

I. **ALCOHOL PANDEMIC TRENDS: INCREASED SALES, MILLENNIALS, HEALTH AND WELLNESS MARKETING, ONLINE SALES, BULK PURCHASES**

1. **RETAIL ALCOHOL SALES JUMPED BY 55%** nationally during the third week of March, when many stay-at-home orders were put in place, this report by Nielsen examines the unusual impact of the pandemic on alcohol sales by the type of alcohol sold (spirits has outsold other categories), bulk purchases, and online sales. <https://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/article/2020/rebalancing-the-covid-19-effect-on-alcohol-sales/>
 - **BULK PURCHASES** - “As consumers spend more time at home and are limited to where they can go to consume alcohol, it’s no surprise they have started buying in bulk. The percent of boxed wine sales increased more than tenfold between Feb. 29 and April 18 and 1.75-L spirits were 23 times higher, according to Nielsen. And for the week of April 18, 30-packs of beer sales were up 21% and 24-packs were up 20%, while six-packs decreased 2%.” Drink mixers like tonic water and lemon/lime juice have increased sales along with other alcoholic beverage mixers by 96% vs. a year ago.
 - **VIRTUAL HAPPY HOURS** - Anheuser-Busch’s research from May found that 45% of consumers were drinking more at home week over week as people adapted and formed new habits around in-home occasions such as meals and relaxing and new social occasions including virtual happy hours.
2. **WORKING FROM HOME AN “EXCUSE TO DRINK”** – A study by the American Addiction Centers in late March of 3,000 U.S. adults working from home revealed 1 in 3 (35%) of the respondents said they were more likely to consume alcohol while self-isolating. 1 in 5 (22%) said they’ve stockpiled alcohol over other food and drink items while isolating. 1 in 3 indicated they are more likely to drink alcohol during work hours while operating from home as compared to working in their typical workspace. The survey found 26% of Kentucky workers are drinking alcohol at home during working hours. <https://www.alcohol.org/guides/work-from-home-drinking/>
3. **HARD SELTZER PANDEMIC GROWTH W/ WELLNESS CONNECTION**- Furthermore, Neilson has looked at a new trend with millennials buying hard seltzer malt beverages at growing levels in 2020, due to pandemic purchasing and seasonality. Sudden bar and restaurant on-premise alcohol retailer closing have hurt the industry, but the difference is more than being made up for by off-premise retail sales as consumers quarantined to avoid risk of exposure to COVID-19. Hard seltzer has further gained traction during the pandemic due its correlation with health and wellness, as its marketed as a lower calorie, lighter alcoholic drink with trendy bold flavors options. <https://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/article/2020/hard-seltzer-defies-categorization-and-limits-as-the-most-resilient-alcohol-segment-in-u-s/>
4. **PANDEMIC SALES INCREASES TO MILLENNIALS** - The increases have been noted to be especially high during the pandemic for online sales (permitted in KY as of this Wednesday), and to millennials (1 in 4) and Gen Xers (1 in 5). The pandemic sales increases have been noted to appear to be by a small percentage of the population, indicated most have not increased their alcohol use by leaps and bounds, but rather a smaller portion of people are binge drinking and drinking more excessively than usual during the pandemic resulting in the increases.
 - <https://www.heart.org/en/news/2020/07/01/covid-19-pandemic-brings-new-concerns-about-excessive-drinking>
 - <https://morningconsult.com/2020/04/06/coronavirus-social-distancing-millennials-eating-drinking/>

II. COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND HIGH-RISK DRINKING:

1. **PANDEMIC ENDS SOCIAL DRINKING, NOW SOCIALLY ACCEPTABLE TO DRINK ALONE** - Most states including KY seemed to waive alcohol regulations for COVID Executive ABC Orders nearly overnight, and “drinkers embraced trends like virtual happy hours, online wine tastings, curbside pickup and liquor delivery services” not in previously permitted or social accepted.

‘Dr. Sarah Johnson, medical director of Landmark Recovery, an **addiction treatment program based in Louisville, Kentucky**, with locations in the Midwest said that, virtual events aside, the pandemic has nearly put an end to social drinking. “It’s not as much going out and incorporating alcohol into a dinner or time spent with family or friends,” Johnson said. “Lots of people are sitting home drinking alone now and, historically, that’s been viewed as more of a high-risk drinking behavior.” <https://khn.org/news/drinking-surged-during-the-pandemic-do-you-know-the-signs-of-addiction/>

2. **ALCOHOL DEATHS INCREASING** - All the while, a recent NIH analysis of death certificates found that the rate of alcohol-related deaths among people ages 16 and older doubled, from 35,914 to 72,558, between 1999 and 2017. Significant overlap exists between alcohol and drug users, as the NIH analysis revealed. In 2017, the nation’s overdose deaths from a combination of alcohol and other drugs totaled 10,596, about 15% of total alcohol-related deaths.

Shortly after this release by NIH on alcohol-related deaths doubling, the pandemic hit, and treatment centers and recovery groups were forced to shut down while they transitioned to tele-medicine and virtual meetings. <https://www.wnpr.org/post/addiction-programs-adapt-meet-challenges-pandemic-and-rising-need>

3. **ALCOHOL AN ESSENTIAL IN THE U.S., RESTRICTED ACCESS OVERSEAS** - In the U.S., the CDC categorized alcohol as “essential” during the pandemic permitting most alcohol retailers nationwide to remain open and some states to ease alcohol regulations. However, the European WHO urged governments to restrict alcohol access during lockdown due to its contribution to mental health problems, violence and impulsive risk-taking behavior. https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/disease-prevention/alcohol-use/news/news/2020/04/alcohol-does-not-protect-against-covid-19-access-should-be-restricted-during-lockdown/_recache?fbclid=IwAR2lklQcxfDdziOa7esAbXO-calV66wvhmP4JxoDwXQd5z14X02jAmHZulg

Some nations and foreign regions, including most recently South African, have taken steps to ban alcohol to reduce COVID-19 spread and ease fears over domestic violence due to families in confined spaces during lockdown. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/07/south-africa-bans-alcohol-coronavirus-surges-200712202105777.html>

4. **KENTUCKIANS SPENT 50-HOURS DRINKING DURING PANDEMIC** - Survey found by Cathy Prothro, Suicide PES, on 3200 adults (aged 21+) nationwide by the American Addiction Centers showing hours spent drinking during the pandemic (50 hours for Kentuckians). The findings also suggest “The AAC report also found that 14 percent of Americans said they’ve been drunk more during lockdown than before it, and nearly 20 percent hide their drinking from their partners.” I was unable to find the methodology used in this study. <https://www.wave3.com/2020/07/08/survey-finds-kentuckians-have-been-drunk-hours-during-lockdown/>

The AAC blog page provides the state by state breakdown of how many hours each state has spent drinking during the pandemic. <https://americanaddictioncenters.org/blog/drunk-during-lockdown>

III. HISTORICAL REFERENCE: ALCOHOL AND TRAUMATIC EVENTS (1918 FLU, NATURAL DISASTERS, 9/11, COVID-19)

1. **AMID 1918 PANDEMIC, BOOTLEG WHISKEY CONSIDERED A MEDICINE** - When influenza began to sweep through the U.S. in 1918, a frightened nation looked to an unproven but familiar remedy: whiskey. There was just one problem. More than half the states had passed Prohibition laws by then, making liquor difficult, sometimes impossible, to legally obtain. Confiscated whiskey began being used as medicine in military hospitals, then soon in civilian hospitals while doctors remained split on whether to prescribe whiskey for the influenza pandemic. By 1922, 51% of doctors surveyed by the AMA said they considered whiskey a “necessary therapeutic agent.” Some physicians believed alcohol helped stimulate the heart and respiratory system of patients weakened by illness, while others thought its sedative effects made suffering patients more comfortable. In Pittsburg, bootleggers paid doctors \$1 for each whiskey prescription, while the druggist got \$5 a bottle for the whiskey. OTC medicines not regulated by the FDA ran high like Tanlac, an elixir that billed itself as the “Master Medicine” and claimed to cure about everything, contained 17% alcohol. Peruna, another medicine, contained 28% alcohol. Some suggested pro-prohibition concern over whiskey’s supposed medical benefits may have pushed the 18th amendment passage by January 16, 1919, that went into effect the following year.

Due whiskey’s short supply during the Prohibition, it is unknown how the 1918 Spanish Flu specifically impacted alcohol abuse, excessive drinking, and other related factors. <https://www.history.com/news/1918-flu-pandemic-whiskey-remedy-prohibition>

2. **ALCOHOL INCREASES WITH TRAUMATIC EVENTS: COVID19, HURRICANES, 9/11** - “Traumatic events such as the coronavirus pandemic have historically led to a spike in alcohol abuse and dependence, Julia Chester of Purdue University said, along with increased calls to mental health crisis centers and domestic abuse hotlines, and an uptick in DUIs. That was the case, she said, after 9/11 and natural disasters such as Hurricanes Sandy and Katrina. Some recovery-support nonprofits are already seeing an increase in reported alcohol abuse.”

During COVID-19 in KY, we’ve seen an uptick in calls to mental health crisis centers, concerns reported over domestic abuse, and a spike in alcohol sales. While I am unsure about DUIs as this data usually doesn’t get reported until much later, this does seem to fit with other historical events.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/wellness/drinking-problem-home-coronavirus-lockdown/2020/04/27/69c45984-865e-11ea-a3eb-e9fc93160703_story.html

3. **9/11 EXPOSURE AND FREQUENT BINGE DRINKING 5-6 YEARS LATER** - Frequent binge drinking was significantly associated with increasing 9/11 exposure and PTSD. Those with very high and high exposures had a higher prevalence of frequent binge drinking (13.7% and 9.8%, respectively) than those with medium and low exposures (7.5% and 4.4%, respectively). Upon stratification, very high and high exposures were associated with frequent binge drinking in both the PTSD and no PTSD subgroups. The findings suggest 9/11 exposure had an impact on frequent binge drinking five-to-six years later among Registry enrollees. **Understanding the effects of traumatic exposure on alcohol use is important to identify risk factors for post-disaster alcohol misuse, inform policy, and improve post-disaster psychological and alcohol screening and counseling.** <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4154498/>
4. **NYC RESIDENTS INCREASED DRUG ABUSE 5-8 WEEKS POST 9-11** - A survey conducted by NIDA-funded researches at the NY Academy of Medicine 5-8 weeks after the 9-11-2001 terrorist attacks of NYC residents found high levels of depression, PTSD and increases in substances abuse. In looking at rates of new substance use among respondents, the researchers found that, of respondents who did not use these substances during the week before September 11, 3.3% started smoking cigarettes after September 11; 19.3% started drinking alcohol; and 2.5% began using marijuana. Overall, the percentages of respondents who smoked, consumed

alcohol, and used marijuana increased 9.7%, 24.6%, and 3.2%, respectively, after the attacks.

<https://www.medicinenet.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=24251>

5. **SAMHSA DISASTER TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER SUPPLEMENTAL RESEARCH BULLETIN: FIRST RESPONDERS: BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CONCERNS (MAY 2018)** – “First responders are always on the front line facing highly stressful and risky calls. This tempo can lead to an inability to integrate work experiences. 69% of EMS professionals have never had enough time to recover between traumatic events (Bentley et al., 2013). As a result, depression, stress and posttraumatic stress symptoms, suicidal ideation, and a host of other functional and relational conditions have been reported.”
<https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/dtac/supplementalresearchbulletin-firstresponders-may2018.pdf>

IV. HISTORICAL REFERENCE: ALCOHOL DURING A RECESSION

1. **INCREASE IN MODERATE AND HEAVY DRINKERS IN RECESSION** - A study from the US shows that **during** the Great **Recession** of 2008-2009, the total **alcohol** consumed increased due to a reduction **in** the number of light drinkers, and an increase **in** the number of moderate and heavy drinkers. Meanwhile, the rates of abstinence from **alcohol** increased among US adults. http://eucam.info/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/marketing-tactics-in-recession-final_1.pdf
2. **FREQUENCY OF HEAVY DRINKING AND INTOXICATION INCREASE DURING RECESSION** - “This is the first study to examine broadly the overall net change in U.S. population estimates of alcohol use related to a recession—The Great Recession—among individuals who remain employed. Data for this repeated cross-sectional study were obtained from two national telephone surveys of U.S. workers. The first survey occurred prior to the Great Recession (2002–2003; $N = 2,501$), whereas the second survey occurred during and after the official end of the Great Recession (2008–2011; $N = 2,581$). The results revealed that the recession was related to a higher proportion of drinkers among middle-aged employees, but not among young employees. Gender and race did not moderate the relation of the recession to drinker status. **Among drinkers, the recession was not related to usual alcohol use (frequency and quantity), but was positively related to the frequency of heavy drinking and intoxication.**” <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4801729/>
3. **AFRICAN AMERICANS AND AGES 18-24 MOST LIKELY TO BINGE DRINK IN BAD ECONOMY** - Along with higher unemployment and bankruptcy, an economic recession brings increased drinking. The increased use of alcohol includes binge drinking, problem drinking and impaired driving according to a study published in Health Economics referenced on WebMD. As free-time goes up, like when you’re unemployed or even potentially working from home without a long commute, one engages in more self-medication and leisure time activities like drinking. The study reported people drink more during a recession, but African Americans and people aged 18-24 are most likely to binge drink. As income and education level go up, drinking is more common. The risk of “high-functioning alcohol abuser” becomes more apparent as stress and worry increase during a bad economy. <https://www.webmd.com/mental-health/addiction/news/20111013/as-economy-goes-down-drinking-goes-up#1>
4. **1% INCREASE IN UNEMPLOYMENT = 17% INCREASE IN ALCOHOLISM** – Researchers at the University of Miami looked at the connections between risky drinking and state unemployment rates in a sample of more than 43K people surveyed between 2001 and 2005. This was before the economic crisis, so the variances in state economies allowed for comparisons. The study found each 1% increase in the state unemployment rate corresponded to a nearly 17% increase in cases of alcoholism or alcohol abuse and a 35% increase in rates of drunk driving. <https://healthland.time.com/2011/10/17/do-people-really-drink-more-when-the-economy-tanks/>

V. ALCOHOL RECOVERY DURING A PANDEMIC:

1. **PANDEMIC MASK PROBLEM DRINKING SIGNS** - In many ways the pandemic can make it easier to meet one's life obligations and miss important clues from changes in behavior resulting from problematic drinking (example - virtual vs. in-person meetings, or seeing family and close friends less often due to social distancing, might make it easier to mask an addiction for some). <https://khn.org/news/drinking-surged-during-the-pandemic-do-you-know-the-signs-of-addiction/>
2. **ALCOHOL RECOVERY IMPACT** - A PBS Special video released June 11th, discussed how the stay-at-home orders have impacted those in recovery, particularly those in alcohol recovery. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/how-americans-drinking-habits-have-changed-during-the-pandemic>
3. **UNEMPLOYMENT, ADDICTION AND RELAPSE** - Overall, the existing research suggests a complicated relationship between unemployment and alcohol and other drug problems. For example, the National Household Survey on Drug Use and Health consistently finds that rates of substance misuse and addiction in unemployed people are nearly twice as high as in those who have jobs. Unemployment is also linked with increased odds of relapse for people with addictions, while employment is linked with recovery. <https://healthland.time.com/2011/10/17/do-people-really-drink-more-when-the-economy-tanks/>
4. **ALCOHOL RECOVERY AND UNEMPLOYMENT** - The AAC website provides a glimpse into the research they've conducted on alcohol recovery success and unemployment. Given the recent unemployment increases in KY and sustained high level during the pandemic, greater research surrounding this topic may provide further valuable insight. <https://americanaddictioncenters.org/our-research/addiction-insights>
5. **SOBER SILVER LINING: MORE FREE ONLINE SUPPORT** - 'Weeks or even months of using alcohol to escape difficult emotions could leave those who indulge with a problem that's hard to shake once the lockdown is over. "Many people will, for the first time, develop an alcohol use disorder," said Julia Chester, associate professor of psychological sciences in the College of Health and Human Sciences at Purdue University, who studies the factors influencing alcohol and substance abuse disorders. One huge positive to emerge from the pandemic, Chester said, is that more free online support has opened up, making sober support more accessible to those who might otherwise not be able to afford it, have time for it or be able to attend without child care. Moreover, virtual support sessions have made it less intimidating for people who think they might have a problem to talk through their concerns; often anonymously with video off.' https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/wellness/drinking-problem-home-coronavirus-lockdown/2020/04/27/69c45984-865e-11ea-a3eb-e9fc93160703_story.html
 - "If you decide you might have an unhealthy relationship with booze, you can find support to quit from 12-step programs such as [Alcoholics Anonymous](#), which has taken its meetings online during the pandemic, or in recovery communities such as [In the Rooms](#). In addition, the Partnership for Drug-Free Kids has launched a new [text-messaging support service](#) to help the increasing numbers struggling with alcohol consumption during isolation."

**NOTE: This document is a summary of research and related data on a current and rapidly emerging topic provided by external linked sources. It is not intended to convey analysis or interpretation.*