

# Wisconsin Epidemiological Profile on Alcohol and Other Drug Use, 2008

## Wisconsin Department of Health Services

- Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services
- Division of Public Health

Prepared by the Bureau of Health Information and Policy, Division of Public Health, in consultation with the Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute

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## *Field Experts and Consulting Epidemiologists*

Amanda Jovaag  
Epidemiologist  
Population Health Institute  
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Robin Lecoanet  
Evaluation Director  
Population Health Institute  
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Ray Luick  
Justice Improvement Program Director  
Wisconsin Office of Justice Assistance

Paul Moberg, Ph.D.  
Deputy Director  
Population Health Institute  
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Brian Weaver  
Coordinated School Health Consultant  
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

## *Wisconsin Department of Health Services*

Greg Levenick  
Supervisor  
Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

Chris Hill-Sampson  
Section Chief  
Division of Public Health

Patricia L. Nametz  
Public Health Educator  
Division of Public Health

Louis Oppor  
Prevention Specialist  
Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

Kathy Thomas  
Strategic Prevention Framework State Incentive Grant  
Manager  
Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

Anne Ziege, Ph.D.  
Research Analyst  
Division of Public Health

Mary "Raina" Zwadzich  
Center for Substance Abuse Prevention Fellow  
Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

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In the Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, Louis Oppor negotiated MOU development and provided oversight for developing the report as part of the Strategic Prevention Framework State Incentive Grant (SPF/SIG) project.

### Contact Information

*For questions regarding this document contact:*

Greg Levenick  
SPF/SIG Project Director  
Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services  
Wisconsin Department of Health Services  
One West Wilson Street, Room 434  
Madison, WI 53703  
*E-mail:* Greg.Levenick@wisconsin.gov  
*Phone:* (608) 266-1987

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**Note:** This report is available online at <http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/stats/aoda.htm>.

# Executive Summary

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The Wisconsin Department of Health Services is committed to moving toward need-based funding through improved data collection and analysis. One important aspect of prevention services is the ability to track the needs of communities through epidemiological factors. Based on the identified needs, resources can be allocated to address the problem using evidence-based programming.

Like its 2006 counterpart, Wisconsin's 2008 "Epidemiological Profile on Alcohol and Other Drug Use" presents data on the use and abuse of alcohol and other substances in Wisconsin and the resulting consequences. This edition of the Profile includes new sources of data, and data at the county level, to make it more useful in understanding and addressing substance abuse problems in Wisconsin.

## Key Findings

### Consequences of Alcohol and Other Drug Consumption

Many types of mortality, morbidity, and dangerous criminal behavior have been linked to the use of alcohol and other drugs. Given Wisconsin's high rate of alcohol consumption, it is not surprising that the rates at which Wisconsin experiences the consequences associated with alcohol use also tend to be higher than the national average.

Rates of alcohol dependence, alcohol abuse, and alcohol-related motor vehicle fatalities are higher in Wisconsin than in the United States as a whole. Wisconsin has one-and-a-half times the national rate of arrests for operating a motor vehicle while intoxicated and more than three times the national rate of arrests for other liquor law violations. Wisconsin also has the highest rate in the nation of self-reported drinking and driving.

Wisconsin's rate of alcohol-related motor vehicle deaths has been decreasing in recent years, although more slowly than the overall rate of motor vehicle deaths. One surprising finding is that Wisconsin has had a lower rate of alcohol-related liver cirrhosis than the national average, although this difference may be disappearing. Wisconsin's rate of other alcohol-related deaths (other than liver cirrhosis and motor vehicle) has increased since 1999.

The number of clients receiving publicly funded services for alcohol and other drug abuse increased 11% between 1997 and 2006, while inflation-adjusted public expenditures for those services increased just 4%.

From 1999 to 2006, Wisconsin's age-adjusted rate of drug-related deaths increased; the statewide rate of drug-related hospitalizations has also increased in recent years. Wisconsin's rate of arrests for drug law violations remains lower than the national average but has increased since 1997.

### Alcohol Consumption

Wisconsin's rates of alcohol use and misuse are among the highest - if not the highest - in the nation. As of 2006, Wisconsin adults continue to have the highest rates of alcohol consumption, binge drinking and heavy drinking among all U.S. states and territories, and Wisconsin rates of underage drinking (ages 12-20) exceed national levels. As of 2007, Wisconsin high school students have a binge drinking rate that is the third highest of reported states, and the highest rate of current alcohol use.

In good news, high school students in both Wisconsin and the nation are decreasingly likely to report they began alcohol use before age 13. Also, binge drinking among young adults (ages 18-24) has declined in Wisconsin since 2000.

Data for the most recent decade consistently show that Wisconsin women of childbearing age are more likely to drink - and to binge drink - than their national counterparts. This has important implications for unplanned pregnancy and infant health.

### Other Drug Consumption

The use of drugs other than alcohol also remains a problem in Wisconsin. As a whole, consumption patterns of illicit drugs in Wisconsin mirror national trends with few exceptions. One notable trend was in the use of marijuana. In 1997, the prevalence of both lifetime and current use of marijuana was lower than the national average. Over the next four years, however, these measures rose until they were nearly identical to the national averages. Since 2001, both lifetime and current use of marijuana in the United States and Wisconsin have decreased at similar rates. Both nationally and in Wisconsin, the misuse of prescription drugs for non-medical purposes has emerged as a problem, especially among young adults.

### Conclusion

Areas of need are clearly identified in this report. Wisconsin data for 2006 reflect a higher prevalence of alcohol use and binge drinking in adults, especially young adults, compared to the country as a whole. Underage drinking and underage binge drinking also occur at higher rates in Wisconsin, as does drinking among women of childbearing age. Concerning illicit drug use, Wisconsin rates of death and hospitalization from drug use have been increasing. From 1996 to 2006, Wisconsin's arrest rate for liquor law violations was more than three times the national rate; arrests for operating while intoxicated also occur at a higher rate in Wisconsin.

The economic and health costs of substance abuse in Wisconsin are great, as are the related costs to the community of arrests and criminal offenses. Focus on these key areas will be useful in guiding the state's funding decisions regarding which problems to address and which interventions to use.

# Table of Contents

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Acknowledgements.....	Page 2
Executive Summary .....	4
Table of Contents .....	6
List of Tables and Figures.....	7
Introduction .....	10
<b>Narrative and Results</b>	
<b>Consequence Indicators.....</b>	<b>11</b>
Consequences of Alcohol Consumption .....	11
Consequences of Illicit Drug Consumption .....	30
Consequences Associated with More Than One Substance .....	37
<b>Consumption Indicators .....</b>	<b>47</b>
Alcohol Consumption .....	47
Other Drug Consumption.....	64
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>Appendix 1: Indicator Definitions.....</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>Appendix 2: Surveys and Other Data Sources .....</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>Appendix 3: Wisconsin Regions by County.....</b>	<b>84</b>

# Tables and Figures

## Tables

### *Consequences of Alcohol Consumption*

Table 1. Alcohol-related liver cirrhosis deaths, Wisconsin and the United States...	12
Table 2. Alcohol-related liver cirrhosis deaths, Wisconsin by county .....	13
Table 3. Motor vehicle injury rates and death rates, Wisconsin by county .....	16
Table 4. Other alcohol-attributable deaths, Wisconsin by county .....	20
Table 5. Prevalence of alcohol dependence and abuse, age 12 and older.....	21
Table 6. Alcohol-related hospitalizations, Wisconsin by county .....	23
Table 7. Operating while intoxicated (OWI) and liquor law arrests, Wisconsin by county .....	28

### *Consequences of Illicit Drug Consumption*

Table 8. Drug-related deaths, Wisconsin and the United States .....	30
Table 9. Drug-related hospitalizations, Wisconsin by county .....	33
Table 10. Arrests for drug law violations, Wisconsin by county .....	36

### *Consequences Associated with More Than One Substance*

Table 11. Reported property crimes, Wisconsin by county .....	40
Table 12. Reported violent crimes, Wisconsin by county .....	42
Table 13. Disorderly conduct arrests, Wisconsin by county .....	46

### *Alcohol Consumption*

Table 14. Current alcohol use, adults by age and sex.....	49
Table 15. Current alcohol use, adults by race/ethnicity .....	49
Table 16. Current alcohol use, high school students by race/ethnicity .....	50
Table 17. Current alcohol use among adults, Wisconsin by county .....	51
Table 18. Binge drinking, high school students by race/ethnicity .....	53
Table 19. Binge drinking, adults by age and sex .....	53
Table 20. Binge drinking, adults by race/ethnicity .....	54
Table 21. Binge drinking among adults, Wisconsin by county .....	55
Table 22. Heavy drinking, adults by age and sex .....	57
Table 23. Heavy drinking, adults by race/ethnicity .....	57
Table 24. Heavy drinking among adults, Wisconsin by region.....	57
Table 25. Initiation of alcohol use before age 13, high school students by sex .....	61
Table 26. Initiation of alcohol use before age 13, high school students by race/ethnicity .....	61

***Other Drug Consumption***

Table 27. Prevalence and state rank of illicit drug use among Wisconsin residents age 12 and older .....	64
Table 28. Current marijuana use, high school students by race/ethnicity .....	68
Table 29. Initiation of marijuana use before age 13, high school students by race/ethnicity .....	68
Table 30. Current cocaine use, high school students by race/ethnicity .....	69
Table 31. Lifetime heroin use, high school students by race/ethnicity .....	70
Table 32. Lifetime methamphetamine use, high school students by race/ethnicity .....	72

**Figures**

***Consequences of Alcohol Consumption***

Figure 1. Alcohol-related deaths.....	11
Figure 2. Alcohol-related liver cirrhosis deaths, Wisconsin and the United States ..	12
Figure 3. Alcohol-related and total motor vehicle fatalities .....	14
Figure 4. Alcohol-related motor vehicle death rates, Wisconsin and the United States .....	15
Figure 5. Alcohol-related motor vehicle injury rates, Wisconsin and the United States .....	15
Figure 6. Alcohol-related recreational vehicle fatalities .....	18
Figure 7. Other alcohol-related death rates .....	19
Figure 8. Alcohol dependence and abuse, age 12 and older .....	21
Figure 9. Alcohol-related hospitalizations.....	22
Figure 10. Alcohol-related hospital charges .....	22
Figure 11. Driving under the influence of alcohol, states with highest and lowest prevalence and the United States .....	25
Figure 12. Arrest rate for operating a motor vehicle while intoxicated, Wisconsin and the United States .....	26
Figure 13. Arrest rate for liquor law violations, Wisconsin and the United States ..	27

***Consequences of Illicit Drug Consumption***

Figure 14. Drug dependence and abuse, age 12 and older .....	31
Figure 15. Drug-related hospitalizations.....	32
Figure 16. Drug-related hospital charges .....	32
Figure 17. Arrest rate for drug law violations, Wisconsin and the United States ....	35

***Consequences Associated with More Than One Substance***

Figure 18. Alcohol and other drug abuse clients receiving services with public funds .....	37
Figure 19. Public funds expended for alcohol and other drug abuse treatment .....	37
Figure 20. Rate of reported property crime offenses, Wisconsin and the United States .....	38

Figure 21. Rate of reported violent crime offenses, Wisconsin and the United States ..... 39

Figure 22. Arrest rate for property crimes, Wisconsin and the United States..... 44

Figure 23. Arrest rate for violent crimes, Wisconsin and the United States ..... 44

Figure 24. Arrest rate for disorderly conduct, Wisconsin and the United States .... 45

***Alcohol Consumption***

Figure 25. Alcohol use among high school students, Wisconsin and the United States ..... 47

Figure 26. Alcohol use among adults, Wisconsin and the United States ..... 47

Figure 27. Current alcohol use among adults, Wisconsin and the United States..... 48

Figure 28. Current alcohol use among high school students, Wisconsin and the United States ..... 50

Figure 29. Adult binge drinking prevalence by state: Low, high, and United States median ..... 52

Figure 30. Binge drinking among high school students, Wisconsin and the United States ..... 54

Figure 31. Heavy drinking among adults, Wisconsin and the United States ..... 56

Figure 32. Per capita alcohol consumption, Wisconsin and the United States ..... 58

Figure 33. Underage drinking, Wisconsin and the United States ..... 59

Figure 34. Initiation of alcohol use before age 13 among high school students, Wisconsin and the United States ..... 60

Figure 35. Current alcohol use among women ages 18-44, Wisconsin and the United States ..... 62

Figure 36. Binge drinking among women ages 18-44, Wisconsin and the United States ..... 63

***Other Drug Consumption***

Figure 37. Lifetime use of illicit drugs among high school students, Wisconsin and the United States ..... 65

Figure 38. Use of marijuana, illicit drugs other than marijuana, and pain relievers for non-medical purposes ..... 65

Figure 39. Current marijuana use among high school students, Wisconsin and the United States ..... 66

Figure 40. Lifetime marijuana use among high school students, Wisconsin and the United States ..... 67

Figure 41. Current cocaine use among high school students, Wisconsin and the United States ..... 69

Figure 42. Lifetime heroin use among high school students, Wisconsin and the United States ..... 70

Figure 43. Lifetime inhalants use among high school students, Wisconsin and the United States ..... 71

Figure 44. Lifetime methamphetamine use among high school students, Wisconsin and the United States ..... 72

Figure 45. Use of prescription pain relievers for non-medical purposes, Wisconsin and the United States ..... 73

# I ntroduction

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This report summarizes current data on the consequences and use of alcohol and other drugs in Wisconsin. The Executive Summary is followed by a narrative with charts and tables detailing key trends for Wisconsin in the consequences of alcohol and other drug use and in patterns of consumption. The Appendixes provide information on indicator definitions, data sources, and sample sizes.

Data in this report primarily reflect trends at a statewide level. Where available, information by county or region has also been included.

Please note that tobacco use and its consequences are outside the scope of the 2008 profile. The Tobacco Prevention and Control Program in the Department of Health Services regularly publishes information about the epidemiology of tobacco use in Wisconsin and works with partners to address tobacco control needs at the local and statewide level.

In the sections on the consequences of alcohol and other drug use, this report includes data on both arrests and reported offenses; both kinds of data have advantages and disadvantages. Reported offenses are not influenced by the laws and enforcement practices of a particular locality; however, arrests provide a measure of the socioeconomic toll of these crimes. Data on reported offenses are only available for "index" crimes: burglary, theft, arson, motor vehicle theft, homicide, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. Arrest data are available for a wider range of crimes.

New kinds of information in this edition of the Profile include data on drinking among women of childbearing age from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, data on alcohol-related motor vehicle deaths from the national Fatality Assessment Reporting System, and data on alcohol- and drug-related hospitalizations from Wisconsin hospital inpatient data files.