

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: Alcohol Use Disorder and COVID-19**

According to a recent Nielson report, there has been a 54 percent increase in alcohol sales during the week ending March 21, 2020, over the same week in 2019. Meanwhile, online sales during the same period jumped 262 percent from 2019 despite warnings from the World Health Organization that alcohol use during the pandemic may potentially exacerbate health concerns and risk-taking behaviors.

A recent survey study published in JAMA Network Open examined individual-level changes in alcohol use and consequences associated with alcohol use in US adults, as well as demographic disparities, from before to during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Data were collected using the RAND Corporation American Life Panel (ALP), a nationally representative, probability-sampled panel of 6000 participants age 18 years or more who speak English or Spanish and are weighted to match a range of national demographic characteristics. A sample of 2615 ALP members ages 30 to 80 years was invited to participate in the baseline survey (wave 1), which was closed after 6 weeks (April 29-June 9, 2019) with 1771 completions. Wave 2 data were collected from May 28 to June 16, 2020, several months after widespread implementation of COVID-19–associated social distancing. The completion rate for the wave 2 survey was 58.9% of all wave 1 invitations.

Comparisons before and during the COVID-19 pandemic were made on number of days of any alcohol use and heavy drinking (defined as 5 or more drinks for men and 4 or more drinks for women within a couple of hours), and average number of drinks consumed over the past 30 days. The 15-item Short Inventory of Problems assessed adverse consequences associated with alcohol use in the past 3 months (eg, “I have taken foolish risks when I have been drinking”). Comparisons were made overall, and across self-reported sex, age, and race/ethnicity.

Of the 1540 sample of adults whose mean age was 56, 825 (53.6%) were in the age range of 30-59 years; and 883 (57.3%) were female) from the baseline survey who, approximately 1 year later, completed the wave 2 survey. Frequency of alcohol consumption increased. Overall, representing an increase of 14% over the baseline of 5.48 days in 2019; For women, an increase

of 17% over the 2019 baseline of 4.58 days was noted. For adults age 30 to 59 years, an increase of 19%; For non-Hispanic White individuals an increase of 10% over the 2019 baseline of 6.46 days. On average, alcohol was consumed 1 day more per month by 3 of 4 adults. For women, there was also a significant increase of heavy drinking- 41% over baseline. This equates to an increase of 1 day for 1 in 5 women.

Data provide evidence of changes in alcohol use and associated consequences during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to a range of negative physical health associations, excessive alcohol use may lead to or worsen existing mental health problems, such as anxiety or depression, which may themselves be increasing during COVID-19.

The population level changes for women, younger, and non-Hispanic White individuals highlight that health systems may need to educate consumers through print or online media about increased alcohol use during the pandemic and identify factors associated with susceptibility and resilience to the impacts of COVID-19.

JAMA Network Open is a monthly open access medical journal published by the American Medical Association covering all aspects of the biomedical sciences. For more information please visit [www.jamanetwork.com](http://www.jamanetwork.com)

To learn more about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition please follow us on [www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition](https://www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition) or visit SAFE's website to learn more about the COVID-19 Epidemic and its correlation to increased mental illness, alcohol and substance use at [www.safeglencove.org](http://www.safeglencove.org).