

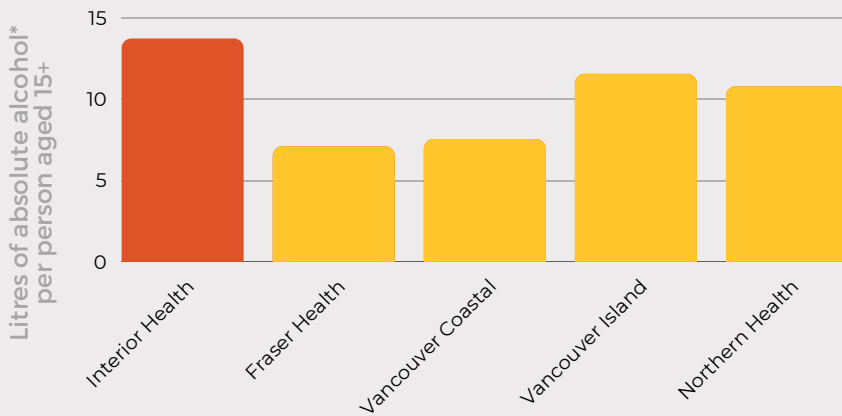
Local Government Alcohol Toolkit: Health Evidence & Recommendations



When building a healthy community, local governments are in a unique position to foster healthy environments and shape culture. The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of the costs and effects of alcohol use, so communities can continue to have informed conversations about ways to reduce consumption. The recommendations included in this toolkit support a culture of moderation to lessen alcohol-related harms.

EVIDENCE Interior BC has the highest alcohol consumption rates and related health costs in the province.

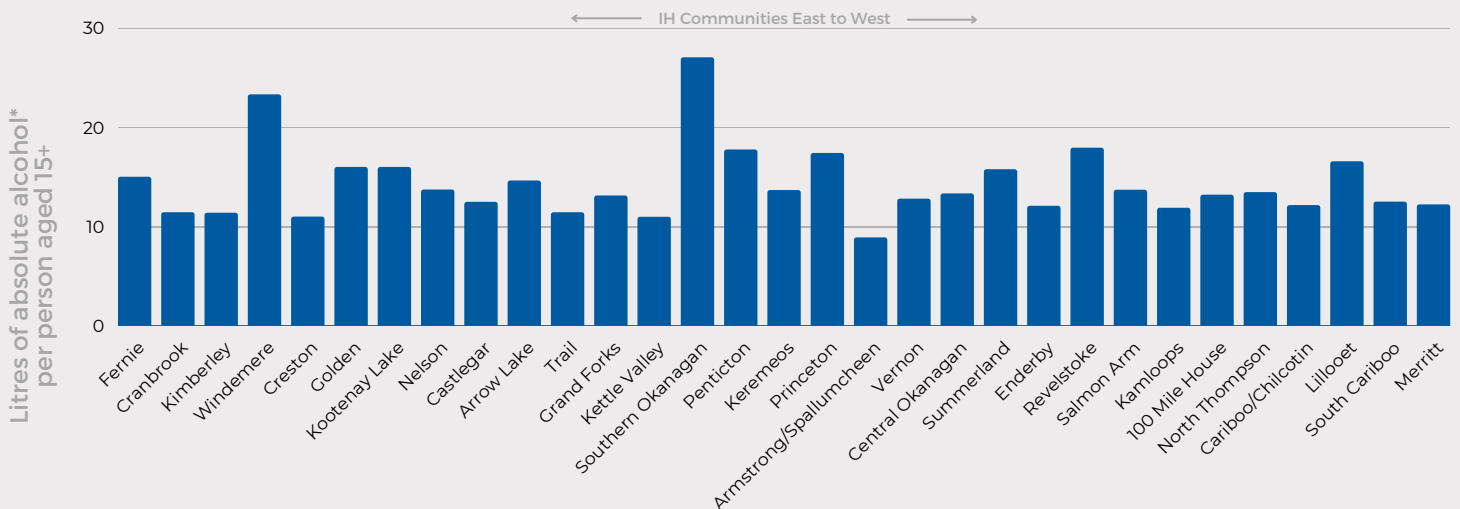
2020 Per Capita Alcohol Consumption by BC Health Authorities¹



Since 2002, the Interior Health (IH) region has had the highest per capita alcohol consumption rates; 2020 being the highest year of consumption on record.²

2020/21 Annual per Capita Litres of Alcohol Consumed³

2020 per Capita Alcohol Purchasing & Sales by Local Health Area, Interior Health¹

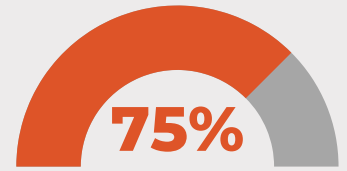


*1 litre of absolute alcohol = 58.65 beers, glasses of wine or cocktails per person aged 15+ per year

As per the Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research, consumption is measured by litres of alcohol purchased in that local health area.¹ Alcohol sales data is used as a proxy for alcohol consumption because it tends to be more accurate than population surveys, which underestimate alcohol consumption.⁴ Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction released Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health (2023), to help individuals make informed decisions about alcohol use.

LEGAL YET HARMFUL

Alcohol is a legal and regulated **drug**. Despite how normalized alcohol is in our culture, the harms, costs, and quantity of consumption are greatly underestimated.



75%
% of men and women who drink underestimate how much they consume⁵



DRUG
/dræg/

A substance which has a physiological effect when ingested or otherwise introduced into the body.⁶

“
There's no level of alcohol use that is good for you. None is best for your health.
”

- Adam Sherk, UVic⁸

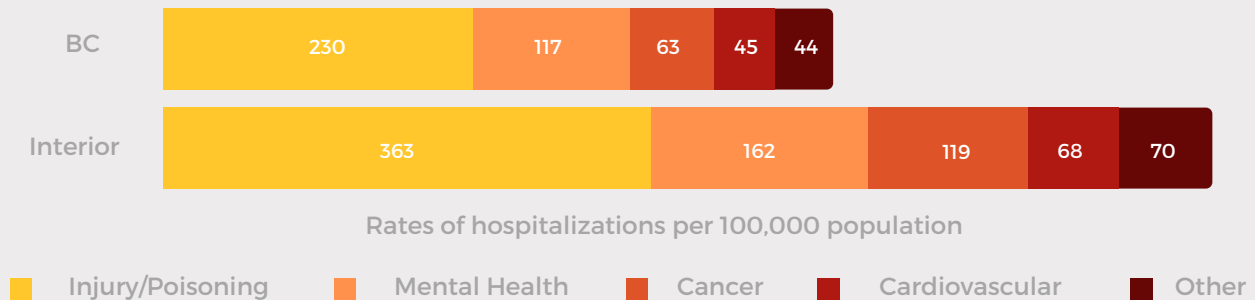
HEALTH RISKS

Alcohol is linked to more than 200 health conditions, ranging from cancer and cardiovascular illness to physical injuries and mental illness.⁷

Alcohol-related deaths typically arise from complications of alcohol use itself or alcohol-related injuries (motor vehicle accident, drowning, suicide).

Alcohol-related hospitalizations and deaths have been consistently increasing in the Interior region since 2012.⁴

Hospitalization Rates Attributable to Alcohol by Condition, 2015⁹



COSTS^{4, 10, 11}

The direct societal costs of alcohol in BC due to health care, lost productivity, and enforcement costs were over \$2 billion in 2017. The government gross profit from alcohol that year was \$1.4 billion, creating a net negative balance. These costs were related to policing as well as social costs (disability/injury from impaired driving, domestic violence, and lost work time/productivity).

Substance use-attributable costs, BC, 2017¹⁰

	Emergency Department Visits	Policing
Alcohol	\$59.1 M	\$157.6M
Tobacco	\$18.3M	\$0.0
Opioids	\$5.04 M	\$80.3M



Interior Health

WHAT CAN LOCAL GOVERNMENTS DO?

Local governments are uniquely situated to create healthy environments. Through healthy public policies and partnerships, it is possible to both support the economic and social benefits of alcohol, and reduce negative impacts.

1 PUBLIC SPACES & EVENTS¹²

Permitting alcohol use on public property can create a sense of “normalization,” and increased consumption, resulting in increased risk of health impacts and social harms. Limiting the availability of alcohol can reduce a range of alcohol-related harms. Event organizers can help reduce alcohol-related harms by managing the availability of alcohol and strategically designing environments where alcohol is served.

Possible Actions:

- Regulate, manage, and evaluate alcohol consumption in public places and on municipally owned and managed properties during public and private events, including festivals.
- Enclose licensed areas at events if alcohol is permitted and ensure they are not accessible to minors.
- Establish clear consequences for non-compliance (e.g. fines, loss of hosting/renting privileges).
- Implement bylaws and policies to restrict and limit alcohol imagery, marketing and sponsorship.
- Provide alcohol-free spaces and incentives for alcohol-free events (lower booking fees, priority dates).
- When alcohol is served at events, follow the suggestions outlined in the [Public Health Guidelines on Major Planned Events: Fact Sheet #5: Harm Reduction \(gov.bc.ca\)](#)
- Limit the number of alcoholic drinks that can be purchased, provide easily accessible/free drinking water and low-cost non-alcoholic options, provide incentives for designated drivers and safe options for people to get home.

2 LAND USE PLANNING^{12,13}

A greater density of alcohol retail outlets/places that allow alcohol consumption have been shown to increase community-level harms such as injury, poor mental health, and acute and chronic diseases. Having alcohol establishments close to areas frequented by children and youth normalizes the consumption of alcohol.

Possible Actions:

- Establish bylaws that restrict where off-premise alcohol outlets can be located.
- Prohibit/challenge alcohol establishments from operating within a certain distance of areas frequented by children/youth (e.g., schools, daycares, community facilities).

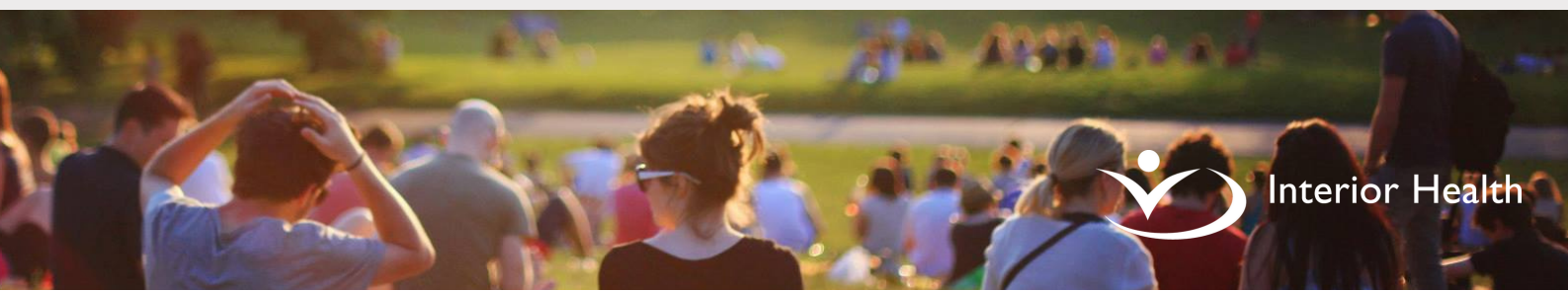


3 COMMUNITY SAFETY^{12,13}

Alcohol-related collisions remain one of the leading causes of alcohol-related death and injury in Canada and internationally.

Possible Actions:

- Invest in transit options and pedestrian pathways when considering on-site alcohol location.
- Leverage partnerships with bylaw officers and police around enforcement and penalties for disorderly conduct and drinking and driving.



4 BUSINESS BYLAWS ^{12,13}

Longer hours of sale increases access to alcohol. In particular, late night retail hours are associated with levels of heavy drinking. Limiting hours of operation reduces the overall access and availability of alcohol, which has been shown to reduce alcohol-related harms.

Possible Actions:

- Create a business license bylaw to reduce operating hours of on-premise and off-premise alcohol sales.
- Implement a business bylaw for alcohol serving locations to communicate the health harms of alcohol use.
- Consider a business bylaw that prohibits the sale of alcohol less than \$3.00/standard serving.

Decreased hours of operation for alcohol establishment



Decreased consumption



Decreased alcohol-related harms

5 PUBLIC AWARENESS ^{12,13}

Alcohol marketing and advertising can impact all sectors of the population in many ways (e.g. through normalizing many drinking contexts, trivializing risks, encouraging early onset of drinking, and potentially triggering people who are trying to abstain from alcohol).

Possible Actions:

- Ensure citizens know drinking in public is prohibited by provincial law and ensure equitable enforcement/penalties for non-compliance.
- Implement policies to restrict and limit exposure to alcohol marketing, advertising, and sponsorship.

What is Equitable Enforcement?

A process of ensuring that law or bylaw enforcement doesn't target, harm, or discriminate based on age, skin colour, etc.

6 ADVOCACY ^{12,13}

Increased taxes and minimum pricing are effective approaches for reducing consumption and importantly, alcohol-related health and social harm. Adjusting alcohol prices for inflation ensures that alcohol products do not become cheaper relative to other goods in the marketplace, thus maintaining their ability to protect public health over time.

Possible Actions:

- Advocate for a pricing structure that ensures alcohol costs deter high levels of consumption, keeps pace with inflation, and reflects alcohol content (including beer and cider).
- Advocate for preventative alcohol policy/harm reduction at the provincial and federal level.
- Advocate at the federal level about nutrition and warning labelling on alcohol products.
- Advocate for greater marketing restrictions at the provincial and federal levels.

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