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Coverage
United Kingdom
Theme
Health and Care

Alcohol-related death rates almost double since 1991

The alcohol-related death rate in the UK increased from 6.9 per 100,000 population in 1991 to 13.0 in 2004, according to data released today by the Office for National Statistics. The number of alcohol-related deaths has more than doubled from 4,144 in 1991 to 8,380 in 2004.

These figures are based on a new harmonised definition of alcohol-related deaths that has been recently agreed across the UK. Further details of the change are given in the background notes to this release.

Death rates are much higher for males than females and the gap between the sexes has widened in recent years. In 2004 the male death rate, at 17.7 deaths per 100,000 population, was twice the rate for females (8.5 deaths per 100,000), and males accounted for over two thirds of the total number of deaths.

For men, the death rates in all age groups increased between 1991 and 2004. Men aged 35 to 54 had the highest death rate in each year. This rate more than doubled between 1991 and 2004, from 16.9 to 38.3 deaths per 100,000.

The death rates by age group for females were consistently lower than rates for males, however the trends showed a broadly similar pattern by age. The death rate for women aged 35 to 54 nearly doubled between 1991 and 2004, from 9.3 to 17.9 per 100,000 population, a larger increase than the rate for women in any other age group.

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BACKGROUND NOTES

1. Alcohol-related deaths data based on the revised definition are available on the National Statistics website at:
<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=1091>
2. The definition of alcohol-related deaths used by ONS includes those causes regarded as most directly due to alcohol consumption. In 2005 ONS began to review its definition of alcohol-related deaths and produced a discussion paper on potential options for revising the causes included. This was circulated to individuals and organisations with relevant topic expertise. Following this discussion process, the definition of alcohol-related deaths used by ONS has been revised. ONS also discussed its proposals for revising the definition of alcohol-related deaths with the General Register Office for Scotland (GROS) and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). It has been agreed that the new definition will be used when reporting alcohol-related deaths for the United Kingdom. The rates reported here are therefore based on mortality data from ONS, GROS and NISRA.
3. From 1991 to 2000, deaths in England, Wales and Northern Ireland were coded using the Ninth Revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-9). From 2001 onwards the Tenth Revision of the ICD (ICD-10) has been in use. Deaths in Scotland were coded using ICD-9 up to 1999 with ICD-10 in use from 2000 onwards. This change in coding means that data following the introduction of ICD-10 are not completely comparable with that for earlier years. The causes selected for this analysis of alcohol-related deaths in ICD-10 are however broadly comparable to those in ICD-9. Mortality data for England and Wales, which were coded using both ICD-9 and ICD-10, showed that the change in revision resulted in a difference in the number of alcohol-related deaths of less than one per cent.
4. The rates reported here are based on deaths registered in each calendar year. They have been directly age-standardised and therefore make allowances for differences in the age structure of the population, over time and between sexes. The age-standardised rate for a particular disease or condition is that which would have occurred if its observed age-specific rates had applied in a given standard population, in this case the European Standard Population. This is a hypothetical population standard, which is the same for both males and females allowing standardised rates to be compared for each sex, and between sexes.
5. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available from the press office.
6. National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference. © Crown copyright 2006.