

Alaska Health Status Indicators

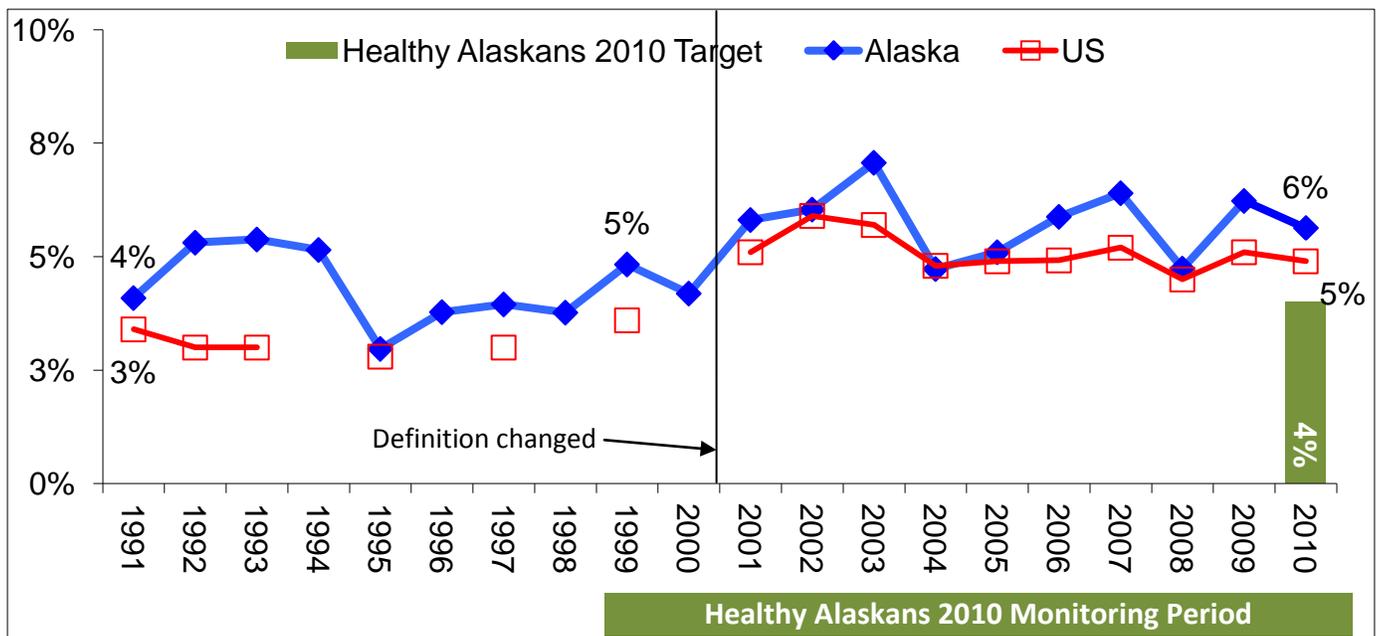
Indicator: *Adult Heavy Drinking*

Why is this important?

Heavy drinking is associated with *alcoholism*, which is when a person shows signs of physical addiction to alcohol (for example, tolerance and withdrawal) and continues to drink, despite problems with physical health, mental health, and social, family, or job responsibilities.¹ Long term, excessive alcohol use is associated with increased health risks for dementia, stroke and neuropathy, cardiovascular disease, cancer, liver disease, gastrointestinal problems and psychiatric problems.² Alcohol abuse has severe consequences in Alaska; statewide mortality rates for alcohol and alcohol-related injuries are among the highest rates in the nation. In 2008, approximately one of every 10 Native deaths was alcohol induced. From 2004-2008, 43% of suicides had either proven or suspected alcohol intoxication preceding the event, of which one-third had a known alcohol dependency or problem. Unintentional injury remains the third leading cause of death and is highly associated with alcohol use. Of the hospitalizations due to injury reported to the Alaska Trauma Registry (ATR), nearly 25% of all hospitalized injury patients were suspected or proven alcohol-related injuries.³

How are we doing?

Percentage of Adults Who Are Heavy Drinkers: Alaska and the U.S.



The percentage of Alaska adults who are heavy drinkers has increased slightly over the past 2 decades, from 4% in 1991 to 6% in 2010.

❖ How is Alaska Doing Relative to the *Healthy Alaskans 2010* Target?

The *Healthy Alaskans 2010* target for the prevalence of adult heavy drinking 4% or lower. Adult heavy drinking prevalence has been around 6% during the *Healthy Alaskans 2010* monitoring period. **The *Healthy Alaskans 2010* target of 4% has not been met.**

❖ How does AK compare with the US?

The Alaska adult heavy drinking rate has been at or slightly higher than the US rate.

Alaska Health Status Indicators

❖ How are different populations affected?

The prevalence of heavy drinking is higher in the 45-64 age group (6%) than in the 18-24 age group (2%) and the 65 or over age group (3%). Also, the Asian and Pacific Islander group has a significantly smaller prevalence of heavy drinking (<1%) than Whites (5%). There are no other significant differences by age, race, region, income or education. (Source: 2008-2010 BRFSS.)

What is the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services doing to improve this indicator?

The two primary objectives chosen by the Alaska Strategic Prevention Framework State Incentive Grant (SPF SIG) Advisory Committee are to reduce youth alcohol use (e.g., lifetime, current, heavy and binge drinking) and adult alcohol abuse (e.g., heavy and binge drinking). The SPF SIG Strategic Plan³ identifies four key strategies: (1) Enhance the Alaska prevention workforce; (2) Develop regional/community capacity to promote prevention principles and strategies; (3) Increase the understanding and use of community coalitions and environmental strategies to accomplish sustainable community change; and (4) Increase regional/community understanding and use of data to drive decision-making, implementation, evaluation and continuous quality improvement of strategies and interventions.

Indicator Definition and Notes

Starting in 2001, this indicator has been used: Percentage of men aged 18 years and older who consumed more than two drinks per day or the percentage of women aged 18 and older who consumed more than one drink per day within the past 30 day period. It is based on responses to these questions:

- *During the past 30 days, have you had at least one drink of any alcoholic beverage such as beer, wine, a malt beverage or liquor?*
- *During the past 30 days, how many days per week or per month did you have at least one drink of any alcoholic beverage?*
- *One drink is equivalent to a 12-ounce beer, a 5-ounce glass of wine or a drink with one shot of liquor. During the past 30 days, on the days when you drank, how many drinks did you drink on the average? During the past 30 days, have you had at least one drink of any alcoholic beverage such as beer, wine, a malt beverage or liquor?*

From 1991 through 2000 the following definition was used, based on the same set of questions: Percentage of adults aged 18 years and older who consumed an average of more than 60 drinks within past 30 day period.

Data Sources

Alaska: Alaska Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Alaska Department of Health and Social Services; US: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Alaska data were obtained from the Standard AK BRFSS from 1991 through 2003, 2005 through 2007, and 2009 through 2010, and from the Standard and Supplemental AK BRFSS surveys combined in 2004 and 2008. The Supplemental BRFSS survey is conducted using identical methodology as the Standard BRFSS and allows a doubling of the BRFSS sample size for those measures included on both surveys.

References

1. Medline Plus. *Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse*. <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000944.htm> (printed 5/5/11).
2. CDC Fact Sheet. *Alcohol Use and Health*. <http://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/fact-sheets/alcohol-use.htm> (printed 5/5/11)
3. AK DHSS/DBH/Prevention and Early intervention. *Moving Prevention Upstream, January 2011*. http://hss.state.ak.us/dbh/prevention/programs/spfsig/pdfs/SPFSIG_AlaskaStrategicPlan.pdf



Available at: <http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/chronic/>

