

Older Adults and Substance Use

Interactive PDF: Select underlined words for more information/resources.

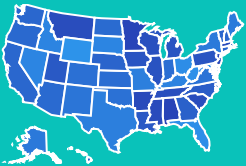
Why is this an important issue?

Although older people are less likely than younger people to use substances, the consequences can be great.

- The impacts of alcohol and other drugs on the body increase with age and it takes more time for the body to process these substances.
- Older people are more likely to have health conditions that can be negatively affected by alcohol and other drugs.
- Older people are more likely to use prescription drugs for medical conditions which increase the risk for substance interactions.
- Substance use is associated with greater risk for elder abuse, self-neglect, and financial exploitation.
- Data on substance use and older people is limited, particularly at the local level.

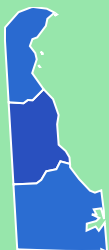
Center for Drug and Health Studies, 2015

What is happening throughout the U.S.?



- 9.3% of adults 50 and older and 6.3% of adults 65 and older reported a substance use disorder.*
- 45.3% of adults 65 and older reported current alcohol use, 1 in 10 reported binge drinking, and 3.4% reported heavy alcohol use.*
- The Monitoring the Future study found that frequent alcohol use increased with age as 14.2% of adults 60 and older reported daily use.**
- 2% of adults 65 and older reported misuse of opioids in the past year.*
- Over 2.5 million adults 65 and older (4.7%) reported using an illicit drug in the past year.*

What is happening in Delaware?

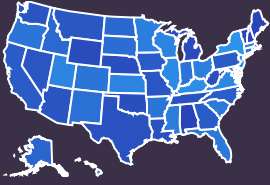


According to the 2021 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System data on Delaware adults 65 and over:

- Nearly half reported alcohol use in the past month
- 6.6% reported binge drinking (5 or more drinks for males/4 for females on one occasion)
- 4.6% reported heavy drinking (14 drinks per week for males/7 for females)

In 2021, there were 64 overdose deaths in Delaware among people over the age of 60. (Delaware Division of Forensic Science, 2022)

Older Adults and Mental Health



Data from the 2020 National Survey on Drug Use and Health*

More than 1 in 10 adults 65 and older in the U.S. reported having any type of mental illness the previous year. 2% reported experiencing a serious mental illness.

Depression can occur at any age. Illness and chronic medical conditions, having a disability, personal losses, and grief -- which may be more common to experience as we age -- can contribute to risk for depression.

Approximately 1 in 20 adults aged 50 and over surveyed recently experienced a major depressive episode the previous year. 3.8% of adults 65 and over also experienced a major depressive episode. Rates are much higher for females.

Among adults 50 and over:

- Over 3 million had serious thoughts of suicide
- more than half a million made a suicide plan,
- 124,000 attempted suicide

To Learn More...

National Institutes of Mental Health

- [Older Adults and Mental Health](#)
- [Mental Health and Older Adults Factbook Live Q&A](#)

Delaware Data



9.4% of adults aged 65 and over in Delaware reported that they had ever been told they had a form of depression.

[2021 Delaware Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System](#)

6.5% of Delawareans aged 65 and over experienced frequent mental distress, the lowest rate reported among all age groups in Delaware in 2020.

[America's Health Rankings](#)

The rates of death by suicide increase with age among older people:

65 and older	12.7 per 100,000 population
age 65-74	10.6 per 100,000
age 75-84	13.8 per 100,000
85 and older	20.7 per 100,000

[My Healthy Community](#)

To Find Help and Services...

[Delaware Aging & Disabilities Resources Center](#)

www.DelawareADRC.com

1-800-223-9074

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifelines

Delaware Hope Line
833-9-HOPEDE

[Help Is Here](#)

<https://www.helpisherede.com/>



This is a publication of the Delaware State Epidemiological Outcomes Workgroup (SEOW) project. Funding for the SEOW has been provided by the Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health through funding from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).