



2025

BINGE AND UNDERAGE DRINKING STATUS REPORT



INTRODUCTION

San Diego County's diverse landscape that includes, numerous educational institutions, military bases, and recreational venues present unique challenges in combating binge and underage drinking. The 2024 Annual Status Report by the San Diego County Binge and Underage Drinking Initiative (BUDI) offers an in-depth analysis of alcohol consumption patterns among youth and adults, the subsequent public health ramifications, and the impact on public safety. By examining these indicators, the report aims to inform and guide future prevention and intervention strategies in the region. Please note that data availability on the report varies by source. This report includes the most recent data accessible as of February 2025.

OVERVIEW & PREVALENCE



2023 Data - Binge Drinking

- **Binge drinking** is the most common and costly pattern of excessive alcohol use in the United States. Binge drinking is defined as consuming 5 or more drinks on an occasion for men or 4 or more drinks on an occasion for women.¹
 - There has been an emerging focus on **heavy or high intensity** drinking which is defined as consuming 15 or more drinks on an occasion for men and 8 for women.²
 - **6% of adults ages 18 or older** in the United States drink heavily, with **nearly all** adults who drink heavily, also binge drinking.²
- Most people who binge drink are not dependent on alcohol. However, binge drinking is harmful on its own as it is associated with serious injuries and diseases, and a higher risk of alcohol use disorder.¹

In the United States:

Nearly 1 in 4 (23.5%) of adults in the U.S. reported **binge drinking** in the past month¹ which was the **same** as the previous year.

In the state of California:

1 in 6 (17.9%) adults reported **binge drinking** in the past 30 days, which was a **decrease** from the previous year.

In San Diego County:

1 in 5 (20%) adults reported **binge drinking** in the past 30 days, which was a **decrease** from the previous year.

2023 Data - Underage Drinking

- **Underage drinking*** is a significant public health problem in the U.S. Excessive drinking is responsible for more than 3,900 deaths and 225,000 years of potential life lost among people under age 21 each year.²
- **Peer/social relationships and drinking:**
 - A 5% increase in binge drinking among adults in a community is associated with a 12% increase in the chance of underage drinking in the same community.²
- Among adolescents whose peers drink alcohol, those with parents who binge drink are more likely to drink alcohol than those with parents who do not.²

*Underage is defined as respondents ages 12-17 years.

In the United States:

1 in 26 (3.9%) underage people in the **U.S.** reported **binge drinking** in the past month¹, an **increase** from the previous year.

In the state of California:

1 in 5 (20.2%) teens reported to ever have had an **alcoholic drink** in 2023³, an **increase** from the previous year.

1 in 25 (4%) teens reported **binge drinking** in the past month³, an **increase** from the previous year.

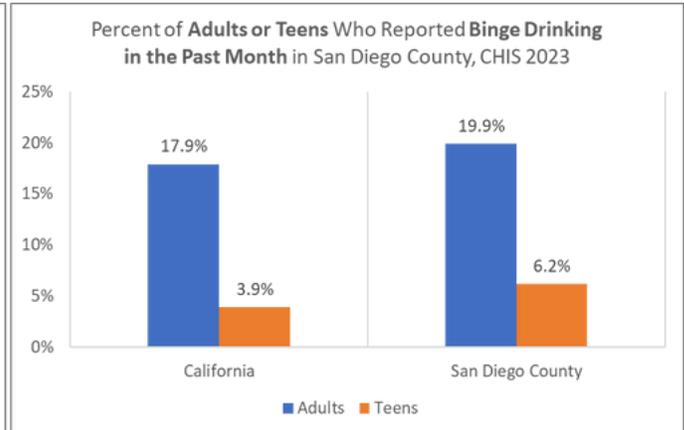
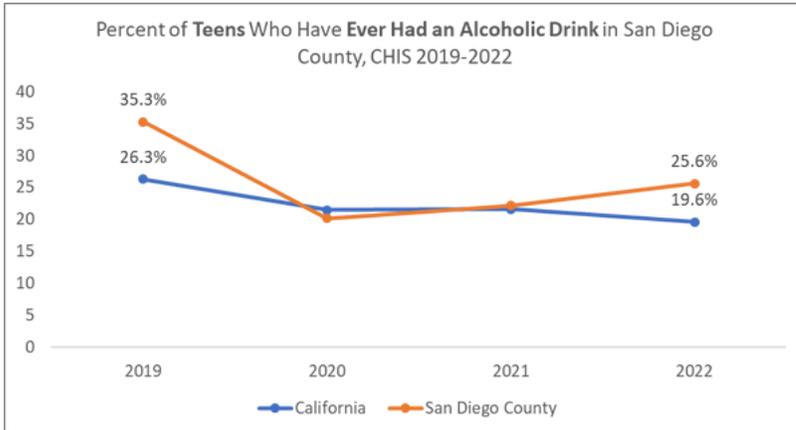
In San Diego County:

1 in 5 (20.3%) of teens have had an **alcoholic drink** in 2023³, a **decrease** from the previous year.

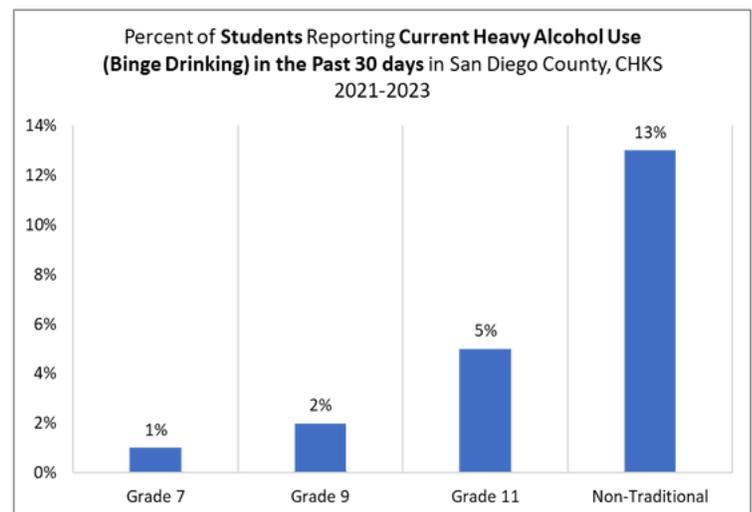
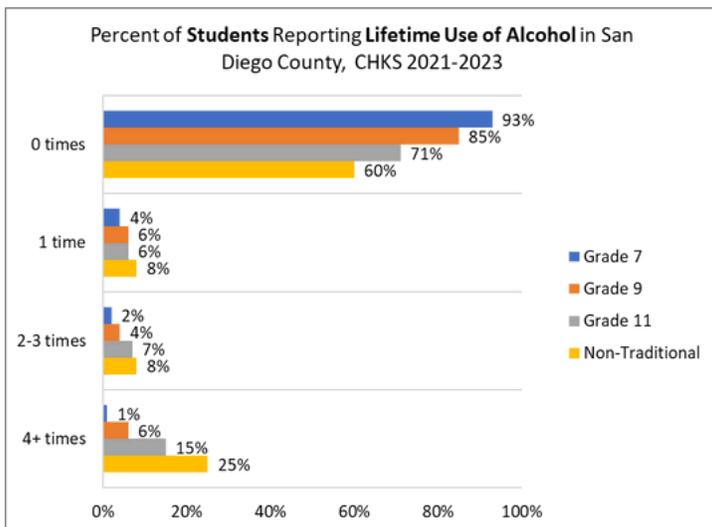
1 in 16 (6.2%) of teens reported **binge drinking** in the past month in 2023³, a **decrease** from the previous year.

COMMUNITY RESPONSES:

CA HEALTH INTERVIEW SURVEY (CHIS) /
CA HEALTHY KIDS SURVEY (CHKS)



- From **2019 to 2022**, the percent of **teens** who have **ever had an alcoholic drink** has **decreased** in both San Diego County and California.
 - However, more **recent trends** show an **increase** in rates from **2021-2022** in San Diego County.
- In **2023**, the percent of **adults and teens in San Diego County** who reported **binge drinking** in the past month was higher than the state.



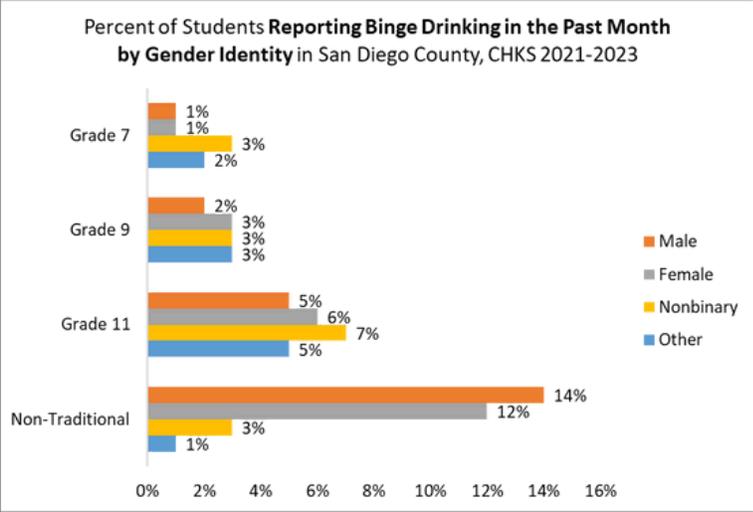
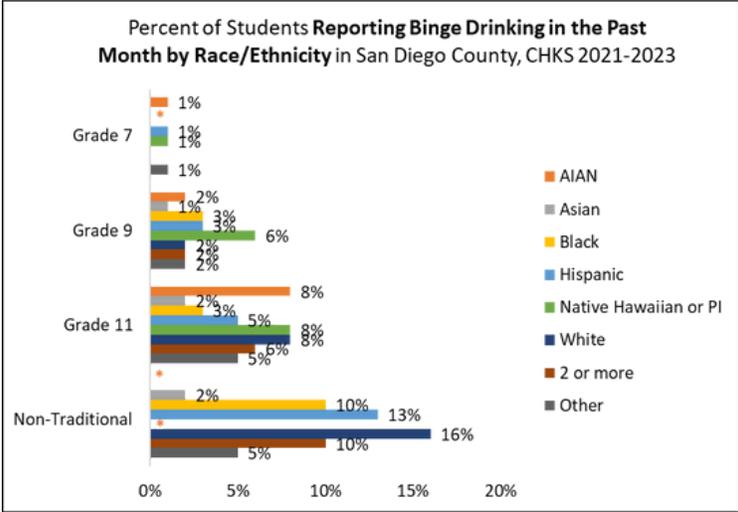
- From **2021 to 2023**, the percent of students who reported **lifetime use of alcohol 4 or more times** was higher among those in **11th grade** and among those attending **non-traditional schools**.
- Additionally, the percent of students reporting **current binge drinking in the past month** was higher among **11th graders** and those from **non-traditional schools**.

Non-traditional schools include: Continuation High Schools, County Community Schools, District Community Day Schools, Juvenile Court Schools, Opportunity Schools, and Special Education Schools, as defined by the California Department of Education.

Source: California Healthy Kids Survey, 2021-2023. Accessed online 02/2025 at <https://calschls.org/reports-data/public-dashboards>

COMMUNITY RESPONSES:

CA HEALTH INTERVIEW SURVEY (CHIS) /
CA HEALTHY KIDS SURVEY (CHKS)



- In 2021-2023, the percent of students reporting **binge drinking in the past month** was highest among **Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, White, and American Indian/Alaska Native** students.
- Additionally, **binge drinking** was higher among **nonbinary 11th graders in traditional** schools and **male students in non-traditional schools**.

Summary

The report reveals a concerning prevalence of binge and underage drinking in San Diego County. In 2023, one in five teenagers reported having consumed alcohol, with 6.2% admitting to binge drinking in the past month, surpassing the state average. Notably, binge drinking was most prevalent among high school students identifying as female or non-binary. Research shows these groups are more susceptible to stress, depression, and other internalizing behaviors, potentially contributing to their risk for binge drinking as a coping mechanism. Although teen drinking rates have declined since the early 2000s, social norms remain a concern. In San Diego County, 1 in 5 adults reported binge drinking in the past 30 days. Studies reveal that a 5% increase in binge drinking among adults is associated with a 12% increase in the chance of underage drinking. This underscores the need to continue with preventative measures.

* Some demographics are suppressed for statistical instability
 Non-traditional schools include: Continuation High Schools, County Community Schools, District Community Day Schools, Juvenile Court Schools, Opportunity Schools, and Special Education Schools, as defined by the California Department of Education.
 Source: California Healthy Kids Survey, 2021-2023. Accessed online 02/2025 at <https://calchls.org/reports-data/public-dashboards>

ALCOHOL-RELATED MOTOR VEHICLE INJURY COLLISIONS

Alcohol-Related Motor Vehicle Injuries and Deaths from 2019 to 2023 Occurring on San Diego County's Public Roads												
Category	2019		2020		2021		2022		2023*		2019 - 2023	
	Count	Percent										
Drinking Drivers¹ Involved in Motor Vehicle Collisions	1,756	6.7%	2,031	10.7%	2,469	10.6%	1,868	8.2%	1,981	8.2%	+22.6%	
Underage Drinking Drivers¹ Involved in Motor Vehicle Collisions (<21 years old)	95	0.4%	156	0.8%	153	0.7%	118	0.5%	168	0.6%	+65.8%	
Those Involved in a Drinking & Driving Collision Who Were Killed ²	51	2.6%	82	4.0%	88	3.6%	53	2.3%	53	2.1%	-18.4%	
Those Involved in a Drinking & Driving Collision Who Were Injured ²	1,330	67.1%	1,434	70.6%	1,763	71.4%	1,583	68.7%	1,654	67.0%	-0.2%	
Those Killed in ANY Alcohol-Involved Collision ³	85	2.5%	98	3.1%	106	2.7%	70	1.9%	76	2.0%	-18.8%	
Those Injured in ANY Alcohol-Involved Collision ³	2,433	70.5%	2,164	69.2%	2,714	70.0%	2,536	69.8%	2,735	70.7%	+0.3%	

- From 2019 to 2023, the percentages of **drinking drivers** and **underage drinking drivers** involved in **motor vehicle injury collisions** had **increased** in San Diego County.
- The percentages of **injuries or deaths** due to **alcohol-involved collisions** had **decreased** in San Diego County.
 - **2020** marked the year with the **highest percentage** of **drinking drivers** involved in motor vehicle injury collisions, **underage drinking drivers** involved in collisions, and **deaths** due to alcohol-related car accidents.



* 2023 data is preliminary and subject to revisions. Excludes property damage-only collisions.

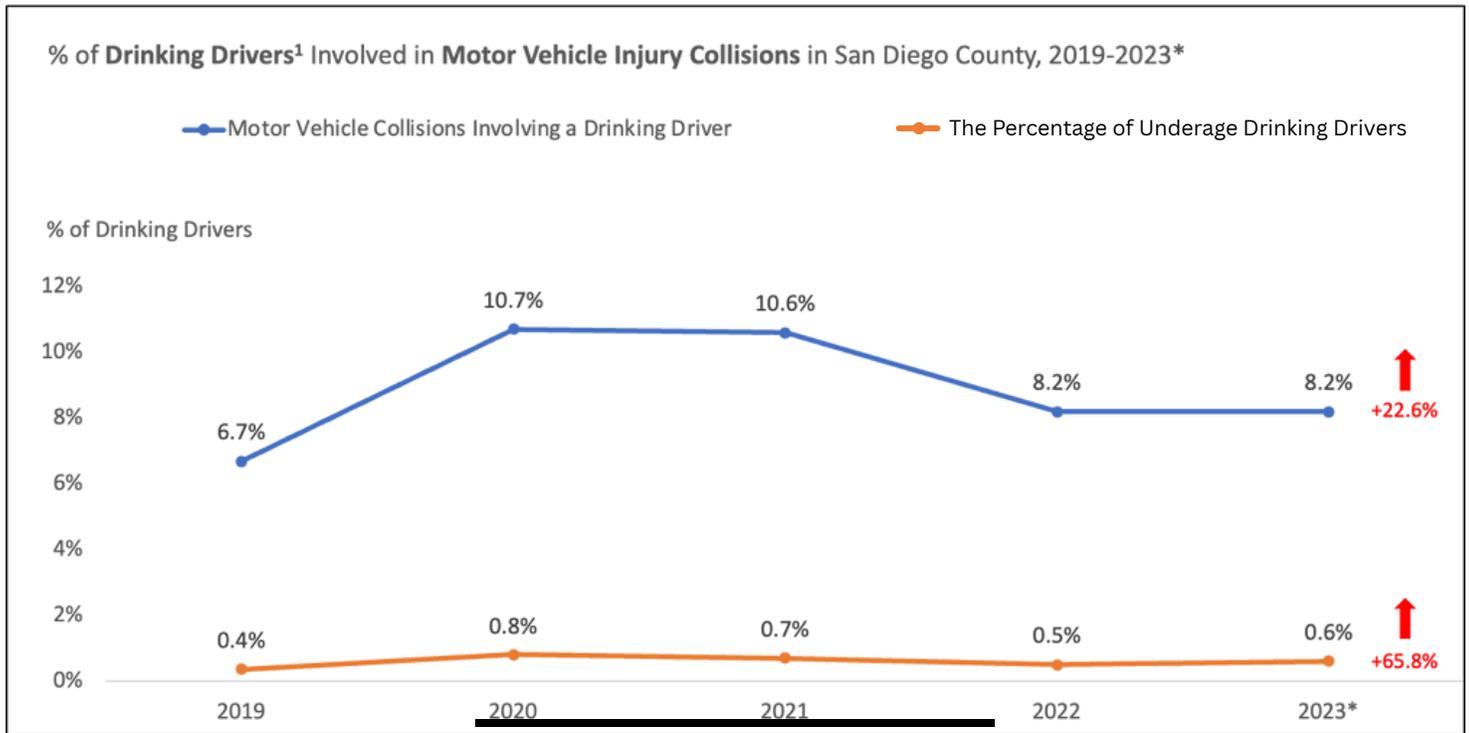
¹ Drinking drivers include motor vehicle drivers involved in a collision who were confirmed to have been drinking by an investigating officer. Includes those who were drinking & under the influence, drinking & not under the influence, and drinking with undetermined impairment.

² Those who were killed or injured in a drinking & driving collision includes all parties (driver, pedestrians, bicyclists, etc.) who died in an event where at least one drinking driver was involved.

³ Deaths and injuries among "any alcohol-involved collision" includes all events where alcohol played a role in the collision among any number of party members (ie. pedestrian, passenger, driver, bicyclist, etc.) and not just solely involving a drinking driver.

Data pertains to motor vehicle collisions that occurred on public roads, where at least one victim was injured/killed regardless of their disposition (ie. pedestrian, passenger, bicyclist, driver). Geographic location pertains to where the collision occurred and includes out of county residents. Source: Transportation Injury Mapping System (TIMS), accessed 2/2025

ALCOHOL-RELATED MOTOR VEHICLE INJURY COLLISIONS



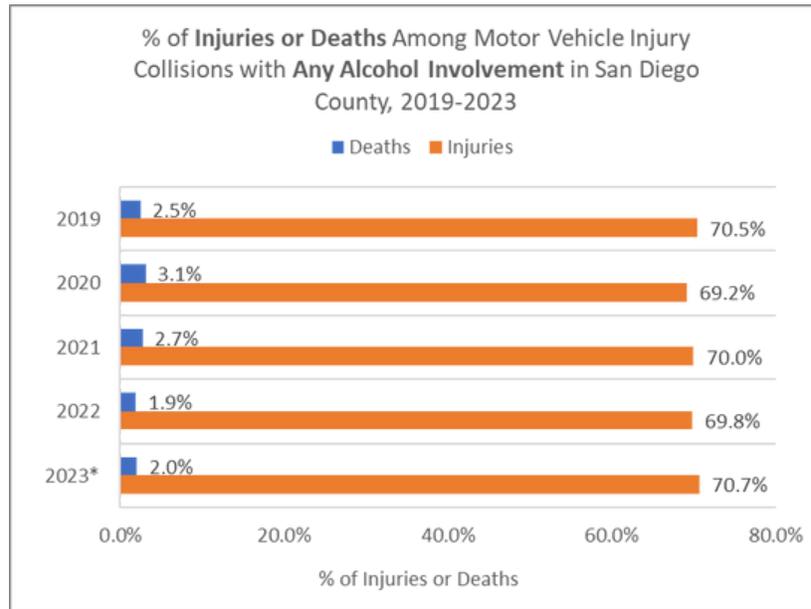
- **Drinking drivers** were confirmed to have been drinking by an investigating officer. This includes those who were **drinking & under the influence, drinking & not under the influence, and drinking with undetermined impairment.**
- From **2019 to 2023**, the percentage of motor vehicle collisions occurring in San Diego County involving **a drinking driver increased by 22.6%.**
 - The percentage of **underage drinking drivers** (under 21 years old) had increased by **65.8%** in the same time frame.
 - In **2023, 0.3% (168) of all drinking drivers** who were involved in a motor vehicle collision were **under 21 years old.**
 - In **2023, 86% of drivers who had been drinking alcohol** were determined to be **“at fault”** of the Motor Vehicle collision, regardless of their level of impairment.



* 2023 data is preliminary and subject to revisions. Excludes property damage-only collisions.

¹ Drinking drivers include motor vehicle drivers involved in a collision who were confirmed to have been drinking by an investigating officer. Includes those who were drinking & under the influence, drinking & not under the influence, and drinking with undetermined impairment. Source: Transportation Injury Mapping System (TIMS), accessed 2/2025

DRINKING & DRIVING-RELATED MOTOR VEHICLE INJURY COLLISIONS: INJURIES OR DEATHS BY CITY



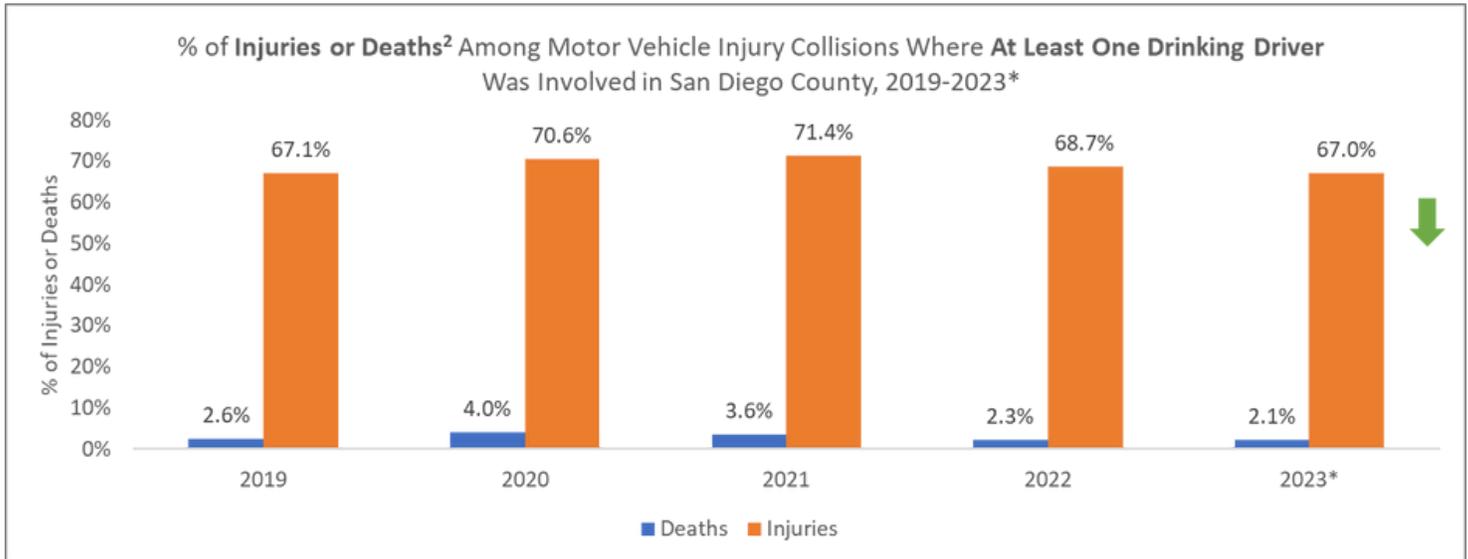
City in San Diego County	2022		2023*	
	% of those killed in an alcohol-involved collision	% of those injured in an alcohol-involved collision	% of those killed in an alcohol-involved collision	% of those injured in an alcohol-involved collision
CARLSBAD	4%	3%	3%	3%
CHULA VISTA	7%	5%	3%	6%
CORONADO	1%	1%	0%	1%
DEL MAR	0%	0%	0%	0%
EL CAJON	6%	3%	3%	3%
ENCINITAS	1%	2%	3%	2%
ESCONDIDO	0%	5%	5%	5%
IMPERIAL BEACH	0%	1%	0%	1%
LA MESA	4%	2%	1%	2%
LEMON GROVE	1%	1%	3%	1%
NATIONAL CITY	1%	3%	1%	4%
OCEANSIDE	0%	6%	13%	8%
POWAY	4%	1%	0%	0%
SAN DIEGO	29%	44%	20%	40%
SAN MARCOS	3%	2%	1%	2%
SANTEE	0%	1%	1%	1%
SOLANA BEACH	0%	0%	0%	0%
UNINCORPORATED	36%	17%	38%	17%
VISTA	1%	3%	5%	4%

- From **2019 to 2023**, the **likelihood of an injury** due to being involved in an alcohol-related collision was **higher** than the **likelihood of death**.
- In **2023**, the **City of San Diego**, **City of Oceanside**, and **Unincorporated Area** had **higher percentages of injury or death** due to alcohol-involved motor vehicle collisions.

* 2023 data is preliminary and subject to revisions. Excludes property damage-only collisions.

³ Deaths and injuries among "any alcohol-involved collision" includes all events where alcohol played a role in the collision among any number of party members (ie. pedestrian, passenger, driver, bicyclist, etc.) and not just solely involving a drinking driver. Source: Transportation Injury Mapping System (TIMS), accessed 02/2024

DRINKING & DRIVING-RELATED MOTOR VEHICLE INJURY COLLISIONS: INJURIES OR DEATHS



- Those who were **killed or injured** in a drinking & driving collision **includes all parties (driver, pedestrians, bicyclists, etc.)** who died or were injured in an event where **at least one drinking driver** was involved.
- Across all five years, the likelihood of **injury** from a **drinking and driving collision** was higher than the likelihood of death.
- From **2019 to 2023**:
 - The percent of those who **died** in an MV injury collision with a drinking driver had **decreased by 18.4%**, whereas the percent of those who were injured had **decreased by 0.2%**.
- **In 2023** among all injury/fatal collisions, 67% of those in a drinking and driving collision were injured, 2.1% were killed, and 31% were unharmed.

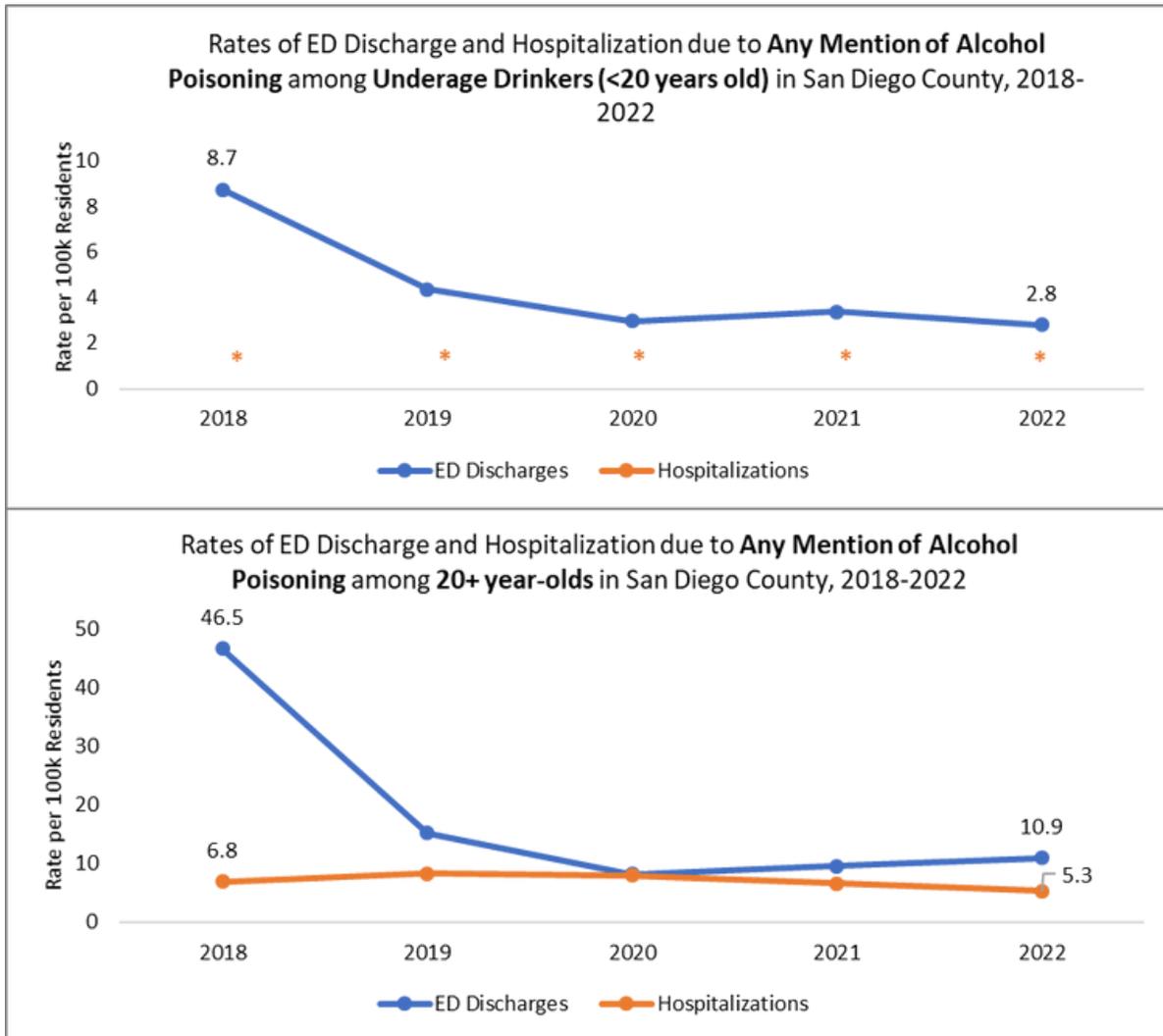
* 2023 data is preliminary and subject to revisions. Excludes property damage-only collisions.

² Those who were killed or injured in a drinking & driving collision includes all parties (driver, pedestrians, bicyclists, etc.) who died in an event where at least one drinking driver was involved.
Source: Transportation Injury Mapping System (TIMS), accessed 02/2025

Summary

Drinking and driving data trends indicate a public safety concern. From 2019 to 2023, motor vehicle collisions involving drinking drivers in San Diego County increased by 23%, with underage drinking drivers (under 21 years old) involved in such incidents rising by 66%. Furthermore, 86% of drivers who had been drinking were deemed "at fault" in these collisions. During the COVID-19 pandemic, DUI fatalities, injuries, and binge-drinking rates peaked despite fewer motorists. Since fewer drivers were on the road, even slight increases in DUI incidents could disproportionately raise rates; for example, one additional DUI fatality in a smaller driving population can significantly impact percentage rates. Elevated stress and pandemic factors may have contributed to increased drinking. However, these trends should be viewed cautiously, as changes in driving volume and reporting can influence data.

ED DISCHARGE & HOSPITALIZATIONS: ALCOHOL POISONING

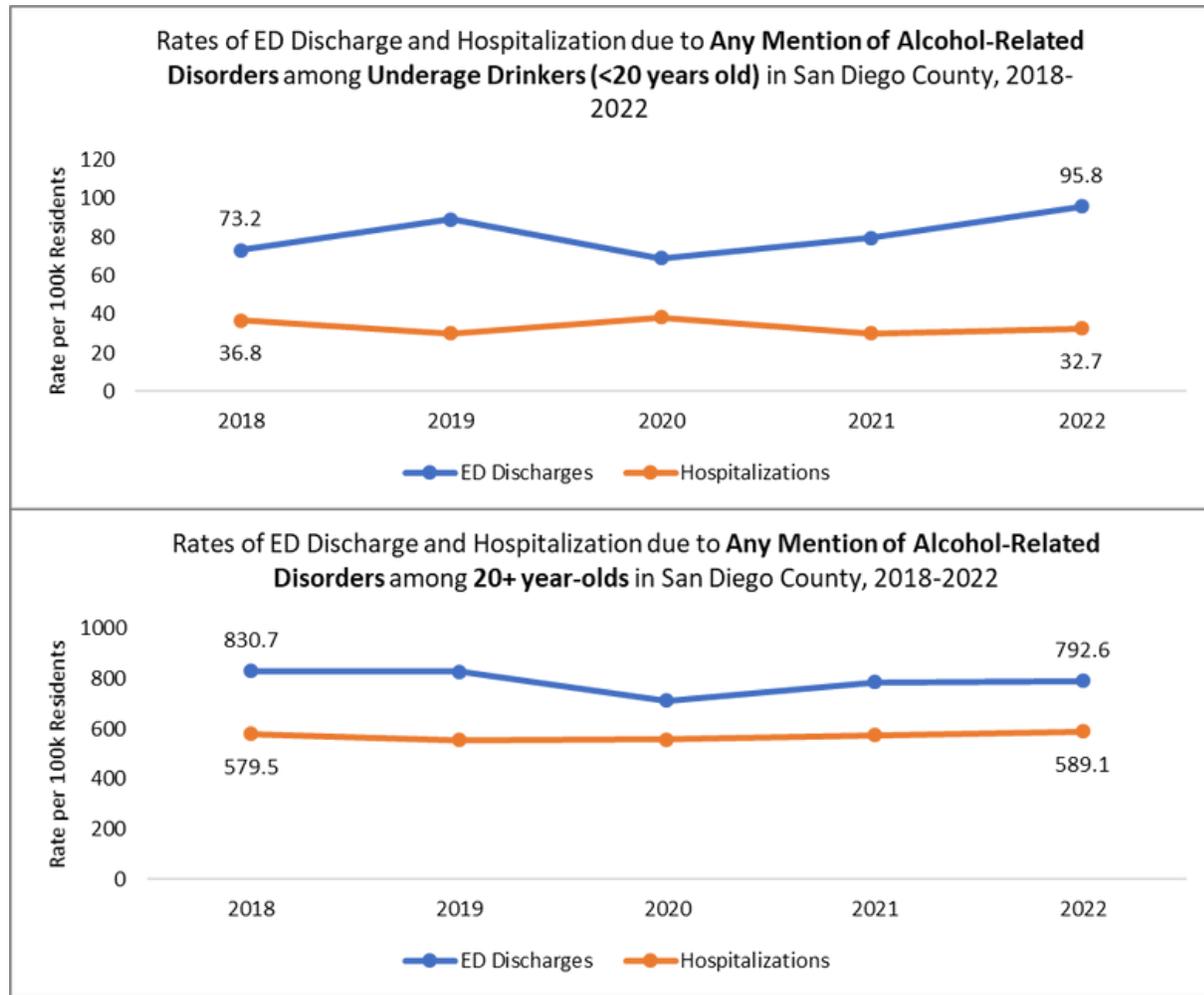


- From **2018 to 2022**, the rates of medical encounters (ED discharge or hospitalization) due to **alcohol poisoning** had **decreased** overall in San Diego County.
- Across all 5 years, patients were **more likely** to be **discharged from the ED for alcohol poisoning**, rather than be hospitalized.
- **20+ year-olds** had **higher rates** of medical encounters due to **alcohol poisoning** compared to underage drinkers.
- In **2022**:
 - **ED discharges** due to alcohol poisoning among **20+ year-olds** were **4x times higher** than underage drinkers.
 - **Hospitalizations** among **20+ year-olds** were **higher** than underage drinkers.

Note: Population data by age for years 2020 and onward will be in standardized age groupings based on SANDAG's changes to their modeling algorithm. Due to new standard age groupings, underage and drinking age were defined as <20 and 20+ year-olds. Single age estimates are no longer available.

*Rates are not shown for <11 encounters. ED discharges and hospitalizations do not include fatal encounters. Rates are among San Diego County residents only. Data includes those with any mention of alcohol poisoning or alcohol abuse or dependence within their medical record. Includes duplicate records for those with multiple visits. Source: California Department of Public Health, California Department of Health Care Access and Information (HCAI), Patient Discharge Data & Emergency Department Data, (2018-2022).

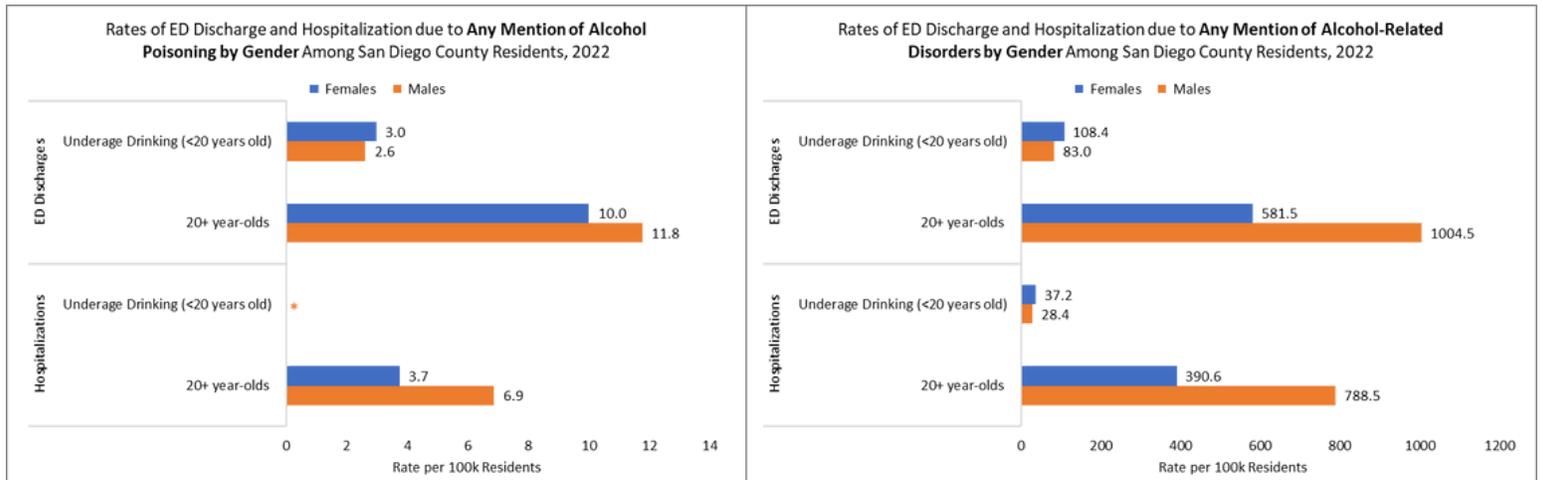
ED DISCHARGE & HOSPITALIZATIONS: ALCOHOL-RELATED DISORDERS



- From **2018 to 2022**, the rates of **ED discharge** due to **alcohol-related disorders** decreased (-5%) while **hospitalizations** slightly **increased** among **20+ year-olds** (+2%).
- Across all 5 years, patients were **more likely** to be **discharged from the ED for alcohol-related disorders** rather than be hospitalized.
- **20+ year-olds** had **higher rates** of medical encounters due to **alcohol-related disorders** compared to underage drinkers.
- In **2022**:
 - **ED discharges** due to alcohol-related disorders among **20+ year-olds** were **higher** than underage drinkers.
 - Hospitalizations among **20+ year-olds** were **higher** than underage drinkers.

*Rates are not shown for <11 encounters.
ED discharges and hospitalizations do not include fatal encounters. Rates are among San Diego County residents only.
Data includes those with any mention of alcohol poisoning or alcohol abuse or dependence within their medical record. Includes duplicate records for those with multiple visits.
Source: California Department of Public Health, California Department of Health Care Access and Information (HCAI), Patient Discharge Data & Emergency Department Data, (2018-2022).

ED DISCHARGE & HOSPITALIZATIONS: BY GENDER



- In **2022**, the rates of medical encounters due to **alcohol poisoning or alcohol-related disorders among underage drinkers <20 years old** were **higher among females** compared to males.
- In contrast, among **20+ year-olds**, the rate of medical encounters due to alcohol poisoning or alcohol-related disorders was **higher among males**.

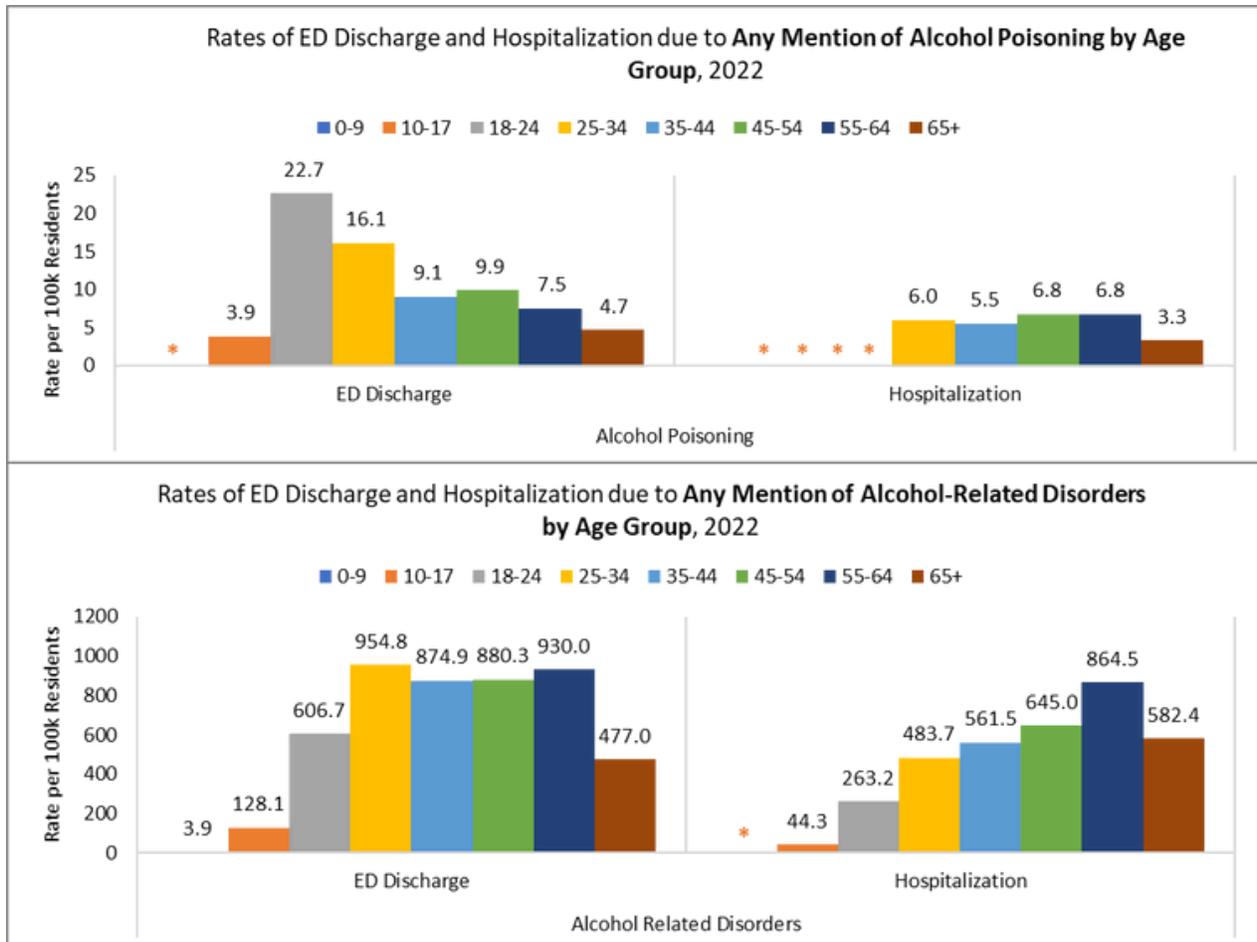
*Rates are not shown for <11 encounters.

ED discharges and hospitalizations do not include fatal encounters. Rates are among San Diego County residents only.

Data includes those with any mention of alcohol poisoning or alcohol abuse or dependence within their medical record. Includes duplicate records for those with multiple visits.

Source: California Department of Public Health, California Department of Health Care Access and Information (HCAI), Patient Discharge Data & Emergency Department Data, (2018-2022).

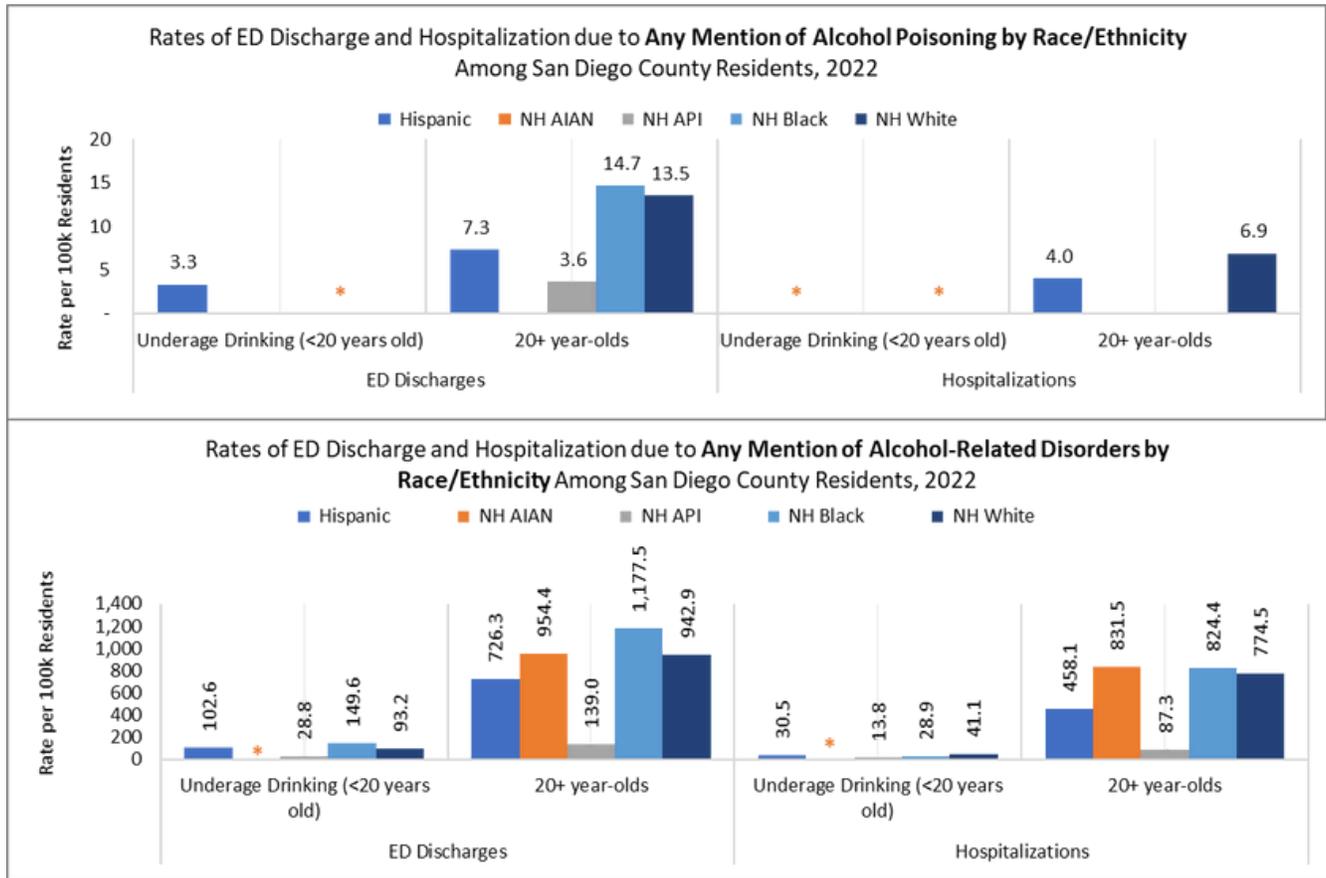
ED DISCHARGE & HOSPITALIZATIONS: BY AGE GROUP



*Rates are not shown for <11 encounters.
ED discharges and hospitalizations do not include fatal encounters. Rates are among San Diego County residents only.
Data includes those with any mention of alcohol poisoning or alcohol abuse or dependence within their medical record. Includes duplicate records for those with multiple visits.
Source: California Department of Public Health, California Department of Health Care Access and Information (HCAI), Patient Discharge Data & Emergency Department Data, (2018-2022).

- **Alcohol Poisoning:**
 - In 2022, the rate of **ED discharge** due to **alcohol poisoning** was **highest** among **18-24 year-olds**.
 - The rate of **hospitalization** was highest among **45-64 year-olds**.
- **Alcohol-Related Disorders:**
 - In 2022, the rate of **ED discharge** due to **alcohol-related disorders** was highest among **25-34 year-olds and 55-64 year-olds**.
 - The rate of **hospitalization** was highest among **55-64 year-olds**.

ED DISCHARGE & HOSPITALIZATIONS: BY RACE/ETHNICITY

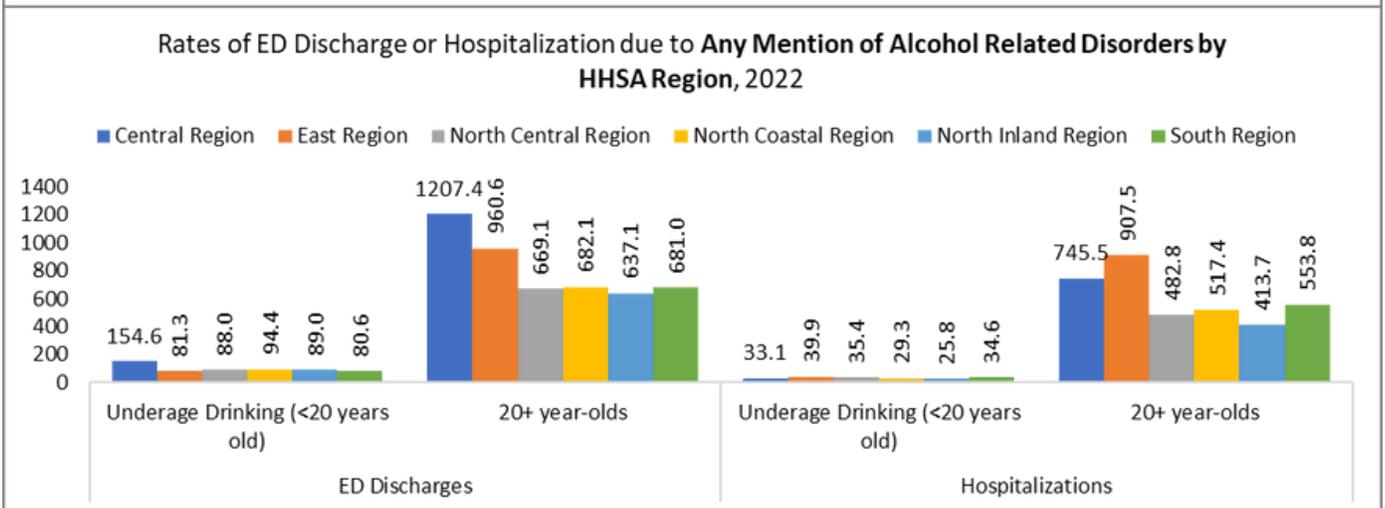
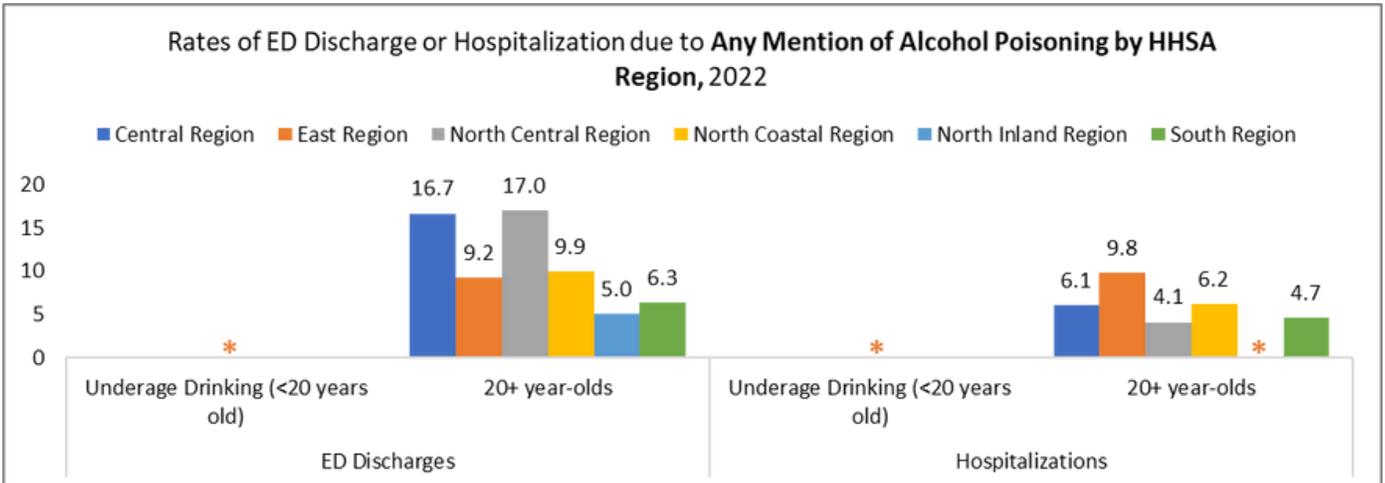


*Rates are not shown for <11 encounters.
 ED discharges and hospitalizations do not include fatal encounters. Rates are among San Diego County residents only.
 Data includes those with any mention of alcohol poisoning or alcohol abuse or dependence within their medical record. Includes duplicate records for those with multiple visits.
 Source: California Department of Public Health, California Department of Health Care Access and Information (HCAI), Patient Discharge Data & Emergency Department Data, (2018-2022).

- **Alcohol Poisoning:**
 - In 2022, the rate of **ED discharge** due to **alcohol poisoning** was **highest** among **20+ year-olds** who were **non-Hispanic Black and non-Hispanic White**.
 - The rate of **hospitalization** was highest among **20+ year-old non-Hispanic White residents**.
- **Alcohol-Related Disorders:**
 - In 2022, the rate of **ED discharge** due to **alcohol-related disorders** was **highest** among **20+ year-olds** who were **non-Hispanic Black and non-Hispanic White**.
 - The rate of **hospitalization** was highest among **20+ year-olds** who were **non-Hispanic American Indian/Alaska Native**.



ED DISCHARGE & HOSPITALIZATIONS: BY HHSa REGION



*Rates are not shown for <11 encounters.

ED discharges and hospitalizations do not include fatal encounters. Rates are among San Diego County residents only.

Data includes those with any mention of alcohol poisoning or alcohol abuse or dependence within their medical record. Includes duplicate records for those with multiple visits.

Source: California Department of Public Health, California Department of Health Care Access and Information (HCAI), Patient Discharge Data & Emergency Department Data, (2018-2022).

- **Alcohol Poisoning:**

- In 2022, the rate of **ED discharge** due to **alcohol poisoning** was **highest** among **20+ year-olds** who lived in **North Central and Central region**.
 - The rate of **hospitalization** was highest among **20+ year-olds** who lived in **East Region**.

- **Alcohol-Related Disorders:**

- In 2022, the rate of **ED discharge** due to **alcohol-related disorders** was **highest** among **20+ year-olds** who lived in **Central Region**.
 - The rate of **hospitalization** was highest among **20+ year-olds** who were from **East Region**.

ED DISCHARGE & HOSPITALIZATIONS: COMORBIDITIES

- **Alcohol Poisoning:**

- In 2022, a **majority** of those who were discharged from the **emergency department or inpatient care/hospitalization** with any mention of **alcohol-related poisoning** were admitted with the **principal diagnoses** of:
 - Toxic effects of ethanol
 - Head injury
 - Poisoning by benzodiazepines

- **Alcohol-Related Disorders:**

- In 2022, a **majority** of those who were discharged from the **emergency department** with any mention of **alcohol-related disorders** were admitted with the **principal diagnoses** of:
 - Alcohol abuse
 - Alcohol dependence
 - Suicidal ideations
- ***Inpatient care/hospitalization:***
 - Alcohol dependence
 - Sepsis
 - Major depressive disorder

Data includes those with any mention of alcohol poisoning or alcohol abuse or dependence within their medical record. Includes duplicate records for those with multiple visits.
Source: California Department of Public Health, California Department of Health Care Access and Information (HCAI), Patient Discharge Data & Emergency Department Data, (2022).

Summary

Hospital statistics further highlight the health risks associated with alcohol consumption. From 2018 to 2022, rates of medical encounters due to alcohol poisoning and abuse/dependence decreased overall in San Diego County. However, adults over 20 years old consistently exhibited higher rates of such medical encounters compared to underage drinkers. In 2022, emergency department discharges due to alcohol poisoning among individuals aged 20 and above were four times higher than those among underage drinkers. Research shows that adults have more social and retail access to alcohol, which could explain their higher rates of medical encounters. In 2022, the rate of emergency room discharges due to alcohol poisoning was highest among adults who lived in the North Central and Central Regions of San Diego County. This could be associated with a large concentration of bars and restaurants located in the communities of Pacific Beach, the Gaslamp Quarter, and Little Italy; however, there are many factors that must be evaluated based on local circumstances.



CONCLUSION



The BUDI 2025 Annual Status Report highlights ongoing public health and safety concerns related to alcohol use across San Diego County.

Young adults aged 18 to 34 consistently report the highest rates of binge drinking, while high school students identifying as female, nonbinary, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, White, or American Indian/Alaska Native show the highest or fastest-growing rates of underage drinking.

From 2019 to 2023, alcohol-related motor vehicle collisions increased by more than 20%, with underage drinking drivers rising by 65%.

It's important to note that a peak in injuries and fatalities from DUI incidents occurred during the pandemic and remains a serious issue.

Adults aged 18 to 24 account for a significantly larger share of emergency department visits for alcohol poisoning, especially in the North Central and Central regions.

Hospitalization rates due to alcohol-related disorders, including conditions like alcohol dependence, abuse, intoxication, and withdrawal, increase with age, peaking among adults aged 45–64 before showing a modest decline in older adults.

The data also suggest an overlap between alcohol use and the use of other substances, which can worsen health risks and lead to more severe outcomes, including overdose deaths. Combining alcohol with drugs like opioids or stimulants raises the risk of fatal overdoses.

The report highlights San Diego County's challenges with binge and underage drinking. The data indicate that alcohol use among both youth and adults continues to pose serious public health and safety issues. The rise in alcohol-related car accidents, particularly those involving underage drivers, and the high number of medical visits due to alcohol poisoning and dependence emphasize the urgent need for comprehensive prevention and intervention strategies. Community efforts, stricter enforcement of underage drinking laws, and targeted educational programs for both youth and adults can help reduce the negative impacts of alcohol misuse and promote a healthier, safer environment in San Diego County.