



The Extra Mile

Advocating for evidence-based policies and practices to prevent and reduce alcohol-related harms

Miles to Go: Nebraska's Impaired Driving Outlook on a Collision Course with Policymakers' Indifference

Alcohol-impaired driving continues to be a public safety concern that has worsened since the pandemic began. [NHTSA reports that police-reported alcohol involvement crashes increased by 9% in 2020 compared to 2019.](#) despite miles traveled decreasing by 430 billion (-13%).

According to the [National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine](#), nearly one-third of all traffic fatalities over the last four decades were alcohol-impaired and almost 40 percent of those fatalities are victims other than the drinking driver, including 214 children under the age of 15 in 2016 alone. The estimated economic cost (medical, lost earnings and productivity, legal costs, property damage) of alcohol-related crashes was \$121.5 billion in 2010. In addition, rural areas are disproportionately affected by alcohol-impaired driving crashes with nearly 50 percent of all alcohol-impaired driving fatalities occurring in rural areas.

Alcohol-related crashes continue to make news in Nebraska. Over the last six months (since May 1, 2021), alcohol-impaired driving has been the subject of 123 media articles across Nebraska with 31 of those articles covering at least one injury or death suffered as a direct result of alcohol-impaired driving. That's an average of about 2 articles every three days. Some of the headlines included:

- [Burwell teen dies in Taylor crash](#)
- ['You could kill someone': Douglas County deputies report alarming DUI trends](#)
- [Grand Island man sentenced to four years in prison for hit and run crash that seriously injured teen](#)
- [Consequences of drunken driving: 8 surgeries and weeks of rehab for 9-year-old](#)
- [Lincoln man facing eighth DUI, possible paralysis of pedestrian](#)
- [Omaha musician killed in West Dodge crash](#)
- [Bellevue principal on leave amid DUI crash investigation that critically injured motorcyclist](#)

- [Grand Island woman accused of driving under the influence with boy in car.](#)

Yesterday, the Nebraska Highway Safety Office held an Impaired Driving Summit to discuss statewide efforts to keep our roads safe with the view that roadways may become even more dangerous following a potential 2022 ballot initiative on medical marijuana. The summit was highlighted by an overview of the Drug Recognition Expert (DRE) program given by Officer Matt Kelly of the Omaha Police Department. Multiple speakers emphasized the need to support DREs and increase their numbers. Nebraska typically has 90 DREs but law enforcement agencies in attendance noted that the current number is much lower. Kearney Police Chief Bryan Waugh expressed a desire to incentivize his officers to become DREs as KPD currently only has one.



Nevertheless, when our state’s legislators were deciding about permanently extending cocktails-to-go and curbside pickup earlier this year, they indicated that law enforcement had not seen a spike in DUIs involving these services. Yet if we look at Nebraska’s DUI numbers, we are significantly lower in terms of arrests compared to neighboring states with similar binge drinking rates, indicating a need for increased enforcement around alcohol but also stronger policies to prevent people from drinking excessively in the first place.

<i>State</i>	<i>Binge Drinking Rate (%)</i>	<i>DUI arrests (per 100,000 population)</i>
<i>Colorado</i>	17.9	422
<i>Iowa</i>	21.5	321
<i>Kansas</i>	17.0	187
<i>Minnesota</i>	18.4	344
<i>Nebraska</i>	20.4	41
<i>North Dakota</i>	20.8	836
<i>South Dakota</i>	17.9	939
<i>Wisconsin</i>	22.8	406
<i>Wyoming</i>	16.4	562

[DUIs Arrests and Fatalities By State | Alcohol.org](#)

There is no one single solution to this challenge, but the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine made several recommendations in its Getting to Zero Alcohol-Impaired Driving Fatalities report published in 2018. Those include (Nebraska status in parentheses):

- **Significant increases to alcohol taxes** (Attempted in Nebraska in 2019 but immediately shut down by the alcohol industry)
- **Reduce alcohol availability** (Nebraska drastically did the opposite in 2021 when it permanently extended pandemic measures designed to benefit the alcohol industry)
- **Implement standards for permissible alcohol marketing content and placement** across all media, establish consequences for violations, and fund counter-marketing campaigns (No action)

- **Dedicate enforcement to prevent sales to minors** (operations continue to be primarily grant-funded using federal dollars) **and sales to intoxicated persons** (These have yet to occur)
 - **Lower the legal blood alcohol content limit from 0.08 to 0.05**(No action)
 - **Conduct sobriety checkpoints** (While legal across the state, few agencies engage in checkpoints)
 - **All health systems should conduct evidence-based screenings for alcohol misuse** (Approximately half of the health systems in the Omaha area report implementing system-wide evidence-based screenings).
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Going the Distance:

Virtual Events Convene Organizations to Discuss Best Practices and the Way Forward for Alcohol Policy

While the COVID-19 pandemic has diminished the ability to meet physically, it has created virtual opportunities to connect nationally and internationally to discuss how the pandemic has impacted alcohol policies and what can be done to confront these challenges. Two recent opportunities available during the month of October were the Global Alcohol Policy Alliance (GAPA) Conference and a COVID-19, Alcohol Consumption, and the Changing Alcohol Policy Landscape webinar hosted by the American Public Health Association (APHA).

GAPA held their virtual conference from October 12-14, 2021. The conference provided opportunities for international discussions around three key topics: 1) protection of alcohol policy from industry interests; 2) the three policy “best buys” for reducing alcohol-related harms; and 3) the way forward through an alcohol action plan and coalition building. The conference was formatted in three regional sessions with keynote speakers and regional panelists to accommodate attendees in different areas of the world.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, alcohol outlets positioned themselves as essential businesses and many policies were relaxed to accommodate the industry. As a result, changes like cocktails-to-go and curbside pickup have become permanent in a [majority of U.S. states](#). The industry’s involvement erodes policies and public health protections put in place thereby increasing the associated harms.

The conference demonstrated that excessive alcohol consumption is not merely an American problem but one that is felt around the globe, and that the best way forward is to follow the [World Health Organization’s \(WHO\) Three Best Buys](#): 1) increase the price of alcohol, 2) decrease the availability of alcohol, and 3) improve regulations governing alcohol advertising. Global and regional partnerships are key to making progress in this field given the strength of the industry and many cultures that glorify alcohol.

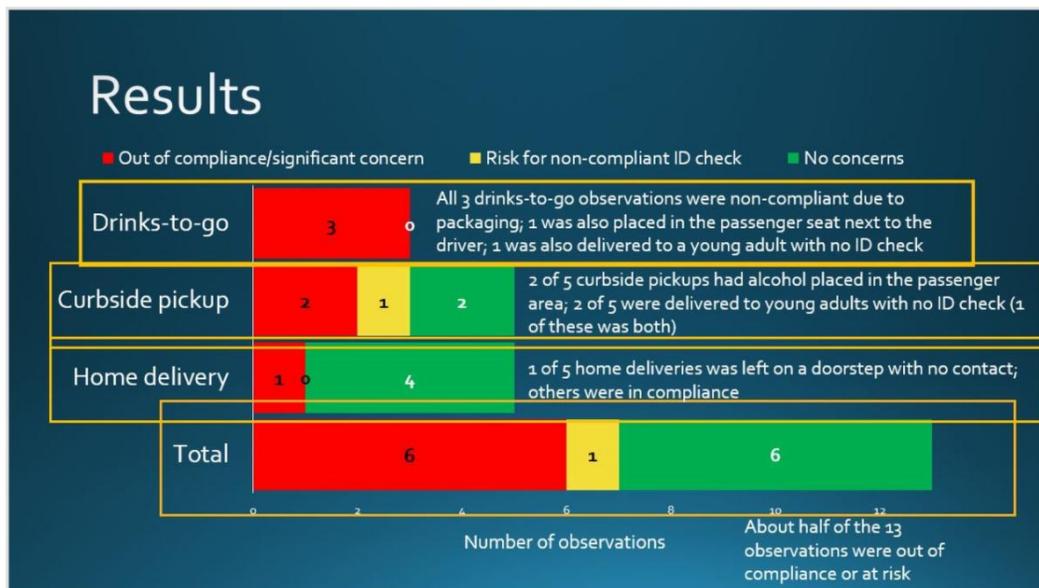
One such effort in the United States was APHA’s webinar to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on the alcohol policy landscape featuring Dr. Tim Naimi and Dr. Aaron White. Highlights of the webinar included a historical overview of alcohol policy changes and per capita alcohol consumption in the U.S. and data showing that off-premise alcohol sales increased by 20% in 2020 and 30% in 2021 when compared to the two years prior to the pandemic. Furthermore, total alcohol sales increased by 4.6% in 12 states when

compared to the previous 3-year average. It is safe to assume that this is indicative of what is happening nationwide, especially in those states that relaxed alcohol regulations. Doctors Naimi and White called for stronger policies, such as the aforementioned “Three Best Buys” to reduce excessive consumption and the associated harms.

Gathering Data to Prevent Underage Access to Alcohol

Project Extra Mile is joining coalitions across the country to gather data on the expansion of alcohol services such as cocktails-to-go, curbside pickup, and home delivery given the compliance and enforcement challenges detailed by National Liquor Law Enforcement Association Executive Director Carrie Christofes outlined at our coalition meeting in September.

Researchers have developed an online toolkit to support monitoring of these alcohol transactions – The Alcohol Availability Assessment Tool. Dr. Julia Dilley with the Oregon Health Authority presented to the coalition at the October meeting to share background and purpose of the tool. The tool can be used by any adult (21+) to document their experiences with these new alcohol sales options. The purpose of this effort will be to provide more detailed information to regulators, policy makers, and law enforcement about how these services are being utilized in Nebraska, whether rules are being followed, and where there are opportunities for better safeguards to be implemented.



Project Extra Mile will be launching a data collection project on November 10th for coalition members across the state to record their experiences through the end of the year. This is not intended as a tool for enforcement action, but rather as an unbiased method for observing and recording legal transactions. If you'd like to be part of this effort or have any questions, please reach out to us at info@projectextramile.org.

Research Brief

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) released the [2020](#)

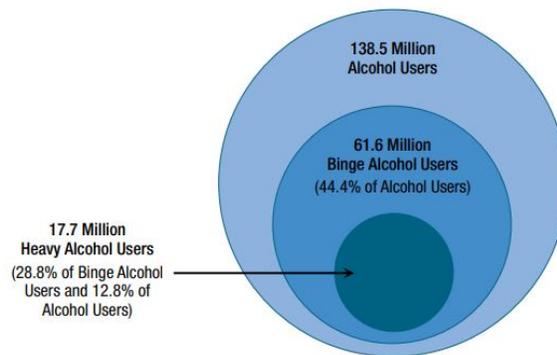
[National Survey on Drug Use and Health \(NSDUH\) findings](#) in late October. As expected, the COVID-19 pandemic appears to have had a negative impact on the nation's health and wellbeing. The top four used substances in the past month for people aged 12 or older are listed below. It's notable that alcohol is reported to be used significantly more than the other three combined.

- Alcohol – 138.5M
- Tobacco products – 51.7M
- Marijuana – 32.8M
- Nicotine vaping – 10.4M

The [2020 Report to Congress on the Prevention and Reduction of Underage Drinking](#) was also released in October. This report looks at each state and potential best practices to target underage drinking and driving, alcohol availability, and alcohol pricing. Nebraska measures included in the report are as follows:

- Percentage of 12- to 20-year-olds who used alcohol in the last month – 21.5% (above US average)
- Percentage of 12- to 20-year-olds who binge drank in the last month – 14.6% (significantly above US average)
- Percentage of 12- to 17-year-olds who perceive drinking five-plus drinking once or twice a week as not a great risk – 60.7% (significantly above US average)
- Percentage of 12- to 17-year-olds with DSM-5 alcohol use disorder – 1.9% (above US average)
- Percentage of traffic crash deaths involving 15- to 20-year-old driver with 0.01+ BAC – 19% (US average).

Figure 6. Current, Binge, and Heavy Alcohol Use: Among People Aged 12 or Older; 2020



Note: Binge Alcohol Use is defined as drinking five or more drinks (for males) or four or more drinks (for females) on the same occasion on at least 1 day in the past 30 days. Heavy Alcohol Use is defined as binge drinking on the same occasion on 5 or more days in the past 30 days; all heavy alcohol users are also binge alcohol users.

Please join us for our Coalition meeting next Wednesday!

Project Extra Mile's next coalition meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, November 10, at 9 a.m. Please plan to join us as Omaha Police Department's Crash Investigations Unit discusses their role in determining the presence of alcohol in traffic crashes.

The coalition will meet via [Zoom](#). You can join the meeting directly from Project Extra Mile's website page located [here](#). For more information, please get in touch with us at 402-963-9047 or info@projectextramile.org.



Omaha Metro Coalition Meeting

Wednesday, **November 10, 2021**

9:00 a.m.

Please join us **via Zoom**

as we welcome the

Omaha Police Department's

Crash Investigation Unit

**to discuss their role in determining the
presence of alcohol in traffic crashes.**

Thank you for your involvement!

Jennifer Pollock

Jennifer Pollock, Coalition Chair

Join Zoom Meeting:

Meeting ID: 913 6167 4111

Password: 12345

For more information:
(402) 963-9047



www.projectextramile.org • info@projectextramile.org

