

General Alcohol Facts in Mississippi

Underage Consumption and Consequences

Results from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, Monitoring the Future, and the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System show that a large percentage of young people in the United States are drinking alcohol. Many of these adolescents and young adults are drinking large amounts of alcohol and, in some cases, are operating a motor vehicle under the influence of alcohol. According to 2004 data from the Mississippi Department of Public Safety, the state experienced a 6.2 percent increase in alcohol-related crashes during the prior year and a 9.0 percent increase in vehicular crashes linked to high alcohol usage over the previous year. During the same time, 185 drivers below drinking age were involved in fatal crashes. Of those who were tested for alcohol, one third were over the illegal blood-alcohol limit. Over a ten-year period, underage drunk drivers in Mississippi were responsible for 688 deaths, which was an average of more than one death per week. The Mississippi Department of Public Safety reports that ten percent of DUI (driving under the influence) incidences between 2001 and 2002 were committed by a minor (i.e., drivers under the age of nineteen).

Drinking Statistics at Mississippi Universities

Another method for ascertaining the scope and magnitude of underage drinking in Mississippi entails examining alcohol-related incident data at university campuses across the state. Data from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education for 2001-2003, documented the total number of on-campus arrests and total number of on-campus disciplinary action related to alcohol usage at universities in Mississippi. These data are featured in Table 2. The percentage of each school's student body falling into these two categories is presented in parentheses. The percentages were calculated using 2002 fall enrollment figures for Mississippi universities. These data were made available through the state's Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL), and were analyzed by Dr. Ronald Cossman of Mississippi State University's Social Science Research Center.

As illustrated in Table 2, Alcorn State University is the school with the highest percentage of overall alcohol-related infractions, with 5.2 percent of its student body apprehended for their involvement in such incidents, and 4.2 percent of all students arrested for such activity. The University of Southern Mississippi and Delta State University also have had appreciable percentages of their student bodies apprehended by law enforcement for alcohol-related infractions on campus. Several additional insights can be drawn from the data presented in Table 2. First, although such percentages are not extremely high, four or five out of every one hundred students on these high-incident campuses facing law enforcement prosecution for alcohol-related infractions is, in fact, substantial. Second, the fluctuation in percentage figures reveals that rates of alcohol-related infractions vary considerably across university campuses. Rates of alcohol-related infractions at high-incident campuses (Alcorn State University, the University of Southern Mississippi) are up to seven times those of low-incident campuses (Mississippi State University, Mississippi University for Women). Third, by way of caveat, it is worth noting that the statistics reported in Table 2 are likely influenced by university police department policies. Differences in police staffing and rigor of enforcement undoubtedly influence incidence rates, and incidences that may lead to arrest on one campus may only be subject to disciplinary action on another. This caveat notwithstanding, these data suggest that underage drinking is a problem on some Mississippi campuses. This conclusion is buttressed by comparing general alcohol consumption in Mississippi to the nation as a whole, patterns to which we now turn.

Table 2. Alcohol-related Arrests and Disciplinary Actions at Mississippi Universities

| | Alcohol-related Campus Arrests | Alcohol-related Campus Disciplinary Actions | Total Alcohol-related Infractions |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| Alcorn State Univ. | 131 (4.2%) | 33 (1.0%) | 164 (5.2%) |
| Delta State Univ. | 85 (2.1%) | 53 (1.3%) | 138 (3.4%) |
| Jackson State Univ. | 66 (0.8%) | 18 (0.2%) | 84 (1.0%) |
| Mississippi State Univ. | 106 (0.6%) | 24 (0.1%) | 130 (0.7%) |
| Mississippi Univ. for Women | 3 (0.1%) | 13 (0.6%) | 16 (0.7%) |
| Mississippi Valley State Univ. | 14 (0.3%) | 37 (1.1%) | 51 (1.4%) |
| Univ. of Mississippi | 34 (0.3%) | 157 (1.2%) | 191 (1.5%) |
| Univ. Medical Center-Jackson | 14 (0.8%) | 2 (0.1%) | 16 (0.9%) |
| Univ. of Southern Mississippi | 365 (2.4%) | 262 (1.7%) | 627 (4.1%) |
| Total | 818 (1.2%) | 599 (0.9%) | 1417 (2.1%) |

Note: Number of alcohol-related incidents (2001-2003); number of incidents as percent of student body in parentheses.

Mississippi ranks among the worst states in the country for alcohol-related behaviors, driving under the influence, and deaths of underage drinkers. Data collected by the State Epidemiological Outcomes Workgroup indicates that the state's adults and youth engage in risk-taking behaviors leading to arrests and deaths.

- Among adults in Mississippi, it was discovered that males are twice as likely to be heavy drinkers as females with males reporting 4.9 percent and females reporting 2.3 percent on the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System.
- 2005 Treatment Data provided by the Mississippi Department of Mental Health showed that 22.3 percent of adult patients received treatment for alcohol as their primary presenting problem and 23.7 percent received treatment for alcohol as a secondary presenting problem. Patients reported alcohol as their drug of choice 36.4 percent of the time.
- The 2005 Mississippi Smart Track Survey™ showed that having at least one alcoholic drink during the past 30 days is the highest ranked substance for 9th, 10th, and 11th graders.
- Of 9th -11th graders, 10.3 percent have been suspended or expelled due to an alcohol-related incident.
- All alcohol-related deaths in Mississippi increased between 1990 and 2000 (0.31 percent), decreased between 2001 and 2002 (0.28 percent), and increased between 2002 and 2004 (0.26 percent) with an overall increase of some 0.35 percent.
- Mississippi ranked 47th highest in the nation for cost of underage drinking in 2001 with a cost of \$1,647 for each youth in the state.
- Underage drinkers accounted for 2.3 percent of all DUI arrests in Mississippi in 2003. This remains unchanged throughout 2005.

- According to the Department of Public Safety, in 2005, 371 people in Mississippi died in alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes, accounting for 40 percent of all traffic-related deaths.

Tobacco facts in Mississippi

- The 2003 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System survey showed that 25.6 percent of the adults in Mississippi were current smokers. The highest rates were seen among males (31.0 percent), whites (26.9 percent) and adults forty-five through fifty-four years of age (32.5 percent). Mississippi reports higher levels of cigarette smoking than national (25.6 percent vs. 22.0 percent, respectively). Trends data from the survey indicated that from 1999 to 2002 cigarette consumption has increased from 22.9 percent to 27.3 percent.
- Among Mississippi's youth population, 34.7 percent of white females reported smoking one or more days in the past thirty days. Their numbers have been consistently higher than any other group from 1999 to 2003, according to the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System Survey. The total percentage of youth that have ever tried cigarettes has continually decreased since 1997. The overall prevalence rate of cigarette smoking showed a steady decline from 1997 to 2003 (31.3 percent vs. 25.0 percent, respectively). Black males are more likely to smoke cigars (30.0 percent versus 22.0 percent among white males) than any other group. White males are more likely to use smokeless tobacco (15.2 percent compared to 2.3 percent in the Black male population) in Mississippi.
- More than 400,000 deaths in the U.S. each year are attributed to cigarette smoking. In Mississippi, more than 13,000 people died from smoking-related diseases in 2004.
- All tobacco related mortality categories decreased by over 4.5 percent from 1990 to 2000 and continued a slow decline of about 2.5 percent from 2000 to 2004. Heart disease accounted for over 8,000 deaths in the state of Mississippi during 2004 according to data provided by the Mississippi Department of Health, Division of Vital Statistics.
- Mississippi Department of Health mortality data indicate that lung cancer in Mississippi has increased by over 0.60 percent since 1990 with the largest increase between 1990 and 2000 and a relatively large increase between 2003 and 2004.
- Tobacco-related illnesses costs the State of Mississippi Medicaid System \$264 million dollars every year