14. IMPACT OF EXCESSIVE ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION ON HEALTH AND SOCIETY IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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Introduction. Excessive alcohol consumption is one of the most important public health issues in the Republic of Moldova, with an annual average intake exceeding 13 liters of pure alcohol per capita. It has been assumed that excessive alcohol consumption is associated with significant increases in morbidity and mortality, as well as the emergence of social problems.

Aim of study. Assessing the effects of excessive alcohol consumption on health and social security in the Republic of Moldova, using recent data from national studies.

Methods and materials. A descriptive study was conducted using data from the STEPS 2021 survey (n=4097 people aged 18–69). Data on the quantity of alcohol consumed, mortality, liver cirrhosis incidence, domestic violence cases and traffic accidents were analyzed. Data processing included descriptive statistics and chi-square test, with a significance level of $p<0.05$.

Results. The average annual consumption was 13 liters of pure alcohol per capita. While the prevalence of current drinkers remains high, heavy episodic drinking (binge drinking)- defined as consuming six or more standard drinks at once- affects 13.8% of the adult population. This behavior is eight times more prevalent in men (24.5%) than in women (3.1%). Harmful alcohol consumption is present in 8.5% of current drinkers. Unrecorded alcohol, primarily home-produced wine, is a major concern, used by nearly half of current drinkers and accounting for 41.5% of total volume. Adverse impacts are significant: 9.2% of drinkers failed daily obligations, and 9.7% required a morning drink to recover from a binge. Although binge drinking has dropped by 29.2% since 2013, the improvement was mainly among women, with minimal progress for men. Alcohol remains a primary behavioral risk factor for the country's high rate of noncommunicable diseases. Alcohol-related mortality accounted for 26% of all deaths. Liver cirrhosis incidence remained high, and excessive alcohol use was involved in 38% of domestic violence cases and about 30 road accident deaths per year. The differences were statistically significant ($p<0.001$).

Conclusions. The hypothesis that excessive alcohol consumption is associated with increased medical and social problems was confirmed. It is recommended to implement effective prevention programs, population education and strict control of homemade alcohol production.

Keywords. alcohol, public health, mortality, cirrhosis, violence, STEPS.

https://doi.org/10.66603/medespera2026.014