

Older Adults and Substance Use

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

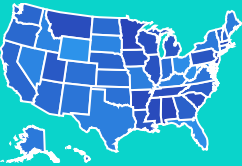
Why is this an important issue?

Although older people are less likely than younger people to use substances, the consequences to their wellbeing 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.?



According to the [2022 National Survey on Drug Use and Health](#):

- 11.5% of adults 50 and older and 7% of adults 65 and older reported a substance use disorder.
- 43.4% of adults 65 and older reported current alcohol use, 1 in 10 reported binge drinking, and 2.4% reported heavy alcohol use.
- More than 1 in 10 adults 65 and older reported using an illicit drug in the past year, and 6.1 reported using an illicit drug in the past month.

What is happening in Delaware?



According to the [2022 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System](#) data on Delaware adults 65 and over:

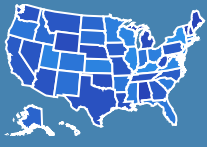
- Nearly half (46.3%) reported alcohol use in the past month.
- 5.2% reported binge drinking (5 or more drinks for males/4 for females on one occasion).
- 3.6% reported heavy drinking (14 drinks per week for males/7 for females).

In 2022, there were 78 overdose deaths in Delaware among people over the age of 60. ([Delaware Division of Forensic Science, 2023](#))

Sources:

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2023). [Results from the 2022 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Detailed Tables](#). Center for Drug and Health Studies at the University of Delaware. (June 2015). [Substance Use, Misuse, and Abuse among Older Delawareans](#). Newark, DE.
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System. (2022). [BRFSS Prevalence and Trends Data](#).
Delaware Division of Public Health, Department of Health and Social Services, My Healthy Community (n.d.). [Insights from the 2014-2018 Suicide Surveillance Study](#).
Delaware Division of Forensic Science, Department of Homeland Security. (2023). [Annual Report 2022](#).

Older Adults and Mental Health



Data from the 2022 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. 1.4% 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 a person ages -- can contribute to risk for depression.

Approximately 1 in 20 adults aged 50 and over (including 2.7% of adults 65 and over) experienced a major depressive episode in the year before the survey. Rates are much higher for females.

Among adults 50 and over, approximately:

- 2.8 million had serious thoughts of suicide
- 667,000 made a suicide plan
- 410,000 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

12.9% of adults aged 65 and over in Delaware reported that they had ever been told they had a form of depression.

[2022 Delaware Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System](#)

7.3% of Delawareans aged 65 and over experienced frequent mental distress, the lowest rate reported among all age groups in Delaware in 2022.

[2022 Delaware Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System](#)

From 2014 through 2018, the rate of death by suicide among Delawareans aged 65 and older was 12.7 per 100,000 population.

[MyHealthyCommunity](#)

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/>