

# Veterans: More than half the men and two of five women struggle with alcohol

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Veterans and active-duty service men and women face alcohol challenges more frequently than general population.

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While most of America's warriors return home without traumatic brain injuries or damaged arms or legs, beer and liquor are the crutches for a growing number of those who serve our country. Servicemen and servicewomen who fought abroad – from Vietnam to Bosnia to Afghanistan – return home to fight alcohol use disorders at a rate nearly two times higher than the general public.

The National Council on [Alcoholism](#) and Drug Dependence, Inc. ([NCADD](#)) reports that of nearly 30 million veterans in the United States, 56 percent of male veterans and 41 percent of females have problems with alcohol and 23 percent of males and 14 percent of females binge drink. Additionally,

according to the Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center, one in eight troops returning from Iraq and Afghanistan from 2006 to 2008 were referred for counseling for alcohol problems after their post-deployment health assessments. The number of soldiers enrolled in treatment after being diagnosed with alcoholism or alcohol abuse has increased 56 percent since 2003. Many of those who have seen active duty turn to alcohol to try to deaden the images of what they've endured.

To gain a fuller understanding of [alcohol use disorders](#) among younger veterans and active-duty personnel, the U.S. Department of Defense is following a representative sample of U.S. military from 2001 to 2022. It is the largest prospective study in military history. Findings from this study suggest that Reserve and National Guard personnel and younger service members who deploy with reported combat exposures are at an increased risk for the onset of heavy weekly drinking, binge drinking and other alcohol-related problems.

All service branches, the Department of Veterans Affairs ([VA](#)) and the National Institutes of Health ([NIH](#)) are trying to address the alcohol crisis. In one project, researchers are using smart phones and wearable wireless sensors to record real-time responses to stress among veterans suffering from addictions and trauma. Also, the VA offers a brief, anonymous and confidential tool on their website to help veterans who may have concerns about their drinking. The [Drinker's Check-Up](#) an easy-to-use online audit developed for the [armed services](#) under a grant from the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism ([NIAAA](#)).

The referral process and accessibility of treatment options for veterans with alcohol use disorders are only slightly better than the resources available to the general public today, however, the military was playing catch-up with their budgeting for such resources for the past decade. They are taking education, treatment and prevention seriously, today, as more of the nation's warriors return from the Afghanistan war, but the resources are available to all veterans.

## SUGGESTED LINKS

- [JAMA: Mixing alcohol and energy drinks harmful](#)
- [Journal: Alcohol causes depression rather than curing it](#)
- [Sex problems last a year after heavy drinking stops according to new study](#)
- [Drinking alcohol increases prediabetes, type 2 diabetes risk](#)
- [Teen drinking gene found](#)



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