

Alcohol Deficit in Canada: 6 Things You Need to Know

1 **\$6.4 billion** 

In 2020, Canada's alcohol deficit was \$6.4 billion. This deficit is the difference between the government revenue from alcohol sales and taxation and the social costs associated with alcohol use, which include health care, lost productivity and the criminal justice system.

2 **122%** Between 2007 and 2020, this alcohol deficit increased by 122% (in inflation-adjusted dollars).

3 **\$5.7 billion** The cost of alcohol use has increased from \$14 billion in 2007 to \$19.7 billion in 2020.

4   Healthcare and lost productivity costs are the largest categories contributing to the [social cost](#) of alcohol use.

5 

On average, people who drink alcohol consume 13.3 standard drinks a week. [Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health](#) recommends people consider drinking less and defines low- (1-2 drinks a week), moderate- (3-6 drinks a week) and increasingly high- (7 or more drinks a week) risk zones for alcohol-related harms.

In Canada, a standard drink is 17.05 ml or 13.45 g of pure alcohol, which is the equivalent of:

 Beer 341 ml (12 oz) of beer 5% alcohol	OR	 Cooler, cider, ready-to-drink 341 ml (12 oz) of drinks 5% alcohol	OR
 Wine 142 ml (5 oz) of wine 12% alcohol	OR	 Spirits (whisky, vodka, gin, etc.) 43 ml (1.5 oz) of spirits 40% alcohol	

6 Among provinces and territories, Nunavut and Northwest Territories reported the highest per person alcohol deficits while Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador reported the lowest in 2020.



The government revenue from alcohol sales does not offset the social costs of alcohol use in Canada.



What this means

Everyone in Canada is affected by alcohol use and the associated harms, which leads to the significant deficit in the cost of alcohol use.



What you can do?

Advocate for evidence-based alcohol policies that focus on public health, including health promotion, alcohol pricing, labelling and availability, to reduce the alcohol deficit in Canada and overall alcohol-related harms on society.

This poster summarizes the original quantitative research article:

Sherk, A. (2024). Canada's alcohol deficit, 2007-2020: Social cost, public revenue, magnitudes of alcohol use and the per-drink net deficit for a fourteen-year period. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, 85(3), 306-311. <https://doi.org/10.15288/jsad.23-00241>