COSTA RICA

Recorded adult per capita consumption (age 15+)

Sources: FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations), World Drink Trends 2003

Last year abstainers

A national survey conducted in 2000–2001 (total sample size $n = 4588$, males $n = 2298$ and females $n = 2287$; aged 12–70 years old) found that 26.6% of the total subjects, 36.8% of males and 16.4% of females had consumed alcohol in the month prior to the survey.²

A 1995 national survey of Costa Rican inhabitants aged between 12 and 70 years old (total sample size $n = 2731$; males $n = 1360$ and females $n = 1371$) found that 44.8% of males and 70.4% of females were current abstainers.³

According to the WHO GENACIS Study (2003 survey; total sample size $n = 1067$, males $n = 354$ and females $n = 713$; age range 20 to 64 years), the rate of last year abstainers was 44.7% (total), 32.6% (males) and 56.7% (females).⁴

Estimates from key alcohol experts showing proportion of adult males and females who had been abstaining (last year before the survey). Data is for after year 1995.¹
Heavy and hazardous drinkers (among drinkers)

A 1995 national survey of Costa Rican inhabitants aged between 12 and 70 years old (total sample size \( n = 2731 \); males \( n = 1360 \) and females \( n = 1371 \)) found that of 1154 current drinkers, 23% reported heavy drinking behaviours. This prevalence was higher in men (33.7%) than among women (5.9%). Heavy drinking was defined as having had five or more drinks at least once in the last month.³

Heavy episodic drinkers (among drinkers)

Data from the WHO GENACIS study. National survey conducted in 2003 (age group 20 to 64 years). Total sample size \( n = 1067 \); males \( n = 354 \) and females \( n = 713 \). Definition used: average consumption of 40 g or more of pure alcohol a day for males and 20 g or more of pure alcohol a day for females (data is for among drinkers only).⁴

Youth drinking (past year alcohol use)

1995 study of 304 randomly selected students from rural schools (mean age for females 14.7 years and for males 14.4 years).³
Alcohol dependence

![Pie chart showing alcohol dependence rates: Total 7%]  
- Male: 10.8% 
- Female: 2.4%

Traditional alcoholic beverages

*Guaro* is a local cane spirit.3

Unrecorded alcohol consumption

The unrecorded alcohol consumption in Costa Rica is estimated to be 2.0 litres pure alcohol per capita for the population older than 15 for the years after 1995 (estimated by a group of key alcohol experts).1

Mortality rates from selected death causes where alcohol is one of the underlying risk factors

The data represent all the deaths occurring in a country irrespective of whether alcohol was a direct or indirect contributor.

Chronic mortality

![Line graph showing chronic mortality rates for different causes]  
- Alcohol use disorders
- Cirrhosis of the liver
- Mouth and oropharynx cancers
- Ischaemic heart disease

Note: Chronic mortality time-series measured on two axes, ischaemic heart disease on right axis and the other causes on the left.

A national survey conducted in 2000–2001 (total sample size n = 4588; males n = 2298 and females n = 2287; aged 12–70 years old). Alcohol dependency/alcoholic was defined as an individual that presents/displays the inability to abstain from the consumption of spirits or is unable to stop when consuming spirits as well as symptoms of greater deprivation (e.g. tremors).2
Acute mortality

Source: WHO Mortality Database
Note: Caution should be exercised when interpreting the results as death registration level is incomplete.

Morbidity, health and social problems from alcohol use

It is estimated that 30% of absenteeism and workplace accidents are caused by alcoholism.6

Of a total of 927 644 emergency consultations in 1987, 120 594 (13%) were related to problems secondary to the consumption of alcoholic beverages. In the period 1981–1987, 119 435 traffic accidents were recorded, of which 6003 (5%) were associated with drunken driving.6

In a 1995 study of rural male and female Costa Rican adolescents using the Drug Use Screening Inventory (DUSI), it was found that for males especially, those who reported use of alcohol in the past year manifested more problems. For example, there were significant differences between male alcohol users and nonusers on the severity indices for both behavioural patterns and peer relationships.5

Country background information

| Total population 2003 | 4 173 000 |
| Adult (15+)          | 2 921 100 |
| % under 15           | 30        |
| Urban                | 60        |
| Rural                | 40        |
| Life expectancy at birth (2002) | Male 74.8 |
|                      | Female 79.5 |
| Probability of dying under age 5 per 1000 (2002) | Male 12 |
|                      | Female 10 |
| Gross National Income per capita 2002 | USS 4100 |


References

4. Preliminary results from the *Gender, Alcohol and Culture: An International Study (GENACIS Project)*. International Research Group on Gender and Alcohol (for more information please see http://www.med.und.nodak.edu/depts/irgga/GENACISProject.html).
