SAUDI ARABIA

Recorded adult per capita consumption (age 15+)

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

Data collected by the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean in 2003 estimates that the extent of alcohol use in Saudi Arabia is considerable and that data from the last five years suggest a stable trend in the use of alcohol.¹

Last year abstainers

A cross-sectional study conducted in Al-Amal Hospital in Riyadh in March 1998 of 160 male patients aged 20 years or older found that alcohol was used by 23.75% of the patients.³
Alcohol abuse among male hospital patients

In a study of 120 male inpatients in a hospital for treatment of male substance abusers in Dammam in Saudi Arabia’s eastern region, it was found that 12.5% of the sample abused alcohol singularly (without abuse of other drugs). DSM-IV criteria for the diagnosis of substance abuse was used in this study.\(^5\)

Unrecorded alcohol consumption

The unrecorded alcohol consumption in Saudi Arabia is estimated to be 0.6 litres pure alcohol per capita for population older than 15 for the years after 1995 (estimated by a group of key alcohol experts).\(^2\)

Morbidity, health and social problems from alcohol use

Saudi Arabia has a large number of expatriates, some of whom live in special quarters. Alcoholic beverages are available to them, but the unwritten rule is that the drinking takes place behind closed doors. While there are limited legal means to get alcohol and consume it privately, there is also smuggling, which is thought to be more active through the eastern side of the country. Alcohol can be brought in from neighbouring Gulf states, especially Bahrain, which is easily accessible via a causeway. Another smuggling route is from Jordan where spirits are available, and where some of it is manufactured, like beer and a spirit known as alaq. Those with a smaller budget resort to buying homemade alcohol, or make it themselves using grapes and dates. Occasionally, there are reports about the discovery of factories for making alcoholic beverages.\(^6\)

Country background information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total population 2003</th>
<th>24 217 000</th>
<th>Life expectancy at birth (2002)</th>
<th>Male 68.4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult (15+)</td>
<td>14 772 370</td>
<td></td>
<td>Female 73.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% under 15</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Probability of dying under age 5 per 1000 (2002)</td>
<td>Male 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population distribution 2001 (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Female 25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>Gross National Income per capita 2002</td>
<td>US$ 8460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td>In Saudi Arabia, it is estimated that 100% of the population are Muslim.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


References