

Raising Alcohol Taxes to Reduce Harm: Fact Sheets for Brazil



These fact sheets were produced by Vital Strategies to make the case for raising taxes on alcohol in Brazil. Vital Strategies is dedicated to promoting public health policies with a focus on reducing the world's largest drivers of preventable death and disability, such as alcohol. According to the World Health Organization, 2.6 million deaths are attributed to alcohol annually. Taxes on alcohol are among the most effective policies to reduce consumption and, in turn, alcohol-related harms, while also creating revenue that can be used for health and social programs.

These fact sheets can be used individually and are available as single files on our website at this [link](#).

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Why Raise Taxes on Alcohol?

Almost 105,000 deaths in Brazil were attributed to alcohol consumption in 2019.

Alcohol use causes enormous health, economic and social harms. Yet, consumption remains high largely because most people are unaware of many of its short- and long-term effects, and because alcohol is inexpensive, available and widely advertised.

Raising tax rates on alcohol can make it less affordable, leading to reduced consumption and better health, social and economic outcomes.

Health

In Brazil, there were almost 105,000 deaths attributable to alcohol in 2019—the vast majority (86%) among men.¹

Globally, alcohol consumption was associated with more than 740,000 new cases of cancer in 2020.

Economy

In 2019, consumption of alcoholic beverages cost Brazil R\$ 18.8 billion.¹

Every \$1 dollar spent on alcohol policy development can result in \$76 dollars in social benefits.

Violence

Data for Brazil shows that in 2016, 36.7% of male deaths in road crashes were alcohol-related.

Women are more likely than men to suffer from the consequences of their partners' alcohol use, such as domestic violence, the most common type of violence against women.

Youth

Young Brazilians (ages 25–29) are most at risk of dying from alcohol-related violence and injuries compared to other age groups.

Young people in Brazil between the ages of 18 and 39 are the most likely to binge drink—defined as five or more drinks on a single occasion for men, and four or more for women.

REDUCING ALCOHOL HARMS IN BRAZIL

The most effective ways to reduce the harms of alcohol and the long-term health care costs associated with alcohol-related diseases and injuries are to increase alcohol taxes, limit marketing and restrict availability.

RESET Alcohol works with civil society, government leaders, research organizations and global public health leaders to advance the World Health Organization's [SAFER](#) package of policies, which includes increasing taxes, limiting marketing and restricting availability.

THE TIME TO ADVANCE TAX REFORM IS NOW

Currently, 67% of Brazilians consider alcohol to be relatively inexpensive. Laws regulating alcohol consumption in Brazil are generally weak, including those that regulate alcohol advertising.

Raising taxes sufficiently almost always results in alcoholic beverages becoming less affordable, leading to reduced consumption, better health outcomes and a stronger economy.

Learn more about RESET at: <https://www.vitalstrategies.org/programs/alcohol-policy>

“Brazil needs policies that protect kids, making the healthy choice the easy choice and guarding against industry influence. RESET Alcohol is doing just that through strong partnerships with government, civil society leaders and academia.”

– Pedro de Paula, Country Director, Brazil, Vital Strategies

Taxing Alcohol Is Good for the Health of Brazilians

More than 105,000 preventable deaths were attributable to alcohol consumption in 2019 in Brazil.¹

KEY FACTS

Alcohol is among the top 10 preventable killers.

- 86% of the nearly 105,000 deaths attributable to alcohol in 2019 in Brazil were in men from cardiovascular diseases, accidents and violence.¹
- Young people are more at risk of dying from alcohol-related causes than people in other age groups. Brazilians between 25 and 29 years old are the most at risk.²
- Alcohol use can cause more than 200 diseases and injury conditions.³
- Alcohol causes harms to individuals and also to families, communities and societies.

Alcohol use harms the cardiovascular system in multiple ways.

- Alcohol consumption increases the risk of hypertension, heart disease and stroke.⁴
- According to the World Heart Federation, there are no heart health benefits from alcohol.⁵

No other risk factor involves as many types of disease and injury as alcohol.

- Studies show the risk of liver cirrhosis is almost three times greater in those who consume alcohol compared to those who do not.^{6,7}
- There is a causal relationship between drinking alcohol and incidence of infectious diseases, and/or adverse outcomes from infectious diseases, including tuberculosis and HIV.⁸
- Alcohol consumption during pregnancy can cause fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and pre-term birth complications.⁹

The amount of alcohol consumed in a given society is a key driver of injury rates.

- Some alcohol-related injuries are easily recognized as such (e.g., road traffic injuries, violent assault). Others are less widely perceived as being caused by alcohol (e.g., drownings, workplace injuries.)¹⁰

- The impact of alcohol on health systems is considerable: In a study of 27 countries, alcohol contributed to up to 40% of all emergency department visits for injuries¹⁰

Alcohol consumption is among the leading risk factors for cancer. In 2019, 4.4% of diagnosed cancers worldwide and 401,000 cancer deaths were attributed to alcohol.¹¹

- Alcohol has been classified as a Group 1 carcinogen since 1988 by the International Agency for Research on Cancer of the World Health Organization.
- A study published in The Lancet Oncology found that alcohol consumption was associated with more than 740,000 new cases of cancer worldwide in 2020 alone.

Alcohol use increases the risk of seven cancers including:¹²

- **Breast:** For every 10 grams (one drink or less) of alcohol regularly consumed each day, the risk of female breast cancer increases by about 12%.¹³
- **Colon and rectal:** The risk for these cancers increases steadily after roughly two drinks per day.¹³

Brazil's tax reform can lead to better health for the country's 210 million people if the tax rates are increased enough to reduce alcohol consumption.

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Taxing Alcohol Is Good for Brazil's Economy

Alcohol consumption costs governments and society billions.

KEY FACTS

- In 2019, consumption of alcoholic beverages cost Brazil R\$ 18.8 billion.¹
- Low productivity, such as absences from work, generate high costs for Brazil. In 2023, 8.9 million Brazilians reported not being able to perform work-related activities because of alcohol consumption in the 12 months prior to the survey.²

THERE ARE MANY BENEFITS TO RAISING TAXES

Higher prices reduce alcohol consumption and discourage people from starting to drink. Taxes can be used specifically to cover the costs of alcohol-related harm.

- For every US\$1 invested in implementing the three WHO “best buys” for alcohol—increased alcohol taxation, restricting alcohol marketing, and limiting availability—there is a return of US\$9 in economic benefits, according to the report “Saving Lives by Spending Less.”³
- Alcohol taxation is among the most cost-effective interventions for reaching the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.⁴
- A specific tax, a fixed amount per unit of alcohol sold, allows the effect to be proportional to the damage caused by different types of alcoholic beverages (e.g., beer and spirits).
- The specific tax also helps to increase the price of inexpensive products, such as beer, which youth, in particular, are more likely to consume.
- An additional ad valorem tax, a variable amount based on the value of the good, can help improve equity by raising the price of expensive, premium brands more.

- The estimated collection of taxes from beer alone, which accounts for 90% of the Brazilian market, could generate revenue of approximately R\$59 billion annually, representing a significant increase on the current R\$37 billion.⁵
- Annual adjustments higher than the combination of inflation and income growth will ensure that alcoholic beverages will be less and less affordable over time.
- Industries producing harmful products such as tobacco and alcohol often claim that tax increases lead to job losses. Early research from other countries indicates these claims tend to be widely exaggerated. For example, we know that for every job lost in the alcohol industry, significantly more are gained in other sectors such as education and health care.



Learn more about RESET at: <https://www.vitalstrategies.org/programs/alcohol-policy>

Raising Taxes on Alcohol Can Reduce Violence and Injuries

Alcohol is a risk factor for various types of violence.

KEY FACTS

- Alcohol causes harms not only to those who consume alcohol but also to families, communities and societies.
- 17% of Brazilians over the age of 18 reported having driven after consuming alcohol. This behavior was more prevalent among men (21%) compared to women (8%).¹
- 3.5 million Brazilians have hurt someone or injured themselves after drinking alcohol.²
- Among those, 6.9% of 25-34-year-olds have hurt someone or been hurt themselves after drinking alcohol. For those between the age of 35 and 44 years, the figure was 8.2%.

Alcohol plays an insidious role in gender-based violence.

Despite the existence of a law to combat violence against women in Brazil, women still face severe consequences from gender-based violence. And while violence is a multifactorial phenomenon, alcohol consumption still plays a large role in gender-based violence in the country.

- Domestic violence caused by alcohol is among the top three concerns Brazilians have about alcohol.³
- Women are more likely than men to suffer from their partner's drinking and its consequences, such as domestic violence, the most common type of violence against women.
- The effects of alcohol on men may increase the severity of aggression toward a female partner.
- Men overall drink a higher total volume of alcohol and have more harmful patterns of consumption, including heavy episodic or binge drinking, defined as five or more drinks in a single occasion for men, and four or more for women.

Brazil's tax reform can lead to less violence against women and fewer traffic deaths and injuries, if the tax rates are increased enough to reduce alcohol consumption.

Learn more about RESET at: <https://www.vitalstrategies.org/programs/alcohol-policy>



Brazilians Support Alcohol Taxes

More than 9 out of 10 (94%) support raising taxes on products that are harmful to health and the environment, such as cigarettes, alcohol and ultra-processed foods.¹

Datafolha Polling Results¹

The survey found:

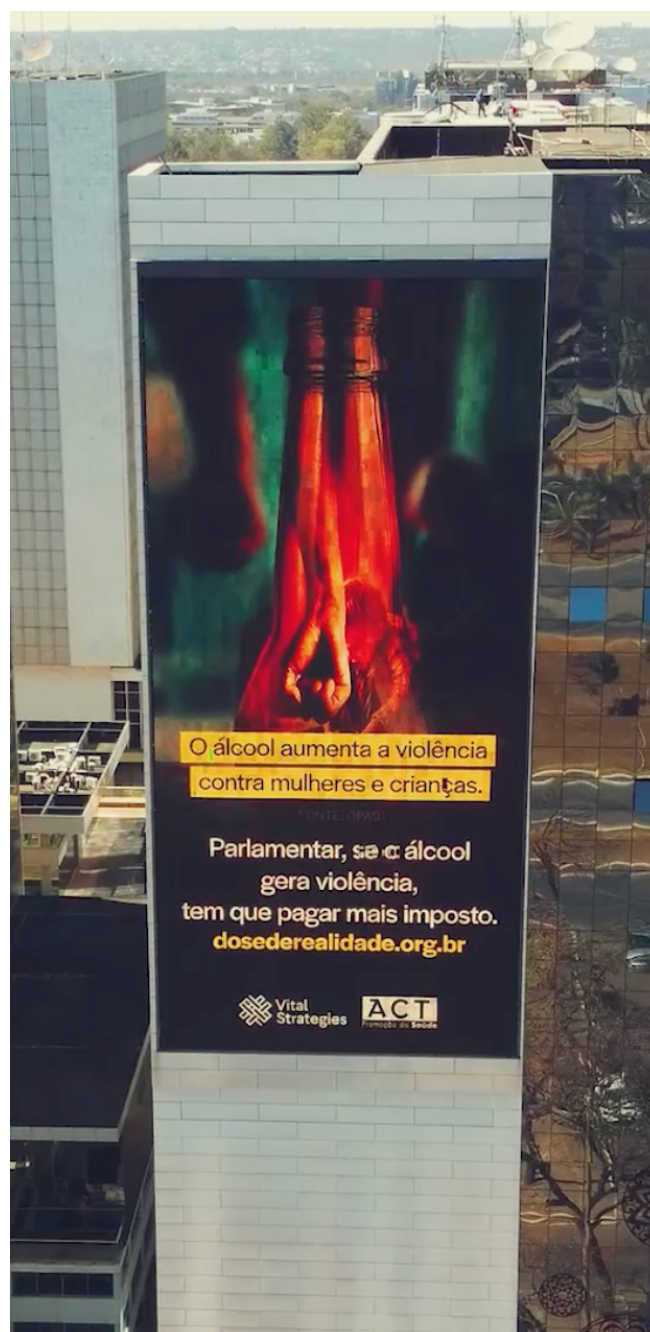
- 73% support using revenue from alcohol taxes for the public health care system.
- 71% think alcohol should be taxed more.
- 57% are against tax incentives for sectors that produce products that are harmful to health.

Vital Strategies Polling Results²

- 78% of Brazilians would sign a petition that asks the government to address alcohol harms.
- 77% agree that “It is the government’s responsibility to address problems with alcohol consumption.”
- 67% consider alcohol relatively inexpensive.
- 65% agree that the alcohol industry interferes with alcohol policy.
- 62% agree that greater taxation on alcohol would effectively help reduce consumption.

Brazil’s tax reform can reduce the health and social impact of alcohol if the tax rates are increased enough to reduce consumption.

Learn more about RESET at: <https://www.vitalstrategies.org/programs/alcohol-policy>



Taxing Alcohol Protects Brazil's Youth

Young people are at greater risk of dying from alcohol-related causes than any other age group.

- In Brazil, nearly 105,000 deaths are attributable to alcohol every year.¹
- National surveys have found that 23% of Brazilians between the ages of 18 and 39 report consuming alcohol heavily and often. People in this age group are most likely to binge drink, defined as five or more drinks on a single occasion for men, and four or more for women.²

Increased alcohol taxation can raise prices, which can discourage young people from buying alcohol and dissuade heavy drinking.

- 60% of males under the age of 17 have tried alcohol in Brazil. Of this group, 66% did so before the age of 14.³
- 67% of females under the age of 17 have tried alcohol in Brazil. Of this group, 71% did so before the age of 14.³
- Among those under the age of 17 who say they have used alcohol, 29% say they have had access to alcoholic drinks at parties and 11% drank with friends or family. Almost 27% say they were able to purchase beverages in stores or supermarkets, even though there is a law in Brazil that prohibits the sale of alcoholic beverages to people under the age of 18.³
- 26% of both males and females under the age of 17 have had at least one episode of binge drinking.
- Worldwide, alcohol consumption causes death and disability relatively early in life. In people aged 20–39 years, approximately 13.5% of total deaths are attributable to alcohol.⁴
- Alcohol-related traffic crashes and violence are the main causes of death among young adult males in Brazil.⁵
- Among people between 25 and 39 years old, 21% say they have driven after drinking. The figure was 16% for those between the ages of 18 and 24.⁶



Brazil's tax reform holds the potential to protect Brazil's youth, if new tax rates that are high enough to reduce consumption are put in place. There is good evidence that an alcohol tax increase that results in higher prices can reduce harms for young people, including suicides, traffic injuries and sexually transmitted diseases.

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Taxing Alcohol Leads to Safer Streets

Driving under the influence of alcohol dramatically increases the risk of fatal road crash.

Drinking and driving kills more than one person every hour on Brazil's roads, or nearly 11,000 people annually.¹

In 2016, 1.3 million people died around the world because of road crashes. A third of those deaths (370,000) were attributable to alcohol use.²

Policies on drinking and driving have evolved in Brazil in the last 20 years, but many gaps persist.³

In 2010, new legislation on drinking and driving was approved. The legislation decreased the legal amount of blood alcohol concentration while driving to zero and increased the number of random breath tests performed. This resulted in the annual number of deaths falling by more than 25%.⁴

Despite the progress, in 2019, 17% of Brazilians over the age of 18 reported having driven after consuming alcohol.⁵

KEY FACTS

- 96% of Brazilians said alcohol increases the risk of crashes and road injuries.⁶
- Yet, among people aged 25-39, 21% had driven after drinking, as well as 16% of those aged 18-24.⁷
- Drinking and driving is more frequent among men: 21% said they engaged in drink driving, compared to 8% of women.

Brazil's tax reform holds the potential to reduce the health and social burden of alcohol, including road traffic death and injuries if tax rates that are high enough to reduce consumption are put in place.

RESET Alcohol is led by Vital Strategies in collaboration with Brazilian partners, such as ACT Promoção da Saúde, Universidade Católica de Brasília (UCB), and global technical partners that include Johns Hopkins University Economics For Health, Global Alcohol Policy Alliance (GAPA), Movendi International, NCD Alliance and Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).

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