

ALCOHOL AND COVID-19 IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

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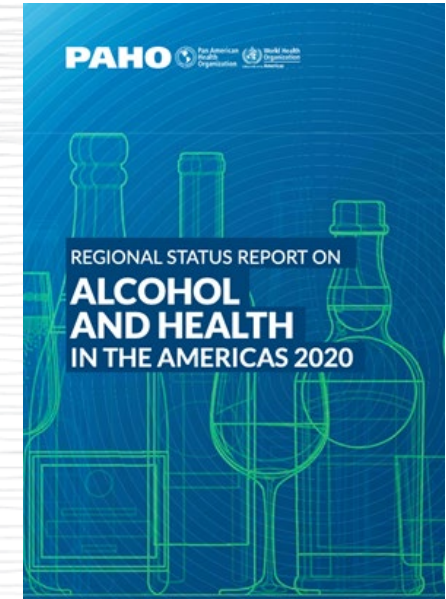
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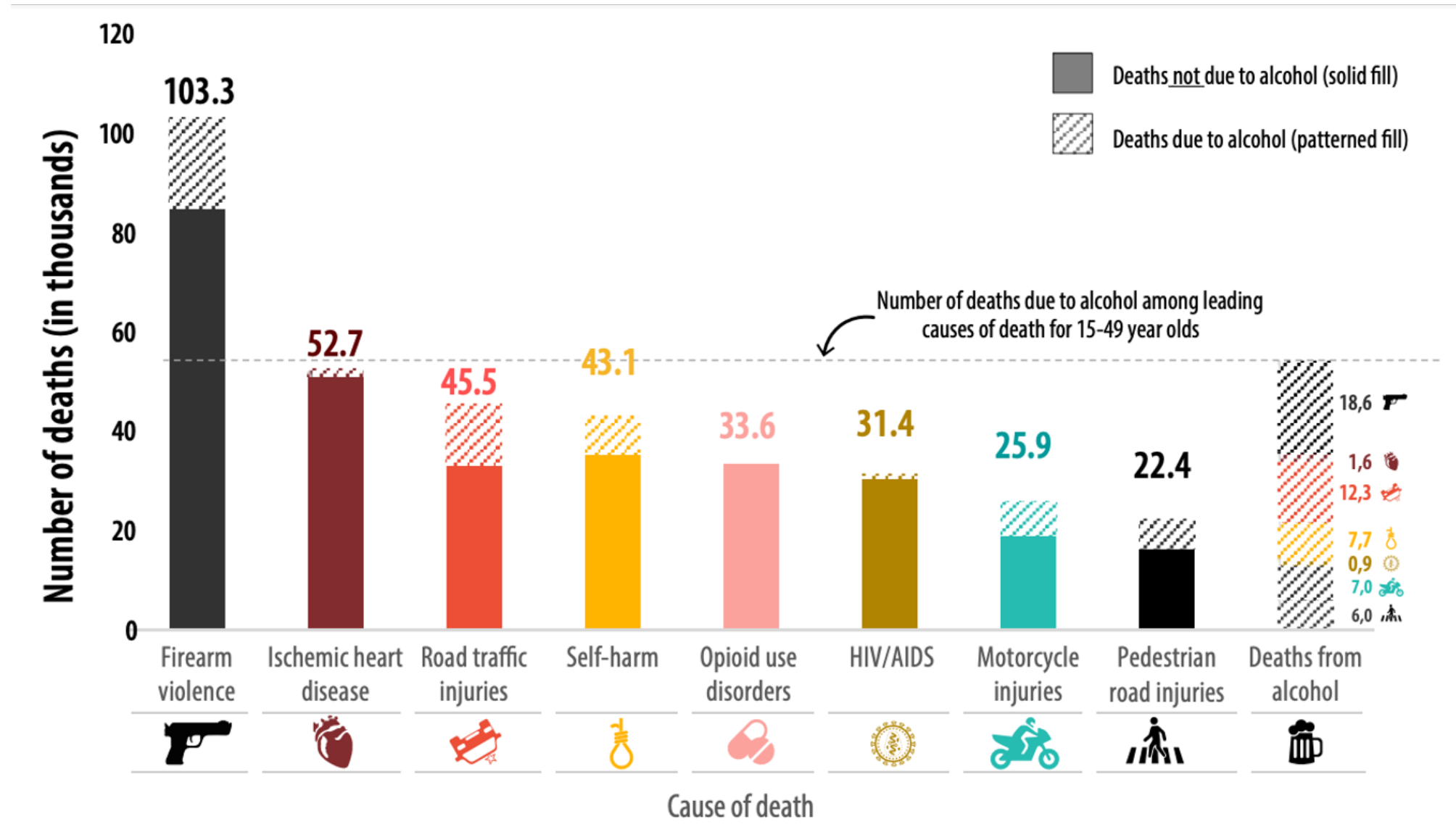
PAHO

Alcohol consumption and harms in the Americas pre-COVID-19

- The Americas has the **second highest average of alcohol per capita consumption** (8.0 L) after Europe (10 L), also above the global average (6 L)
- The Americas has the **lowest level of abstinence** in the world: In 2016, 46.1% of the adult population (15+) drank in the past year
- 25% of the general population are **heavy episodic drinkers**
- Highest prevalence of **Alcohol Use Disorders** for women and second for men
- In 2016, there were a total of **379,000 alcohol attributable deaths** in the Americas (5.5% of all deaths) and **18.9 million DALYs** (6.7% of all DALYs)



Alcohol use as a risk factor for seven of the eight leading causes of death among 15-49-year-olds in the Americas in 2016



Status of national written alcohol policy in 2016 for countries in the Americas

No, no national policy



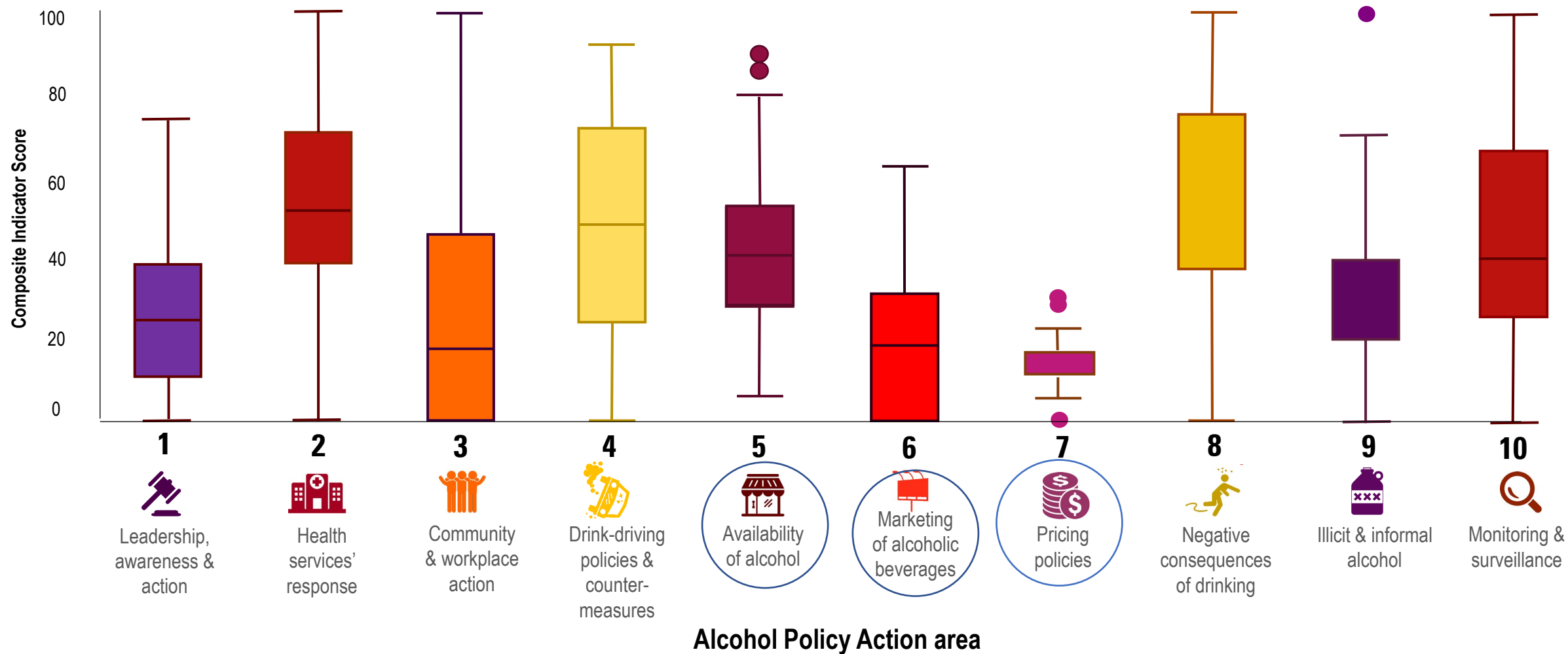
Sub-national policy

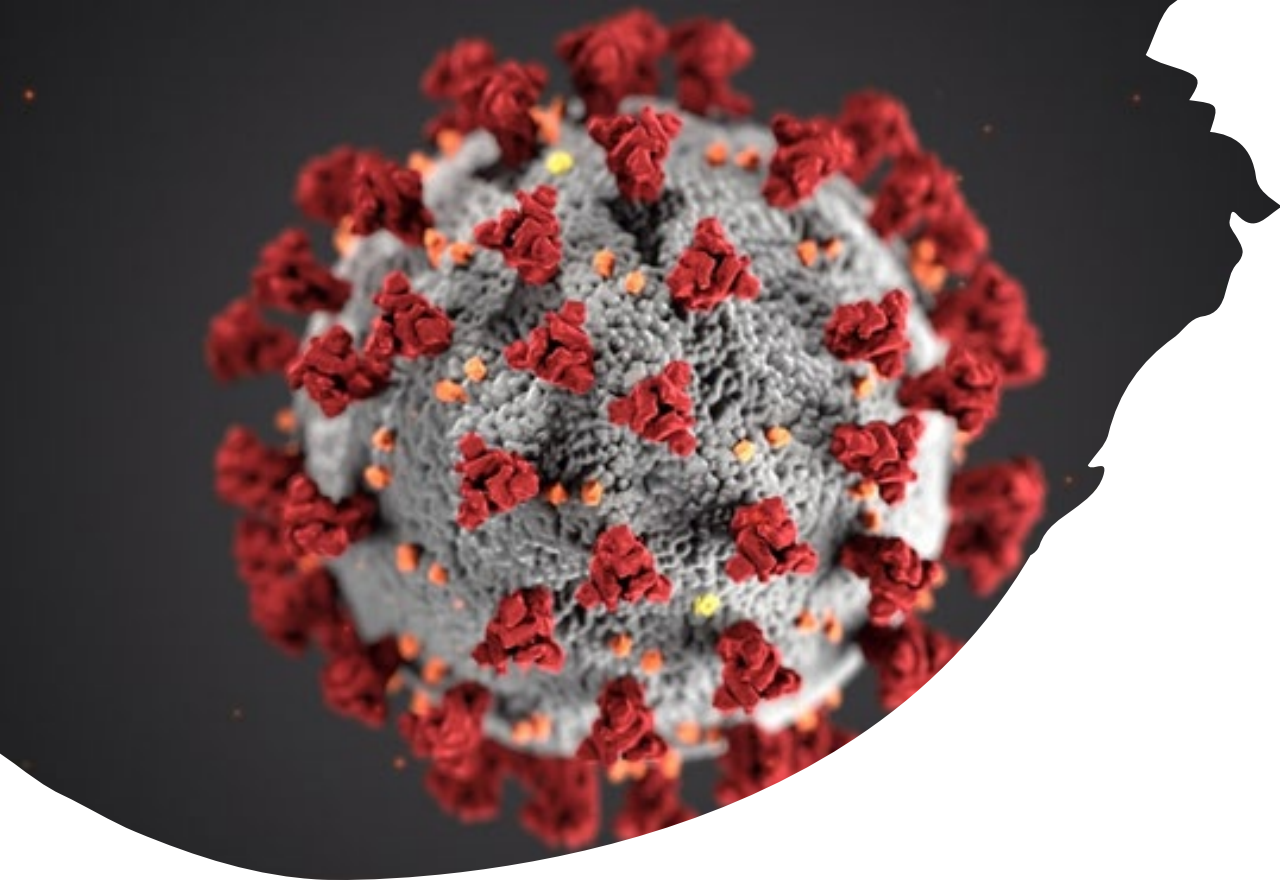


Yes, written national policy



Alcohol Policy Scores for the 10 areas of the Global Strategy





Alcohol and COVID-19

Spread of Misinformation with the pandemic

- Consuming alcohol destroys the virus
- Drinking strong alcohol kills the virus in the inhaled air
- Alcohol stimulates immunity and resistance to the virus
- Perpetuating a message of “sympathy”, that it is ok, understandable, for people to drink to cope with the current situation, that they can at least drink...



HOW PAHO RESPONDED

- FACT SHEETS and SOCIAL MEDIA tiles for the public (with EURO)
- 2 Editorials in scientific journals
- Over 10 webinars in E, S, P
- Facebook live sessions with countries and globally
- Regional online survey: report and 2 scientific publications



Alcohol and COVID-19: what you need to know



Under no circumstances should you drink any type of alcoholic product as a means of preventing or treating COVID-19 infection.
Consumption of alcohol WILL NOT protect you from COVID-19.

Avoid alcohol altogether

so that you can no longer undermine your own immune system and health and do not put at risk the health of others.



Do not use alcohol as a way of dealing with your emotions and stress

as isolation and drinking may also increase the risk of suicide. Please call a health hotline if you have suicidal thoughts.



Reach out for help

if you think your drinking or the drinking of someone close to you is a problem.



Never mix alcohol with medications

even herbal or over-the-counter remedies, as this can make them less effective, or might increase their potency to a level where they become toxic and dangerous.



Avoid alcohol as a social cue for smoking

and vice versa, as smoking is associated with more complicated and dangerous progression of COVID-19.



Make sure that children and young people do not have access to alcohol

and do not drink in their presence or a role model. Monitor the screen time of your children, as TV and other media are flooded with alcohol advertising and misinformation that may stimulate early initiation and increase consumption.



Discuss with children and young people the problems associated with drinking and COVID-19

such as violations of quarantine and physical distancing, which can make the pandemic worse.



PAHO Regional Survey on Alcohol and COVID-19

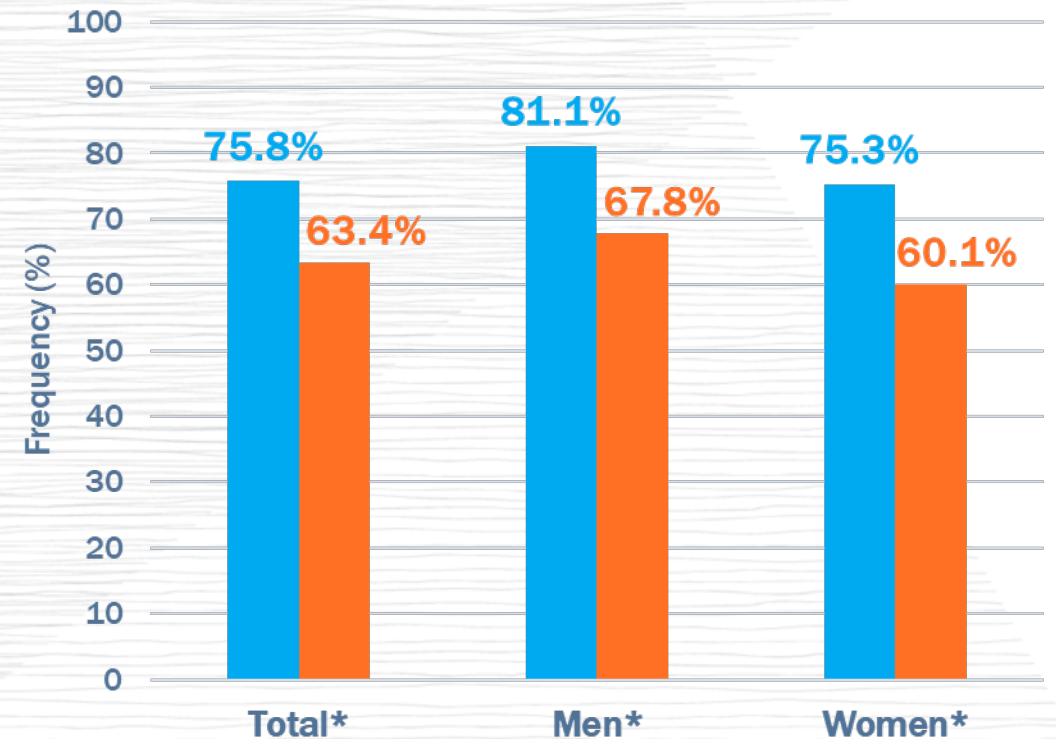
- Implemented by PAHO in May-June 2020 (early in the pandemic)
- Participants from 33 countries in the Region
- 12,328 valid responses
- Questions included: Demographics, COVID-19 measures, pre-pandemic alcohol consumption, current pandemic alcohol consumption and mental health impacts over the last 14-days



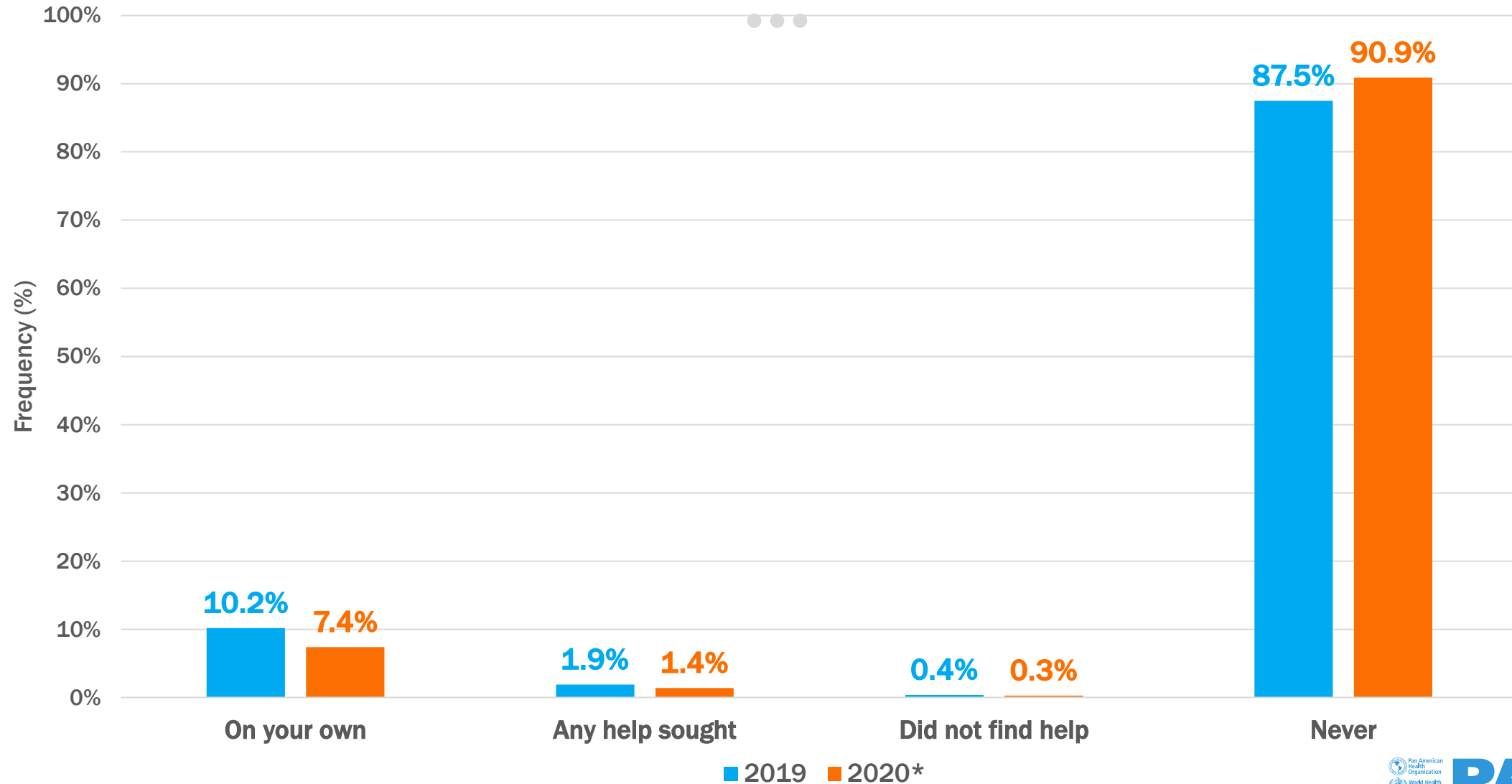
PAHO Regional Survey on alcohol and COVID-19

Key Survey Results:

- Overall decrease in consumption 2020
- A trend towards the consumption of **stronger** alcohol products
- Decrease in overall prevalence but increase in frequency of **illicit and informal** alcohol consumption
- Overwhelming majority **did not seek help** for reducing drinking (before and by the time of the survey)

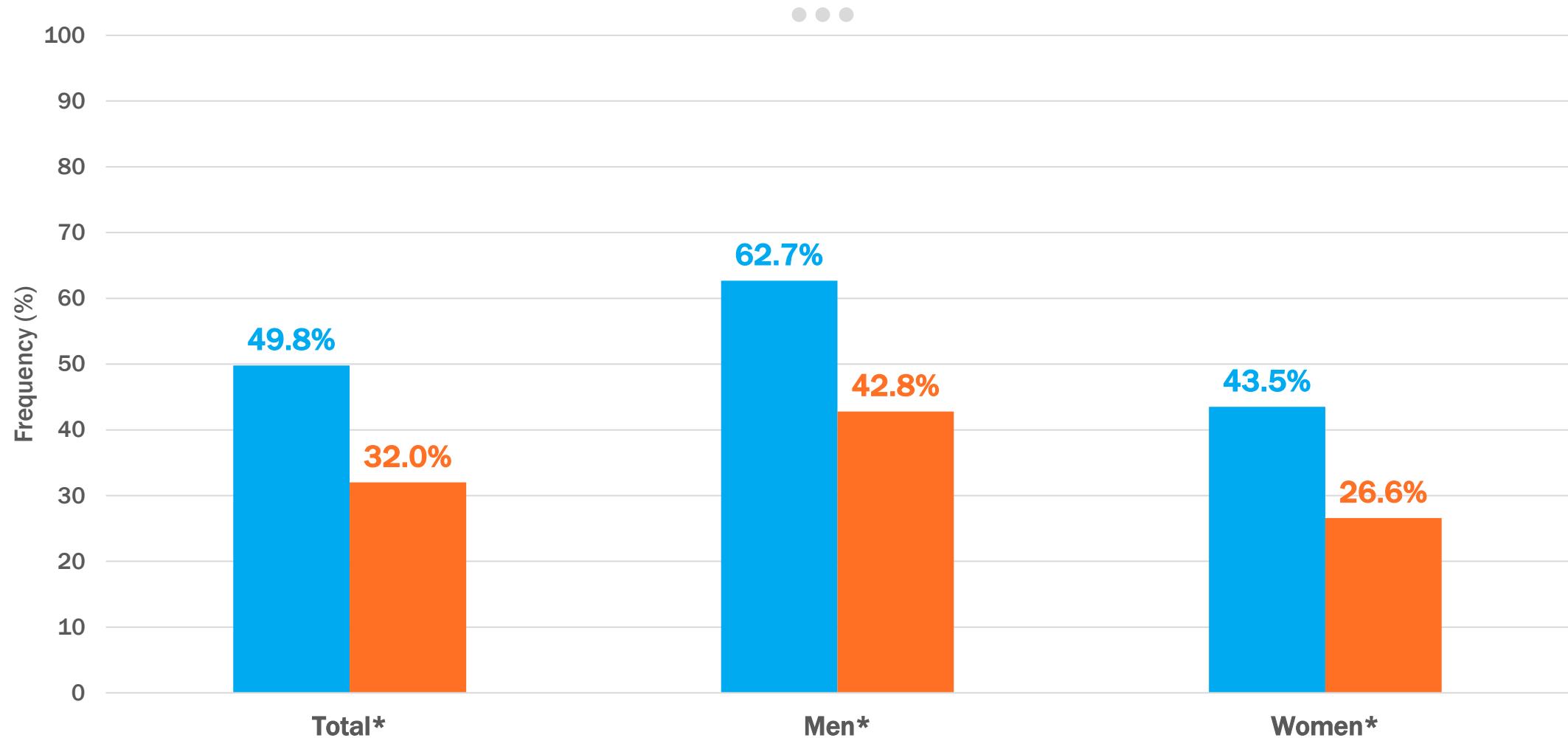


Seeking help to reduce consumption



* From March to June 2020, during the pandemic.

Prevalence of Heavy Episodic Drinking (HED) by Sex

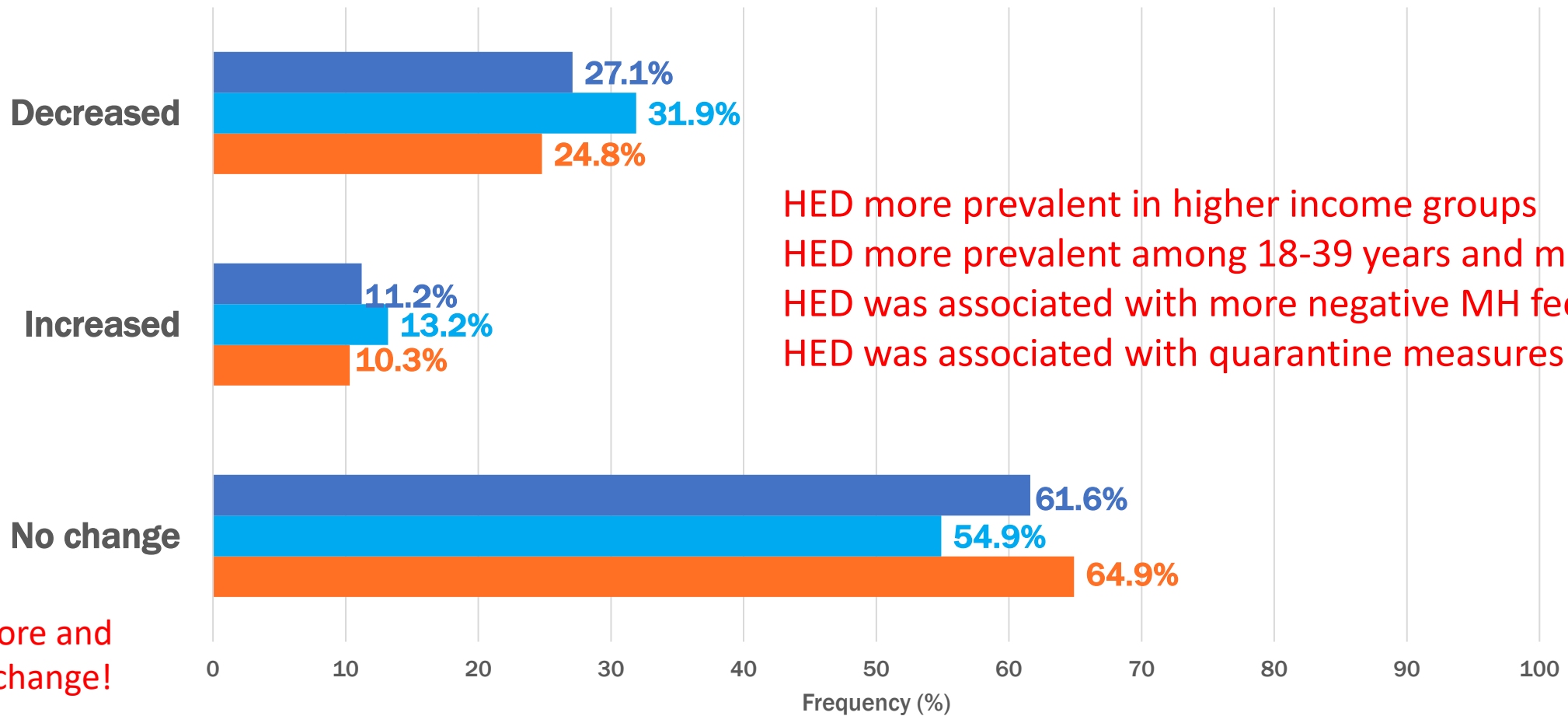


■ 2019 ■ 2020**

* Chi-square tests between years (2019 vs. 2020) and between genders were significant for the total sample; $P < 0.001$

** From March to June 2020, during the pandemic.

Change in Frequency of HED by Sex from 2019 to 2020*



HED more prevalent in higher income groups
 HED more prevalent among 18-39 years and males
 HED was associated with more negative MH feelings
 HED was associated with quarantine measures

HED before and did not change!

■ Total ■ Men** ■ Women**

* From March to June 2020, during the pandemic.
 ** Chi-square test between the change in frequency of HED and genders was significant; $P < 0.001$

Impact of COVID-19 on alcohol use, harms and policy

We need to assess and evaluate various scenarios!

Pandemic potential impacts:

- Both increases and decreases in consumption
- Reduction of public violence (road injuries, in public venues and locations)
- Increase in domestic violence and child abuse*
- Increased exposure of young people to drinking and online marketing and promotions (norm changing)
- Less access to treatment and services
- Alcohol-related diseases could be linked to severe COVID-19

Factors for increased consumption:

- Anxiety, stress, boredom
- Increase in free time
- “Multitasking”: work, kids, house, care giving
- Increased online marketing, home deliveries
- Loosening of restrictions to access alcohol
- Online marketing
- Increased availability and affordability

Factors for decreased consumption:

- Reduction in availability
- Reduction in affordability
- Reduction in public drinking
- Reduction in drinking opportunities for youth in sports/shows

Sources:

Finlay. *BMJ* 2020;369:m1987 doi: 10.1136/bmj.m1987

Clay JM, Parker MO. *The Lancet Public Health*, 2020, 5(5):e259.

Monteiro et al, in press (*JAD*, 2020)

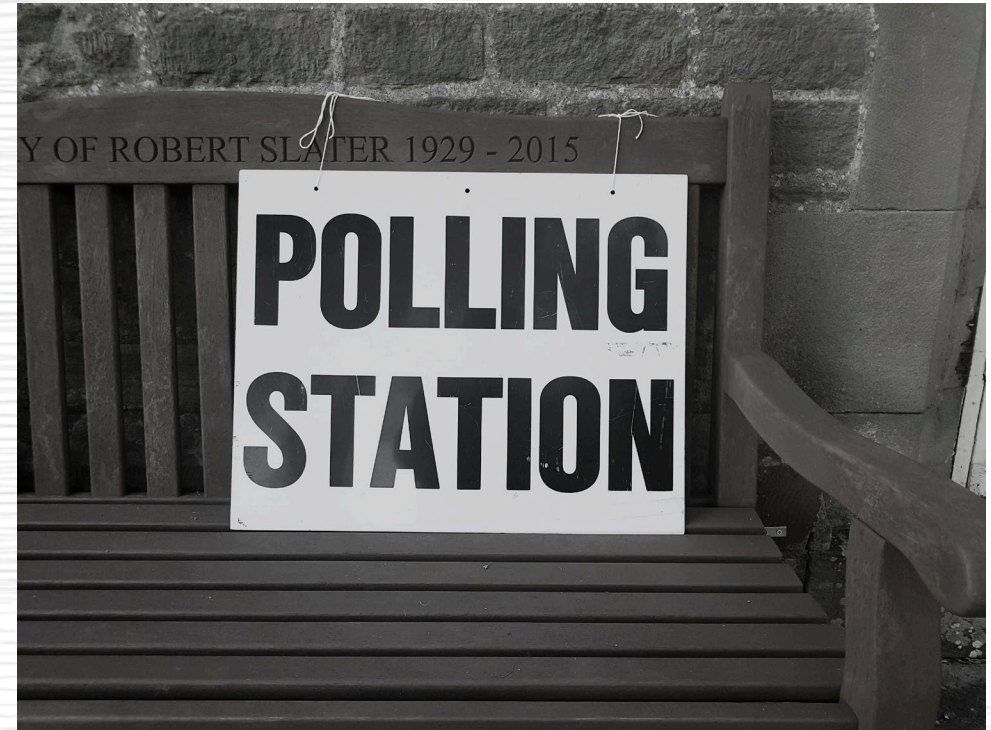
*<https://www.gov.br/mdh/pt-br/assuntos/noticias/2020-2/marco/coronavirus-sobe-o-numero-de-ligacoes-para-canal-de-denuncia-de-violencia-domestica-na-quarentena>

Source: Alcohol use in times of the COVID 19: Implications for monitoring and policy

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/dar.13074>





New frontiers for alcohol policy

- Challenge to regulate E-Commerce and online marketing and sales
- Keep and strengthen current policies
- Accelerate training of health professionals on alcohol-related issues
- Increase telehealth for Alcohol Use Disorders and Alcohol Brief Interventions
- Increase health literacy on alcohol (using new tools such as social media and reliable sources)
- Balance economic and public health interests moving forward out of the pandemic
- Promote alcohol policy preparedness and response for public health emergencies in the future
- **PREPARE-PREVENT-PROTECT-PROMOTE-PARTICIPATE**



Questions?
Thank you!

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#MentalHealth
#GetVax
#pahowho
#BeatNCDs
#UniversalHealth



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