



# Does Alcohol Increase the Risk of Cancer?

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Drinking alcohol on a regular basis can increase the risk of contracting cancer, according to a major new study backed by the World Health Organisation (WHO). Published in [The Lancet](#), the research found that 741,300 diagnoses of cancer around the globe last year were caused by alcohol abuse.

Although the number of alcohol-related cancer cases recorded in the UAE in 2020 were comparatively low on a global scale, they were among the highest figures in the Middle Eastern region. However, that discrepancy is likely explained by the high number of ex-patriates living in the country.

## Heavy drinkers most at risk

The research was compiled by looking at drinking habits and cancer rates of patients all around the world. Classification of alcohol consumption was split into three main categories: light to moderate drinking (up to two drinks per day), risky drinking (up to six drinks per day) and heavy drinking (more than six drinks per day).

Just under half (346,400, or 47%) of alcohol-related cancer cases in 2020 were linked to heavy drinkers. However, those who consumed an average maximum of two drinks were also at risk, with one in seven cancer diagnoses linked to their drinking habits. When other factors, like a substandard diet, sedentary lifestyle and smoking were considered, the risk became even more pronounced.

## Emirati ex-pats drive average up

The authors of the study attempted to assess each country's performance in this area by assigning them a "population attributable fraction" (PAF) based on demographics and cancer types. In the UAE, the PAF for men was found to be 1.4%, which is significantly lower than countries like the USA (3.8%), Australia and the UK (both 4.9%).

On the other hand, the Emirati PAF was the highest among Gulf nations, beating out 0.7% in Lebanon, 0.3% in Iraq and just 0.1% in Qatar. However, the country's poor regional performance can be attributed to the high number of ex-pats living in the UAE, who indulge in drinking alcohol far more than the indigenous population.



## Education is key

In any case, the authors of the report are hoping it may serve as a wake-up call to the global population that alcohol abuse represents a very serious carcinogenic threat to human health. Although [recent developments in cancer therapy](#) have improved the chances of an individual beating the disease, it still claims the lives of roughly 10 million people per year. That equates to more than 1,000 every single hour.

As such, it's imperative that everyday citizens become more aware of how the choices that they make – both with regard to their alcohol consumption and other daily lifestyle habits – affect their long-term health. If alcohol abuse could be reduced through widespread education of its adverse impacts, it could not only potentially save millions of lives, but also save governmental budgets untold sums in healthcare spending.