

# COVID-19 & Alcohol: Wisconsin's Changing Landscape

“Restaurants and bars are just waking up from a long slumber but our livers have been working overtime during the pandemic.”

WaPo May23,2020

# Alcohol-Related Harms are Increasing

- Between 2000—2016, death rates from alcohol more than doubled. Source: White et al. 2020
- Emergency Department visits involving alcohol increased by 61.6%, costing \$15.3 billion, from 2006-2014 Source: White et al., *ACER*, 2018
- From 1999-2016, annual deaths from liver cirrhosis increased by 62%; liver cancer deaths doubled. Source: Tapper & Parikh 2018
- Age-adjusted death rates for alcoholic liver disease up by 40.6% 1999-2017; increase higher among women and young people. Source: Woolf and Schoomaker, *JAMA*, 2019

# Wisconsin's Troubling Trends

## Underage Drinking

- In every grade Wisconsin, more Wisconsin high school students drink than the US average.
- While Wisconsin & U.S. average rates of underage drinking have dropped, the gap between the percentage of youth in the US that have ever consumed alcohol and Wisconsin is higher than it was in 2011.
- By 12<sup>th</sup> grade a greater percentage of girls drink alcohol than boys. Males 72%. Females 74%

## Adult Binge Drinking

- Wisconsinites in every age group engaged in more binge drinking than the U.S. median for that age group.
- Wisconsinites of all races and ethnicities engaged in binge drinking at higher rates than the U.S. median for that group.
- Nearly 24% of Wisconsin adults (18+) self-report binge drinking in the past month, while the national estimated average is just 16.6% for the same time period.

# Financial Cost to Wisconsin

## **Binge Drinking Cost to Wisconsin**

≥ 4 drinks for a woman

≥ 5 drinks for a man

on a single occasion.

**About \$3.8 Billion annually**

## **Excessive Drinking Costs Wisconsin**

Underage drinking

binge/heavy drinking

drinking during pregnancy

**About \$6.8 Billion annually**

# Wisconsin Alcohol Policy: Pandemic Issues

## What's Legal

In 2019 Wisconsin eliminated the 4-liter limit on off-premises sales by Class B licensees.

The Department of Revenue ruled that growlers are original sealed containers for the purpose of off-premises *purchases*.

## What's Illegal

Mixed drinks to go.

Alcohol delivered without an onsite, face-to-face purchase.

Serving alcohol outside the “licensed premises”.

# Alcohol Sales Skyrocketed Before Quarantine

- Alcohol beverage sales spiked 55% the week of March 21.
- Bud Light sales increased 44% in April and May 2020
- Ready-to-drink cocktails rose by 106%.
- Consumers purchased 90% more 24 and 30-packs of beer.
- Sales of 3-liter boxed wine and online alcohol sales also up substantially.
- Instacart measured 72% increase in alcohol sales in March 2020



# Average BAC in Wisconsin Before & After Quarantine

The largest increase in average BAC was on Friday March 27th, where it increased by 320%

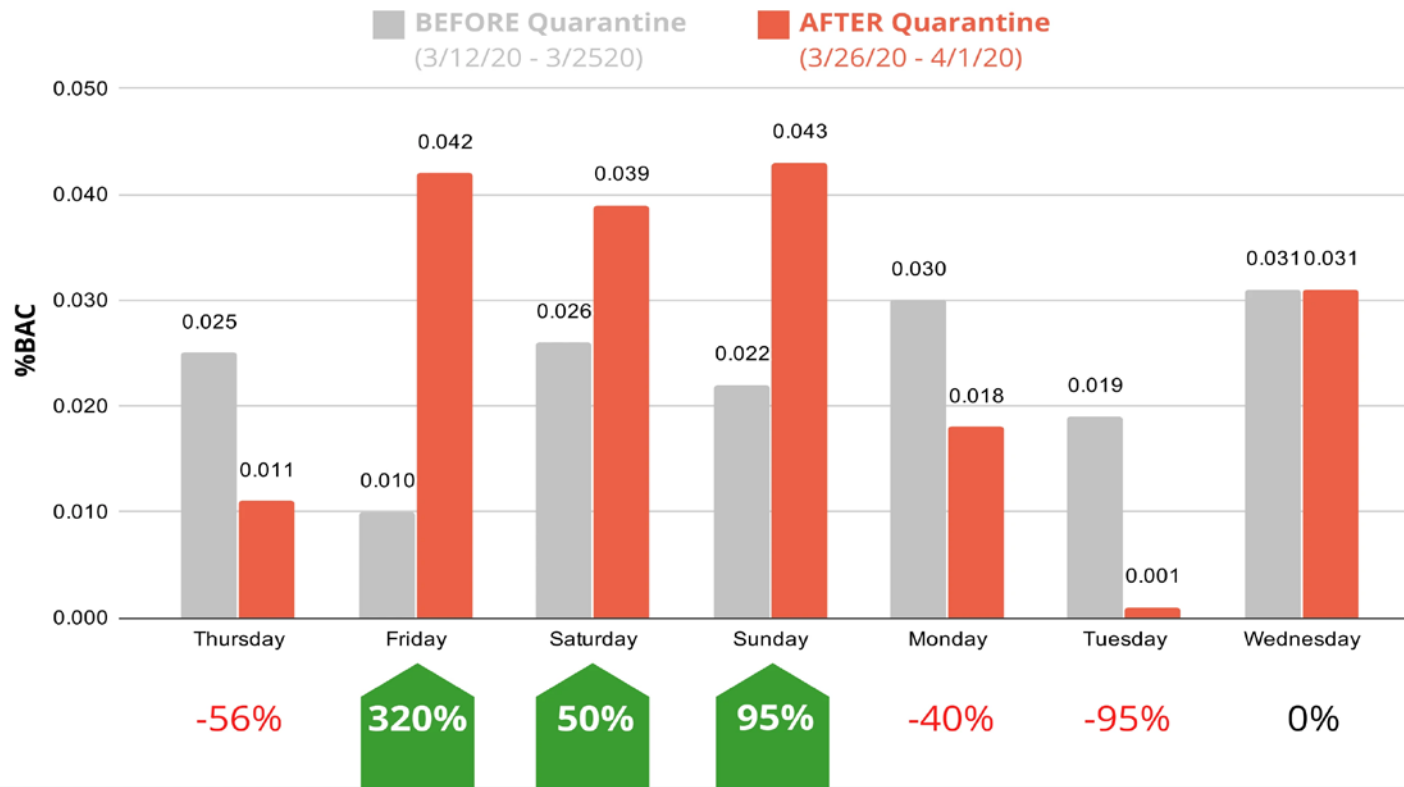
The largest decrease in average BAC was on Tuesday March 31st, where it decreased by 95%

The average BAC for All Days increased by 13%

The average BAC on Weekdays (Mon-Thur) decreased by 42%

The average BAC on Weekends (Fri-Sun) increased by 114%

# Drinking in Wisconsin Skyrockets 320% First Friday After Quarantine

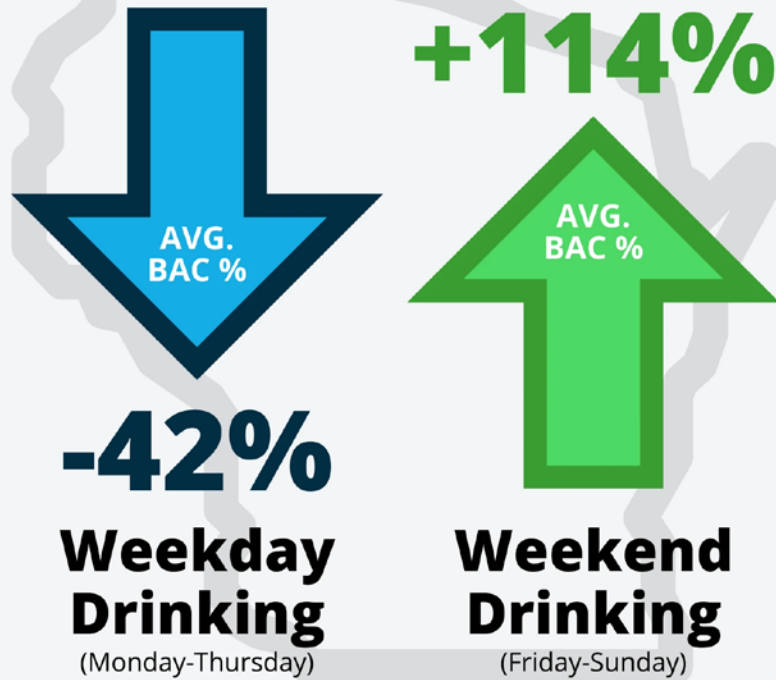


BAC data was collected anonymously from BACtrack App users in Wisconsin, between March 12th and April 1st, 2020. First day after "shelter in place" mandate was Thursday March 26th, 2020.

**BAC**track



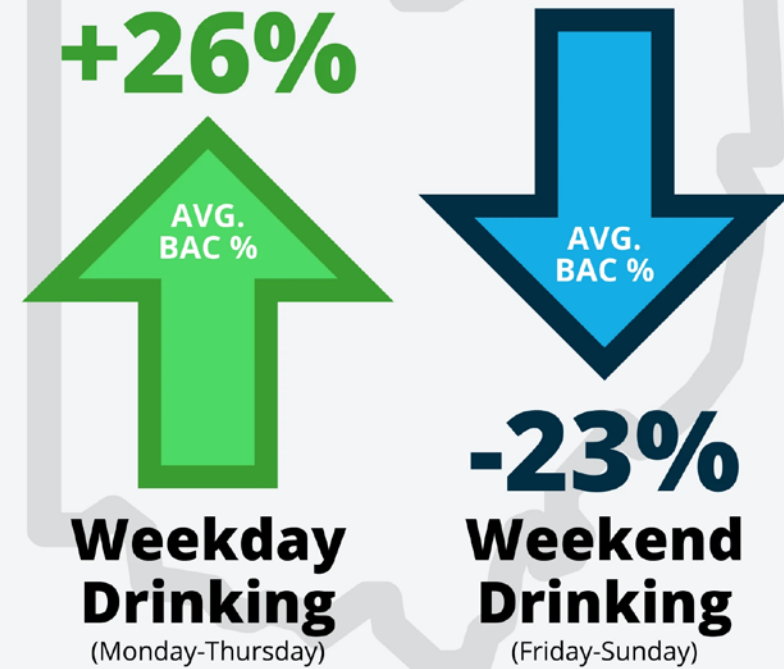
## Drinking in Wisconsin Jumped 114% First Weekend After Quarantine



BAC data was collected anonymously from BACtrack App users in Wisconsin, between March 12th and April 1st, 2020. First day after "shelter in place" mandate was Thursday March 26th, 2020.

**BAC**track

## Weekday Drinking in Ohio Jumped 26% First Week After Quarantine



BAC data was collected anonymously from BACtrack App users in Ohio, between March 10th and March 30th, 2020. First day after "shelter in place" mandate was Tuesday March 24th, 2020.

**BAC**track

# Increases in Alcohol Consumption Appear to Remain After Traumatic Event

1. Financial difficulty, isolation, uncertainty about the future worsen patterns of alcohol use.
2. The affordability & availability of alcohol predict outcomes.

Rehm, J., Kilian, C. et al. *Drugs and Alcohol*, 2019



# But what about the children?

- Most summer & organized sports have been cancelled.
- Parents working from home may not closely monitor teens & 'tweens.
- A youth's first experience with alcohol is most likely to include alcohol "pilfered" from family home or a friend's family home.

# Kids can't drink what they can't access

- Lock up your alcohol
- Ask your local coalition to help distribute “fridge locks”
- Include empty-nesters & those with very small children.
- Participate in the YRBS.



*“Main Street Wisconsin is in Jeopardy of Changing.”*



Significant number of licensees may close.

Some municipalities have ordinances requiring licenses to be surrendered is closed for 60-90 days.

A new owner or new tenant is a new applicant.

# By the Numbers...

..... as  
described by

Pete Madland, E.D.  
Tavern League WI,  
Wisconsin Eye,  
*Newsmakers*, May 2020

## Bar & Grill

70-80% of the profit –  
alcohol

20-30% of the profit –  
food

## Restaurant - Supper Club

70-80% of the profit –  
food

20-30% of the profit -  
alcohol

# Alcohol Policy Changes Proposed in Wisconsin

## Immediate:

- Expanded licensed premises to accommodate social distancing.
- Effort to refill vacant commercial properties.

## Long-term:

- Carry-out mixed drinks (TLW)
- Likely effort to eliminate/weaken 3-tier system.
- On-line/ phone sales of alcohol for home delivery (WILL).



*“Main Street Wisconsin is in Jeopardy of Changing.”*

*Pete Madland, Wisconsin Tavern League on Wisconsin Eye.*



# Prepare to Resist Pressure to Refill Vacant Bars Quickly.

- Map existing licensees, identify problematic clusters.
- Document local alcohol-related issues:
  - Alcohol-related EMS calls – falls!
  - Alcohol-related PD calls for service
  - Alcohol-related domestic disturbances
  - Alcohol-related Emergency Dept or urgent care visits
- Solicit the support of remaining licensees. They may not want additional competition.

# Today's To-Do List:

1. Map local licensees
2. Monitor local alcohol licensing process.
3. Inventory Municipal Ordinances
4. Collect local statistics.
  - Police resources used
  - Emergency physicians
  - Domestic violence shelters
5. Collect local stories about alcohol-related problems, harm to community, expense to the community.

## TO DO LIST

**OCTOBER 8, 2020**

**2020 Alcohol  
Policy Seminar  
Online**

*The only meeting  
dedicated to the  
policies and practices  
that prevent  
excessive drinking.*

Just \$75



[Julia.Sherman@wisc.edu](mailto:Julia.Sherman@wisc.edu)

<https://law.wisc.edu/wapp/>

**Registration Opens August 15**