

Americans Hold Dangerous Misperceptions About Risks of Heavy Drinking

**Public Opinion Survey Reveals At-Risk Drinking Not Considered a Problem by Many
National Alcohol Screening Day[®] is April 11**

BOSTON, MA — April 10, 2013 — For Immediate Release — At-risk drinking (four or more drinks per day for men; three or more for women) is common in the U.S. but many people don't consider it a problem. According to a recent national survey of American adults released this month by Screening for Mental Health, Inc., a nonprofit provider of mental health screening programs, half of all men and one-third of women had at least one at-risk drinking episode in the last year. Furthermore, one-fifth of Americans believe that regardless of how much a person drinks, it isn't a problem unless there are negative impacts on their personal relationships or work performance.

The public opinion poll findings come as thousands of community-based organizations, military installations, and colleges prepare to host **National Alcohol Screening Day** events on Thursday, **April 11**. Anonymous online screenings are available at www.HowDoYouScore.org.

"These findings reinforce just how important National Alcohol Screening Day is," said Douglas G. Jacobs, M.D., associate clinical professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School and medical director of Screening for Mental Health, Inc. "Despite public opinion, at-risk drinking increases your chances of developing alcohol use disorders—such as alcoholism—as well as other physical and mental health problems. In the U.S., about 18 million people have an alcohol use disorder. The screenings allow individuals to assess their drinking habits and have an opportunity to connect with local support resources."

The telephone poll, conducted by Anderson Robbins Research, surveyed 1,000 American adults between March 22 and 28 and gathered information on drinking habits, opinions, and perceptions. Interviews were conducted by professional interviewers. Respondents were randomly selected for inclusion in the survey and were interviewed on cell phones and landlines.

Other key findings include:

- Seven in 10 respondents (68%) said they'd be likely to speak with a health care provider if they thought they might have a problem with alcohol, but this drops to just half (51%) among those who had the most at-risk drinking episodes (20+ times) in the past year.
- One-fifth (20%) feel that drinking heavily is a phase that many kids go through, but that it will not hurt them in the long run. However, according to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), people who started drinking before age 15 were 50% more likely to become alcohol dependent as adults. The same was true to a lesser extent for those who started drinking between ages 15 and 17.
- At-risk drinking is highly correlated with age and gender. Men under age 35 are the most likely (71%) to report at-risk drinking and women over age 55 are the least likely (21%).
- Over three-quarters (77%) of Americans think pregnant women should avoid alcohol altogether, while one-fifth (20%) think an occasional glass of wine is fine. According to NIAAA,

no amount of alcohol is safe during pregnancy. Consuming any kind of alcohol can potentially harm an unborn child.

Held annually in April as part of Alcohol Awareness Month, National Alcohol Screening Day raises awareness about alcohol misuse and provides referral options for individuals with alcohol problems for further treatment. More than 40,000 screenings were taken online and at in-person events last National Alcohol Screening Day. To take an anonymous and free screening online, visit www.HowDoYouScore.org.

Read more details of the survey [here](#).

Screening for Mental Health Inc. (SMH) is the non-profit organization that first introduced the concept of large-scale mental health screenings with its flagship program, National Depression Screening Day®, in 1991. SMH programs include both in-person and online programs for depression, bipolar disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder, eating disorders, alcohol problems, and suicide prevention. SMH programs have been used by hospitals, mental health centers, social service agencies, government agencies, older adult facilities, primary care clinicians, colleges, secondary schools, corporations, and military installations reaching individuals ranging from adolescents to older adults.

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