



## Alcohol Regulation in India

**For Prelims:** [Methanol](#), [Ethanol](#), [National Health Mission](#), [Seventh Schedule](#), [National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction](#), [National Mental Health Policy \(2014\)](#), [National Action Plan and Monitoring Framework for Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases](#), [Excise Act, 1944](#), [National Suicide Prevention Strategy \(NSPS\) 2022](#).

**For Mains:** Issue of Alcohol Consumption in India, Alcohol Regulation in India- related Provisions and Challenges, Effect Liquor Consumption on the Human Body.

**Source: TH**

### Why in News?

India is witnessing a steady rise in **alcohol** consumption, which, despite its well-documented links to **health risks, violence, crime, suicides**, and financial distress, remains unregulated by a unified national strategy, prompting urgent calls for a comprehensive **National Alcohol Control Policy and Programme**.

### What are the Key Driving Factors for Alcohol Consumption in India?

- **Alcohol Prevalence in India:** As per the NFHS-5, **14.6% of people aged 10-75 (16 crore) consume alcohol in India with 23% of men and 1% of women.**
  - India ranks among the **highest globally in heavy episodic drinking**, with **2.6 million DALYs (Disability-Adjusted Life Years)** and a **societal cost of Rs 6.24 trillion (2021)**.
  - **High-use States:** Chhattisgarh, Tripura, Punjab, Arunachal Pradesh, Goa; **High disorder prevalence (>10%):** Tripura, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, Chhattisgarh, Arunachal Pradesh.
- **Key Driving Factors:**
  - **Biopsychosocial Determinants:** Alcohol use is driven by **genetic predisposition**, as it activates the [brain's reward system](#), making it addictive like nicotine or cocaine.
    - **Psychologically**, it is used to cope with **stress, anxiety**, or to seek **euphoria**.
    - **Socially**, factors like **urban lifestyle, peer pressure**, and **glamorized media portrayals** have normalised its use.
  - **Commercial Determinants:** Alcohol use is promoted through [surrogate advertising](#), **influencer marketing**, and **OTT content**.
    - **Product innovations** like **pre-mixed drinks and flavoured spirits** attract youth.
    - **Easy availability** via retail outlets, online delivery, and **attractive packaging** enhances visibility. **Low-cost Indian Made Indian Liquor (IMIL)** targets the rural poor, while **rising urban incomes** increase affordability.
  - **Policy Gaps:** **Regulatory loopholes, State dependence on excise revenue**, and lack of a **unified national policy** enable harmful alcohol consumption to persist unchecked.

### What are the Key Regulations Related to Alcohol Usage in India?

- **State Level: Alcohol regulation** falls under the **State List of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution**, giving States exclusive authority over its **production, sale, and distribution**, resulting in wide inter-State legal variations.
  - States like **Bihar, Gujarat, Nagaland, and Mizoram** enforce prohibition, while others have experimented with bans.
  - **Some states exploring for online alcohol delivery** via platforms like Swiggy and Zomato **contradicts access restrictions**.
  - **Legal drinking age varies from 18 to 25 years; pricing regulations exist in only 19 States/UTs.**
- **National Level:** It includes:
  - [National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction \(NAPDDR\) 2021-22](#) under **Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyan** addresses alcohol regulation.
  - [National Mental Health Policy \(2014\)](#) links alcohol to mental illness.
  - [National Health Policy \(2017\)](#) and [National Suicide Prevention Strategy \(NSPS\) 2022](#) recommend control measures.
  - [National Action Plan and Monitoring Framework for Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases \(NMAP\) 2017-2022](#) advocates for a **national alcohol policy**.
  - [Excise Act, 1944](#) regulates the production and distribution of alcohol, including penalties for illegal manufacturing.
  - [Article 47 \(DPSP\)](#) provides that the State shall endeavour to **prohibit the consumption of intoxicating drinks and drugs injurious to health** and to **improve public health and nutrition**.

## What are the Key Challenges to Alcohol Regulation in India?

- **Fragmented & Inconsistent Policies:** Alcohol being a **State subject** leads to **divergent policies**, with no **unified national framework**, causing inconsistent regulation, conflicting approaches, and weak coordination across States and Ministries.
  - Also, poor monitoring enables **illicit liquor trade, underage drinking**, and non-compliance with licensing and pricing norms, especially in rural and peri-urban areas.
- **Revenue Dependency of States:** **High revenue dependency** on alcohol excise duty, which is **outside the GST ambit**, incentivizes States to **prioritize liquor sales over stricter regulation or prohibition**. This creates a **conflict between fiscal interests and public health objectives**, hindering effective alcohol control policies.
- **Regulatory Gaps & Evasion:** **Surrogate advertising, celebrity endorsements, and digital influencers** exploit loopholes in advertising laws, while **online delivery** increases access despite restrictions.
- **Political-Bureaucratic Nexus:** Political protection and bureaucratic complicity in the **illegal liquor trade**, aided by **corruption and bribery**, weaken enforcement and allow bootleggers to operate with impunity.
- **Low Public Awareness and Health Literacy:** Limited awareness of alcohol's link to **mental illness, NCDs, cancer, and socioeconomic harms** (like poverty and domestic violence) hampers public demand for regulation and behaviour change.

## What measures Should Be Taken to Effectively Address India's Alcohol Crisis?

- **Affordability:** Raise **excise duties** to discourage excessive consumption while ensuring safeguards against a shift to **illicit liquor**, especially among the poor.
- **Allocation:** **Earmark alcohol tax revenues specifically for public health, de-addiction, and rehabilitation programmes, with transparent utilisation to prevent diversion and undue corporate influence.**
- **Accessibility:** **Limit physical and digital access** by restricting alcohol sales in **residential areas, malls, food courts**, and curbing **online delivery** through platforms like **Swiggy, Zomato, and Blinkit** to denormalize casual consumption.
- **Advertisement:** **Ban surrogate and influencer-led promotions**, and regulate **algorithm-driven amplification** of alcohol-related content across **social media and**

#### OTT platforms.

- **Attractiveness:** Enforce **plain packaging, prominent health warnings**, and **ban in-store promotional displays** to reduce alcohol's glamorized and aspirational appeal.
- **Awareness:** Launch **nationwide public awareness campaigns**, drawing from **tobacco control successes**, to highlight links between alcohol and **cancer, mental illness, domestic violence, and poverty**, especially targeting youth and vulnerable communities.
- **Artificial Intelligence (AI):** Use **AI tools** to detect and curb **digital misinformation**, promotional content, and **underage targeting**, while also aiding in **monitoring policy violations and enforcement**.
- **National Level Policy:** A **National Alcohol Control Policy and Programme** must be formulated to ensure a **coordinated, public health-oriented approach** that prioritises **people over profit, prevention over revenue**, and **long-term societal well-being over short-term fiscal gains**.

## Conclusion

India's growing **alcohol crisis** demands urgent, **coordinated action** beyond fragmented **State policies**. A comprehensive **National Alcohol Control Policy**, rooted in **public health** and **social equity**, is essential to curb rising **consumption** and related **harms**. Prioritising **prevention, awareness**, and **regulation** over **revenue interests** will ensure **long-term well-being** and **sustainable governance**.

#### **Drishti Mains Question:**

Q. India's rising alcohol consumption poses major public health and governance challenges. Discuss the need for a National Alcohol Control Policy and suggest key measures to address it.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

### **Prelims:**

**Q. Bisphenol A (BPA), a cause of concern, is a structural/key component in the manufacture of which of the following kinds of plastics? (2021)**

- (a) Low-density polyethylene
- (b) Polycarbonate
- (c) Polyethylene terephthalate
- (d) Polyvinyl chloride

**Answer: (b)**

**Q. 'Triclosan', considered harmful when exposed to high levels for a long time, is most likely present in which of the following? (2021)**

- (a) Food preservatives
- (b) Fruit-ripening substances
- (c) Reused plastic containers
- (d) Toiletries

**Answer: (d)**

PDF Refernece URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/printpdf/alcohol-regulation-in-india>

