

# UNRECORDED ALCOHOL

## IN THE AMERICAS

### What is unrecorded alcohol?

Unrecorded alcohol is **alcohol that is not accounted for by official government systems**. It is usually produced, distributed, and sold outside the formal channels under government control.



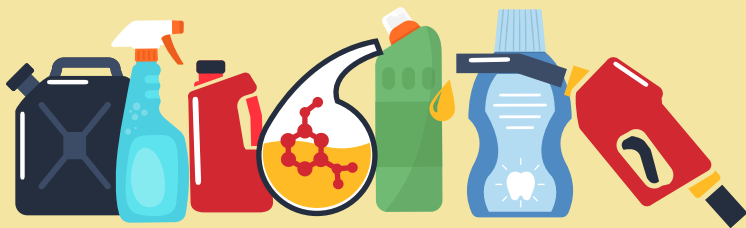
### Unrecorded alcohol includes:

- Informally produced alcohol such as homemade fermented or distilled beverages and small-scale production of traditional beverages:
  - > Pulque, Mexico
  - > Chicha de jora and cañazo, Peru.
- Illicit alcohol such as alcohol smuggled across borders or produced illegally to avoid taxes and tariffs.



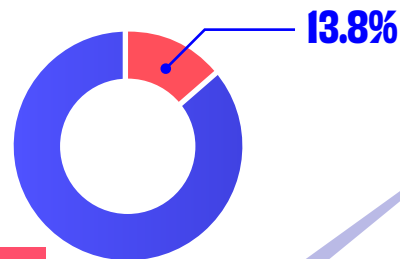
### Surrogate alcohol

which encompasses ethanol-based products that are not officially intended for human consumption:



**Mouthwash; Medical tinctures; Windshield washer fluid; Hand sanitizer; Antifreeze; Cleaning fluids; Ethanol used as fuel in cars.**

### Unrecorded alcohol facts



#### FACT 1:

**13.8% of the alcohol consumed in the Americas is unrecorded.**

#### FACT 2:

**The harms associated with unrecorded alcohol are similar to those of recorded alcohol (with the exception of methanol poisoning and harms caused by contaminants).**

#### FACT 3:

**Unrecorded alcohol products are often consumed by chronic heavy drinkers, people with alcohol use disorders, and socially marginalized populations.**



### WHAT ARE THE DANGERS ASSOCIATED WITH CONSUMING UNRECORDED ALCOHOL?



In all alcoholic beverages, commercial or not, **ethanol is the ingredient responsible for most of the harms from alcohol**. However, **unrecorded alcohol may contain contaminants**, such as methanol and heavy metals, that are also harmful. If consumed, **these types of alcohol can result in blindness and death**, even in relatively small doses.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### For consumers:

- **Avoid non-commercial alcohol products**, especially if you do not know their origin and how they were produced. If you accidentally drink contaminated alcohol, seek help immediately, contacting a poison control center or going to an emergency room.
- **Seek help** if you think you may be drinking too much and can benefit from drinking less.

#### For governments:

- Unrecorded alcohols are not regulated by governments. Countries should consider improving their monitoring and surveillance to track unrecorded alcohol.
- Countries can also implement policies to enforce alcohol laws and prevent the use of unrecorded alcohols (such as alcohol stamps).

#### Sources:

- Pan American Health Organization. Regional Status Report on Alcohol and Health 2020. Washington, DC: PAHO; 2020. Available from: <https://iris.paho.org/handle/10665.2/52705>.
- Lachenmeier DW, Neufeld M, Rehm J. The Impact of Unrecorded Alcohol Use on Health: What Do We Know in 2020? J Stud Alcohol Drugs. 2021;82(1):28–41. <https://doi.org/10.15288/jsad.2021.82.28>.



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