Disabled Latino Youth Struggle With Alcohol Abuse

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Disabled young people in Latin America and the Caribbean have the largest alcohol abuse problem in the world, according to a study published in the medical journal *The Lancet* and published by Fox News Latino.

It seems youth all over the world are struggling to maintain their health and disabled Latino youth are fighting particularly hard against alcohol dependency. For this study, the first comprehensive look at the health of young people around the world, researchers from the World Health Organization set out to measure causes of disability.

Using data from the WHO's 2004 Global Burden of Disease report, researchers gathered information from men and woman in different age groups living in rich and poor countries and then calculated how many healthy years were lost because of a disability.

Researchers found that youth between 10 and 24 years old were responsible for 15.5 percent of the total number of years lost, making up a large portion of the disabled population. Researchers also found that the No. 1 reason for disability among youth was a mental health disorder, comprising about 45 percent of the disability burden. In fact, psychiatric disorders caused four time as much disability as unintentional injury (12 percent) and infection and parasitic diseases (10 percent).

And finally, researchers found that the main risk factors to those lost years were alcohol and unsafe sex, accounting for 7 percent and 4 percent of lost time. For Latin American and Caribbean youth, alcohol abuse was the largest cause of disability, making researchers question where health priorities should lie.

"A large population of young people are affected and are suffering," said lead author Fiona Gore, a WHO researcher. "This means they lose years of healthy life."

Researchers are hoping this study will prompt governments to scale up their alcohol regulations for youth.

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