

CDC: Heavy drinking a costly burden to US

August 13 2013



Report tallies \$223 billion in total losses, especially from binge drinking.

(HealthDay)—Excessive drinking is a major economic problem in the United States, costing billions of dollars in health care costs, lost worker productivity and other consequences involved, the federal government reported Tuesday.

The nationwide economic burden of excessive drinking in 2006 was \$223.5 billion. The cost for each state ranged from \$420 million in North Dakota to \$32 billion in California. The median cost per state for each single alcoholic drink was \$1.91, the report said.

The highest per-person cost from excessive drinking was \$1,662 in Washington, D.C. Meanwhile, Utah had the highest cost per drink at \$2.74. The government paid for about \$2 of every \$5 in state costs, ranging from 37 percent of costs in Mississippi to 45 percent of the costs

in Utah, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report.

Binge drinking—defined as having five or more drinks per occasion for men and four or more drinks for women—was responsible for more than 70 percent of excessive-drinking-related costs.

The share of excessive-drinking-related costs caused by lost productivity ranged from 61 percent in Wyoming to 82 percent in Washington, D.C., while the share caused by [health care expenses](#) ranged from 8 percent in Texas to 16 percent in Vermont.

Other contributors to the costs of excessive drinking include property damage, [traffic crashes](#) and criminal justice proceedings, according to the study, which appears online Aug. 13 in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*.

"This study alerts states to the huge economic impact of excessive alcohol use, and shows how it affects all of us by reducing productivity, increasing criminal justice expenses and increasing health care costs," CDC Director Dr. Thomas Frieden said in an agency news release. "Effective prevention programs can support people in making wise choices about drinking alcohol, and help reduce the huge personal and social costs of [excessive drinking](#)."

The researchers believe the study's findings are underestimated because it did not include other related costs, such as pain and suffering among excessive drinkers or others affected by their drinking.

Excessive drinking causes an average of 80,000 deaths and 2.3 million years of potential life lost in the United States each year. Binge drinking causes more than half of those deaths and two-thirds of the years of life lost, according to the CDC.

More information: The U.S. National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism has more about [alcohol-use disorders](#).

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Citation: CDC: Heavy drinking a costly burden to US (2013, August 13) retrieved 16 January 2023 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-08-cdc-heavy-costly-burden.html>

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