



## Press Release

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### **Binge drinking is bigger problem than previously thought** *U. S. adults binge drink more frequently and consume more drinks when they do*

More than 38 million U.S. adults binge drink an average of four times a month, or almost once a week, with some consuming as much as eight drinks per binge according to a new [Vital Signs](#) report from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#). While binge drinking is more common among young adults ages 18-34, of those age 65 and older who report binge drinking, they do so more often – an average of five to six times a month.

Binge drinking is more common among those with household incomes of \$75,000 or more, but the largest number of drinks consumed per occasion is significantly higher among binge drinkers with household incomes of less than \$25,000 – an average of eight to nine drinks, the report said.

Binge drinking is defined as consuming four or more drinks for women and five or more drinks for men on an occasion. Binge drinkers also put themselves and others at risk for many health and social problems, including car crashes, other unintentional injuries, violence, liver disease, certain cancers, heart disease, sexually transmitted diseases, and both unintended and alcohol-exposed pregnancies.

Drinking too much, including binge drinking, causes more than 80,000 deaths in the United States each year, making it the third leading preventable cause of death, and was responsible for more than \$223.5 billion in economic costs in 2006. Over half of these deaths result from injuries that disproportionately involve young people.

“Binge drinking causes a wide range of health, social and economic problems and this report confirms the problem is really widespread,” said [CDC Director Thomas R. Frieden, M.D., M.P.H.](#) “We need to work together to implement proven measures to reduce binge drinking at national, state and community levels.”

Adult binge drinking is most common in the Midwest, New England, the District of Columbia, Alaska and Hawaii, the report said. However, binge drinkers consume more drinks in the southern part of the Mountain states (Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah), the Midwest, and some states where binge drinking is less common - including Louisiana, Mississippi and South Carolina.

CDC scientists analyzed data on self-reports of binge drinking within the past 30 days for about 458,000 U.S. adults aged 18 years and older. The data were in the 2010 [Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System \(BRFSS\)](#). The data used in this study included about 36,000 cell phone respondents.

“It is alarming that binge drinkers are drinking like this almost every week, sometimes up to eight drinks per binge, but this risk to lives can be reduced,” said Robert Brewer, M.D., M.S.P.H., Alcohol Program leader at the CDC and one of the authors of the report. “CDC is working in collaboration with our partners to strengthen binge drinking prevention through improved public health surveillance of excessive alcohol use and by supporting the implementation of community-based prevention strategies that can reduce excessive drinking.”



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Adult binge drinking also casts a shadow on future generations.

“Binge drinking by adults has a huge public health impact, and influences the drinking behavior of underage youth by the example it sets,” said [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administrator Pamela S. Hyde](#). “We need to reduce binge drinking by adults to prevent the immediate and long-term effects it has on the health of adults and youth.”

For more information about binge drinking and how to prevent this dangerous behavior, visit the CDC’s Alcohol and Public Health website at <http://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/index.htm>. Members of the public who are concerned about their own or someone else's binge drinking can call 1-800-662-HELP to receive assistance from the national Drug and Alcohol Treatment Referral Routing Service. For state-specific estimates of alcohol-related deaths and years of potential life lost by condition, visit the Alcohol-Related Disease Impact system at <https://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/ardi/HomePage.aspx>.

#### *About Vital Signs*

[CDC Vital Signs](#) is a report that appears on the first Tuesday of the month as part of the CDC journal [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report \(MMWR\)](#). Vital Signs is designed to provide the latest data and information on key health indicators — cancer prevention, obesity, tobacco use, alcohol use, prescription drug overdose, HIV/AIDS, motor vehicle passenger safety, health care-associated infections, cardiovascular health, teen pregnancy, access to health care, and food safety.

[CDC works 24/7](#) saving lives, protecting people from health threats, and saving money through prevention. Whether these threats are global or domestic, chronic or acute, curable or preventable, natural disaster or deliberate attack, CDC is the nation’s health protection agency.

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