

Binge Drinking Costs Billions in Wisconsin, Study Finds



A new study calculates binge drinking cost Wisconsin \$6.8 billion last year.

Easy availability of alcohol, combined with low alcohol taxes, has contributed to high rates of alcohol use in the state, NPR reports.

One-fourth of adults in Wisconsin are binge drinkers, the highest percentage in the country. Binge drinking is defined as having five or more drinks in a short period for men, and four for women.

The study by the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute calculates binge drinking costs each person in the state about \$1,200 in higher taxes, more health care and other costs. Study co-author Penny Black told NPR there were 50,000 hospitalizations in Wisconsin due to binge drinking in 2011.

More than 60,000 binge drinkers were arrested in 2010. The large number of college students in the state plays a role, Black observed. "We know that binge drinking is a huge problem in the 18- to 25-year-old population, but in Wisconsin specifically, that behavior continues past college," she said. "And it's really kind of a norm. And that's why we are No. 1 in the nation as far as binge drinking rates."

"Overall alcohol use is a problem in the state—the general consumption rate for alcohol is 30 percent higher than the national average. One reason is that alcohol is easy to obtain, she said. "Alcohol is available at every event — church event, school event, sporting event. We have local control here so there is no monitoring of the number of licenses that are allowed for people to sell alcohol."

Low alcohol taxes also contribute to the problem, according to Black. Wisconsin has one of the lowest alcohol taxes in the country. "We know that increased prices are a deterrent for younger drinkers, so it would help on front end in that it would reduce some drinking," she said. "And then on the other end it would help pay for more of the problems that are caused by excessive alcohol use."

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However, for millions of individuals and family members, alcohol is a source devastating pain and loss. Alcohol is addictive and the state of addiction to alcohol is known as the disease of alcoholism.

To begin to better understand alcoholism, there is a great deal we need to talk about regarding alcohol and it's effect on the individual, the family and many of major problems faced by our society - crime, drinking and driving and in the workplace. In addition, we need to discuss the special role that alcohol plays in problems among women, veterans and seniors. [Click here](#) to find valuable information NCADD offers about Alcohol and Alcoholism.