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Excessive Alcohol Use Costs $223.5 Billion Annually, CDC Reports

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Excessive alcohol use costs the United States $223.5 billion annually, according to a new study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Binge drinking accounts for more than 70 percent of these costs.

"It is striking to see most of the costs of excessive drinking in states and D.C. are due to binge drinking, which is reported by about 18 percent of U.S. adults," report author Dr. Robert Brewer, alcohol program lead at CDC, said in a statement.

CBS News reports the median state cost associated with excessive alcohol use was $2.9 billion; about $2 of every $5 was paid for by the government. Alcohol-related costs totaled almost $32 billion in California, compared with $420 million in North Dakota.

The authors concluded costs due to excessive drinking largely came from losses in workplace productivity, healthcare expenses and costs resulting from criminal justice expenses, motor vehicle crashes and property damage. The report found underage drinking accounted for $24.6 billion, or 11 percent, of the total excessive drinking costs.

The findings are published in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*.

In 2012, the CDC released a report that found 38 million American adults are binge drinkers, and most of them are ages 18 to 34. Binge drinking is defined as men who have five or more drinks in one sitting, and women who have four or more drinks at one time.

The CDC recommends a number of strategies to reduce alcohol-related costs, including increasing alcohol taxes, limiting the number of alcohol retailers in certain areas and holding retailers liable for selling alcohol to obviously intoxicated people or minors who cause death or injury to others.