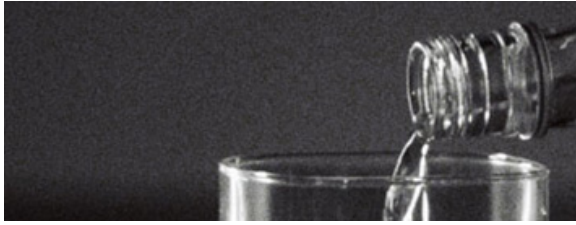


## The High Price of Excessive Alcohol Consumption



Excessive alcohol consumption is known to cause about 79,000 deaths in the U.S. each year, but a new study released by the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC) and the Lewin Group shows that it also has a huge impact on our wallets.

The cost of excessive alcohol consumption in the U. S. reached **\$223.5 billion** in 2006, or about \$1.90 per drink. Almost three-quarters of these costs were due to binge drinking, which is defined as consuming 4 or more alcoholic beverages per occasion for women or 5 or more drinks per occasion for men. Binge drinking is the most common form of excessive alcohol consumption in the U.S.

The researchers found the cost of excessive alcohol consumption to be far-reaching, affecting many aspects of the excessive drinker's life and on the lives of those around them. The costs largely resulted from losses in workplace productivity (72% of the total cost), healthcare expenses for problems caused by excessive drinking (11% of total), law enforcement and other criminal justice expenses related to excessive alcohol consumption (9% of total), and motor vehicle crash costs from impaired driving (6% of the total).

The study analyzed national data from multiple sources to estimate the costs due to excessive alcohol consumption in 2006, the most recent year for which data were available. The study did not consider a number of other costs such as

those due to pain and suffering among either the excessive drinker or others that were affected by their drinking, and thus may be an underestimate. Nevertheless, the researchers estimated that excessive drinking cost \$746 for every man, woman, and child in the U.S. in 2006.

### What You Need to Know About Binge Drinking

Binge drinking is reported by about 15% of U.S. adults, and is most common among men, 18-34 year olds, whites, and people with household incomes of \$75,000 or more. Most binge drinkers are not alcohol dependent.

### How Can We Prevent Excessive Alcohol Consumption and Reduce Its Economic Costs?

There are many evidence-based strategies that communities can use to prevent excessive drinking. These include increasing alcohol excise taxes, reducing alcohol outlet density, reducing the days and hours of alcohol sales, and holding alcohol retailers liable for injuries or damage done by their intoxicated or underage customers.

By implementing some or all of these evidence-based strategies, communities can reduce excessive alcohol consumption and the many costs related to it.

For more information on effective strategies communities can use to prevent excessive drinking and its costs, go to <http://www.thecommunityguide.org/alcohol>.

For tools and resources related to the surveillance and prevention of excessive alcohol consumption and its costs, go to <http://www.cdc.gov/alcohol>.

Source: Economic Costs of Excessive Alcohol consumption in the U.S., 2006. <http://www.ajpmonline.org/>