



Alcohol and Public Health

Excessive Drinking is Draining the U.S. Economy

The cost of excessive alcohol use in the U.S. was almost a quarter trillion dollars in 2010. Implementing effective community-based interventions can reduce excessive drinking and its costs.

Excessive alcohol use is known to kill more than 140,000 people in the United States each year, but a [CDC study](#) suggests it is also a drain on the American economy, mostly due to losses in workplace productivity.

Overview of study findings

Total costs

The cost of excessive alcohol use in the United States reached **\$249 billion** in 2010, or about **\$2.05 per drink**. Most (77%) of these costs were due to **binge drinking**. Binge drinking is defined as drinking four or more alcoholic beverages per occasion for women or five or more drinks per occasion for men. Further, 2 of every 5 dollars were paid by federal, state, and local governments, demonstrating that we are all paying for excessive alcohol use.



State costs

Excessive alcohol use cost states and the District of Columbia (D.C.) a median of \$3.5 billion in 2010, ranging from \$488 million in North Dakota to \$35 billion in California. D.C. had the highest cost per person (\$1,526, compared to the \$807 national average), and New Mexico had the highest cost per drink (\$2.77, compared to the \$2.05 national average).

Cost Breakout

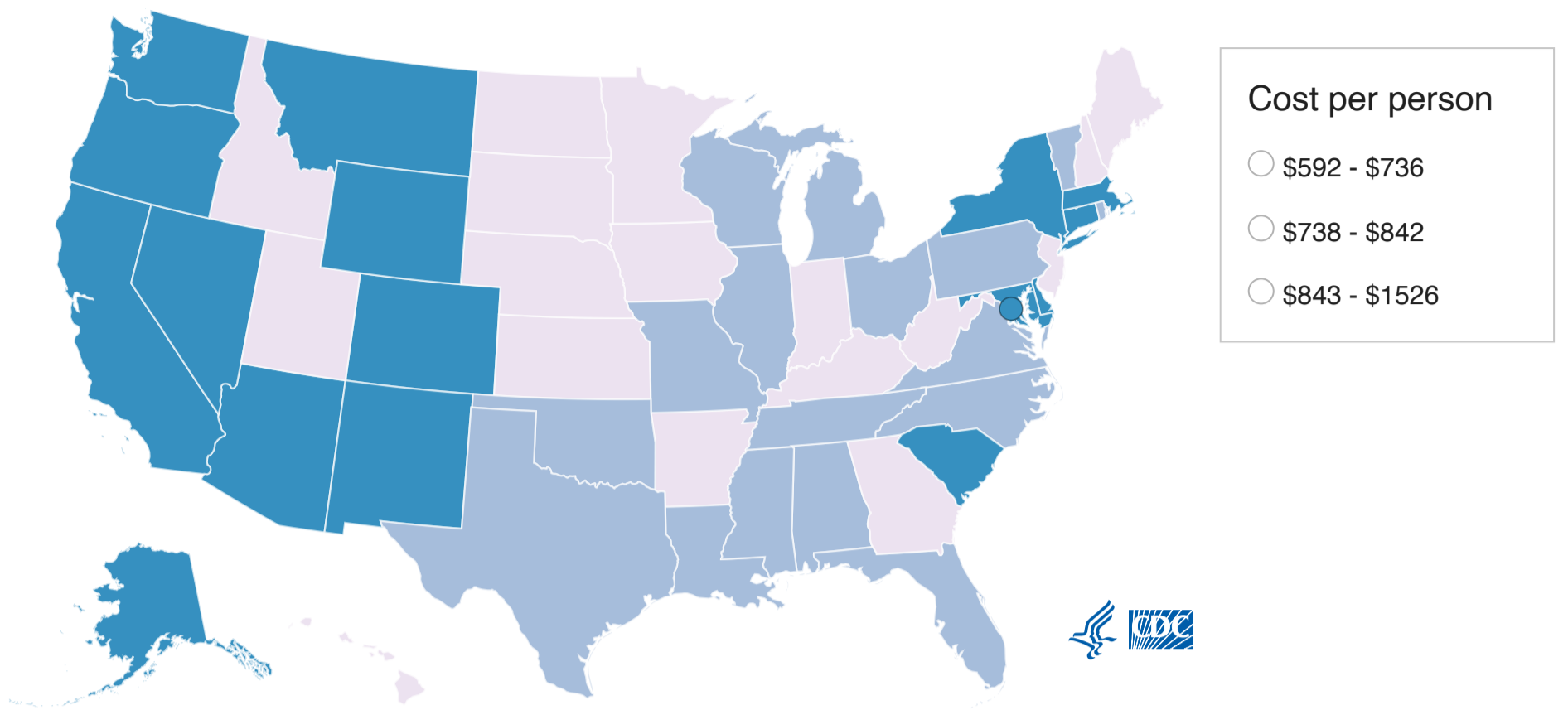
The researchers found that the cost of this dangerous behavior impacts many aspects of the drinker's life and the lives of those around them. However, most of the costs resulted from losses in **workplace productivity** (72% of the total cost), **health care** expenses for treating problems caused by excessive drinking (11% of total), law enforcement and other **criminal justice** expenses (10%), and losses from **motor vehicle crashes** related to excessive alcohol use (5%).

These estimates update two previous CDC studies that found excessive drinking cost the U.S. \$223.5 billion and cost states and D.C. a median of \$2.9 billion in 2006. The researchers believe that the study still underestimates the cost of excessive drinking because information on alcohol is often underreported or unavailable, and the study did not include other costs, such as pain and suffering due to alcohol-related injuries and diseases.



Binge drinking is defined as 4 or more alcoholic beverages per occasion for women or 5 or more drinks per occasion for men.





[Download Data \(CSV\)](#)

Data Table			
Location	Cost per person	Total cost	Cost per drink
<input type="radio"/> Alabama	\$779	\$3,724,300,000	\$2.27
<input type="radio"/> Alaska	\$1165	\$827,200,000	\$2.25
<input type="radio"/> Arizona	\$930	\$5,946,400,000	\$2.27
<input type="radio"/> Arkansas	\$711	\$2,073,300,000	\$2.27
<input type="radio"/> California	\$940	\$35,010,600,000	\$2.44
<input type="radio"/> Colorado	\$1005	\$5,056,500,000	\$2.14
<input type="radio"/> Connecticut	\$847	\$3,029,000,000	\$2.04
<input type="radio"/> Delaware	\$895	\$803,800,000	\$1.64
<input type="radio"/> District Of Columbia	\$1526	\$918,400,000	\$2.14
<input type="radio"/> Florida	\$815	\$15,322,200,000	\$1.82
<input type="radio"/> Georgia	\$715	\$6,930,900,000	\$2.12
<input type="radio"/> Hawaii	\$689	\$937,400,000	\$1.58
<input type="radio"/> Idaho	\$726	\$1,137,900,000	\$1.62
<input type="radio"/> Illinois	\$757	\$9,715,700,000	\$1.86
<input type="radio"/> Indiana	\$689	\$4,468,200,000	\$1.96
<input type="radio"/> Iowa	\$635	\$1,933,600,000	\$1.59
<input type="radio"/> Kansas	\$728	\$2,075,800,000	\$2.18
<input type="radio"/> Kentucky	\$736	\$3,194,500,000	\$2.36
<input type="radio"/> Louisiana	\$839	\$3,801,400,000	\$1.91
<input type="radio"/> Maine	\$707	\$938,700,000	\$1.58
<input type="radio"/> Maryland	\$860	\$4,964,700,000	\$2.22
<input type="radio"/> Massachusetts	\$861	\$5,634,600,000	\$1.93
<input type="radio"/> Michigan	\$826	\$8,161,700,000	\$2.1
<input type="radio"/> Minnesota	\$733	\$3,886,400,000	\$1.74
<input type="radio"/> Mississippi	\$768	\$2,277,400,000	\$2.05
<input type="radio"/> Missouri	\$769	\$4,603,600,000	\$1.83
<input type="radio"/> Montana	\$880	\$870,800,000	\$1.73
<input type="radio"/> Nebraska	\$639	\$1,166,500,000	\$1.61
<input type="radio"/> Nevada	\$850	\$2,296,300,000	\$1.49

Location	Cost per person	Total cost	Cost per drink
<input type="radio"/> New Hampshire	\$729	\$959,900,000	\$0.92
<input type="radio"/> New Jersey	\$702	\$6,175,200,000	\$1.7
<input type="radio"/> New Mexico	\$1084	\$2,232,900,000	\$2.77
<input type="radio"/> New York	\$843	\$16,330,200,000	\$2.28
<input type="radio"/> North Carolina	\$738	\$7,034,200,000	\$2.11
<input type="radio"/> North Dakota	\$725	\$487,600,000	\$1.4
<input type="radio"/> Ohio	\$739	\$8,519,800,000	\$2.1
<input type="radio"/> Oklahoma	\$821	\$3,081,200,000	\$2.49
<input type="radio"/> Oregon	\$919	\$3,520,200,000	\$2.08
<input type="radio"/> Pennsylvania	\$751	\$9,544,200,000	\$1.92
<input type="radio"/> Rhode Island	\$842	\$886,500,000	\$1.82
<input type="radio"/> South Carolina	\$861	\$3,982,900,000	\$2.13
<input type="radio"/> South Dakota	\$735	\$598,200,000	\$1.59
<input type="radio"/> Tennessee	\$738	\$4,683,800,000	\$2.25
<input type="radio"/> Texas	\$748	\$18,820,600,000	\$1.99
<input type="radio"/> Utah	\$592	\$1,636,100,000	\$2.74
<input type="radio"/> Vermont	\$820	\$513,000,000	\$1.66
<input type="radio"/> Virginia	\$766	\$6,126,000,000	\$2.06
<input type="radio"/> Washington	\$863	\$5,805,100,000	\$2.23
<input type="radio"/> West Virginia	\$720	\$1,334,900,000	\$2.2
<input type="radio"/> Wisconsin	\$783	\$4,452,900,000	\$1.62
<input type="radio"/> Wyoming	\$1052	\$593,100,000	\$2.33

How can we prevent excessive alcohol consumption and reduce its economic costs?

Communities can use effective interventions to prevent excessive drinking and related harms and costs. These include:

- Implementing pricing strategies to increase the price of alcohol
- Regulating the number and location of where alcohol is sold (outlet density).
- Holding alcohol retailers liable for injuries or damages caused by their intoxicated or underage customers.
- Avoiding moving from state-controlled alcohol sales to commercial alcohol sales (privatization).

More Information

- [Learn more about effective strategies communities for preventing excessive drinking](#)