

New study shows economic and social impact of excessive drinking in Minnesota

Excessive drinking cost Minnesotans nearly \$8 billion in 2019, according to a new study from the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) published today in the [American Journal of Preventive Medicine](#).

The study found the greatest financial cost fell on those who drink excessively and their families, as well as government and health insurance providers. Other parts of society, including employers, also were found to experience negative impacts from excessive drinking.

“Excessive drinking can significantly affect individual health, but it also has a cost for families, communities, and the health care system,” said Minnesota Commissioner of Health Jan Malcolm. “The financial burden is staggering, and of course there are additional psychological and societal impacts and harms in addition to those measured here. It’s important that we acknowledge these impacts and find ways to mitigate them.”

The study shows excessive drinking cost Minnesotans \$7.85 billion in 2019, through lost productivity, health care costs, and other costs such as those related to criminal justice and motor vehicle crashes. The total financial cost equals \$1,383 per Minnesota resident.

Excessive drinking includes binge drinking (four or more drinks on an occasion for women, five or more drinks for men), heavy drinking (eight or more drinks per week for women, 15 or more drinks per week for men), or any drinking among pregnant people or people under age 21.

Key findings of the report include:

- Lost productivity accounted for almost three-quarters of the financial costs, including increased absenteeism, impaired productivity at work and at home, premature mortality, and incarceration.
- About 3% of inpatient hospital treatments were attributable to alcohol, but these visits accounted for 35% of all inpatient health care costs.
- For each alcoholic drink purchased, people in Minnesota experience an impact cost equivalent of \$2.86.
- Binge drinking contributed to 73% of the financial costs to society, or \$5.7 billion. These costs are due to things like lost productivity, crime, motor vehicle crashes, and fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.

Established methods from national studies were used to apply alcohol-attributable fractions for health care, lost productivity, crime, and other effects (e.g., motor vehicle crashes) to 2019 Minnesota data, to quantify these costs.

In addition to the economic costs, excessive drinking is linked to an increased risk of violence and injury, like traffic crashes, and chronic health problems like liver disease, heart disease, high blood pressure, and some cancers.

One strategy being implemented in Minnesota to reduce the harms of excessive drinking is called Place of Last Drink (POLD). POLD is an initiative in almost 30 Minnesota communities that systematically collects data on where individuals last drank when they are stopped for any type of alcohol-related incident (e.g., traffic stop, domestic violence). Establishments that are named more frequently can be offered assistance and education to improve practices to reduce illegal service to already intoxicated patrons.

People in Minnesota can use this tool to learn more about their drinking and make a plan to avoid drinking to excess ([CDC: Check Your Drinking](#)).

For more information about alcohol and your health and links to additional resources visit MDH's [Alcohol and Your Health](#) website and [Costs of Excessive Alcohol Use in Minnesota](#).