

Alcohol use among adults in Minnesota

Excessive alcohol use includes binge drinking, heavy drinking, and any drinking by pregnant women or people younger than age 21.¹ It can lead to both short- and long-term health and safety issues. Short-term harms include injuries such as motor vehicle crashes or drowning; violence including homicide, suicide, and intimate partner violence; alcohol poisoning; and poor birth outcomes.¹ Long-term alcohol use can lead to several types of cancer and chronic diseases such as heart disease, liver disease, digestive problems, and alcohol use disorder.¹

In 2023, most adults aged 18 and older in Minnesota reported drinking alcohol during the past month (58.4% overall; 55.5% of women, 61.4% of men) and 17% reported binge drinking (i.e. more than four drinks on an occasion for women, and more than five drinks for men).

Overall, males were more likely to report binge drinking than females.

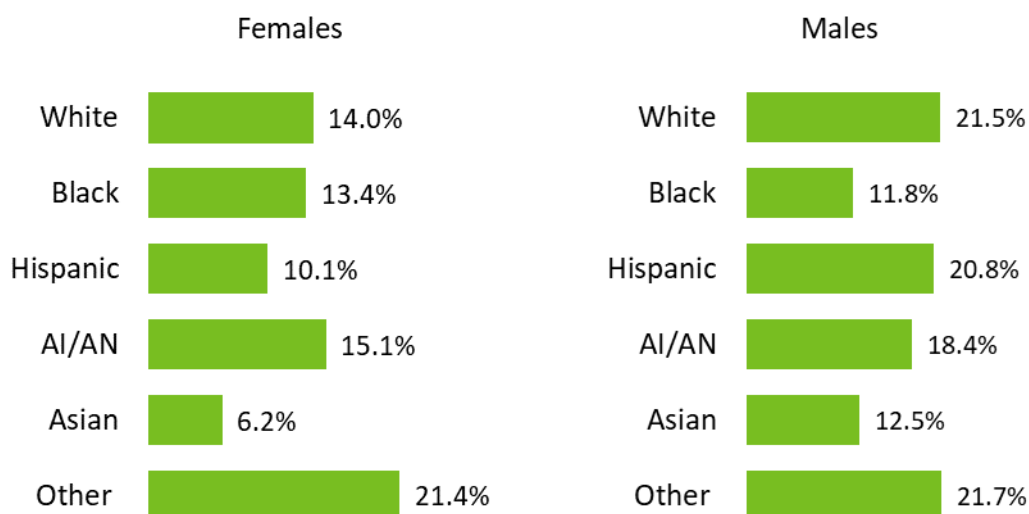


Figure 1: Percent of adults who reported binge drinking (i.e., ≥ 4 drinks per occasion for women, ≥ 5 drinks for men) by racial/ethnic category and sex in 2023.

Binge drinking is associated with the greatest costs—both health and economic. Overall, men are more likely to report binge drinking than are women. Almost 22% of white males reported binge drinking in 2023, compared to 12% of Black males. Although women report lower rates of binge drinking than men, about 14% of all women reported binge drinking in the past month.

Binge drinking rates are highest among adults throughout their 20's.

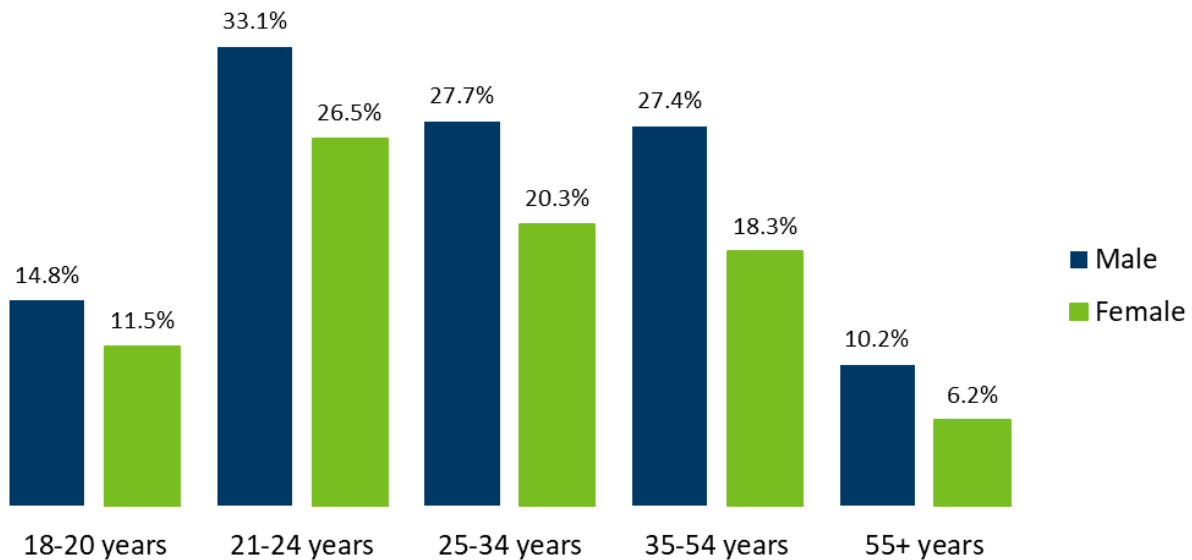


Figure 2: Percent of adults who reported binge drinking (i.e., >4 drinks per occasion for women, >5 drinks for men) by age group and sex in 2023.

Compared to other age groups, adult males aged 18-20 years and 55 years and older were less likely to report binge drinking (14.8% and 10.2%, respectively). Among females, adults aged 21 – 24 years old were most likely to report binge drinking (26.5%) than other age groups.

Further assessment of drinking reported by Minnesota adults provides additional information about drinking patterns in Minnesota. Younger female drinkers (18-20 years old) reported less binge drinking, and among those who binge drank reported doing so less frequently than young adult females (ages 21-24 and 25-34). However, younger females (ages 18-20 years) who binge drank were more likely to report binge drinking at a higher intensity (i.e., more drinks on an occasion) than females of other age groups. For example, 15% of 18 – 20-year-old females reported drinking seven or more drinks per occasion compared to 10% of young adult women ages 21 – 34. Young males (18 – 20 and 21 – 24 years old) were most likely to report binge drinking at a higher intensity (i.e. more drinks of occasion) and more frequently than any other age group, with 33.7% of 18 – 20 year old males and 35.7% of 21 – 24 year old males reporting high intensity drinking, and 18.4% of 18 – 20 year olds and 20.5% of 21 – 24 year old males reporting high frequency drinking.

Individuals who binge drink, especially those who binge drink more frequently and with higher intensity, are at higher risks for negative outcomes.

Those who binge drink are more likely to drink more heavily and frequently.

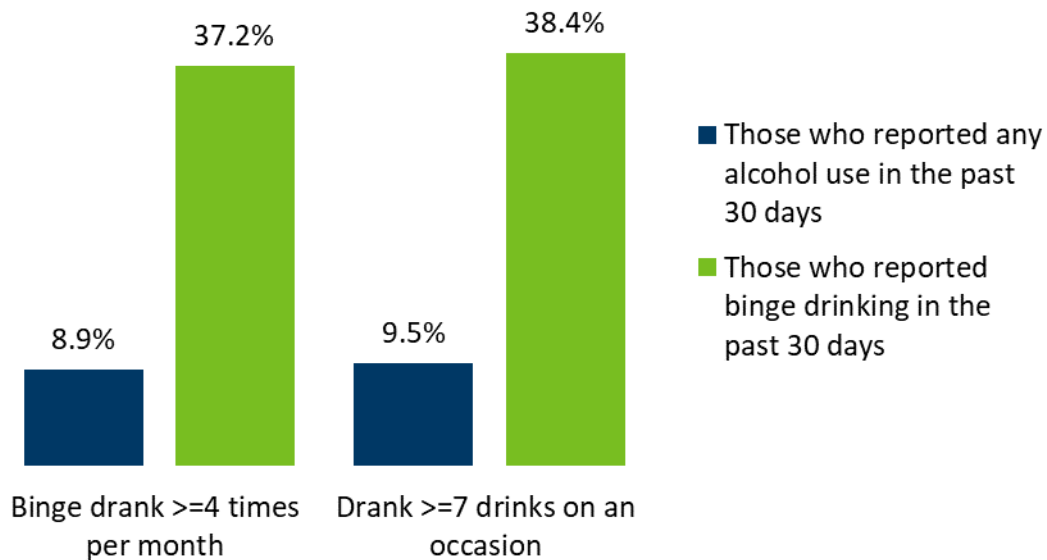


Figure 3: Percent of adults who reported high binge frequency and binge intensity by drinking pattern in 2023.

While some individuals report binge drinking occasionally, those who binge drink are more likely to drink more frequently and greater quantities on an occasion.

Alcohol and health

Drinking less is better for health than drinking more.¹ Drinking excessively on an occasion can harm your health and lead to negative effects including injuries, violence, alcohol poisoning, and sexually transmitted infections. Over time, drinking excessively can lead to mental health conditions (depression, anxiety, etc.), several types of cancer, and chronic diseases such as liver disease, heart disease, stroke, or alcohol use disorder.²

Alcohol and cancer

Drinking any alcoholic beverages, including red and white wine, beer, and liquor, is linked with cancer.¹ In fact, the risk of some cancers increases with any amount of alcohol use, including cancers of the head and neck, esophagus, liver, breast and colon.^{1,3}

- [CDC – Alcohol and Cancer \(https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/risk-factors/alcohol.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/risk-factors/alcohol.html)
- [National Cancer Institute – Alcohol and Cancer Risk \(https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk/alcohol/alcohol-fact-sheet#q2\)](https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk/alcohol/alcohol-fact-sheet#q2)
- [Drink Less for Your Breasts - Alcohol Research Group \(https://drinklessforyourbreasts.org/\)](https://drinklessforyourbreasts.org/)

Cost of excessive alcohol use

Excessive drinking is one of the leading causes of preventable death in the U.S. About 178,000 people die from excessive alcohol use in the US each year with more than 2,000 deaths occurring in Minnesota.³

In 2019, about 3% of inpatient hospital treatments were attributable to alcohol and accounted for 35% of the health care costs. Lost productivity accounted for almost three-quarters of the costs, including productivity losses such as increased absenteeism, impaired productivity at work and at home, premature mortality, and incarceration.

- [Costs of Excessive Alcohol Use in Minnesota - MN Dept. of Health](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/alcohol/data/costs.html)
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Excessive alcohol use is preventable

The Dietary Guidelines recommends that individuals who do not drink alcohol should not start drinking for any reason. If adults 21 years and older choose to drink alcohol, they should do so in moderation (2 drinks or less per day for men, 1 drink or less per day for women) to minimize risks associated with alcohol.⁴

The Community Guide's Excessive Alcohol Consumption resource includes several evidence-based recommendations to reduce the likelihood of excessive drinking, including drinking underage and binge drinking, and the related harms:

- Enhance enforcement of laws prohibiting alcohol sales to minors
- Increase alcohol taxes
- Regulate alcohol outlet density
- Implement dram shop (commercial host) liability
- Avoid privatization of retail alcohol sales
- Maintain limits on the days and hours when alcohol is sold (in settings such as liquor stores, restaurants, and bars)⁵

Resources

- [Alcohol and Your Health - MN Dept. of Health](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/alcohol/basics/alcoholhealth.html)
(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/alcohol/basics/alcoholhealth.html>)
 - For information on the impacts of alcohol and tips for creating a safer culture around alcohol in Minnesota.
- [CDC - Check Your Drinking](https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/checkyourdrinking/index.html) (<https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/checkyourdrinking/index.html>)
 - This tool is intended for adults 18 and older to check their drinking and build a personalized plan to drink less.

Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS)

This data brief reports on alcohol use among Minnesota adults as measured by the 2023 Minnesota Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS). The BRFSS is an annual phone-based survey of adults ages 18 years and older, funded by CDC and implemented by the Minnesota Department of Health.

Suggestion Citation

Norman I, Gloppen K. Alcohol use among adults in Minnesota: 2023. Saint Paul, MN: Minnesota Department of Health, March 2025.

References

1. CDC. "Alcohol Use and Your Health." Alcohol Use, 23 May 2024, <https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/about-alcohol-use/index.html>.
2. CDC. "Alcohol and Cancer." Cancer, 5 June 2024, <https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/risk-factors/alcohol.html>.
3. CDC. "Alcohol-Related Deaths." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 16 Apr. 2024, <https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/features/excessive-alcohol-deaths.html>.
4. Home | Dietary Guidelines for Americans. <https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/>. Accessed 5 June 2024.
5. Preventing Excessive Alcohol Use | The Community Guide. 17 Aug. 2023, <https://www.thecommunityguide.org/topics/excessive-alcohol-consumption.html>.

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