

2018 Alcohol Use and Abuse: Binge Drinking Highest Among Younger Adults

There has been little change in the prevalence of self-reported "binge drinking" or of chronic heavy drinking among Delaware adults during the past six years. In 2018, **16.4 percent of Delaware adults reported binge drinking** during the 30 days prior to being interviewed, and **6.4 percent of adults reported chronic, heavy drinking**.

The Delaware BRFSS asks several questions about alcoholic beverages, which are analyzed to provide prevalence estimates for three factors: 1) percentage of the adult population **who drink alcoholic beverages** of any type, 2) percentage of adults who are **binge drinkers**, and 3) percentage of adults who are **heavy drinkers**. Chronic heavy drinking and/or binge drinking can increase the drinker's risk for personal injury, car crashes and fatalities, heart disease, cancer, cirrhosis of the liver, and a number of other health conditions.



The BRFSS defines binge drinking as "males having five or more drinks, and females having four or more drinks, on one occasion." **Binge drinking was higher among men** (21.2 percent) than women (11.9 percent). Prevalence was highest among adults age 18-44 and declined steadily with age.

Binge Drinking, by Age:

- 18-24 = **26.6** percent
- 25-34 = **24.3** percent
- 35-44 = **24.5** percent
- 45-54 = **15.8** percent
- 55-64 = **11.8** percent
- 65 and older = **4.8** percent

Binge drinkers are about **two times as likely as those who don't binge drink to smoke cigarettes**, increasing their risks for several chronic diseases. About **26.2**

percent of binge drinkers report also being smokers, compared to only 14.1 percent of adults who don't binge drink.

Regular Heavy Drinking

"**Heavy drinking**" is defined by the BRFSS and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as more than 14 alcoholic drinks per week for men and more than 7 drinks per week for women.

In 2018, **6.4 percent of Delaware adults reported heavy drinking**. The trend has been essentially level for the past seven years. The highest prevalence of heavy drinking was 8.8 percent among adults age 25-34.

Drinking and Driving Still a Problem

The BRFSS drinking and driving question is asked only in even-numbered years. In 2016, four percent of Delaware adults who drank alcohol — mostly men — admitted to **drinking and driving** during the month preceding the interview. The question asks: "During the past 30 days, how many times have you driven when you've had perhaps too much to drink?" Three percent of respondents who drink reported having driven with "perhaps too much to drink" one or more times during the month. While this seems like a small percentage, it translates to **more than 11,600 adult drivers on our roads after drinking in any given month**.

There has not been any statistically significant change in the prevalence of self-reported drinking and driving since 2011.

Any Alcohol Use

In 2018, more than half (54.3 percent) of Delaware's adult population reported drinking alcohol at least once in the past 30 days. The percentage of the adult population who consume at least some alcoholic beverages has remained largely unchanged for the past decade.