Alcohol Abuse and Dependence

This is a data update of the Health of Washington State chapter on Alcohol Abuse and Dependence published in 2012. In 2013, the clinical diagnoses of Alcohol Abuse and Dependence were replaced by Alcohol Use Disorder. However, statewide data are not available for either diagnostic approach and so the measure used in this chapter did not change.

**Time Trends**

Nationally, in 2012 an estimated 7% of adults had an alcohol use disorder. State trend data are not available for alcohol use disorder but are available for binge drinking. The Washington Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) collected data on the percentage of Washington adults who reported binge drinking – defined as consuming five or more drinks on one occasion in the past month in 1995, 1997, 1999 and 2001–2005 and as five or more drinks on one occasion in the past month for men and four or more drinks for women in 2006–2013. The 2006–2013 measure approximates a .08 blood alcohol level.

Binge drinking in Washington did not change significantly between 1990 and 2010. More recent trends cannot be assessed because BRFSS methodology changed in 2011 and data are not comparable before and after the methodology change. In 2013, 17% (±1%) of Washington adults reported binge drinking, a lower rate than the United States as a whole (19% ± <1%). The Washington rate is the same with or without adjustment for age.

**Geographic Variation**

Based on BRFSS data from the 2011–2013 surveys combined, reported binge drinking ranged from 25% (±12%) in Ferry County to 12% (±7%) in Klickitat County. Most counties had rates similar to the state rate but Pierce and Skagit Counties had lower rates. Pend Oreille County is not included because there were too few survey respondents.
Age and Gender

In the 2011–2013 BRFSS, men reported binge drinking more often than women for every age group. Women 18–34 years old reported binge drinking more often than women 35 years old and older. Men 18–44 years old reported binge drinking more often than men 45 years old and older. These patterns are consistent with national patterns.

Nationally, men are at higher risk for alcohol problems than are women, and this is consistent across age, racial and ethnic groups. But women experience health effects at lower levels of consumption than men.

Economic Factors and Education

In the 2011–2013 BRFSS, rates of binge drinking were slightly lower among college graduates compared to those with less education. Rates were also lower in the group with annual household incomes under $20,000 compared to incomes of $25,000 to $49,999 or $75,000 or more.
These results are similar to BRFSS data for other states. Higher rates of binge drinking in groups with higher income may reflect the availability of resources to purchase alcohol. Nationally, rates of alcohol abuse and dependence are not associated with educational level. Being employed is associated with lower rates of alcohol abuse and dependence.

**Race and Hispanic Origin**

In the 2011-2013 BRFSS, Asians were the least likely to report binge drinking, and Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders the most likely. Nationally, Asians have the lowest prevalence of alcohol use disorders, and American Indians and Alaska Natives have the highest prevalence (the national study had too few Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders to report).

**Data Sources** (For additional detail, see Appendix B)


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**Endnotes**


