



# SNAPSHOT

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A QUICK LOOK AT CALIFORNIA'S HEALTH BEHAVIORS

Snapshot is a publication that demonstrate the uses of Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) data to illustrate various health behaviors among adult Californians. BRFSS is the largest, ongoing, telephone health survey in the world. Established in 1984, the California BRFSS is an annual effort by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), Chronic Disease Surveillance and Research Branch, in collaboration with the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), to assess the prevalence of and trends in the health-related behaviors and to monitor preventable risk factors for chronic disease and other leading causes of death among the California adult population.

## Excess Alcohol Use Among California Adults, 2015-2020

Binge drinking and heavy drinking, otherwise known as excessive alcohol use, is associated with injury, poor pregnancy outcomes and chronic disease<sup>1</sup>. Binge drinking is defined as five or more drinks (≥5 drinks) for men or four or more drinks (≥4 drinks) for women on at least one occasion. Heavy drinking is consuming 14 or more drinks (≥14 drinks) for men, and seven or more drinks (≥7 drinks) for women per week.

### BRFSS Excess Alcohol Use Questions

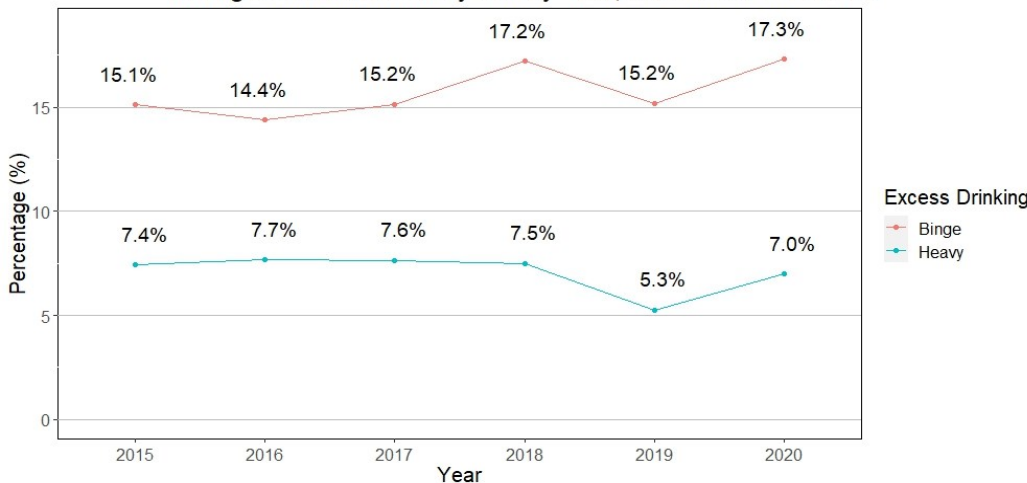
Has a doctor, nurse, or other health professional ever told you that you had any of the following:

- ① During the past 30 days, how many days per week or per month did you have at least one drink of any alcoholic beverage, such as beer, wine, a malt beverage, or liquor?
- ② One drink is equivalent to a 12 ounce beer, a five ounce glass of wine, or a drink with one shot of liquor. During the past 30 days, on the days when you drank, about how many drinks did you drink on the average?
- ③ Considering all types of alcoholic beverages, how many times during the past 30 days did you have drinks on an occasion?
- ④ During the past 30 days, what is the largest number of drinks you had on any occasion?

### Prevalence of Excess Alcohol Use

The estimated prevalence of binge drinking during the past 30 days was 15.6 percent and heavy drinking during the past 30 days was 7.1 percent. This prevalence represents 3.84 million and 1.75 million Californian adults, respectively. From 2015 to 2020, the prevalence increased from 15.1 percent to 17.3 percent [Figure 1]. On average, adults who reported binge drinking did so on a near weekly basis.

Figure 1. Prevalence of Excess Drinking among California Adults by Survey Year, CA BRFSS 2015-2020



\*Prepared by the California Department of Public Health, Chronic Disease Surveillance and Research Branch  
Binge Drinking represents five or more drinks (≥5 drinks) for Males or four or more drinks (≥4 drinks) for Females  
Heavy Drinking represents fourteen or more drinks (≥14 drinks) for Males or seven or more (≥7 drinks) for Females

**3.7**

The average number of occasions California adults binge drink per month

California BRFSS, 2015-2020

**Table 1. Prevalence of Binge and Heavy Alcohol Consumption by Demographics in California Adults, BRFSS 2015-2020 \***

California (n = 56,232)	Binge Drinking <sup>†</sup>		Heavy Drinking <sup>‡</sup>	
	Percent (%)	95% CI	Percent (%)	95% CI
<b>Gender</b>				
Men	20.3	(19.8 - 20.8)	5.2	(4.9 - 5.4)
Women	11.0	(10.7 - 11.4)	6.0	(5.8 - 6.3)
<b>Age Group</b>				
18-24 years	21.8	(20.7 - 22.9)	4.9	(4.3 - 5.5)
25-34 years	24.0	(23.1 - 24.8)	6.3	(5.8 - 6.8)
35-44 years	16.9	(16.1 - 17.7)	5.2	(4.7 - 5.7)
45-54 years	14.1	(13.4 - 14.8)	6.1	(5.6 - 6.6)
55-64 years	10.1	(9.5 - 10.7)	6.3	(5.8 - 6.8)
≥65 years	4.9	(4.5 - 5.2)	4.8	(4.4 - 5.1)
<b>Race/Ethnicity<sup>§</sup></b>				
Asian or Pacific Islander	11.0	(10.2 - 11.9)	1.8	(1.4 - 2.1)
Black	12.4	(11.2 - 13.6)	4.9	(4.1 - 5.7)
Hispanic or Latino	16.5	(15.9 - 17.0)	3.6	(3.4 - 3.9)
White	16.8	(16.4 - 17.3)	8.3	(8.0 - 8.6)
Other <sup>  </sup>	15.7	(14.6 - 16.8)	5.6	(4.9 - 6.4)
<b>Educational Level</b>				
Less than High School	10.5	(9.6 - 11.4)	3.0	(2.5 - 3.5)
High School or GED	15.7	(15.1 - 16.3)	5.4	(5.0 - 5.8)
Some College or Technical School	16.0	(15.4 - 16.6)	6.2	(5.8 - 6.6)
College Graduate or Post Graduate	15.2	(14.7 - 15.7)	5.7	(5.4 - 6.0)
<b>Annual Household Income</b>				
< \$25,000	13.2	(12.6 - 13.8)	4.1	(3.8 - 4.5)
\$25,000-\$49,999	16.7	(16.0 - 17.5)	6.0	(5.5 - 6.4)
\$50,000-\$74,999	16.0	(15.1 - 16.9)	6.8	(6.2 - 7.4)
\$75,000-\$99,999	18.0	(17.1 - 19.0)	6.9	(6.3 - 7.6)
\$100,000 - \$124,999	18.2	(16.9 - 19.5)	6.6	(5.8 - 7.5)
≥ \$125,000	18.9	(18.1 - 19.8)	7.3	(6.8 - 7.9)
<b>Health Insurance</b>				
Have Insurance	15.2	(14.9 - 15.6)	5.6	(5.4 - 5.8)
No Insurance	20.3	(19.1 - 21.4)	7.1	(6.4 - 7.8)

**Abbreviations & Terms:** CI = Confidence Interval, n = Number of respondents answering the survey questions of interest, GED = General Educational Development Certification

\* Respondents who did not know, or refused to answer questions regarding alcohol consumption were excluded from analysis

† Calculated variable for binge drinkers (men having five or more drinks on one occasion, women having four or more drinks on one occasion)

‡ Calculated variable for heavy drinkers (men having 14 or more drinks per week, women having seven or more drinks per week)

§ 'Race/Ethnicity' was categorized as (White, non-Hispanic), (Black, non-Hispanic), (Hispanic), (Asian, non-Hispanic), and (Other, non-Hispanic) groups

|| 'Other' includes (American Indian/Alaska Native, non-Hispanic) and (Multiple Races, non-Hispanic) groups due to small sample sizes

## Demographics of California Adults with Binge Level Alcohol Consumption

Among California adults of 18 years of age or older, men were more likely than women to binge drink (20.3 percent vs. 11.0 percent). A greater proportion of adults aged 18 to 24 years and 25 to 34 years are estimated to binge drink compared to older age groups. Prevalence varies by race and ethnicity with White, non-Hispanic adults having the highest prevalence of binge drinking (16.8 percent), and Asian or Pacific Islanders with the lowest prevalence (11.0 percent). Adults in households with higher income were also more likely to report binge drinking [Table 1, Figures 2-5]. Trends among heavy drinkers were less substantially clear [Table 1].

Figure 2. Prevalence of Binge Drinking among California Adults by Gender, 2015-2020

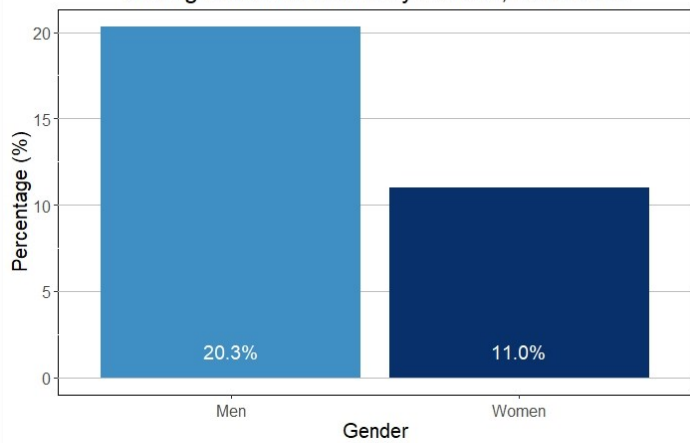


Figure 3. Prevalence of Binge Drinking among California Adults by Race/Ethnicity, 2015-2020

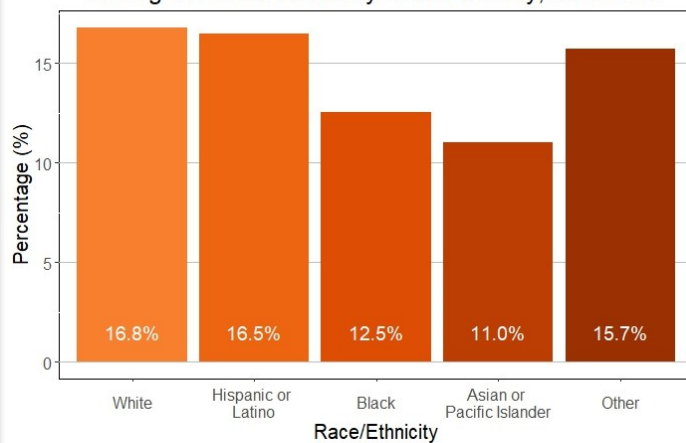


Figure 4. Prevalence of Binge Drinking among California Adults by Age Group, 2015-2020

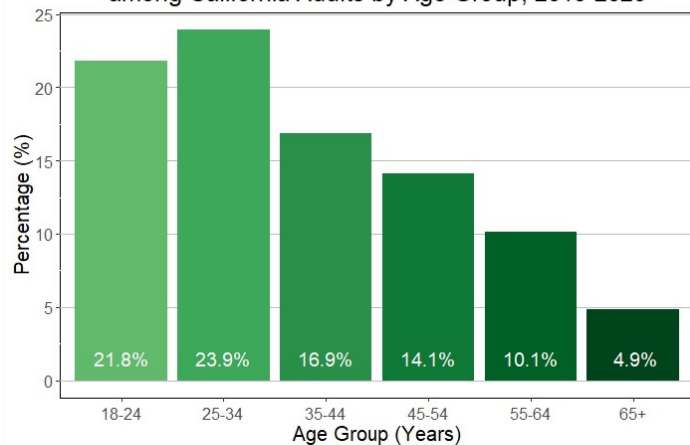
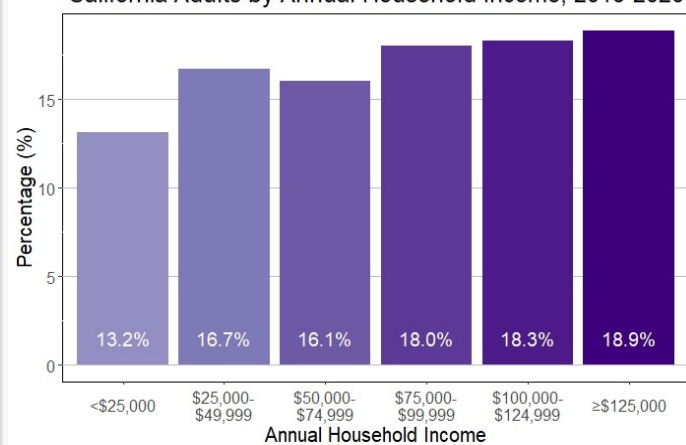


Figure 5. Prevalence of Binge Drinking among California Adults by Annual Household Income, 2015-2020



## Summary

*\*Prepared by the California Department of Public Health, Chronic Disease Surveillance and Research Branch*

It is important to emphasize the close association of excessive alcohol consumption with increased chronic disease, and mortality<sup>1,2</sup>. Binge drinking is fairly common with approximately one in five California adults who reported binge drinking in the past 30 days. This snapshot highlights the prevalence of binge and heavy drinking associated with demographic patterns of gender, age, education, income, and insurance status. Furthermore, this Snapshot demonstrates the use of California BRFSS data to understand and address the emerging health conditions, concerns, and affected lives of the California population.

<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Alcohol-Related Disease Impact (ARDI). Retrieved on May 4, 2022. ([https://nccd.cdc.gov/DPH\\_ARDI/default/default.aspx](https://nccd.cdc.gov/DPH_ARDI/default/default.aspx))

<sup>2</sup> National Cancer Institute. Alcohol and Cancer Risk. Retrieved May 4, 2022. (<https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk/alcohol/alcohol-fact-sheet#r1>)

### FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

California Department of Public Health

Center for Healthy Communities

Chronic Disease Surveillance and Research Branch

E-mail ✉: [BRFSShelp@cdph.ca.gov](mailto:BRFSShelp@cdph.ca.gov) | Web 🌐: <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDPHP/DCDIC/CDSRB/Pages/BRFSS.aspx>