Overview

Excessive alcohol use is a leading cause of death, resulting in about 88,000 deaths each year. Excessive drinking cost the U.S. economy $1.90 a drink in 2006. In contrast, the average total federal and state taxes on alcoholic beverages across all beverage types were approximately $0.12 per drink.

The Community Preventive Services Task Force recommends increasing alcohol taxes based on strong evidence that this can reduce excessive alcohol consumption and related harms. Public health effects are expected to be proportional to the size of the tax increase.

However, questions have been raised about the potential impact of alcohol tax increases on employment and on the cost of alcohol to individual drinkers. To help address these concerns, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) funded a research collaborative involving the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, the University of Florida, the University of Illinois at Chicago, and Boston Medical Center to evaluate how increasing alcohol taxes could affect employment and the amount that consumers would pay for alcoholic beverages based on their self-reported patterns of alcohol consumption. This web tool was developed based on these research findings to model the expected impact of various alcohol tax increase scenarios on these outcomes.

In these web tools, “excessive drinkers” refers to anyone who reported binge drinking (consuming 5 or more drinks on an occasion for men, 4 or more drinks on an occasion for women), heavy drinking (15 or more drinks per week for men, 8 or more drinks per week for women), or underage drinking (any drinking by persons under the age of 21) in the last 30 days. “Non-excessive drinkers” are all drinkers except those who reported binge, heavy or underage drinking.

Alcohol use data come from CDC’s 2011 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System survey of adults aged 18 years and older.