

Binge Drinking On the Rise

Study reveals highest increase is among underage adults.

Binge drinking is common in most segments of society in the U.S., according to a study in the Journal of the American Medical Association, and is climbing fastest among 18–20-year-olds, who are too young to drink legally.

Episodes of binge drinking, defined as having five or more drinks in a sitting, increased 17% among all adults between 1993–2001, and shot up 56% among 18–20-year-olds, according to a Centers for Disease Control & Prevention survey.

Adults age 21–25 went on drinking binges an average of 18 times in 2001, according to CDC. Those ages 18–20 did so an average of 15 times.

Binge drinking among all adults in 2001 increased to 1.5 billion episodes, or an average of more than seven times per person. That is up from about 1.2 billion episodes, or about six times per person, in 1993.

Epidemic Proportions ?

The average number of episodes for other age groups in 2001: nine for those ages 26–34; almost seven for 35–54 year-olds; and almost three for those 55 and older. Men had 12.5 episodes in 2001 compared with 2.7 for women. Hispanics had 8.4 episodes, while whites had 7.4 and blacks 5.4. Researchers think their study still may underestimate the scope of binge drinking.

Psychiatrist Dr. Daniel Angres, who heads an alcohol and drug dependency program in Chicago, said popular culture promotes binge drinking. “We have, really, a public health problem that is in some ways becoming epidemic in proportion.”

CDC researchers analyzed results for every other year between 1993–2001. The number of participants ranged from 102,263 in 1993 to 212,510 in 2001. 📌