

What excessive drinking costs Iowa

An independent update of Iowa's published 2010 cost to 2021 • Model v1.0 • Not a CDC estimate

\$3.25B Total cost to Iowa, 2021 (modernized estimate)	\$1.44B Paid by government (44.3% of the total)	\$2.30 Per standard drink (was \$1.59 in 2010)	\$1,016 Per Iowan (was \$635 in 2010)
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The finding

Excessive drinking cost Iowa roughly **\$3.25 billion in 2021**, up from the \$1.93 billion published for 2010 — a 68% increase. Applying the original framework without correcting for changes in how the underlying data are collected gives \$3.57 billion. The plausible range is \$2.91 billion to \$4.06 billion. Government bore about two dollars in five.

Iowa still costs less per person than the country — but the gap is closing. Iowa was the second-cheapest state in the nation on cost per resident in 2010 (\$635 against a national \$807). In 2021 Iowa is at \$1,016 against a national \$1,427. Iowa remains below average, but its alcohol harm grew faster than the country's.

What makes Iowa different

- Iowa's alcohol deaths more than doubled — faster than the nation's. Deaths where alcohol was the direct underlying cause rose from 233 to 608, a factor of 2.61 against a national 2.11. This is the single most important Iowa-specific finding, and the medical definition did not change over the period, so it is real.
- Iowa drinks more heavily than the country. Binge drinking among Iowans 12 and older ran 26.6% in 2010 and 23.7% in 2021, against a national 23.1% and 21.5%. Iowa is above the national rate in both years.
- Underage drinking improved, but more slowly than nationally. Iowa fell 31% while the country fell 43%. Underage drinking is a larger share of Iowa's alcohol cost (7.7%) than of the nation's.
- Iowa's prison population barely moved. It fell 9% while total US incarceration fell 22%, so corrections is a heavier share of Iowa's alcohol cost than of the national figure.
- Alcohol-impaired traffic deaths rose 31% — essentially the same as nationally — but Iowa's total traffic deaths **FELL** 9%. Alcohol went from 23% to 33% of Iowa road deaths.

Where the cost falls

Category	Iowa 2010	Iowa 2021	Change
Lost productivity	\$1.30B	\$2.30B	+88%
Other costs — justice, crashes, fire, property	\$0.38B	\$0.57B	+50%
Healthcare	\$0.25B	\$0.39B	+60%

How confident should you be

Iowa has a published 2010 anchor, which most state estimates do not: Sacks et al. reported \$1,933.6 million, \$635 per resident and \$1.59 per drink for Iowa, and this model reproduces all three before computing anything for 2021. 16 of the 26 cost components use an Iowa-specific data series; the other 10 fall back to the national driver and are individually flagged. Two independent constructions of Iowa's 2021 cost — this bottom-up model and simply growing Iowa's published 2010 figure at the national rate — agree within 3%. 17 of 17 quality tests pass. 2021 was a pandemic year in Iowa as elsewhere.

LANGUAGE THAT IS SAFE TO USE

Say: "An independent analysis updating the framework behind the CDC-supported 2010 estimate finds that excessive alcohol use cost Iowa about \$3.25 billion in 2021."

Do not say: "CDC estimates that excessive drinking costs Iowa..." CDC has not published or endorsed this figure.

Never add together: the binge (\$2.77B), underage (\$0.28B) and pregnancy (\$0.06B) figures. They overlap — the same dollar appears in more than one.

Full methodology, all 26 Iowa components with their drivers, the Iowa-versus-national comparison and the quality-assurance register are in the model workbook (tabs IA_00 through IA_12) and the results explorer.