

## ALCOHOL USE

Ethyl alcohol is an intoxicating ingredient found in beer, wine, and liquor which is produced by the fermentation of yeast, sugars, and starches.<sup>3</sup> According to the *2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, when alcohol is consumed it should be in moderation and limited to no more than one drink per day for women and two drinks per day for men.<sup>2</sup> While moderate alcohol consumption may have health benefits<sup>2</sup> – depending, in part, on the characteristics of the person consuming the alcohol – excessive drinking can lead to many adverse health and social consequences including injury, violence, risky sexual behavior, alcoholism, unemployment, liver diseases, and various cancers.<sup>4</sup>

Excessive drinking includes binge and heavy drinking. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines heavy drinking as consuming more than one drink per day on average for women and two drinks per day on average for men. Binge drinking is defined as drinking four or more drinks on a single occasion for women and five or more drinks on a single occasion for men (usually over the course of about 2 hours).<sup>3</sup>

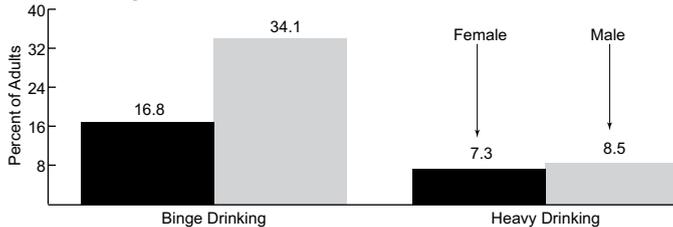
In 2009–2010, men were more likely than women to report both heavy drinking (8.5 versus 7.3 percent, respectively) and binge drinking (34.1 versus 16.8 percent, respectively) in the past 30 days. Despite being less likely to binge drink or drink heavily, women tend to face alcohol-related problems at a lower drink-

ing level than men due to differences in body size and other biological factors.<sup>5</sup>

Binge and heavy drinking among women varies significantly by age, as well as race and ethnicity. Younger women aged 18–25 years were more likely than women of other age groups to report binge and heavy drinking in the past month (33.3 versus 11.5 percent, respectively; data not shown). With respect to race and ethnicity, about 16 percent or more of women in every race and ethnic group reported binge drinking with the exception of non-Hispanic Asian women (7.9 percent). Heavy drinking was most commonly reported among non-Hispanic White women, non-Hispanic women of multiple races, and non-Hispanic American Indian/Alaska Native women (8.7, 7.6, and 6.8 percent, respectively).

### Alcohol Use in the Past Month Among Adults Aged 18 and Older, by Level of Drinking\* and Sex, 2009–2010

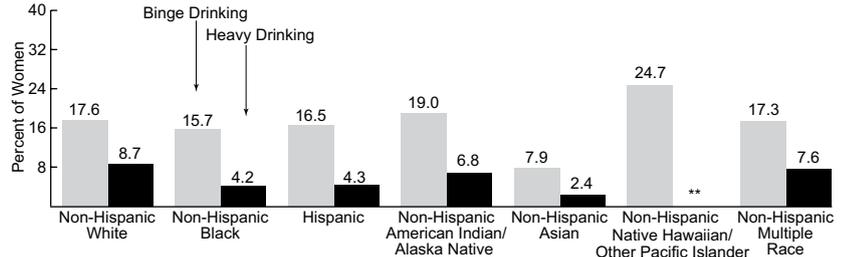
Source II.3: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, National Survey on Drug Use and Health



\*Binge drinking indicates drinking four or more drinks on a single occasion for women and five or more drinks on a single occasion for men usually over the course of about 2 hours. Heavy drinking indicates consumption of more than one drink per day on average for women and two drinks per day on average for men.

### Binge and Heavy Alcohol Use\* in the Past Month Among Women Aged 18 and Older, by Race/Ethnicity, 2009–2010

Source II.3: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, National Survey on Drug Use and Health



\*Binge drinking indicates drinking four or more drinks on a single occasion for women and five or more drinks on a single occasion for men usually over the course of about 2 hours. Heavy drinking indicates consumption of more than one drink per day on average for women and two drinks per day on average for men. \*\*Estimate does not meet the standards of reliability or precision.