

Stress and Excessive Alcohol Consumption among Insured and Uninsured Adults during the Covid-19 Pandemic Results from the 2020 Health District Survey of the Northern Larimer County

Abstract

This study examined the relationships between self-reported stress, excessive drinking, including binge and heavy drinking, and health insurance status among a regionally representative sample of adults living in Northern Larimer County, Colorado. Data from the 2020 Larimer County Community Health Survey were used to conduct analyses representative of the adult population residing in Northern Larimer County aged 18 to 64 years. 23.23% of the adult sample reported binge drinking and 16.15% reported heavy drinking. 10.53% of the sample reported both binge and heavy drinking. With weights, the proportions of individuals reporting binge and heavy drinking were different across age groups, racial and ethnic groups, between female and male, as well as of different incomes, racial and ethnic groups, education attainment, employment statuses, self-rated health, stress, and COVID-19-related stress and anxiety. Individuals with higher levels of stress were more likely to report binge drinking (OR: 1.65; 95% CI: 1.65-1.68) and heavy drinking (OR: 2.61; 95% CI: 2.54-2.67). Furthermore, adults enrolled in Medicaid and those without health insurance were especially vulnerable to the harmful effects of stress in terms of binge drinking (OR: 129.21; 95% CI: 104.97-159.05 and OR: 5.37; 95% CI: 4.71-6.12, respectively) and heavy drinking (OR: 5.18; 95% CI: 3.73-7.21 and OR: 23.34; 95% CI: 19.31-28.21, respectively). Our results highlighted a need for continuing state-wide and/ or national efforts in closing the insurance coverage gap in the hope of reducing excessive drinking due to higher levels of stress in a challenging time.

Keywords: stress, binge drinking, heavy drinking, health insurance, COVID-19