

8 percent of fans legally drunk after attending professional sports games

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It's no secret that there is a lot of alcohol consumed by fans at sporting events, but is it possible to measure the blood alcohol content (BAC) of fans as they exit the stadiums? And if BAC levels can be measured, what do the results tell us?

A new study published online in the journal *Alcoholism: Clinical & Experimental Research* (ACER) finds that BAC levels can be measured using a breath tester on fans as they exit football and baseball events. And the results show that 60% of the fans had zero BAC, 40% had a positive BAC, and nearly 8% were legally drunk.

Darin Erickson, PhD, University of Minnesota, was an investigator on the study and was the lead author of the paper.

"Getting fans to submit to a breath test and participate in a brief survey following a football or baseball game is not an easy task. We conducted BAC tests of 362 adult attendees following 13 baseball games and three football games. This is a preliminary study, but the first one to actually attempt to measure BAC levels after professional sporting events in the US," Erickson said. A Canadian study conducted in 1992 found similar results.

"Our sample size was small, partly because of the difficulty of getting fans to submit to a BAC test after a game. But if we assume that it represents individuals attending professional events, it means that on average about 5,000 attendees leaving one National Football League

(NFL) event would be above the legal BAC limit for driving. That's a lot of drunken individuals who could be involved in traffic crashes, assaults, vandalism, crime and other injuries," Erickson said.

Part of the problem can be addressed through better training of [alcohol](#) servers and several stadiums are trying to train their servers. But according to another study cited by Erickson, even as recently as 2008, individuals who appeared to be obviously intoxicated could purchase alcohol 74% of the time. Increased police patrols around sports stadiums would also help, he said.

Other results from Erickson's study found that:

- Fans under 35 years of age have nine times greater odds of having BAC levels above the limit of 0.08. And those who drink at tailgating parties have 14 times greater odds of being legally drunk, compared to [fans](#) that had not tailgated.
- Nearly one in four attendees who tailgated reported consuming five or more alcoholic beverages while tailgating.
- Those who were in the highest BAC category reported consuming, on average, 6.6 drinks while tailgating compared with 3.7 drinks and 2.8 drinks for those in the mid-range BAC category and the zero BAC category, respectively.
- Night game attendees had higher odds of having a mid-range BAC (not above the legal limit), but they were not significantly more likely to have a BAC above the legal limit.

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