

Study finds risk for binge drinking differs by race, income and changes with age

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A new study led by Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis assistant professor of psychology Tamika Zapolski has found differing risks for binge drinking based on race, income and age.

Zapolski found that African-Americans and Hispanics in the lowest income bracket (annual incomes less than \$20,000) have a lower risk of binge [drinking](#) during adolescence compared to whites, while African-Americans—but not Hispanics—have a higher risk for binge drinking compared to whites at age 50 and older.

At higher incomes, a comparable risk for binge drinking was found for both African-Americans and Hispanics at older ages.

According to the Centers for Diseases Control and Prevention, about 44,000 alcohol-related deaths annually stem from binge drinking—defined as four or more drinks for females or five or more drinks for males in a two-hour period.

The IUPUI researchers analyzed data on binge drinking among 205,198 respondents age 12 and older surveyed in the 2010 to 2013 National Study on Drug Use and Health. They investigated risk for binge drinking as a function of race/ethnicity, gender, income and age.

After controlling for education and marital status, among those with annual incomes less than \$20,000, the risk for binge drinking was lower for African-American males from ages 18 to 24, as well as females from ages 18 to 34, than for their white counterparts. But the risk for binge drinking was higher for both African-American men and women ages 50 to 64, compared to whites. Unlike African-Americans, no crossover from low risk to high risk for binge drinking was found for Hispanics.

Within each of the higher income brackets (\$20,000 to \$50,000, \$50,000 to \$75,000, and greater than \$75,000), risk for binge drinking was generally lower for African-Americans in comparison to whites at younger ages, with similar risk of binge drinking at older ages. The risk for binge drinking for Hispanic respondents was fairly comparable across age groups.

"Although African-Americans are generally at low risk for binge drinking, we found that the risk for binge drinking increases disproportionately with age among African-Americans who are poor," said Zapolski, a clinical psychologist. "This may be linked to the impact of poverty, which is particularly detrimental for African-American populations."

The findings of increased risk for [binge drinking](#) in mid-adulthood to late adulthood for low-income African-Americans can inform clinical practice as well as advance research, Zapolski said. In future studies, she hopes to find out why older African-Americans are more likely to binge drink by looking at stresses prevalent in their communities, such as exposure to violence and housing insecurity. Zapolski's goal is to develop health prevention and intervention strategies that incorporate these social factors.

Zapolski directs PRISM, the Prevention Research In Substance Use & Minority Health Lab in IUPUI's School of Science. PRISM focuses on risk for substance use and other health behaviors among African-Americans.

Further work is required to investigate potential differences in drinking behaviors among Hispanic subgroups, according to Zapolski and study co-authors Patrick Baldwin, an IUPUI graduate student; Devin E. Banks, a former IUPUI graduate student now on the faculty of Chestnut Hill College; and Timothy Stump, an IU School of Medicine biostatistician.

"Does a Crossover Age Effect Exist for African American and Hispanic Binge Drinkers? Findings from the 2010 to 2013 National Study on Drug Use and Health" is published in the June print issue of in the peer-reviewed journal *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*. The study was supported, in part, by the School of Science at IUPUI and the Indiana Clinical and Translational Sciences Institute.

The School of Science at IUPUI is committed to excellence in teaching, research and service in the biological, physical, behavioral and mathematical sciences. The school is dedicated to being a leading resource for interdisciplinary research and science education in support of Indiana's effort to expand and diversify its economy.

More information: Tamika C.B. Zapolski et al. Does a Crossover Age Effect Exist for African American and Hispanic Binge Drinkers? Findings from the 2010 to 2013 National Study on Drug Use and Health, *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research* (2017). [DOI: 10.1111/acer.13380](https://doi.org/10.1111/acer.13380)

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