

News Release

For Immediate Release

June 12, 2014

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Binge Drinking Among Youth Concentrated Among a Small Number of Alcohol Brands; Vodka Often Binge Drink of Choice

Baltimore, MD - Youth who binge drink are often choosing spirits (“hard alcohol”), particularly vodka, and their binge drinking is concentrated among a relatively small number of brands, according to a new study from researchers with the Boston University School of Public Health and the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth (CAMY) at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

The report, published in the *Journal of Substance Use*, is the first study to document alcohol brands used for binge drinking (five or more drinks in a row for males; four or more drinks in a row for females) by underage youth (ages 13-20).

The researchers found underage youth were more likely to report having consumed spirits in a recent binge drinking episode than beer: spirits accounted for 43.8% of binge episodes, whereas beer accounted for less than one-third (31.4%) of binge episodes. Within spirits, vodka accounted for the most binge reports: 11.7% of all binge reports and 26.7% of all binge reports among spirits brands.

Among youth, the brands most likely to be used for binge drinking in the past 30 days were: Bud Light (13.5% of all youth), Jack Daniel’s bourbons (7.0%), Smirnoff malt beverages (6.8%), Budweiser (6.5%), Coors Light (6.1%) and Smirnoff vodkas (5.6%).

“The inclusion of some relatively expensive brands in the top twenty-five binge brand list suggests that variables other than price are driving youth brand preferences with respect to binge drinking,” said study author Dr. David Jernigan, PhD, CAMY director. “Future research will explore which factors drive brand and beverage variability in youth binge drinking.”

Survey respondents were asked about past 30-day consumption of 898 brands of alcohol within 16 different alcoholic beverage types. Out of the 898 brands of alcohol included in the survey instrument, the top 25 binge brands accounted for almost half (46.2%) of all binge reports.

Previous [research](#) from the authors found that the 25 leading brands for overall consumption accounted for 41.8% of youth consumption, suggesting that youth binge drinking is similarly or slightly more brand concentrated compared with youth drinking generally.

“Binge drinking accounts for most of the alcohol consumed by youth in the U.S., and is associated with a host of negative consequences, including drunk driving, sexual assaults and suicide,” said lead study author Dr. Timothy Naimi, MD, MPH, an associate professor at the Boston University School of Public Health. “Identifying the types of alcohol and specific brands youth are choosing when they binge drink is important for the development of public health interventions designed to curtail this dangerous public health problem.”

The study also affirms that binge drinking remains the predominant pattern of youth drinking in the U.S. Results show that two-thirds (67%) of all youth drinks were consumed during binge drinking occasions, and more than half (50.9%) of youth drinkers reported binge drinking with any (at least one) brand during the past 30 days.

“Each year, approximately 4,300 young people under 21 die as a result of alcohol use, and underage drinking costs an estimated 24.6 billion dollars,” said Jernigan. “This study underscores the need to redouble our efforts on the national, state and local levels to address youth alcohol access and consumption.”

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This research was supported by a grant from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.

The Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth monitors the marketing practices of the alcohol industry to focus attention and action on industry practices that jeopardize the health and safety of America’s youth. The Center was founded in 2002 at Georgetown University with funding from The Pew Charitable Trusts and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The Center moved to the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in 2008 and is currently funded by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For more information, visit <http://www.camy.org>.