



RESEARCH SUMMARY
Date Compiled: August 2022

Key takeaways from included research:

- With health risks of moderate alcohol consumption constantly being debated, researchers analyzed dose-response risk curves of 22 health outcomes to estimate the theoretical minimum risk exposure levels. They concluded that population-level health risk associated with low levels of alcohol consumption varied across regions and were greater for younger individuals. Results showed the need for tailored guidelines based on age and geographic region to be most effective in reducing the associated health risks.
- A Scottish study examined current drinkers, age 18-35 and how they perceive alcohol packaging. Researchers concluded that the packaging captures attention, creates appeal, and helps shape perceptions of the product, drinker, and drinking experience.
- Researchers examined individual, peer, and parent domains as they pertain to substance use and how they vary by sociodemographic subgroups as well as substance type. They found that it's important to consider sociodemographic differences and substance variability to better identify risk and protective factors when working to reduce adolescent substance use.
- Researchers examined the role of binge drinking patterns among moderate drinkers to predict alcohol problems. They found that binge drinking was associated with an almost three times increase in the number of concurrent alcohol problems. For those considered moderate drinkers, binge drinking was associated with a nearly five times increase in concurrent alcohol problems.

POPULATION-LEVEL RISKS OF ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION BY AMOUNT, GEOGRAPHY, AGE, SEX, AND YEAR: A SYSTEMATIC ANALYSIS FOR THE GLOBAL BURDEN OF DISEASE STUDY 2020
July 2022

Background: The health risks associated with moderate alcohol consumption continue to be debated. Small amounts of alcohol might lower the risk of some health outcomes but increase the risk of others, suggesting that the overall risk depends, in part, on background disease rates, which vary by region, age, sex, and year.

Methods: For this analysis, we constructed burden-weighted dose–response relative risk curves across 22 health outcomes to estimate the theoretical minimum risk exposure level (TMREL) and non-drinker equivalence (NDE), the consumption level at which the health risk is equivalent to that of a non-drinker, using disease rates from the Global Burden of Diseases, Injuries, and Risk Factors Study (GBD) 2020 for 21 regions, including 204 countries and territories, by 5-year age group, sex, and year for individuals aged 15–95 years and older from 1990 to 2020. Based on the NDE, we quantified the population consuming harmful amounts of alcohol.

Findings: The burden-weighted relative risk curves for alcohol use varied by region and age. Among individuals aged 15–39 years in 2020, the TMREL varied between 0 (95% uncertainty interval 0–0) and 0.603 (0.400–1.00) standard drinks per day, and the NDE varied between 0.002 (0–0) and 1.75 (0.698–4.30) standard drinks per day. Among individuals aged 40 years and older, the burden-weighted relative risk curve was J-shaped for all regions, with a 2020 TMREL that ranged from 0.114 (0–0.403) to 1.87 (0.500–3.30) standard drinks per day and an NDE that ranged between 0.193 (0–0.900) and 6.94 (3.40–8.30) standard drinks per day. Among individuals consuming harmful amounts of alcohol in 2020, 59.1% (54.3–65.4) were aged 15–39 years and 76.9% (73.0–81.3) were male.

Interpretation: There is strong evidence to support recommendations on alcohol consumption varying by age and location. Stronger interventions, particularly those tailored towards younger individuals, are needed to reduce the substantial global health loss attributable to alcohol.

Source: Bryazka, D., Reitsma, M. B., Griswold, M. G., Abate, K. H., Abbafati, C., Abbasi-Kangevari, M., ... & Diress, M. (2022). Population-level risks of alcohol consumption by amount, geography, age, sex, and year: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2020. *The Lancet*, 400(10347), 185-235. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(22\)00847-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(22)00847-9)

In the News: Vanessa Villafuerte. (2022, July 22). Wellness Check: Can alcohol provide benefits to health? The relationship between alcohol and heart disease. *KMTV*. <https://www.3newsnow.com/lifestyle/wellness/wellness-check-can-alcohol-provide-benefits-to-health-the-relationship-between-alcohol-and-heart-disease>

ALCOHOL PACKAGING AS A PROMOTIONAL TOOL: A FOCUS GROUP STUDY WITH YOUNG ADULT DRINKERS IN SCOTLAND
July 2022

Objective: Little research has been conducted on consumer perceptions of alcohol packaging as a marketing tool. The aim of this study was to explore how young adults view and engage with alcohol packaging.

Method: Eight focus groups were conducted in Glasgow (Scotland) with current drinkers (n = 50), segmented by age (18-24, 25-35), gender (female, male), and social grade (ABC1, C2DE). Participants were shown, allowed to handle, and asked about a range of alcoholic products.

Results: Five main themes emerged from the data. The first was the ubiquity of alcohol packaging, with frequent exposure reported in different settings, such as shops and drinking venues, and via marketing. The second was appeal, with pack graphics (e.g., color), structure (e.g., shape, size), and promotions (e.g., gifts, limited editions) allowing alcohol packs to catch attention, enabling products to stand out on shelves, and helping to create product and brand liking, interest, and choice. Third, alcohol packaging was frequently associated with specific occasions and activities. Fourth, alcohol packaging informed perceptions of product-consumer targeting, suitability, and intended drinker profiles. Fifth, alcohol packaging also engaged nonvisual senses (e.g., touch, sound, smell), guiding expectations of product taste and palatability.

Conclusions: For young adult drinkers in Scotland, alcohol packaging can capture attention, create appeal, and help shape perceptions of the product, drinker, and drinking experience.

Source: Jones, D., Moodie, C., Purves, R. I., Fitzgerald, N., & Crockett, R. (2022). Alcohol Packaging As a Promotional Tool: A Focus Group Study With Young Adult Drinkers in Scotland. *Journal of studies on alcohol and drugs*, 83(4), 565-573.

INDIVIDUAL-, PEER-, AND PARENT-LEVEL SUBSTANCE USE-RELATED FACTORS AMONG 9- AND 10-YEAR-OLDS FROM THE ABCD STUDY: PREVALENCE RATES AND SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC DIFFERENCES

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Background: Although a relatively large body of research has identified multiple factors associated with adolescent substance use, less is known about earlier substance-related factors during preadolescence, including curiosity to use substances. The present study examined individual-, peer-, and parent-level domains pertaining to substance use and how these domains vary by sociodemographic subgroups and substance type.

Methods: Participants were 11,864 9- and 10-year-olds from the baseline sample of the Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development (ABCD) Study. Youth-reported measures were curiosity to use substances and perceived peer substance use. Parent-reported measures were availability of and rules about substances. Generalized logistic mixed models (GLMM) were used to compare these measures across alcohol, nicotine, and marijuana and across sociodemographic subgroupings (sex, race/ethnicity, household income, and family history of alcohol problems). GLMM was then used to examine predictors of curiosity to use by substance type.

Results: The most striking descriptive differences were found between race/ethnicity and income categories (e.g., positive associations between greater income and greater availability of alcohol). In multivariable analyses, greater curiosity to use alcohol was associated with being male, higher household income, perceived peer alcohol use, and easy alcohol availability; greater curiosity to use nicotine was associated with being male, perceived peer cigarette use, easy availability of cigarettes, and no parental rules about cigarette use.

Conclusions: This study identified substance use-related individual-, peer-, and parent-level factors among a diverse, national sample. Findings highlight the importance of considering sociodemographic and substance-specific variability and may help identify risk and protective factors preceding adolescent substance use.

Source: Martz, M. E., Heitzeg, M. M., Lisdahl, K. M., Cloak, C. C., Ewing, S. W. F., Gonzalez, R., ... & Wade, N. E. (2022). Individual-, peer-, and parent-level substance use-related factors among 9- and 10-year-olds from the ABCD Study: Prevalence rates and sociodemographic differences. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence Reports*, 3, 100037.

In the News: Adam Barnes. (2022, July 1). Nearly one-third of parents say their child may have easy access to alcohol at home: study. *The Hill*. <https://thehill.com/changing-america/enrichment/arts-culture/3543922-nearly-one-third-of-parents-say-their-child-may-have-easy-access-to-alcohol-at-home-study/>

BINGE DRINKING AND ALCOHOL PROBLEMS AMONG MODERATE AVERAGE-LEVEL DRINKERS

June 2022

Introduction: A significant amount of binge drinking among adults escapes public health scrutiny because it occurs among individuals who drink at a moderate average level. This observational study examined the role of a binge pattern of drinking in predicting alcohol problems among moderate drinkers in a U.S. national sample of adults.

Methods: Participants were 1,229 current drinkers aged ≥ 30 years from 2 waves of the study of Midlife Development in the United States, with a 9-year time lag (2004–2015) (analyzed in 2021–2022). Negative binomial regression analyses were used to examine the number of alcohol problems, and binary logistic regression analyses were used to examine multiple (≥ 2) alcohol problems.

Results: Independent of the average level of drinking, binge drinking was linked with an almost 3 times increase in the number of concurrent alcohol problems and a 40% increase in the number of alcohol problems prospectively 9 years later. Moderate average level drinkers accounted for most cases of binge drinking and multiple alcohol problems. Among moderate drinkers, binge drinking was linked with a close to 5 times increase in concurrent multiple alcohol problems and a >2 times increase in multiple alcohol problems prospectively 9 years later.

Conclusions: These results substantially broaden an increasing recognition that binge drinking is a public health concern among adults. Moderate average-level drinkers should be included in efforts to reduce alcohol problems in adults. These findings are applicable to primary and secondary prevention of alcohol problems with the potential to advance population health.

Source: Holahan, C. J., Holahan, C. K., & Moos, R. H. (2022). Binge Drinking and Alcohol Problems Among Moderate Average-Level Drinkers. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*.

In the News: Jacob Fulton. (2022, July 2). Moderating your alcohol by saving drinks for the weekend? A study says there may be risks. *USA Today*. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/health/2022/07/02/binge-drinking-create-risks-moderate-drinkers/7628536001/>