

Rural underage binge drinkers put their health at risk

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Binge drinking is often considered to be a problem of towns and cities but new research published in BioMed Central's open access journal *BMC Public Health* shows that binge drinking in rural areas is more of a problem than previously thought.

Dr Carolin Donath, from the Psychiatric University Clinic Erlangen, looked at the drinking patterns of over 44,000 15 and 16 year olds in Germany and found that more than 93% of the young people from the countryside and over 86% of those from urban areas had tried alcohol. Of the [adolescents](#) who had drunk alcohol in the last month, 78% from rural areas and 74% from cities admitted to [binge drinking](#) (5 or more drinks at one time).

Dr Carolin Donath says that, "Whilst there is awareness of the problems of binge drinking in towns and cities, this study demonstrates that both drinking and binge drinking are as much of a problem for rural teenagers".

Binge drinking in school children has social ramifications as well as increasing health risks. Not only does alcohol abuse affect school work, and hence job prospects, but being drunk increases the likelihood of accidents among traffic and of unsafe sexual behaviour. This pattern of drinking also causes long term damage to the brain resulting in permanent [brain damage](#), including memory problems and cognitive defects, and increasing risk of [heart disease](#) and cancer.

More information: Casualties Alcohol consumption and binge drinking in adolescents: comparison of different migration backgrounds and rural vs. urban residence – a representative study, Carolin Donath, Elmar Gräbel, Dirk Baier, Christian Pfeiffer, Deniz Karagülle, Stefan Bleich, Thomas Hillemacher, *BMC Public Health* (in press)

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