

Underage youth drinking concentrated among small number of brands

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A relatively small number of alcohol brands dominate underage youth alcohol consumption, according to a new report from researchers at 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 online by *Alcoholism: Clinical & Experimental Research*, is the first national study to identify the alcohol brands consumed by underage youth, and has important implications for alcohol research and policy.

The top 25 brands accounted for nearly half of youth alcohol consumption. In contrast, adult consumption is nearly twice as widely spread among different brands. Close to 30 percent (27.9%) of underage youth sampled reported drinking Bud Light within the past month; 17 percent had consumed Smirnoff malt beverages within the previous month, and about 15 percent (14.6%) reported drinking Budweiser in the 30-day period:

Rank, Brand Reported Use in Previous 30 Days Among Underage Youth

1. Bud Light 27.9%
2. Smirnoff Malt Beverages 17.0%
3. Budweiser 14.6%

4. Smirnoff Vodkas 12.7%
5. Coors Light 12.7%
6. Jack Daniel's Bourbons 11.4%
7. Corona Extra 11.3%
8. Mike's 10.8%
9. Captain Morgan Rums 10.4%
10. Absolut Vodkas 10.1%

Of the top 25 consumed brands, 12 were spirits brands (including four vodkas), nine were beers, and four were flavored alcohol beverages.

"For the first time, we know what brands of alcoholic beverages underage youth in the U.S. are drinking," said study author David Jernigan, PhD, CAMY director. "Importantly, this report paves the way for subsequent studies to explore the association between exposure to alcohol advertising and marketing efforts and drinking behavior in young people."

Alcohol is responsible for 4,700 deaths per year among young people under the age of 21. More than 70 percent of high school students have consumed alcohol, and about 22 percent engage in heavy episodic drinking. At least 14 studies have found that the more young people are exposed to alcohol advertising and marketing, the more likely they are to drink, or if they are already drinking, to drink more.

The researchers surveyed 1,032 youth ages 13-20 via an Internet-based survey instrument. Respondents were asked about their past 30-day

consumption of 898 brands of alcohol among 16 alcoholic beverage types, including the frequency and amount of each [brand](#) consumed in the past 30 days.

"We now know, for the first time, what [alcohol](#) brands – and which companies – are profiting the most from the sale of their products to underage drinkers," said lead study author Michael Siegel, MD, MPH, professor of Community Health Sciences at the Boston University School of [Public Health](#). "The companies implicated by this study as the leading culprits in the problem of underage [drinking](#) need to take immediate action to reduce the appeal of their products to youth."

Provided by Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health

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