

Young beer drinkers binge drink more frequently, study finds

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Just under a third of young Swiss men prefer beer when they drink alcohol, taking in at least two thirds of their alcohol consumption in the form of the beverage. Far fewer (around five percent) prefer wine. Is there an association between the preference for particular alcoholic beverages and a riskier approach to alcohol or other substances? This is what researchers from the Institute of Social and Preventive Medicine at the University of Zurich and Lausanne University Hospital wanted to find out by conducting a survey of around 5,400 men with an average age of 20 as part of a national cohort study.

Men who prefer beer are more likely to be binge or volume drinkers

Men with a penchant for beer display riskier drinking behavior compared to those who do not have a particular preference when it comes to [alcoholic beverages](#). They drink six or more alcoholic drinks at one occasion at least once a month, for instance, which is classed as binge-drinking, or consume at least 21 [alcoholic drinks](#) a week. These beer-drinkers also smoke more frequently on a daily basis than those without a preference for a particular drink, use cannabis more than once a week or have tried at least one other illicit substance in the last 12 months. By contrast, men who prefer wine consume substances in greater moderation.

There are various possible explanations as to why a preference for beer

among young men goes hand in hand with riskier drinking patterns and the consumption of illicit substances. "Beer is comparatively cheap, which means young people can also afford it. And beer tends to be more popular at events such as parties or concerts, where risky consumption behavior is widespread," says Meichun Mohler-Kuo, a lecturer at the Institute of Social and Preventive Medicine.

People who exhibit risky drinking patterns are more likely to smoke cannabis

Besides the preference for a particular alcoholic drink, the drinking pattern also plays a key role. Young men who binge-drink or generally drink a lot smoke cigarettes on a daily basis or cannabis more than once a week more frequently than men with moderate alcohol consumption. They also tend to have consumed other illegal substances at least once in the last 12 months and experience negative alcohol-related consequences, such as accidents, arguments, brawls, unprotected sex, blackouts, damage to property or conflicts with the police or other authorities, more frequently. "The aim of preventive measures should still be to reduce risky [alcohol consumption](#) among [young men](#)," says Meichun Mohler-Kuo.

More information: Dey, M. et al. Beverage preferences and associated drinking patterns, consequences and other substance use behaviours, *European Journal of Public Health*, August 12, 2013. [DOI: 10.1093/eurpub/ckt109](https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/ckt109)

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