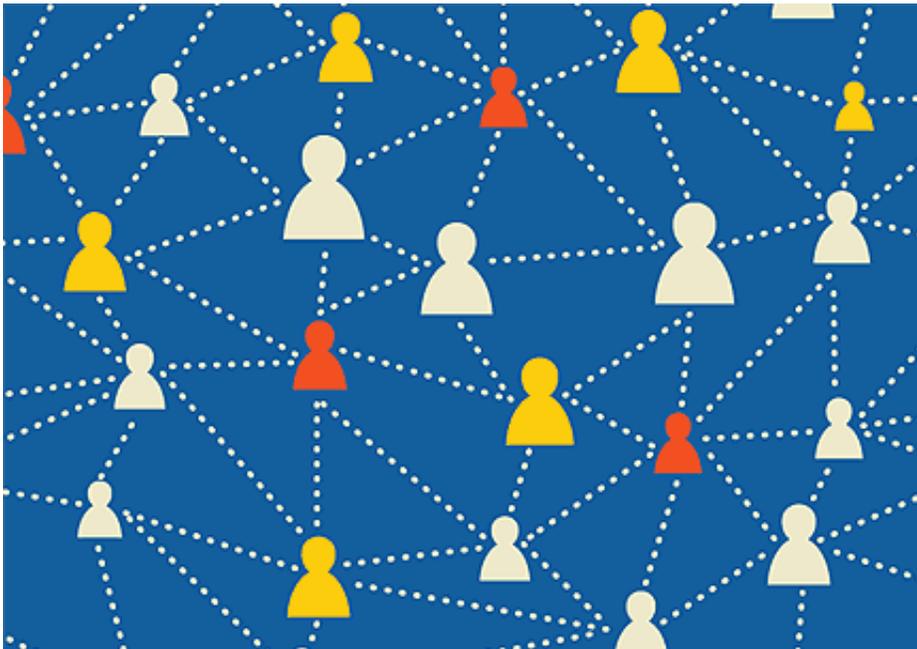


Peer influence: Facebook, Twitter, alcohol and drugs

October 16 2012



(Medical Xpress)—When it comes to alcohol and drug use, peers can be just as influential online as they are in person, researchers at the University of Michigan School of Public Health say.

To gather what they believe to be the most comprehensive survey to date to look at how peers influence one another on Internet social platforms with regard to alcohol and marijuana use, the U-M researchers polled an

online sample of 3,447 people ages 18-24 across the United States.

The research, appearing in the November issue of the *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs* and online now, found that greater [alcohol content](#) online was associated with higher levels of drinking.

Sarah Stoddard and colleagues at the School of Public Health looked specifically at the association between [substance use](#) and the presence of alcohol and marijuana content on Internet [social networking sites](#) and perceived norms about posting such content.

The study found that those who thought their parents and peers would be upset if they viewed images of their drinking and drug use online were less likely to drink. Further, [young adults](#) who reported more online [peer support](#) were less likely to use alcohol.

For marijuana use, Stoddard and colleagues could not establish an association between online content and use of the substance. However, those who were concerned about negative reactions from others if they were to post images of drinking and drug use online were less likely to report marijuana use.

In addition, the researchers found that alcohol use was associated with the number of images of such activity on the respondents' social sites.

"We were surprised, however, that attitudes about whether it was ok to post images and updates about drinking were not associated with alcohol use. If you see what peers are doing, it perhaps is more socially acceptable," said Stoddard, research assistant professor of [health behavior](#) and [health education](#) at the School of Public Health.

"This information suggests use of these social platforms could be a good way to reach young adults with messages about alcohol and marijuana

use and other health behaviors. And images may be effective in a social networking environment."

Provided by University of Michigan

Citation: Peer influence: Facebook, Twitter, alcohol and drugs (2012, October 16) retrieved 26 April 2024 from

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