



## Medical Community Supports Increased Taxation

*The American Academy of Family Physicians* supports *increased taxation* on alcoholic beverages and using the revenue raised from this increase to fund prevention advertising messages.

*The American College of Emergency Physicians* supports *increased taxation* on alcoholic products and allocating revenue from taxes to preventive and other health-related efforts.<sup>9</sup>

*The American Medical Association* supports an *increased excise tax* on alcohol products and allocating revenue from taxation to health care and education needs around alcohol.<sup>10</sup>

*The American Medical Association* supports legislation to minimize alcohol promotions, advertising, and other marketing strategies by the alcohol industry that are aimed at adolescents.

## Prevention Pays

### One dollar of prevention worth \$10 in savings

Researchers at Iowa State University found that \$1 spent on prevention saves \$10 that would later be spent on treatment, associated health costs,<sup>11</sup> emergency room services, and incarceration.

### Raise alcohol taxes, reduce alcohol consumption

Alexander Wagenaar, Ph.D., a researcher at the University of Florida, led a review of 112 published studies. The study concluded that raising alcohol taxes reduces alcohol consumption. Wagenaar's team found the correlation between higher taxes and lowered consumption to be, "statistically overwhelming."<sup>12</sup>

### Prevention messages reduce underage use

A Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) study, conducted from 2002-2007, found that youth exposed to prevention messages used alcohol less<sup>13</sup> than youth who did not hear such messages.

### Policy change has a long-lasting impact

Since 1997, the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth has conducted research and issued reports regarding alcohol industry advertising and marketing to those underage. Such advertising in magazines fell by 22 percent from 2001-2006, due to recommendations from the prevention field, policy development by the Federal Trade Commission, and the alcohol industry's adoption of a 30 percent maximum exposure of its advertising audience for youth. Pursuing policy change for alcopops is an effective strategy to continue to combat underage drinking.<sup>14</sup>



**Mission:** To build a safe and healthy Vermont for us all by organizing prevention advocates to work collaboratively on issues of policy, practice and attitude related to substance abuse.

**Vision:** All of Vermont's communities will be safe and healthy.

## The Alcopop<sup>1</sup> Problem in Vermont

**GATEWAY DRINK:** Alcopops are alcoholic drinks, highly appealing to youth because they taste sweet, more like soda than alcohol. They serve as gateway drinks to harder liquor at a crucial time, when adolescent brains are still developing. Additionally, early alcohol use carries an increased risk of impaired brain development.

**\$200 MILLION:** Underage drinking cost the State of Vermont an estimated \$200 million in 2005. Want to save \$200 million? When you reduce underage access to alcohol, you reduce underage use of alcohol. Reclassifying alcopops will reduce underage drinking.

**EASY ACCESS:** Alcopops are inexpensive. Check your supermarket circular for prices. A six-pack of alcopops is roughly \$1 more than a six-pack of beer. A price increase makes them less accessible to underage youth and aids in reducing Vermont's high rates of underage drinking.



**Alcopops – sweet alcoholic drinks that taste like soda – serve as a gateway drink for adolescents.**

## Prevention Works! Necessary Goals

- Alcopops in stores should be properly displayed, away from non-alcoholic drinks, in areas clearly designated for products containing alcohol.
- Alcopops should be correctly classified so the Department of Liquor Control can regulate marketing, labeling, and store placement. Alcopops should be sold in State liquor stores with labels that indicate they contain alcohol. Prominently placed labels will ensure that customers know what they are buying and clerks know what they're selling.
- To lower underage alcohol consumption, the excise tax on alcopops must be increased. The prices of alcopops are currently low because they are taxed at the same rate as beer and wine. This makes alcopops affordable for youth and helps keep the underage drinking rates high.
- Alcohol prevention, treatment, intervention, enforcement, and recovery programs will be successful in reducing underage drinking when the increased tax revenue from the reclassification of alcopops is allocated to these fields.

For more information about the details of this publication, or to learn more about Prevention Works!, please contact Christine Peterson at (802) 479-7378 or [teenleadaa@myfairpoint.net](mailto:teenleadaa@myfairpoint.net).

<sup>1</sup> Alcopops are also referred to as flavored malt beverages, or FMB's.

# Youth Survey Says ...

The Vermont 2009 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) has plenty to say about underage drinking in the Green Mountain State. On the YRBS:

- Thirty-six percent of Vermont's 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders reported that they drank alcohol in the 30 days prior to taking the survey.

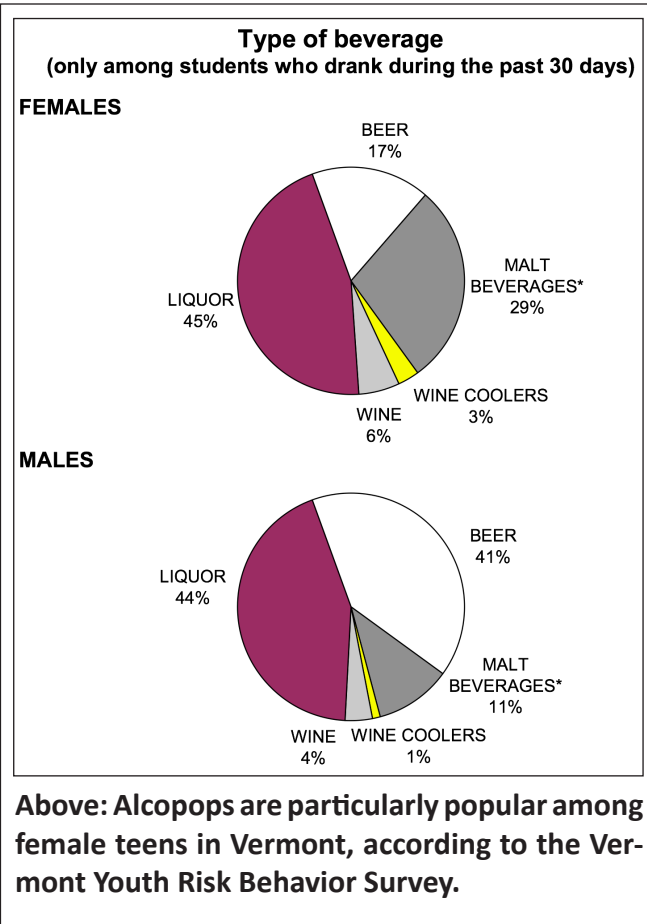
- In that same survey, 20 percent of Vermont's 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders reported binge drinking<sup>2</sup> in the 30 days prior to taking the survey.

- Of those who reported drinking in the last 30 days, 28 percent of females and 9 percent of males indicated that their drinks of choice were alcopops.

The 2002 National Survey on Drug Use and Health found the following:

- Underage drinking among youth ages 12-17 was higher in rural areas than in non-rural areas.

- Vermont has the second highest underage



Above: Alcopops are particularly popular among female teens in Vermont, according to the Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey.

drinking rate in the nation.

In 2001, the Center for Science in the Public Interest reported the results of two national polls conducted by independent firms, identifying the appeal of alcopops to American youth:

- Eighty-seven percent of teens say alcopops have sweetened flavors like lemonade so that they appeal to young people. Nearly 9 out of 10 youth say taste motivates them to try alcopops. Eighty percent of youth say they drink alcopops because they do not taste like beer or liquor. Alcopops are designed for "entry-level drinkers," according to an alcohol industry spokesperson.<sup>3</sup>

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- Eighty-four percent of youth say they consume alcopops because they are easy to get.<sup>4</sup> Alcopops are classified with beer and wine, meaning they are taxed at a lower rate than liquor. They cost about the same as beer and are sold in convenience and grocery stores.

<sup>2</sup> Binge drinking is defined in the survey as five or more drinks in a sitting.  
<sup>3</sup> Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates, Inc, Center for Science in the Public Interest, 2001 What Teens Are Saying About "Alcopops" from website [http://www.cspinet.org/booze/alcopops\\_press.htm](http://www.cspinet.org/booze/alcopops_press.htm).  
<sup>4</sup> Ibid  
<sup>5</sup> Miller, TR, Levy, DT, Spicer, RS, & Taylor, DM. (2006) Societal Costs of Underage Drinking. Journal of Studies on Alcohol, 67(4) 519-528.  
<sup>6</sup> [http://www.ama-assn.org/ama1/pub/upload/mm/388/iom\\_fact\\_sheet.pdf](http://www.ama-assn.org/ama1/pub/upload/mm/388/iom_fact_sheet.pdf) Reducing Underage Drinking: A Collective Responsibility—2003 Institute of Medicine  
<sup>7</sup> Sargent, J.D., Wills, T.A., Stoolmiller, M., et al., Alcohol Use in Motion Pictures and Its Relation with Early-Onset Teen Drinking, Journal of Studies on Alcohol 67 (2006) 54-65.  
<sup>8</sup> The Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth, Clicking with Kids: Alcohol Marketing and Youth on the Internet, March 2004, Washington D.C.  
<sup>9</sup> (P #400226, Revised and Approved Apr 2003)  
<sup>10</sup> (H-490.957, Res. 165, A-90; Reaffirmed: Sub. Res. 114, A-93; Reaffirmed: BOT Rep. I-93-40; Reaffirmed: Sub. Res. 233, I-93; Reaffirmed: CSA Rep. 11, A-03 & BOT Rep. 28, A-03) & (Res. 415, I-01)  
<sup>11</sup> Spoth, R., & Guyll, M. (Eds.). (2008 Dec. 16). Proceedings from United Nations conference: Prevention's Cost Effectiveness: Illustrative Economic Benefits of General Population Interventions. Vienna, Austria.  
<sup>12</sup> Wagenaar, A.C., Salois, M.J., & Komro, K.A. Effects of beverage alcohol price and tax levels on drinking: a meta-analysis of 1003 estimates from 112 studies. Addiction, 104 (2), 179-190.  
<sup>13</sup> SAMHSA. Exposure to Substance Use Prevention Messages and Substance Use among Adolescents: 2002 to 2007. (2009).  
<sup>14</sup> Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth, Youth Exposure to Alcohol Advertising on Television and in National Magazines, 2001 to 2006 (Washington, D.C., 2008).

# The High Cost of Underage Drinking

In 2005, the Pacific Institute of Research and Evaluation determined the costs of underage drinking to the State of Vermont as a part of its work for the Department of Justice's Enforcing Underage Drinking Enforcement Training Center.

Here are some of the results:

- Vermont spends \$3,139 per underage Vermont youth every year as a result of underage drinking. Vermont is ranked 4<sup>th</sup> highest in the United States for underage drinking-related costs per youth.

- Violence and traffic crashes are the largest contributors to the total cost of underage drinking in Vermont.

- Underage youth consumed 13.3 percent of all alcohol sold in Vermont, totaling \$48 million in sales. This provided a profit of \$23 million to the alcohol industry.<sup>5</sup>

- Nationally, alcohol is a factor in nearly 50 percent of youth car crashes, the leading cause of death among teenagers. Alcohol use contributes to youth suicide,

Problem	Total Costs (in millions)
Youth Violence	\$75.4
Youth Traffic Crashes	\$83.1
High-Risk Sex, Ages 14-20	\$5.7
Youth Property Crime	\$4.2
Youth Injury	\$5.6
Poisonings and Psychoses	\$1.1
FAS Among Mothers Age 15-20	\$1.1
Youth Alcohol Treatment	\$23.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$200.0</b>

homicides and fatal injuries, the combined second cause of death among youth after car crashes. Alcohol abuse is linked to as many as 2 out of 3 college sexual assaults and rapes.<sup>6</sup>

# The Impact of Advertising

- Researchers from Dartmouth Medical School followed more than 5,000 Vermont and New Hampshire students ages 10-14 for over a year.<sup>7</sup> Those with higher exposure to alcohol use in movies at the initial assessment were found to be more likely to have started drinking at the time of follow-up. They also found depictions of alcohol use in 92 percent of contemporary movies, including 52 percent of G-rated films.

- Alcopop websites contain interactive games, cartoons, chat rooms, bulletin boards, logoed clothing, and downloads including wallpaper and screensavers that have been identified by the Federal Trade Commission as content that appeals to youth.<sup>8</sup>

