



**RESEARCH SUMMARY**  
Date Compiled: September 2024

**Key takeaways from included research:**

- A new study examined ‘sweetspot’ policy options with the potential to benefit public services and health while avoiding or minimizing negatives impacts on the hospitality industry. They determined interventions that increase the price of alcohol as promising; restrictions of online sales may reduce harms and divert consumption from on-premise to at home settings; reducing late-night hours of sale saw little impact on the hospitality industry. Overall, evidence in this study and others show that regulating the price and online sales have the greatest potential to be ‘sweetspot’ alcohol policies to reduce harms while minimizing impacts on the hospitality industry.
- Young adults are more likely to utilize social media, and the alcohol industry has been utilizing social media to target potential customers, a new study examined the prevalence and factors associated with past-month exposure to social media marketing (SMM) among a group of young Chinese adults. They found that 52.3% of respondents reported past-month exposure to SMM. Direct alcohol SMM (business-to-consumer) was reported by 40.9% while 27.4% reported indirect SMM (shared/liked posts). Researchers concluded that the pervasiveness of alcohol SMM and the lack of alcohol SMM policies indicate greater needs for alcohol marketing regulations.
- A new study examined how young adults perceive drinking-related consequences and what factors may influence their evaluations. Young adults 21+ experienced fewer total consequences and were significantly less likely to endorse experiencing physical/behavioral consequences and rated them ore negatively, as compared to young adults 18-20 years of age. Those who drank weekly or more were significantly more likely to experience all consequences compared to those who drank three times per month or less. Researchers highlighted that identifying the different factors contributing to young adult evaluations may be useful in tailoring brief and personalized interventions.
- Researchers examined polysubstance use and how its associated with adverse health outcomes. While estimating trends in marijuana and heavy alcohol use by cigarette smoking, they found a decrease in heavy alcohol use (7.8% to 6.4%), an increase in marijuana use (6.0% to 11.8%), and concurrent use remained stable. They also examined demographic subgroups and found higher education was associated with higher odds of heavy alcohol use.

## **REDUCING ALCOHOL HARMS WHILST MINIMISING IMPACT ON HOSPITALITY BUSINESSES: 'SWEETSPOT' POLICY OPTIONS**

July 2024

**Background:** During COVID-19, hospitality businesses (e.g. bars, restaurants) were closed/restricted whilst off-sales of alcohol increased, with health consequences. Post-covid, governments face lobbying to support such businesses, but many health services remain under pressure. We appraised 'sweetspot' policy options: those with potential to benefit public services and health, whilst avoiding or minimising negative impact on the hospitality sector.

**Methods:** We conducted rapid non-systematic evidence reviews using index papers, citation searches and team knowledge to summarise the literature relating to four possible 'sweetspot' policy areas: pricing interventions (9 systematic reviews (SR); 14 papers/reports); regulation of online sales (1 SR; 1 paper); place-shaping (2 SRs; 18 papers/reports); and violence reduction initiatives (9 SRs; 24 papers/reports); and led two expert workshops (n = 11).

**Results:** Interventions that raise the price of cheaper shop-bought alcohol appear promising as 'sweetspot' policies; any impact on hospitality is likely small and potentially positive. Restrictions on online sales such as speed or timing of delivery may reduce harm and diversion of consumption from on-trade to home settings. Place-shaping is not well-supported by evidence and experts were sceptical. Reduced late-night trading hours likely reduce violence; evidence of impact on hospitality is scant. Other violence reduction initiatives may modestly reduce harms whilst supporting hospitality, but require resources to deliver multiple measures simultaneously in partnership.

**Conclusions:** Available evidence and expert views point to regulation of pricing and online sales as having greatest potential as 'sweetspot' alcohol policies, reducing alcohol harm whilst minimising negative impact on hospitality businesses.

**Source:** Fitzgerald, N., O'Donnell, R., Uny, I., Martin, J. G., Cook, M., Graham, K., ... & Angus, C. (2024). Reducing alcohol harms whilst minimising impact on hospitality businesses: 'Sweetspot' policy options. *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 129, 104465.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2024.104465>

**In the News:** University of Stirling. (2024, June 10). Research explores measures to reduce alcohol harms without impacting pubs and restaurants. *Medical Xpress*.

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2024-06-explores-alcohol-impacting-pubs-restaurants.html>

## **WHO IS BEING TARGETED BY ALCOHOL SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING? A STUDY OF CHINESE YOUNG ADULTS IN HONG KONG**

July 2024

**Introduction:** Due to the widespread use of social media by young adults, the alcohol industry has been increasingly using social media marketing (SMM) to target potential customers. This study examines the prevalence and factors associated with past-month exposure to alcohol SMM among young Chinese adults, a group with rapidly increasing uptake of alcohol consumption.

**Methods:** An anonymous, random telephone survey was conducted between June and August 2021 on Hong Kong Chinese residents between 18 and 34 years old (n = 675).

**Results:** Of respondents, 52.3% reported past-month exposure to alcohol SMM (68.6% of past-month drinkers and 48.0% of non-past-month drinkers,  $p < 0.05$ ) while 71.6% reported exposure to non-SMM alcohol marketing. Direct alcohol SMM exposure was reported by 40.9% (e.g., business-to-consumer postings, alcohol banner ads) while 27.4% of respondents reported exposure to indirect alcohol SMM marketing (e.g., shared/'liked' alcohol brand posts). Of those exposed to alcohol SMM, 13.7–15.5%

reported that the various forms indirect alcohol SMM influenced them to drink more (vs. 6.2–8.9% for direct alcohol SMM). Being male, lower-income, university educated and spirits/cocktail drinker were independently associated with exposure to direct alcohol SMM (ORMv 1.71–3.14). Past-month exposure to indirect alcohol SMM was independently associated with lower income, not working full-time and drinking any type of alcohol (ORMv 1.59–4.44).

**Discussion and Conclusion:** The comparative effectiveness of indirect SMM on influencing young adults drinking intentions may be a form of peer endorsement of drinking. The pervasiveness of alcohol SMM and lack of alcohol SMM policies may indicate the need for greater alcohol marketing regulation in this region.

**Source:** Chan, R. H., Dong, D., Yu, J., & Kim, J. H. (2024). Who is being targeted by alcohol social media marketing? A study of Chinese young adults in Hong Kong. *Drug and Alcohol Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/dar.13892>

## **EXAMINING WHETHER YOUNG ADULTS DIFFER IN THEIR ENDORSEMENT AND SUBJECTIVE EVALUATION OF ALCOHOL CONSEQUENCES BY AGE, DRINKING FREQUENCY, AND CURRENT UNDERGRADUATE STATUS**

July 2024

**Objective:** There is considerable variability in how young adults (YAs) perceive drinking-related consequences, and some researcher-identified “negative” consequences are viewed by YAs as neutral or even somewhat positive. Little is known about individual difference factors that may influence subjective evaluations of alcohol consequences.

**Method:** We tested whether endorsement and subjective evaluation (‘extremely negative’ to ‘extremely positive’) of 24 alcohol-related “negative” consequences differed by age (18-20, 21-27), past 3-month drinking frequency (3x/month or less, weekly or more), and current undergraduate status (4-year undergraduate, non-student). YAs were recruited for a longitudinal ecological momentary assessment study on cognitions and alcohol use. Participants in the analytic sample (N=640; 48.1% White non-Hispanic/Latinx, 50.0% female, mean age=22.2 years, SD=2.3) reported past 3-month drinking. Past 3-month drinking frequency, negative consequences (total and item-level), and subjective evaluations of consequences were assessed cross-sectionally.

**Results:** Compared to YAs 18-20, YAs 21+ experienced fewer total consequences, were significantly less likely to endorse experiencing physical/behavioral consequences, and rated these consequences more negatively if they were endorsed. YAs who drank weekly or more reported experiencing more consequences and were significantly more likely to experience all 24 consequences in comparison to YAs who drank 3x/month or less. Subjective evaluation ratings did not significantly differ by drinking frequency. There were few differences between 4-year undergraduate and non-undergraduates; non-undergraduates rated several health/responsibility-related consequences more negatively.

**Conclusions:** Findings highlight the importance of identifying individual difference factors that contribute to subjective evaluation ratings, and may be useful for tailoring brief, personalized alcohol interventions for YAs.

**Source:** Walukevich-Dienst, K., Hoang, A. N., Fairlie, A. M., Lewis, M. A., & Lee, C. M. (2024). Examining whether young adults differ in their endorsement and subjective evaluation of alcohol consequences by age, drinking frequency, and current undergraduate status. *Journal of studies on alcohol and drugs*, jsad-23. <https://doi.org/10.15288/jsad.23-00372>

**TRENDS IN MARIJUANA AND HEAVY ALCOHOL USE BY CIGARETTE SMOKING STATUS  
AMONG US ADULTS: AN ANALYSIS OF THE 2002-2019 NSDUH**  
**August 2024**

**Background:** Polysubstance use is associated with adverse health outcomes, yet little research has measured changes in polysubstance use. We aimed to 1) estimate trends in marijuana and heavy alcohol use by cigarette smoking and demographic subgroups, and 2) examine patient factors associated with concurrent use among adults who were smoking.

**Methods:** We conducted a repeated cross-sectional analysis of 687,225 non-institutionalized US adults  $\geq 18$  years from the 2002–2019 National Survey on Drug Use and Health. Participants were stratified into current, former, and never smoking groups. Main outcomes were prevalence of heavy alcohol use, marijuana use, and concurrent use of both substances.

**Results:** From 2002–2019, heavy alcohol use declined from 7.8 % to 6.4 %, marijuana use rose from 6.0 % to 11.8 %, and concurrent use of alcohol and marijuana remained stable. Among adults who were smoking from 2005 to 2019, higher education was associated with higher odds of heavy alcohol use, while older ages, female gender, non-White race/ethnicity, and government-provided health insurance were associated with lower odds. The odds of marijuana use decreased in females, older ages, and higher incomes while increasing in people with poorer health status, higher education, government-provided or no health insurance, and serious mental illness. Compared to White adults who were smoking, Black counterparts had higher odds of marijuana use (OR=1.23; 95 %CI: 1.15–1.29), while Hispanic (OR=0.68; 95 %CI: 0.63–0.72) and other racial/ethnic identities (OR=0.83; 95 %CI: 0.77–0.90) had lower odds.

**Conclusions:** Our study suggests marijuana use might not be sensitive to changes in the use of tobacco and alcohol.

**Source:** Rich, J. J., Back, S. E., Bui, T. C., Bernstein, E. Y., & Le, P. (2024). Trends in heavy alcohol and marijuana use by cigarette smoking status among US adults: An analysis of the 2002–2019 NSDUH. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 111355. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2024.111355>