

# Alcohol Issues **INSIGHTS**

2017 Update #2

January 9, 2017

Here's the latest alcohol policy news and notes:

## [Parental Provision of Alcohol Linked to Less Drinking, Less Binge Drinking, Study Shows](#)

Parents supplying alcohol to their young teens remains a controversial, but relatively common practice. And just as a Canadian study recently found that early drinking experience may not in and of itself be a harbinger of later problems (unlike early drunkenness - see December newsletter) a new study from Australia found that children of parents who supply alcohol in the home are less likely to binge drink, and tend to drink less, than teens who get their alcohol from sources other than their parents.

The study followed 1,927 teens (average age 13 at the beginning of the study), over 4 years. About 1/3 of the teens reported their parents supplied alcohol, the same as in other studies from the US, Europe and Australia, the authors found. The key measures: consumption of "whole" drinks and rates of binge drinking in later years. The key findings, after the results were adjusted for factors like parental consumption, parental monitoring, religiosity, household make-up (one parent, two parent, etc), personality and other factors: parental supply was strongly associated with drinking, but not with binge drinking or heavy drinking. Specifically:

- "Parental supply at any wave was associated with doubled odds of drinking at subsequent waves, but was not associated with bingeing."
- "While supply from other sources was similarly associated with a doubling in the odds of drinking whole drinks, it was associated with more than a tripling in the odds of binge drinking."
- "Consistent with this result, adolescents who received alcohol only from other supply sources drank significantly more drinks than adolescents who were supplied alcohol by their parents (and who were not supplied by other supply sources)."

Other factors that these (and other) authors found associated with lower odds of teen drinking: "parental monitoring" (which some parents cite as the reason they provide alcohol to their teens), "responsive and consistent parenting, religiosity; child social problems; and peer disapproval of substance use." Since they found a link between parental supply and drinking, but not binge drinking, the authors suggest that "parental supply may have a protective effect, possibly due to the supervised nature of the supply," though they quickly add that this would be a "premature" conclusion before more study. Indeed, despite the main finding, "parents may be accelerating children into drinking alcohol," the authors further suggest, by supplying it and thereby "laying down the potential for later harms."

Not surprisingly, in an article describing the findings, The Guardian newspaper quoted several educators who rejected the notion of any possible protective effect against binge drinking and continued to advise that "not drinking remains the safest option." Indeed, one educator said: "While there has been discussion about the European model of drinking, Australia is very different from Europe, and the drinking patterns are also changing." Another said: "This study answers a question that many parents ask: does the European model of providing alcohol to children work? The answer is no, and it doesn't work in Europe either." Meanwhile, drinking rates among teens in Australia, as in the US, have fallen sharply in recent years.

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