Beer Drinking Accounts for Most of the Hazardous Alcohol Consumption Reported in the United States

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Objective: Patterns and correlates of hazardous drinking, defined as occasions in which five or more drinks were consumed in a day, were compared for wine, beer and distilled spirits. Method: From a probability sample of the U.S. adult household population, 2,817 respondents who had consumed at least one drink in the previous year were selected for analysis. Results: The results show that, in the U.S., beer accounts for the bulk of alcohol consumed by the heaviest drinkers. Beer also accounts for a disproportionate share of hazardous drinking. Logistic regression analyses revealed that drinkers who consume beer in a hazardous fashion at least monthly are more likely to be young, male and unmarried, and less likely to be black than are other drinkers. Hazardous beer consumption is more predictive of alcohol-related problems than hazardous consumption of wine or spirits. Conclusions: Three potential explanations for the results are considered: advertising, beer-drinking subcultures and risk compensation. Additional research is urged in order to better specify the causal role of these and other factors in hazardous beer drinking. (J. Stud. Alcohol 60: 732-739, 1999)