Retail alcohol monopolies, underage drinking, and youth impaired driving deaths.

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OBJECTIVE: To explore associations of state retail alcohol monopolies with underage drinking and alcohol-impaired driving deaths. DATA: Surveys on youth who drank alcohol and binge-drunk recently and their beverage choices; census of motor vehicle fatalities by driver blood alcohol level. METHODS: Regressions estimated associations of monopolies with under-21 drinking, binge drinking, alcohol-impaired driving deaths, and odds a driver under 21 who died was alcohol-positive. RESULTS: About 93.8% of those ages 12-20 who consumed alcohol in the past month drank some wine or spirits. In states with a retail monopoly over spirits or wine and spirits, an average of 14.5% fewer high school students reported drinking alcohol in the past 30 days and 16.7% fewer reported binge drinking in the past 30 days than high school students in non-monopoly states. Monopolies over both wine and spirits were associated with larger consumption reductions than monopolies over spirits only. Lower consumption rates in monopoly states, in turn, were associated with a 9.3% lower alcohol-impaired driving death rate under age 21 in monopoly states versus non-monopoly states. Alcohol monopolies may prevent 45 impaired driving deaths annually. CONCLUSIONS: Continuing existing retail alcohol monopolies should help control underage drinking and associated harms.