

Strong alcohol policies help reduce alcohol-involved homicides

22 September 2017



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Stronger alcohol policies, including taxes and sales restrictions, have been shown to reduce the likelihood of alcohol involvement among homicide victims, according to a new study from Boston Medical Center (BMC) and Boston University. The study, published online in the *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, supports the importance of alcohol control policies to reduce violence, including homicide.

Alcohol is an established risk factor for homicide perpetration and victimization. In the U.S., between 40 and 50 percent of homicides involve the use of [alcohol](#) by either the victim or perpetrator, and more than half involve people who are significantly impaired by alcohol, which means that their [blood alcohol levels](#) are at or above 0.08 percent, the legal limit for driving. However, little is known about how alcohol policies, which include [alcohol taxes](#) and the number of places licensed to sell alcohol, relate to alcohol-related homicides.

The new study looked at the relationship between

alcohol policies in place and the likelihood of alcohol involvement (either up to the legal limit of 0.08 or above that limit) among the 27,000 victims of homicide from 17 U.S. states between 2003 and 2012. The data analyzed was from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Violent Death Reporting System. State alcohol policies for each year were characterized using the "Alcohol Policy Scale," a measure of the policy "environment" based on 29 separate alcohol control policies.

Stronger, more restrictive state alcohol policies were protective when alcohol was involved in a homicide. Specifically, a 1 percent increase in the restrictiveness of policies corresponded to a 1 percent reduction in likelihood of alcohol involvement among [homicide victims](#).

"Given the risks involved with alcohol use, strengthening effective alcohol policies could help prevent homicides," said Timothy Naimi, MD, the study's lead author who is a physician in general internal medicine at BMC and researcher at BMC's Grayken Center for Addiction Medicine.

Furthermore, findings were similarly protective among important groups who account for a large proportion of deaths or who are particularly vulnerable, including young adult homicide victims, those who died in intimate partner violence-related homicides, and those who died from firearms-related homicides, including murders involving guns.

"Both alcohol and guns are significant social determinants of [homicide](#), either considered independently or in combination, and it is important to recognize the potential of [policy](#) to help curb these critical problems," said Naimi, who also is associate professor at both BU School of Medicine and BU School of Public Health.

Provided by Boston Medical Center

APA citation: Strong alcohol policies help reduce alcohol-involved homicides (2017, September 22)
retrieved 14 October 2022 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-09-strong-alcohol-policies-alcohol-involved-homicides.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.