

A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

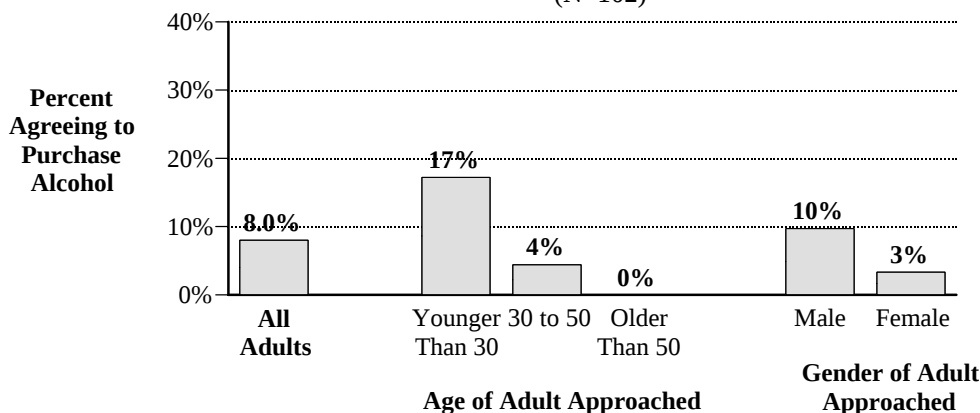
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Young Males Most Likely to Buy Alcohol for Persons Who Appear to Be Underage

Young males are more likely than other adults to buy alcohol for persons who appear to be underage, according to a study of the ability to obtain alcohol by “shoulder tapping.” Pseudo-underage individuals (persons who appeared to be under 21 but were in fact age 21 or older) approached adults outside liquor and convenience stores in 19 Midwestern communities and asked them to buy a six-pack of beer for them (i.e., shoulder tapping). While less than one-tenth (8%) of the 102 adults approached agreed to purchase alcohol for the requestor, adults who appeared to be younger than age 30 were more likely to provide alcohol, as were males (see figure below). In a second wave of shoulder tapping attempts targeting only casually dressed, young males, 19% of the approached men agreed to buy alcohol for the requestors. In addition, the young males were 2.7 times more likely to actually return with beer (data not shown). The authors conclude that while “youth are not likely to easily obtain alcohol through shoulder tapping from a general population of adults entering alcohol establishments, they will be more likely to obtain alcohol through this method if they direct their requests toward younger male adults” (p. 1222). Thus, communities should “direct their educational and enforcement shoulder tap campaigns toward younger males rather than the general adult population” (p. 1220).

Percent of Adults Agreeing to Purchase Alcohol for Persons Who Appear to Be Underage, by Age and Gender

(N=102)



NOTES: During the first wave of this study, requesters approached the first unaccompanied adult who approached the store entrance. During the second wave, requesters approached the first male who appeared to be between 21 and 30 years old, was dressed casually, and approached the store alone. Each time the requestor said, “I don’t have my ID on me and I think this store checks for age identification. Could you get a six-pack of beer for me?” If asked their age, requesters stated their real age (i.e., age 21 or older).

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from Toomey, T.L., Fabian, L.E.A., Erickson, D.J., and Lenk, K.M. “Propensity for Obtaining Alcohol Through Shoulder Tapping,” *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research* 31(7):1218-1223, 2007. For more information, contact Traci Toomey at toomey@epi.umn.edu.

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