Media release

VicHealth
www.vichealth.vic.gov.au

YOUNG CIDER DRINKERS PRONE TO BINGEING, SURVEY OF 6000 AUSSIES SHOWS

A VicHealth survey of 6000 Australian drinkers has found one in five now consider cider their beverage of choice and cider lovers aged under 30 have a tendency to drink heavily.

The 'typical' cider drinker is a university-educated young woman, who drinks more than her non-cider drinking peers. However, the survey shows the vast majority of cider drinkers are health-conscious and would buy a low alcohol-option cider, if one were available.

The online survey was developed by VicHealth to gain insight into the meteoric growth of cider over the past five years. It has been released in the lead up to Australia Day, the single worst day of the year for alcohol-related accidents, injuries and assaults among young people.

Attitudes of Australia cider drinkers: key findings

- One in five of the 6000 people surveyed identified cider as their drink of choice.
- Women (21%) were more likely to select cider as a preferred drink compared to men (18%).
- The main reasons for choosing cider were the taste, it's 'less bloating' and it is viewed as a 'party starter'.
- Most cider drinkers (79%) would consider switching to a low alcohol option (less than 3.5% alcohol per volume).
- The majority (80%) of cider drinkers aged under 30 drank five or more standard drinks in a single sitting at least once a year, compared to 67 per cent of non-cider drinkers in the same age group.
- One in three (32%) regular cider drinkers had consumed more than 11 standard drinks in a single sitting the previous year, compared to one in four (24%) non-cider drinkers.
- Regular cider drinkers are also more likely to drink at a greater number and range of social events.

Cider is the fastest growing category of alcohol in Australia, with sales expanding 30 per cent in 2011 and for some brands, up to 300 per cent in 2012. Cider is now offered on tap at most licensed venues in Victoria, bars dedicated to cider have appeared on the Melbourne scene, and dozens of new brands have appeared in bottle shop displays.

VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter said public health agencies are watching the cider phenomenon with interest, particularly in light of new evidence young people are drinking it to excess, and often.

She added that the alcohol content in cider can vary from 4% to 8%, which could lead to cider drinkers to become more intoxicated than they intended. No low alcohol option is widely available.

"The most popular types of ciders, pear and apple, are currently subject to the Wine Equalisation Tax, which means there's little incentive for producers to make a low-alcohol option. If all ciders were subject to a volumetric tax, like beer is, then we'd potentially see lower alcohol varieties on the market.

"The vast majority of cider lovers we surveyed say they would drink a low-alcohol option, but unfortunately, there is no light version widely available. This survey shows there is clearly a market for it and it may reduce the incidence of heavy drinking," Ms Rechter said.

Ms Rechter said the energy content was also an issue. She said one 500ml bottle of Rekorderlig is equivalent to a jumbo sausage roll and a six-pack of Five Seeds cider akin to eating a medium Big Mac meal with fries and coke.

"Only one in 10 regular cider drinkers were concerned about the calories in their drink, which is surprising, given the majority try to maintain a healthy diet. The less alcohol in a beverage, the less impact it will have on your waistline and your overall health, which is why we would like to see a low-alcohol option on the Australian market."

Download the Attitudes of Australian cider drinkers fact sheet or see the full report at www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/cider

Over summer, VicHealth and the State Government are running a competition urging young people to come up with a name for the point in the evening when clear thinking turns into more drinking – enter at www.namethatpoint.com to win $5000 or weekly prizes of $50.

VicHealth media contact: Jane Gardner 03 9667 1319 / 0435 761 732 jgardner@vichealth.vic.gov.au