Most S’pore youths polled drink excessively

SINGAPOREAN youths tend to go overboard with their drinking – without even realising it. This is according to a survey commissioned by Asia Pacific Breweries Singapore (APBS) and conducted by the National University of Singapore (NUS) as part of APBS’ Get Your Sexy Back (GYSB) campaign to promote responsible drinking among young adults.

The survey found that 73 per cent of youths binge-drink – consuming five or more units of alcohol in one session – at least once a month. As an example, a pint of beer contains about 2 units of alcohol.

Conducted at three popular nightspots here in August, the survey polled 531 Singapore residents aged between 18 and 25.

More worrying was the revelation that youths are not aware of what is considered “binge-drinking”. Respondents saw bingeing in terms of the amount of alcohol ingested, but whether they were able to control the negative consequences of drinking.

So, youths are likely to consider their drinking under control if they don’t have the typical symptoms of drunkenness, regardless of the amount of alcohol consumed.

And 75 per cent of those who responded felt it was all right to binge-drink once in a while.

APBS general manager Bennett Neo hopes that the GYSB campaign, which was launched last December, will encourage more youths to drink responsibly.

“There is a trend of youths drinking more than before,” he said. “We, as a company, are not telling them to stop drinking but just to drink in moderation.”

Following survey results that show that youths are more receptive to health information given by their peers or family doctors, the GYSB campaign is now entering its second phase with a team of volunteer youth ambassadors serving as faces of the campaign.

Said Mr Neo: “The youth today don’t want to be told what to do. They find friends more trustworthy and credible, so spreading the message through word of mouth among peers is more effective.”

NUS student Dex Tan, 24, is one of the youth ambassadors of the campaign. He goes clubbing “occasionally” but does not drink excessively, he said.

He told my paper that he tries to keep his drinking to 3 units of alcohol per outing.

He and his friends also look out for “behavioural changes” in one another – these changes could indicate whether a person is drunk or not.