

# Men in low income neighborhoods drink more than women: study

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Men living in low-income neighbourhoods consume more than three times as many alcoholic drinks each week compared to women in these neighbourhoods, according to a study led by St. Michael's researcher Flora Matheson.

The findings, published in the [Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health](#), suggest neighbourhood affluence affects men and women differently when it comes to [alcohol consumption](#). Heavy drinking is associated with higher death rates and a greater risk of [high blood pressure](#), heart disease, cancer and liver cirrhosis.

"While research has shown men are more susceptible to drinking than women, our study has found a large gap in drinking patterns between men and women and among men depending on where they live," Flora Matheson says. "Surprisingly, where a woman lives really doesn't impact her tendency to drink."

Researchers found no real difference in drinking patterns among women despite whether they live in a low income or affluent neighbourhood. On average, women in low-income neighbourhoods drank 2.6 drinks each week versus women in affluent neighbourhoods who drank 2.2 drinks each week. Conversely, researchers found a large difference in drinking patterns among men. According to the study, men in low-income neighbourhoods drank 8.5 drinks weekly compared to men in wealthy neighbourhoods who drank 4.5 drinks weekly.

"[Alcohol abuse](#) is a major problem in our society and a large burden on the health system," said Dr. Rick Glazier, a family physicians at St. Michael's and one of the study's authors. "The number of drinks per week in this study look to be moderate but they likely reflect important patterns that include problem drinking."

Scientific research suggests the consumption gap between genders may have something to do with aspects of the environment that promote heavy drinking as well as how men and women deal with stress. For example, if you live in a neighbourhood culture that promotes and supports heavier alcohol use then you might be influenced to drink more. Other research suggests that low-income communities are more likely to support a substance use or abuse culture. Men also tend to externalize stress by drinking while women tend to internalize stress in the form of depression or anxiety.

The study recommends community and health services consider neighbourhood influences on drinking patterns among men when providing prevention and treatment programs. Strategies incorporating gender considerations can help relieve the burden of illness, the researchers say.

Provided by St. Michael's Hospital

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