

Athletes prone to alcohol-related violence

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(Medical Xpress) -- New research has found that rates of alcohol-related aggression and antisocial behaviours are particularly high in young Australian athletes, compared to their non-sporting peers.

Health scientists from Monash University, the University of Manchester, Deakin University and the University of Western Sydney surveyed more than 1000 young people in the study. After accounting for factors such as age, gender, living location, and hazardous drinking levels, they found that, when intoxicated, sportspeople were more likely to have displayed physical or [verbal aggression](#), and damaged property than non-sportspeople.

Intoxicated male sportspeople largely accounted for the results, being twice as likely to have damaged property. Rates of intoxicated assault

were 50 per cent higher in male sportspeople than in [females](#) and non-sportspeople.

Lead researcher Dr. Kerry O'Brien of Monash University's School of Political and Social Inquiry said the study was the first of its kind in Australia.

"We were aware of US collegiate studies showing that rates of violence and antisocial behaviour were greater in athletes. However, we were surprised to find that there had been no similar empirical research outside of the US, and felt this preliminary work needed to be done in Australia to provide a starting point," Dr. O'Brien said.

The results come at a time when the Australian National Preventive Health Agency is considering options for the replacement of all [alcohol](#) industry sponsorship of sport in an attempt to reduce drinking-related problems in sport, and the potential influence of alcohol advertising and sponsorship in sport on young people's attitudes to alcohol.

Consistent with other work in Australia, New Zealand and the US, rates of hazardous drinking were significantly higher in sportspeople at 60 per cent, and particularly male sportspeople at 65 per cent, than in non-sportspeople at 55 per cent.

"It's already fairly well established that drinking is problematic in sporting populations, which makes sense given the amount of alcohol advertising and sponsorship that is focused there. But there is virtually no research outside US university athletes on associated physical and social harms," Dr. O'Brien said.

"It's time a much more focused look is taken at the whole sport and alcohol mix in Australia, and particularly the social, cultural, and health costs."

The research has been published in the *Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport*.

Provided by Monash University

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