

Many young people don't know what constitutes sensible alcohol consumption

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A new study published in the journal *Drug and Alcohol Review* reveals that young people do not possess the knowledge or skills required to adhere to government guidelines for responsible alcohol consumption. This article is part of the March special themed issue of the journal on low risk drinking guidelines.

Led by Richard de Visser, PhD, of the University of Sussex, researchers examined young people's knowledge of, and use of, government guidelines for safe alcohol consumption.

A total of 309 secondary school students and 125 [university students](#) in England completed a survey regarding knowledge and beliefs. The university students also reported their [alcohol consumption](#) and completed tasks in which they poured their "usual" drinks and what the government guidelines for maximum "unit" consumption on a daily and weekly basis.

Most respondents lacked the knowledge and skills required to drink in accordance with government guidelines. Participants' "usual" drinks were substantially larger than one unit, and [participants](#) tended to underestimate the unit content of drinks.

For 5 of the 7 items examining knowledge and guidelines, fewer than half of the [respondents](#) gave correct responses.

Although university students gave a significantly greater number of

accurate estimates than did school students, only ¼ of their estimates were within plus or minus 10% of actual content. The majority of estimates were underestimates: 52% among [school students](#); 65% among university students.

"Our results mean that people's reports of drinking patterns in research may lead to inaccurate estimates of the health effects of different levels of alcohol use," de Visser notes. "There may be a need for more and/or different alcohol education in schools and the media."

More information: de Visser and Birch. My cup runneth over: Young people's lack of knowledge of low-risk drinking guidelines. Drug and Alcohol Review. [DOI: 10.1111/j.1465-3362.2011.00371.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1465-3362.2011.00371.x)

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