

# Research asks: What type of drinker are you?

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RMIT University researchers have studied thousands of alcohol drinkers to reveal four "drinking types", in a project funded by VicHealth.

The types of drinkers give insights into the links between personality, cultural influences, and drinking to excess.

The Drinking Related Lifestyles report will inform a new campaign with the State Government to examine Victoria's drinking culture, start a community conversation about alcohol and offer alternatives to getting drunk.

The research, funded by VicHealth and led by RMIT's Associate Professor Mike Reid, was conducted in two parts.

Researchers first held in-depth interviews with an online community of drinkers, followed by an online survey of 2,500 Victorians about the factors that influenced their drinking behaviour.

The team analysed the emerging common themes and came up with four categories of drinkers: the initiator, the follower, the moderator and the protector.

The results of the survey have been transformed into an interactive online quiz and website to help Victorians see where they fit in the spectrum.

Associate Professor Reid, from the School of Economics, Finance and Marketing, said the enduring conclusion from their investigation was that rather than blaming people who drink to excess, we should instead empower [responsible drinking](#).

"Our deeply ingrained drinking culture makes people think they need a reason not to drink rather than a reason to drink," he said.

"Of the four drinking types our research identified, 'initiators' and 'followers' are clearly the most problematic - one pushes the boundaries and drinks too much, while the other follows, thinking if they don't they will be seen in a negative light.

"Effective change requires people to have socially permissible ways to participate in our culture without drinking to excess. Drinkers need to be provided with tools and resources to empower them to drink responsibly with a reassurance that they will be socially accepted.

"We need a multi-pronged approach to addressing the social role of alcohol and this project lays the foundation stone for the long road ahead to change our attitudes towards harmful drinking and ultimately improve the health of all Victorians."

VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter said the research puts Victoria's alcohol culture under the microscope to examine - in a non-judgmental way - people's motivations for drinking, and why alcohol was such a central part of our lives.

"This research shows that [heavy drinking](#) is viewed as acceptable in almost all social situations, from weddings to sports matches, and even at funerals and baby showers," Ms Rechter said.

"We want to take positive steps towards a culture in Victoria where

drinking too much isn't seen as the thing to do, but currently there is little encouragement for people who do choose moderation.

"We are not saying don't drink, but we are saying it's time to have a frank and honest community discussion about the place of alcohol in our lives."

## Drinking Types

The Initiator (40 per cent of survey sample):

- Outgoing and the 'life of the party'
- Drinks to have fun
- Likes to be a source of information on [alcohol](#) brands, types of drinks and places to go out

The Follower (13 per cent of survey sample):

- Fun, social and easy-going
- Influenced by social and cultural pressures
- Gets swept up in the moment and enjoyment of social situations

The Moderator (26 per cent of survey sample):

- Self-disciplined and self-sufficient
- Knows when to say 'no'
- Likes to have a drink or two but that's it

The Protector (21 per cent of survey sample):

- Controlled and conscientious
- Looks out for others when out socialising
- Happy to abstain while others are [drinking](#)

**More information:** [www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/drinking-lifestyles](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/drinking-lifestyles)

Provided by RMIT University

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