

During Great Recession employees drank less on the job, but more afterwards

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Periods of economic uncertainty tend to influence drinking problems among people who lose their jobs, as some turn to alcohol due to stress or because they have more free time and fewer responsibilities.

But what about the drinking habits of people who remain employed?

A new study from the University at Buffalo Research Institute on Addictions explored the effects of the Great Recession of 2007-09 on

[alcohol](#) use among people who remained employed.

"Even among the employed, economic downturns can create sources of work-related and financial stress that may lead to lower levels of alcohol use during the workday, but higher levels of excessive and ill-timed alcohol use away from work," says study author Michael Frone, PhD, senior research scientist at RIA.

Frone compared the results of two U.S. national surveys involving more than 5,000 employed participants. He found that compared to before the [recession](#), drinking at work decreased, while drinking after work and [excessive drinking](#) increased during the recession.

"Despite the increased stress at work that came with the recession, employees decreased their alcohol use during the workday to avoid putting their employment in jeopardy," Frone says. "But perhaps to reduce stress, they increased both excessive alcohol use and drinking right after work."

The study also revealed that compared to before the recession, more middle-aged workers drank during the recession, though there was no change in the proportion of younger workers who drank. Frone attributes this age discrepancy to stronger financial and family responsibilities during middle age, which can exacerbate the stressfulness of increased work demands and job insecurity, as well as financial losses and insecurity about retirement income.

Frone says employers should be concerned if their employees increase their drinking outside of regular work hours.

"Excessive drinking can lead to absenteeism or coming to work hung over, which can affect productivity," Frone says. "Also, increased [drinking](#) after work may lead to family problems, which can affect

performance at [work](#)."

Employers can help address potential employee [drinking problems](#) through workplace interventions that address stress during economic downturns, Frone says. More research is needed to determine best practices before the next economic crisis hits.

Frone's study appears in the current online issue of *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*. It was funded through two grants from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.

Provided by University at Buffalo

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