

Binge drinkers main offenders

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New research analysing the alcohol consumption habits of more than 100,000 Australians over a decade has found that regular binge drinkers are up to 30 per cent more likely to commit drink-driving offenses, vandalism or violence.

Analysing data from the Australian National Drug Strategy Household Surveys (NDSHS) during 2001-2010, Monash University researchers

found that binge drinkers were significantly more likely to engage in antisocial behaviour than other drinkers.

Their model shows that, of the Australian drinking population included in the survey, frequent binge drinking is associated with more crime and anti-social behaviours, including drink-driving (17 per cent more), public disturbance/nuisance, damage to property or stealing (4.2 per cent more) and verbal or physical abuse (11.8 per cent more).

In line with the 2001 NHMRC definitions of binge drinking, the study stated nine per cent of the Australian drinkers are frequent bingers and 43 per cent binge drinkers. According to 2001 NHMRC guidelines, binge drinkers engaging in medium to high risk drinking are men/women who consume seven/five standard drinks a day at least once in 12 months. Frequent binge drinkers are high risk drinkers defined as men/women drinking seven/five standard drinks in a day at least once in a week.

Professor Xueyan Zhao, from the Department of Econometrics and Business Statistics, said this means that for an average Australian drinker, the probabilities for these anti-social or unlawful behaviours among binge drinkers are doubled or tripled.

"We have clear evidence that the act of binge drinking significantly increases the likelihood of people engaging in a range of alcohol related anti-social and unlawful behaviours," Professor Zhao said.

"What we're seeing here is that binge drinking poses a significantly higher risk. Frequent [binge drinking](#) has been shown to significantly increase the probability for behaviours like drink-driving, public disturbance, damage to property or theft, and violence."

The study also revealed that those most likely to be associated with

public disturbance and verbal/physical abuse included males aged between 18-29, indigenous Australians, and those who were unmarried, unemployed or less educated. However, drink-driving is equally associated with all socio-economic groups including higher educated and higher income drinkers.

Professor Zhao said that while the figures were concerning, the rates of these behaviours had since 2001 continued to decline.

"There has been a decreasing trend since 2001 for the probabilities for all negative alcohol related behaviours."

The only demographic group that seems to defy this trend is the 60+ age group. The probabilities for drink driving or other antisocial behaviours for both the male and female 60+ groups have shown a slight increase as the baby boomers enter this age band.

Provided by Monash University

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