

# Risky alcohol consumption can increase at time of retirement

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Credit: University of Turku

Every tenth employee increases their alcohol consumption to risky levels at the time of retirement from full-time employment. However, the increase seems to be temporary as risky drinking often decreases during the retirement. For most pensioners, alcohol consumption remains below the risk levels before and after retirement. The results of the new Finnish study were published in the *Addiction* journal.

Of retiring employees, 12 percent increased their risky drinking at the time of [retirement](#). However, for most people, there was no change in

risky level alcohol [consumption](#) around the time of retirement: 81 percent sustained healthy drinking during the follow-up, and in 7 percent of the participants risky drinking was constant, although they experienced a slow decline in risky level alcohol consumption after retirement. In the study, the levels for risky drinking were 24 units per week for men and 16 units for women, or passing out due to extreme alcohol consumption.

Increase in risky [drinking](#) was more common in smokers, men and those who reported depression, says Senior Researcher, Docent Jaana Halonen from the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health. These are known risk factors for substantial [alcohol](#) use.

Retirement is a major transition in life and, in the light of these results, it also involves a risk of adopting an unhealthy lifestyle.

As baby boomers retire, approximately 70,000 Finns retire each year, so it is a significant social phenomenon. The increase in free time and the changes in the social networks related to retirement can have either adverse or positive effects on public health, says Academy Research Fellow, Docent Sari Stenholm from the University of Turku. Occupational health care and employers could develop operational strategies that could prepare employees for retirement and the changes it can cause. This way, unhealthy changes in lifestyle could be prevented, suggests Jaana Halonen.

## **Nearly 6,000 Employees from Public Sector Participated in the Study**

The study followed 5,800 employees who participated in the Finnish Public Sector (FPS) study and had retired due to old-age between 2000 and 2011. Each participant answered questions on [alcohol consumption](#)

before and after retirement.

**More information:** Jaana I. Halonen et al, Trajectories of risky drinking around the time of statutory retirement: a longitudinal latent class analysis, *Addiction* (2017). [DOI: 10.1111/add.13811](https://doi.org/10.1111/add.13811)

Provided by University of Turku

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