

Study of 3,000 drinkers' attempts to cut down produces sobering results

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January is a popular month for people trying to reduce their alcohol

intake but how successful are they in doing so? A new study by the University of Bristol that assessed data on the drinking patterns of nearly 3,000 drinkers who reported that they were planning to reduce their alcohol consumption found that very few managed it when followed up six months later.

The NIHR School for Public Health Research-funded study, published in *Addiction*, led by Dr Frank de Vocht from Bristol Medical School, aimed to find out whether peoples' motivations to reduce intake did result in reduced alcohol consumption. Key reasons for wanting to reduce [alcohol intake](#) included: to lose weight, improve [fitness levels](#), save money, and avoid health problems.

A total of 2,928 drinkers at risk were interviewed and around 20 per cent reported that they wanted to cut down on their drinking. When followed up six months later, those who had not made plans to cut down on their drinking had reduced their [alcohol consumption](#) by the same amount as those who had.

Dr Frank de Vocht, Senior Lecturer in Epidemiology and Public Health Research from Bristol Medical School: Population Health Sciences (PHS), said: "Alcohol consumption is of particular concern to the UK's [public health](#). We wanted to find out if motivation alone changes limiting intake. Sadly, although people start with good intentions, our results suggest that something more is required for those intentions to make a difference.

"For people who are serious in their intention to reduce consumption, obtaining structural support, for example by signing up to the Dry January campaign, may help. Alternatively, [smartphone apps](#) are also being tested as a way to help people reduce their intake, but it's too early to say whether these can make a difference."

More information: 'Motivation to reduce alcohol consumption and subsequent attempts at reduction and changes in consumption in increasing and higher-risk drinkers in England: a prospective population survey' by Frank de Vocht, Jamie Brown, Emma Beard, Robert West, Susan Michie, Rona Campbell, Matthew Hickman in *Addiction*

Provided by University of Bristol

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