

Alcohol narrows field of vision

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Alcohol reduces a person's ability to notice more than what's in front of them.
Credit: University of Portsmouth

Alcohol can make a person engrossed in an activity oblivious to what's going on around them, no matter how bizarre or unexpected that might be.

New research led by the University of Portsmouth supports the [alcohol myopia theory](#) – that alcohol reduces a person's ability to notice more than what's right in front of them.

Dr. Alistair Harvey, a psychologist at the University and lead author, said: "When engrossed in a particular task, we often miss significant events that occur in plain sight – even those so bizarre that they ought to

be obvious. Our research found alcohol makes us even more oblivious to our surroundings when our attention is focused in this way.

"If an individual has drunk sufficient alcohol and they are engrossed in an activity or task, they're much less likely to notice what's going on around them. Alcohol depletes cognitive resources, forcing the brain to allocate those remaining to processing only the most important or immediate stimuli."

Studies are increasingly showing that alcohol has a more subtle and selective effect on [cognitive functioning](#) than previously thought and this research adds to that body of work.

The research is the first to examine the impact of [task difficulty](#) and [alcohol consumption](#) on an effect psychologists call inattention blindness – not being able to detect striking or obvious things in plain sight when your attention is engaged elsewhere.

It is published in the journal *Psychopharmacology*.

Provided by University of Portsmouth

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