

# Study examines alcohol's effects on sexual aggression

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A new *Aggressive Behavior* study has examined alcohol's "in the moment" effects on sexual aggression, or the acute effects of alcohol on men's decisions about how to respond to sexual refusals in a dating

simulation.

In the study, 62 men in their 20s were randomly assigned to consume [alcohol](#) (target breath alcohol level 0.080%) or no alcohol. Participants were encouraged to talk to a simulated woman as if they were on a date, and they made choices from a list which included nonsexual and sexual options. The female agent was programmed to engage in some sexual activities but refuse others, and her refusals became more intense if participants persisted.

As predicted, participants' self-reported desire to have sex was positively associated with choosing activities in which the woman willingly engaged. Consensual sexual activities were positively associated with the number of times participants persisted after the woman refused. Alcohol moderated this relationship such that it was stronger for intoxicated men than sober men. The more sexual refusals participants received, the more hostile verbal comments they made to the woman. Contrary to the investigators' predictions, this relationship was not moderated by alcohol.

"We found that when a man is sexually interested in a woman, being intoxicated increases the likelihood that he will be more persistent pushing sex, even when she clearly refuses his advances. Furthermore, being sexually refused is associated with making hostile comments to the [woman](#), regardless of whether or not the men were drinking," said lead author Dr. Jacqueline Woerner, currently at Yale University School of Medicine.

**More information:** Jacqueline Woerner et al, The effects of alcohol intoxication and sexual interest on men's sexual persistence and hostility in a dating simulation, *Aggressive Behavior* (2018). [DOI: 10.1002/ab.21773](#)

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