

Middle-aged moderate drinkers rarely have health concerns about drinking

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Middle-aged drinkers (30-65 year olds), who consume low-levels of alcohol, have either minor or non-existent concerns about the health effects of drinking, according to a systematic review published in the

open access journal *BMC Public Health*.

Researchers at the University of Adelaide, Australia analyzed 13 studies to find that the [drinking](#) behavior of middle-aged drinkers without a drinking problem is influenced by factors such as respectability, gender and being in the company of others, but not by [health concerns](#).

Emma Muhlack, the corresponding author said: "It is surprising that health does not strongly factor in the way that this group thinks about their drinking. When they do think about health they use their own experiences as a benchmark (e.g. what it feels like when you drink too much) rather than the guidelines handed down by health organizations."

The authors found that middle-aged drinkers consider it to be important to drink in a way that is appropriate to their age or stage of life and which allows them to meet their responsibilities and avoid obvious signs of drunkenness. Gender was also found to play a role in what was considered acceptable drinking, with certain drinks being deemed more appropriate for women and others for men. Additionally, drinking at home was associated with women but drinking in public was associated with men.

Emma Muhlack said: "We knew very little about the decision-making processes that go into the [alcohol consumption](#) of middle age drinkers. The results from this review help us to better understand how drinking alcohol fits into their everyday lives and which factors may need to be taken into consideration when attempting to reduce alcohol consumption in this group."

The results suggest that [public health](#) campaigns aimed at reducing alcohol consumption in middle-aged moderate drinkers may be more effective if they focus on the risks of what may be considered unacceptable drinking behaviors, such as not meeting responsibilities to

others, the possibility of causing harm to others and the potential loss of respectability, instead of personal health outcomes.

The authors analyzed 13 papers, including nine from the UK, which examined alcohol consumption and how it was experienced in a population that included middle-aged moderate drinkers.

The authors caution that, as most of the studies analysed in the review were carried out in the UK, the generalizability of the results to other countries may be limited.

More information: Emma Muhlack et al, Constructions of alcohol consumption by non-problematised middle-aged drinkers: a qualitative systematic review, *BMC Public Health* (2018). [DOI: 10.1186/s12889-018-5948-x](https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-018-5948-x)

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