

Australia's changing relationship with alcohol

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New research from La Trobe University has revealed that 30 per cent of Australians recently reduced the quantity of their alcohol consumption and a further 29 per cent reduced the frequency of their drinking, while six per cent kicked the habit for good.

Published in *Alcohol and Alcoholism*, the study found young adults aged between 24 and 29 were generational leaders in reducing [alcohol intake](#), citing lifestyle reasons such as work, education and family as their main influencers for change.

Researchers analysed 12 years of data from the National Drug Strategy Household Survey, which included almost 120,000 participants. The data was collected in four stages, looking at the drinking habits of Australians in the previous 12 months.

Lead researcher Dr. Amy Pennay, from La Trobe's Centre for Alcohol Policy Research, said the findings confirm the cultural status of [alcohol](#) in Australia is shifting.

"The research shows all age groups and sexes in Australia are reducing or quitting drinking, even older, more established drinkers," Dr. Pennay said.

"Most surprisingly, we found that intoxication is not as acceptable as it once was, with more than a third of 14 to 30-year-olds who had quit drinking doing so because they dislike the impact alcohol has on their social experiences.

"They believe in moderation, they are concerned about violence and they want to avoid drunkenness or genuinely dislike how getting drunk makes them feel."

While health concerns related to [alcohol consumption](#) remained the greatest concern for Australians overall, Dr. Pennay said the findings connected to socialising could influence future public health efforts.

"For example, health-related messages appear particularly salient for older populations, while a focus on the pleasures of moderation,

avoiding violence and ways to enjoy leisure time without intoxication seem to resonate more with younger groups," Dr. Pennay said.

"More and more Australians are choosing to have a healthy relationship with alcohol.

"It is important now, more than ever, that we use this research to maintain and sustain this movement."

Additional statistics:

- Overall, rates of quitting drinking increased steadily between 2001 and 2013 from 4.3 per cent to six per cent, and rates of reducing either the quantity or frequency of drinking also increased from around 24 per cent to 30 per cent in both over the same time
- Almost one in two drinkers (43.4 per cent) reported using at least one method to reduce their drinking in 2013
- 14 to 17-year-olds were the group most likely to have recently quit drinking (13 per cent)
- 24 to 29-year-olds were the group most likely to have recently reduced drinking (49 per cent)
- Males (45 per cent) were more likely than females (41 per cent) to recently reduce drinking, while females (eight per cent) were more likely than males (four per cent) to recently quit drinking
- People over 30-years were more likely to report health reasons for reducing drinking, while people under 30 years were more likely to report lifestyle, social or lack of enjoyment in drinking
- Females were more likely to reduce drinking for health reasons, while males were more likely to quit [drinking](#) for the same reason

More information: Amy Pennay et al, Patterns in Reduction or

Cessation of Drinking in Australia (2001–2013) and Motivation for Change, *Alcohol and Alcoholism* (2018). DOI: [10.1093/alcalc/agy072](https://doi.org/10.1093/alcalc/agy072)

Provided by La Trobe University

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