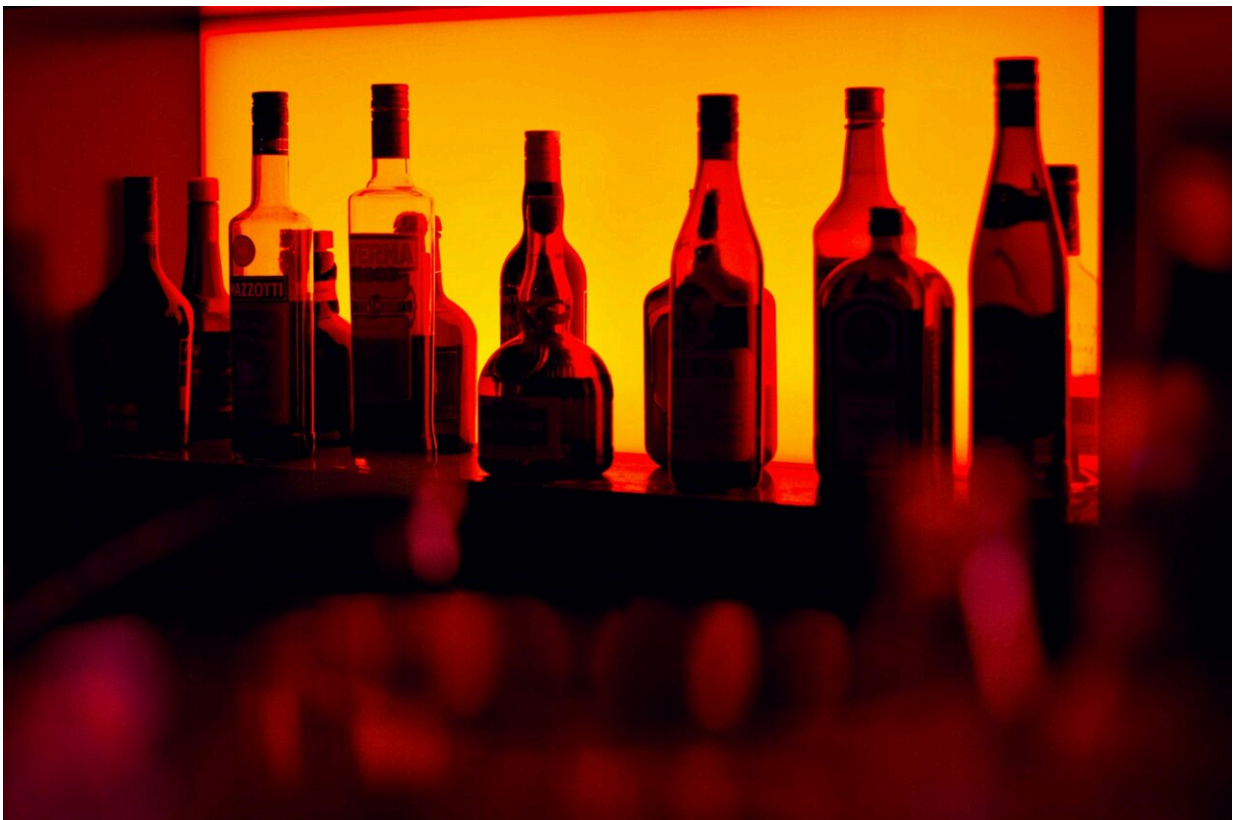


# Stricter alcohol policies are associated with reduced drinking, multi-country analysis finds

April 23 2023

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People who live in countries with more stringent alcohol policies drank less than people in countries with less strict policies, according to a large

multi-country analysis published in *Alcohol: Clinical and Experimental Research*. The more stringent policies were associated with reduced drinking overall and showed more significant associations in drinkers aged 18 to 24 and those with 13 or fewer years of education. The findings suggest that countries could reduce adverse health consequences by adopting cost-effective alcohol policies.

The researchers investigated whether the International Alcohol Control (IAC) Policy Index is associated with [drinking](#) patterns in the overall population and specific demographic groups in a diverse set of countries. The IAC Policy Index measures the implementation and enforcement of policies shown by previous studies to be cost-effective in reducing [alcohol](#) use, namely policies restricting alcohol availability, marketing, pricing, and drinking and driving. In this study, researchers examined the strength of these policies in ten diverse countries to determine each country's International Alcohol Control Policy (IAC) score. The higher the IAC score, the stronger the country's alcohol policies are. Drinkers in each country were surveyed about drinking behaviors, including frequency, quantity, and locations of alcohol consumption.

The study found that the IAC score was significantly associated with the volume and frequency of drinking in the ten countries, with greater interaction in certain demographic groups. Overall, with each additional increase in the IAC score, the average volume of alcohol consumed in the prior six months decreased by 17 percent, and the frequency of drinking decreased by 14 percent. By age group, young adults aged 18 to 24 showed the largest decrease in alcohol consumed on a typical occasion. In countries with less restrictive alcohol policies, this age group shows the highest quantity of alcohol consumption.

There was also an association between stronger policies and drinking quantity by [education level](#). In countries with weaker alcohol control policies, those with less education drank more on each occasion than

those with more than 13 years of schooling. As alcohol policies strengthened, the number of adults with less education who drank per occasion decreased to levels similar to those of more educated respondents.

By gender, men's and women's consumption decreased as the IAC score increased, but men's consumption decreased more slowly than women's.

More than 17,000 people across ten countries participated in the study. The countries participating in the study included five high-income and five middle-income countries, namely New Zealand, England, Australia, Scotland, South Africa, St. Kitts and Nevis, Mongolia, Thailand, Vietnam, and Turkey, with IAC scores ranging from 5 for New Zealand to 13.9 for Turkey. The study focused on the most effective policies and did not measure the possible influence of other policies or cultural traditions on respondents' behaviors.

**More information:** Sally Casswell et al, Effective alcohol policies are associated with reduced consumption among demographic groups who drink heavily, *Alcohol: Clinical and Experimental Research* (2023). [DOI: 10.1111/acer.15030](https://doi.org/10.1111/acer.15030)

Provided by Research Society on Alcoholism

Citation: Stricter alcohol policies are associated with reduced drinking, multi-country analysis finds (2023, April 23) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-04-stricter-alcohol-policies-multi-country-analysis.html>

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