

Understanding drinking behaviors in young Australian adults

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Young Australian adults aged 18–24 years are more likely to binge drink than any other age group prompting a team of Griffith University researchers to take a different approach to better understand why this is

the case.

Blake Palmer, and his Ph.D. supervisors from Griffith University's School of Health Sciences and Social Work and Menzies Health Institute Queensland, employed a behavior change model called the COM-B, to explore young drinker's capability, opportunity and motivations related to alcohol consumption behaviors.

Mr. Palmer said the study was important because when [young people](#) are [drinking](#), decisions to continue to consume alcohol or not occur in dynamic environments and involve a number of complex interrelated factors.

The paper, "A review of factors influencing drinking behaviors in young Australian adults using a behavioural framework approach," has been published in [Drug and Alcohol Review](#).

"The use of a framework such as the COM-B, helps us to better understand the nature of these behaviors," he said.

The researchers explored all previous studies investigating the behavior, attitudes and/or beliefs of young Australian drinkers towards drinking alcohol.

Professor Ben Desbrow, who leads supervision on the team, said the review indicates a person's sense of capability, their motives (both those that come automatically or those being considered) and the physical and [social environment](#), all have the potential to increase or reduce young people's alcohol intake.

"Some of the factors identified that contribute to [excessive alcohol consumption](#) are already well recognized such as drinking on weekends/parties/celebrations, or not drinking due to having other

responsibilities such as needing to drive," Professor Desbrow said.

"Other factors may not be as fixed because as individuals become intoxicated, they can lose their inhibitions, which can impact their drinking behavior."

Mr. Palmer said by understanding how behavior occurs, we have a better chance of developing successful strategies to curtail harmful drinking in young adults.

"Our national guidelines indicate individuals should consume no more than four standard drinks of alcohol on any one day," he said.

"We still have work to do to normalize this level of intake in [young adults](#)."

Mr. Palmer is a qualified dietitian and is completing his Ph.D. investigating the role of "no" and "low" alcoholic products to act as potential moderators of binge drinking in young Australian adults.

More information: Blake Palmer et al, A review of factors influencing drinking behaviours in young Australian adults using a behavioural framework approach, *Drug and Alcohol Review* (2023). [DOI: 10.1111/dar.13760](https://doi.org/10.1111/dar.13760)

Provided by Griffith University

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