

Drinking during the super bowl linked to more aggressive parenting among mothers, unlike on valentine's day

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Alcohol use on certain special occasions may contribute to harsher parenting by mothers, according to an innovative study. The findings

compare drinking and parenting behaviors on Super Bowl Sunday and Valentine's Day and may help create environments conducive to positive parenting.

It is known that special occasions—sporting events, holidays, bachelor parties, and so on—involve atypical drinking behaviors. Major sporting events, in addition, are linked to increased levels of domestic violence and assault. Potentially, atypical drinking on such occasions may similarly be a risk factor for harsh parenting behaviors.

Although alcohol raises the likelihood of physical abuse and [corporal punishment](#) by both [mothers](#) and fathers, little is known about whether special occasions influence harsh parenting behaviors—including hitting, spanking, name calling, and yelling—associated with negative outcomes for children.

For the study in *Alcohol: Clinical & Experimental Research*, investigators used real-time self-reports from mothers. They assessed the relationship between concurrent drinking and parenting behaviors during two markedly different occasions over consecutive Sundays in 2021.

Researchers worked with parents, primarily mothers, in Ohio who had at least one child aged 2–12. The participants were predominantly White, well-educated, and married or cohabiting. They filled out a [baseline survey](#) and, over 14 days, responded to brief surveys sent via an app every morning, afternoon, and evening. O

n days 7 and 14, the survey included questions about alcohol use and parenting behaviors (positive, punitive, non-punitive, and aggressive) toward one child during the past week. Researchers analyzed 637 self-reports from 254 women for the Super Bowl, and for Valentine's Day, 420 self-reports from 179 women.

The sample of mostly mothers reported drinking when children were present in 6% of self-reports on Super Bowl Sunday and 9% on Valentine's Day. During the Super Bowl, they were 2 ½ times likelier to use aggressive discipline and punitive parenting measures compared to mothers who weren't drinking.

Alcohol use that day did not seem to affect their positive or non-punitive parenting. Having more adults in the family was linked to higher odds of aggressive and punitive parenting; boys and younger children were more likely to face punitive parenting than girls and older children. On Valentine's Day, mothers who reported drinking were less likely than others to use aggressive discipline. Alcohol use was not linked to punitive, non-punitive, or positive parenting.

Over the 14 days, alcohol use was not generally related to aggressive discipline; those findings were specific to the Super Bowl.

The study offers the first evidence of a link between alcohol use and aggressive parenting among parents during a major sporting event.

The odds of harsh discipline on special occasions may be related to a combination of [alcohol use](#) and varying event norms around socializing, venues, drinking patterns, and the amount of time spent with children, contributing to the differing outcomes.

Harm reduction strategies for sporting events could include hiring babysitters and planning children's activities. Research involving larger, more diverse samples is needed.

More information: B. Freisthler et al, Using ecological momentary assessments to understand how drinking during special occasions relates to parenting behaviors. *Alcohol: Clinical & Experimental Research* (2023). [DOI: 10.1111/acer.15206](https://doi.org/10.1111/acer.15206)

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