

# Australian study finds large support for blocking online alcohol content

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In a new study [published in \*Health Promotion Journal of Australia\*](#), La Trobe University researchers found large support for a browser plug-in that blocks online alcohol-related imagery to prevent young people being

influenced to start drinking alcohol or drinking to excess.

Lead researcher from La Trobe's Center for Alcohol Policy Research, Maree Patsouras, said depictions of alcohol were common online, and there was a clear relationship between alcohol exposure and alcohol use.

"A large portion of the people we interviewed in this study believed that viewing online alcohol imagery could cause temptation and cravings to drink alcohol," Ms. Patsouras said.

"The majority of our participants believed that a browser plug-in that blocked alcohol imagery was an easy intervention tool for both [parents](#) and people experiencing alcohol-related problems or trying to reduce their drinking.

"The evidence collected from this study could help support future health promotion strategies to consider the development of such software."

The study participants described being exposed to alcohol-related advertising online, regardless of whether they were actively searching for it.

Participants indicated that online alcohol exposure served as a reminder to drink and brought alcohol to the forefront of their minds, even if they were not considering drinking beforehand.

One participant described alcohol exposure as "triggering" thoughts about alcohol.

"If you see it, you think about it...it just triggers the thought in your brain and then you start craving it," they said.

Participants highlighted that [young people](#) needed to be protected from

online alcohol exposure because they were impressionable and vulnerable. There was a concern that online [alcohol exposure](#) taught minors that drinking was socially acceptable, fun, or exciting, which could lead to earlier alcohol consumption.

Participants supported the development of an alcohol [imagery](#) blocking browser plug-in, alongside stricter governmental regulation, and restrictions for alcohol-related marketing and exposure. One participant who supported the development of the plug-in, also emphasized the need for increased legislation.

"I'm sad that (the plug-in) is necessary," they said.

"I really think that this should be legislated at the government level and restricted that way."

**More information:** Maree Patsouras et al, Support for a browser plug-in blocking online alcohol imagery among Australian participants: A qualitative interview study, *Health Promotion Journal of Australia* (2024). [DOI: 10.1002/hpja.863](https://doi.org/10.1002/hpja.863)

Provided by La Trobe University

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