

AUSTRALIAN DRINKERS' ENGAGEMENT IN RESPONSIBLE DRINKING PRACTICES

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Introduction and aims: As part of alcohol control strategies, various responsible drinking practices are recommended to reduce the likelihood of and harms associated with heavy episodic drinking. These include (i) counting the number of drinks consumed, (ii) quenching thirst by having a non-alcoholic drink before having alcohol, (iii) alternating between alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks, (iv) eating while consuming alcohol, (v) only drinking low-alcohol drinks, and (vi) refusing unwanted alcoholic beverages. Data relating to these practices are collected in the AIHW National Drug Strategy Household Survey, but to date the results have not been reported. Using a large online panel sample, this study investigated the extent to which the recommended drinking practices are enacted by adult Australian drinkers.

Design and methods: During October - December 2012, an online survey was administered to 2,168 drinkers who reported consuming alcohol at least twice per month. Analyses were conducted to determine which of the recommended behaviours were enacted most frequently and whether enactment rates were consistent across drinker segments.

Results: On average across the six recommended behaviours, compliance was limited to only around one-third of respondents. Those behaviours with the lowest level of compliance included only counting the number of drinks consumed, drinking only low-alcohol beverages, and alternating between alcoholic/non-alcoholic beverages. Compliance levels were lowest among those drinking at high-risk levels as per the NMHRC Guidelines.

Discussion and conclusion: There is great potential to improve compliance with responsible drinking practices to reduce alcohol-related harms among drinkers in general and heavy drinkers in particular.

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