

Gender differences in young adults' drinking, health and harm outcomes: A Latent Class Analysis Study

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Introduction: *In Australia, young adults (aged 18-29) are more likely to drink at hazardous rates and experience disproportionate levels of acute harms. However, the links between risky drinking, health, and alcohol-related harms vary markedly between men and women. Despite this, there is little research examining how these variables cluster according to gender. This study aims to investigate these associations for young adults in Australia.*

Methods: *We conducted latent class analyses on national survey data for young adults aged 18-29, with models estimated separately for men (n=3201) and women (n=3879). A three-step approach identified classes using the indicators of alcohol consumption (ranging from non-drinking to risky drinking), general health, psychological distress, health condition status, and past-year experiences of alcohol-related harms (e.g., hospital admissions due to intoxication) or risky behaviours (e.g., driving a motor vehicle while intoxicated).*

Results: *A three-class solution best described men's typologies, while a four-class solution best described women. Men's classes were characterised by either high-risk drinking and high proportions of alcohol-related harms or risky behaviours (26% of the sample), or classes with multiple drinking behaviours and minimal experiences of harm, but differing health outcomes. Women's classes indicated greater variability. Most women (39%) belonged to a class with non- or low-risk drinking and no experiences of harms, while a small portion (12%) belonged to a class with increased risky drinking and moderate experiences of harms or risky behaviours.*

Discussions and Conclusions: *Differences in class structure and separation indicated unique typologies for women and men. Only a small portion of women belonged to a class with moderate harms – but a higher portion of men belonged to a class with majority experiences of harms. While there is a growing research focus on women's alcohol use, these findings highlight the importance of focusing on men's drinking and greater experiences of alcohol-related harms.*

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