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Costing harm from others' drinking in Australia in 2021

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Introduction: In this paper we use 2021 survey data alongside per capita consumption and alcohol-related harm in official statistics to estimate the economic impact of others' drinking on Australian society.

Method: Using weighted data from the 2021 (n=2,574) national survey of alcohol's harm to others (AHTO), we collated self-reported harm from respondents affected by their families, friends, co-workers, and the public. Estimates from these key survey findings, including out-of-pocket costs were analysed alongside national indicators of per capita consumption and service-use data on alcohol-related harm (e.g., hospitalisations for alcohol-related car crashes) for 2021, or the most recent statistics available.

Results: Survey and service use data from response agencies was used to estimate direct and indirect, and intangible costs of others' drinking for 2021. Estimates included 261 adult deaths due to others' drinking in 2020; and 17,351 hospital separations of adults in 2020/21. The burden and cost estimate of AHTO found for 2021 will be presented in full.

Discussions and Conclusions: This contemporary estimate of the cost of others' drinking is crucial for informing alcohol and health policy. The estimate approximately doubles costs of drinking which have focused on costs to the drinker and for treatment of the drinker. In turn, such costings leverage services for those harmed by others' drinking and for those affected by their own drinking and inform policies seeking to prevent harm and reduce the social costs of drinking.

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