

## **OK Boomer. Examining alcohol use trajectories across generations**

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**Introduction:** Recent research suggests that younger generations may be consuming less alcohol. However, it remains unclear whether this pattern results from a period-specific effect or signifies a lasting generational change. This study aimed to ascertain generational differences in alcohol intake while controlling for age and other sociodemographic factors.

**Methods:** The current study encompassed 21,083 individuals drawn from 23 waves of data collected through the Australian Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey. To address the non-linear relationship between alcohol consumption and age, the authors fitted generalised additive mixed models to the dataset. Two outcome variables were examined: 1) participants' typical alcohol consumption per drinking occasion and 2) participants' typical weekly alcohol consumption. Baby Boomers—comprising the largest cohort in the current study—served as the reference group.

**Results:** Across all generations, the quantity of per-occasion alcohol consumption reached its peak in emerging adulthood. Compared to Baby Boomers, both Millennials and Generation X cohorts consumed significantly more alcohol per occasion, whereas Generation Z showed no significant difference, and the Silent Generation exhibited a significantly higher consumption. Weekly quantity of alcohol consumption peaked between the ages of 50 and 60. Compared to Baby Boomers, the Silent Generation exhibited significantly higher alcohol consumption, while Generation Z, Millennials, and Generation X demonstrated significantly lower consumption.

**Discussions and Conclusions:** This study provides evidence for the existence of both age- and generation-related differences in alcohol consumption. It identifies that Generation Z—the most recent generation—is broadly consuming less alcohol compared to previous generations.

**Implications for Practice or Policy:** Despite cohort differences, emerging adulthood is marked by high single-occasion alcohol consumption and middle age by high weekly intake, suggesting tailored public health efforts for each life stage.

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