

PARENTAL DRINKING IN AUSTRALIA: TESTING THE IMPACT OF PRESENCE OF CHILDREN IN THE HOME

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Introduction and Aims:

Most Australians drink alcohol at home and many parents are likely to consume alcohol in front of their children. This can result in poor role modelling, poor supervision of children or even neglect. This study investigated whether parental attitudes to: alcohol consumption; a range of policy changes (e.g. raising drinking age, price, banning sponsorship etc); and own behaviour are moderated by the presence of children within the home.

Design and methods:

Data were analysed from the 2013 National Drug Strategy Household Survey. Overall, 22,696 adults (34.5% parents) aged 18 years and over, completed the drop-and-collect cross-sectional survey. Data were weighted and analysis controlled for clustering.

Results:

A lower proportion of parents (17.3%) drank in excess of the guideline for lifetime risk than non-parents (20.2%). This was similarly the case for single occasion risk, with 13.4% of parents exceeding the guideline (weekly) vs 14.7% of non-parents. Lower rates of exceeding the guidelines were found particularly among parents with younger children (0-5 years) in the household. Parents with children in the household between 0-5 years (83.2%) and 6-11 years (82.7%) were more likely to drink in their own homes than non-parents (80.9%). Non-parents were generally more supportive of policy changes than parents, and parental support for policies did not increase greatly with the increased age of the children.

Discussions and Conclusions:

Parents have slightly lower drinking rates than adults without children but are generally less supportive of policy measures designed to reduce population alcohol consumption.

Implications for Practice or Policy:

More education is required for Australian parents on the benefits of policy options to influence teenage drinking behaviours.

Implications for Translational Research:

Further research is planned to investigate the extent to which parents are drinking in front of Australian children and their awareness that they are important role models.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

None to declare