



HARMED, DRUNK AND DANGEROUS: AUSSIES LINK ALCOHOL TO FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

27 April 2017: A staggering majority (92%) of Australians believe alcohol is linked to family and domestic violence.

That finding mirrors Australians' attitudes to alcohol more broadly, with new polling revealing Aussies are concerned about and impacted by alcohol harm, and they are suspicious and deeply cynical about the alcohol industry.

Now in its eighth year, the 'Annual alcohol poll 2017: Attitudes and behaviours' found almost eight in ten (78%) of respondents believe Australia has a problem with excess drinking, and a growing majority (81%) think more should be done to reduce alcohol harm.

Each year the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education's (FARE) national alcohol poll provides valuable trend data and insights into community perspectives on alcohol.

2017 was the first year in which Australians were asked if they perceived a link between alcohol and family and domestic violence.

FARE Chief Executive Michael Thorn is not surprised by the poll's findings, but says it should act as a wake-up call to governments that have been too slow to take action.

"The evidence showing alcohol's involvement in family and domestic violence is not in dispute, and for an even longer time we've had the anecdotal proof as well. The public, whether witnessing this first-hand or through the media, clearly understands and acknowledges the link, with a majority of those (80%) calling on governments to step up and address the problem," Mr Thorn said.

Conducted by Galaxy Research, the 2017 poll once again confirms the alcohol industry's poor reputation.

A minority of Australians say they could trust information provided by the alcohol industry on responsible drinking (40%), drinking during pregnancy (27%), underage drinking (24%) and the health benefits of certain alcohol products (16%).

Mr Thorn says the Australian community has a healthy level of scepticism about the alcohol industry.

"It is no exaggeration to say Aussies are deeply suspicious and justifiably critical when it comes to the alcohol industry. They don't trust what the industry says and they recognise its poor corporate behaviour. Fifty seven per cent of Australians say the alcohol industry targets people under the age of 18 years, and the majority, 74 per cent of Australians, believe the alcohol industry should pay for reducing the alcohol harm it causes, and rightly so," Mr Thorn said.

In 2017, Australians reported getting drunk in larger numbers than ever before. The proportion of Australians who drink to get drunk increased to 44 per cent (up from 37% in 2016 and 34% in 2015). Wine remains the country's alcoholic drink of choice (29%), beating out regular strength beer (21%).

For the first time since 2010, we also asked Australians why they had increased or decreased their consumption of alcohol over the past 12 months.

Peer pressure, stress, and depression led many to drink more, with 30 per cent needing to drink to feel happy or overcome depression, 29 per cent feeling more stressed, and 29 per cent of respondents influenced by the increased alcohol consumption of friends and family.

In contrast, people's wallets, waistlines and wellness concerns caused many to drink less, with 49 per cent of this group wanting to improve their health, 24 per cent citing weight concerns and 23 per cent stating they could not afford to drink as much as the reason for a decrease in their alcohol consumption.

The 2017 Poll has once again highlighted the extent of alcohol harm in the Australian community.

One third of Australians (35%) indicated they have been affected by alcohol-related violence (up from 29% in 2016), with 48 per cent of these indicating they have been affected by alcohol-related violence in the last 12 months.

One in five (21%) parents with a child under 18 reported that their child has been harmed or put at risk of harm due to someone else's drinking (consistent with 23% in 2016).

Mr Thorn says this is the serious and very troubling face of the national poll.

"It's a damning indictment of this country's toxic relationship with alcohol when we have more than a third of Australians affected by alcohol-related violence. These troubling findings are really a reflection of the extent of alcohol harm in Australia; the 15 lives lost and 430 hospitalisations caused by alcohol every single day," Mr Thorn said.

In 2017 the poll again looked at the impact of alcohol advertising on children, with 77 per cent of parents reporting their child under the age of 18 has been exposed to alcohol advertising (up from 71% in 2016).

Almost half of parents indicated that their child has been exposed to alcohol advertising at a supermarket or shopping centre (49%), while outside on the street (billboards/posters) (45%), through the radio, television or cinema (43%), or at a licensed venue (restaurant or club) (42%).

More than two thirds (68%) of Australians support placing a ban on alcohol advertising on television before 8.30pm, consistent with 2016 (70%) and a majority of Australians (55%) believe alcohol sponsorship should not be allowed at sporting events (down from 60% in 2016).

Mr Thorn says Australia's major sporting codes continue to find themselves out of step with community attitudes and expectations when it comes to alcohol advertising and sport.

"It is very clear that on this issue Australians overwhelmingly support booze free sport. Exposure to alcohol advertising is harmful to children, and we will continue to represent the Australian community and fight for an end to alcohol sponsorship in sport," Mr Thorn said.

[ENDS]

Key Findings

- 78% of people believe that Australia has a problem with excess drinking or alcohol abuse.
- 74% of people believe that alcohol-related problems in Australia will either get worse or remain the same over the next five to ten years.
- 81% of Australians believe that more needs to be done to reduce the harm caused by alcohol-related illness, injury, death, and related issues (up from 78% in 2016).
- 61% of Australians believe that governments are not doing enough to address alcohol harm.
- 74% of Australians believe that the alcohol industry should pay for reducing alcohol harm (up from 71% in 2016).
- 72% of Australians believe that political parties should not be able to accept donations from the alcohol industry.
- 77% of parents and guardians with children under 18 years of age say their children have been exposed to alcohol advertising (up from 71% in 2016).
- 44% of Australian drinkers (five million Australians) consume alcohol to get drunk (up from 37% in 2016).
- 74% of Australian drinkers have been influenced by a promotion when purchasing alcohol (up from 68% in 2016).
- 58% of Australian adults indicate that they are aware of *the Australian Guidelines to Reduce Health Risks from Drinking Alcohol*, but only 16% are also aware of the content.
- 35% of Australians have been affected by alcohol-related violence (up from 29% in 2016), with 48% of these Australians indicating they have been affected by alcohol-related violence in the last 12 months.
- 92% of Australians think that there is a link between alcohol and family and domestic violence, with 80% of these Australians indicating that governments should be doing more to address the role alcohol plays in family and domestic violence.
- 21% of parents or guardians of children under the age of 18 years report that their child has been harmed or put at risk of harm because of someone else's drinking.
- 68% of Australians support a ban on alcohol advertising on television before 8.30pm.

Michael Thorn is available for interview.

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The **Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE)** is an independent, not-for-profit organisation working to stop the harm caused by alcohol. Alcohol harm in Australia is significant. Over 5,500 lives are lost every year and more than 157,000 people are hospitalised making alcohol one of our nation's greatest preventative health challenges.

For over a decade, FARE has been working with communities, governments, health professionals and police across the country to stop alcohol harms by supporting world-leading research, raising public awareness and advocating for changes to alcohol policy. In that time FARE has helped more than 750 communities and organisations, and backed over 1,400 projects around Australia.



Galaxy Research is an Australian market researching company which conducts opinion polling throughout the country with results published in all major Australian newspapers.