



AUSSIES SIGNAL THIRST FOR GOVERNMENT EFFORTS, BUT ALCOHOL INDUSTRY STILL ON THE NOSE

30 April 2015: The nation's most comprehensive annual alcohol poll has shed light on what we drink and think, highlighting that Australians want to get rid of our boozy hangover and are looking to governments to take action.

Three quarters (75%) of Australians think we have a problem with excess drinking or alcohol abuse, but for the first time this decade the annual poll has seen a significant shift in public perceptions – with an increasing number of Australians embracing recent government efforts to address alcohol harms and eager for the industry to be held more accountable.

Now in its sixth year, the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education's (FARE) *Annual alcohol poll 2015: Attitudes and behaviours* provides valuable trend data and insights into community perspectives on alcohol.

Trend data shows a marked decline in the number of Australians who think our alcohol problems are unlikely to get better in the near future (71%, down from 76% in 2014).

The majority of Australians (73%) still think more needs to be done to reduce the harms from alcohol, but this has declined from 79% in 2014. Similarly, last year 64% of Australians thought governments weren't doing enough to reduce alcohol harms. In the latest poll that figure has dropped to 55%.

FARE Chief Executive Michael Thorn says it is clear what is driving the shift in the nation's attitudes to alcohol.

"The 2014 poll was undertaken at the height of community concern about alcohol-related violence in Sydney, when the devastating impact of alcohol featured prominently in the media. This year's poll was reflective of a very different environment, following decisive action by the NSW Government to address alcohol harms. By introducing a range of measures including trading hour restrictions, NSW has led the way in restoring community confidence," Mr Thorn said.

The poll found Australians are supportive of the alcohol policies implemented in New South Wales and, more recently, being proposed in Queensland. Four in every five Australians (81%) think that pubs, clubs and bars should close at 3am or earlier.

In addition to a strong government response, most Australians believe that clubs and pubs (60%) and alcohol companies (66%) need to be doing more to prevent harms.

Many suggest we go straight to the source of the problem to fund prevention and intervention services, with 70% of Australians believing the alcohol industry should pay for reducing alcohol harms.

The poll also highlighted public scepticism of the alcohol industry's intentions, with 69% wanting industry to be banned from making political donations and 59% of Australians believing the alcohol industry is targeting young people and minors under the legal drinking age.

Industry-led initiatives, such as asking young Australians for identification at the point-of-sale, are rarely being implemented. The poll found 42% of Gen Y had never been asked for ID in the last year at a bottle shop and 38% had never been asked at a pub, club or bar.

Australians are also concerned about the quantity and content of alcohol advertising the industry is producing. 73% had recently seen an alcohol advertising and the majority (69%) thought it was inappropriate, most commonly because the advertisement was aimed at young people or promoted drinking as key to success.

FARE's Director of Policy and Research Caterina Giorgi says Australians are rightfully sceptical of an industry whose main imperative is to sell as much alcohol as possible.

"The poll shows the community is becoming wise to alcohol industry tactics; from targeting young people, to influencing policy and failing to effectively self-regulate their advertising. Alcohol is responsible for 15 deaths and 430 hospitalisations each day, and the majority of Australians want pubs, clubs and alcohol companies to pay for reducing these harms. It's time the industry are held accountable for the harm their product causes," Ms Giorgi said.

The poll also showed majority support for a number of other policies, including: increasing the number of police on our streets (85%), increasing the penalties for alcohol-related violence (86%), banning alcohol advertising from public transport (65%) and on television before 8:30pm (63%), introducing health information labels on alcohol products (60%), and developing a National Alcohol Plan for Australia which would outline strategies to be implemented by all levels of government (68%).

FARE Chief Executive Michael Thorn says the poll findings contain important evidence for policy makers, demonstrating Australian voters are keen to change our relationship with alcohol and that Australians are receptive to efforts to address this problem.

"The message from the 2015 alcohol poll is clear: Australians want to see change and they will respond positively to governments that take decisive action. Alcohol has long been seen as an issue that's too hard to touch – but the poll shows this couldn't be further from the truth. A majority of Australians think alcohol is a problem, the majority support a range of policy solutions, and we've seen from the response to efforts to date that communities will reward strong leadership and embrace meaningful alcohol reform," Mr Thorn said.

State and territory breakdown (for a complete overview – see pages 40-41 of the report)

	Australia (%)	NSW (%)	QLD (%)	SA (%)	VIC (%)	WA (%)
Believe Australia has a problem with alcohol	75	74	71	75	73	82*
Believe more needs to be done to reduce alcohol-related harms	73	71	74	76	74	74
Think the alcohol industry should pay for reducing alcohol harms	70	70	63*	69	74	70
Consumes alcohol	79	82	76	77	79	76
Drinks to get drunk	34	33	35	31	37	32
Aware of the Guidelines	58	57	55	56	55	68*
Know that two standard drinks is the maximum to avoid long term harm	43	38	39	44	43	61*
Know women should avoid alcohol altogether during pregnancy	74	72	74	76	74	80*
Aware of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD)	50	46	54	48	45	57*
Have experienced alcohol-related violence	30	31	30	32	28	32
Support introduction of National Alcohol Plan	68	67	66	65	72	67
Support a closing time for pubs, clubs and bars of no later than 3am	81	82	82	83	80	80
Support alcohol labels	60	54*	58	63	65	65
Believe alcohol advertising should be banned on bus, tram and train stops	60	58	57	59	67*	59
Support increasing tax on alcohol	48	47	42*	45	51	49
Support stopping the sale of alcohol 30 minutes before closing time	73	72	76	71	74	64*

* denotes a significant difference from the Australian average



Foundation for Alcohol
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Key findings from the FARE Annual alcohol poll 2015

- 75% believe Australia has a problem with excess drinking or alcohol abuse (down from 78% in 2014).
- 71% of Australians believe alcohol-related problems will either get worse or remain the same over the next five to ten years (down from 76% in 2014).
- 73% believe more needs to be done to reduce the harm caused by alcohol-related illness, injury, death, and related issues (down from 79% in 2014).
- 55% of Australians think governments are not doing enough to reduce alcohol harms (down from 64% in 2014).
- 79% of Australian adults consume alcohol.
- 92% of Australians think they are a responsible drinker, but 34% of drinkers (4 million Australians) consume alcohol to get drunk.
- 30% of Australians have been affected by alcohol-related violence.
- 20% of parents report their child/children have been harmed or put at risk because of someone else's drinking.
- 70% of Australians believe the alcohol industry should pay for reducing alcohol harms.
- 69% believe political parties should not be able to receive donations from the alcohol industry.
- 59% of Australians believe that the alcohol industry targets young people under 18 years.
- 42% of Gen Y (aged 18-34 years) have never been asked for ID at a bottle shop, and 38% have never been asked for ID when they visited a pub, club or bar in the past 12 months.
- 73% recall seeing alcohol advertising in the past 12 months, and 69% of those considered it to be inappropriate.
- 68% of Australians support the introduction of a National Alcohol Plan for Australia.
- 81% of Australians believe that pubs, clubs and bars should close at 3am or earlier.
- 60% of Australians believe health information labels should be placed on alcohol products.

Michael Thorn (@MichaelTThorn) and Caterina Giorgi (@CatGiorgi) are 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.