# Alcohol consumption of Australian parents: continuity and change in the new millennium

## Researchers

1. Anne-Marie Laslett, Centre for Alcohol Policy Research, La Trobe University and National Drug Research Institute, Curtin University.
2. Heng Jiang, Centre for Alcohol Policy Research, La Trobe University.
3. Robin Room, Centre for Alcohol Policy Research, La Trobe University.

## Summary

This report examines whether trends in alcohol consumption among parents, carers and guardians of dependent children aged 0-14 years have changed since the commencement of the millennium compared to non-parents.

Data was obtained from the National Drug and Alcohol Strategy Household Surveys (NDSHS), undertaken in 2001, 2004, 2007, 2010 and 2013.

## Outcomes

Examination of the 2013 National Drug Strategy Household Survey revealed the frequency of drinking of parents and non-parents at various levels of risk.  Parents were less likely to report being abstainers than non-parents (19 per cent versus 23 per cent), significantly more likely to report being moderate drinkers (44.4 per cent versus 31.1 per cent) and significantly less likely to report being risky drinkers (36.7 per cent versus 45.6).

Mothers were more likely to report being abstainers than fathers in 2013 (22 per cent vs 15 per cent). Fathers were more likely than mothers to report being risky drinkers in 2013 (49 per cent vs 26 per cent)

Abstention amongst parents has increased from 16 per cent of parents in 2001 to 19 per cent in 2013.

The prevalence of risky drinking among parents diminished from 42 per cent in 2004 to 35 per cent in 2013 (to near the 2001 level of 36 per cent).

Abstention in younger parents increased more during 2001 and 2013 than in the other age groups, to the extent that there is a higher rate of abstention in younger parents than in mid-aged and older parents. Abstention rates increased between 2001 and 2013 for most groups of mothers and fathers, apart from the older mother group.

Risky drinking rates were higher for non-parents than for parents, and each fell according to a similar pattern during 2004-2013. Risky drinking rates of younger fathers and mothers decreased more than in other parent groups.

There is a general shift in attitude among parents, as well as non-parents, which favours more restrictive alcohol policies – though these are still the least-favoured policies among those asked about alcohol policies.

Drinking patterns seem to be shifting in parents and non-parents in ways that are similar, suggesting that broader social and cultural factors are involved in changes in parental drinking behaviour.

## Recommendations

This report provides evidence that the drinking patterns of parents and non-parents seem to be shifting over time, resulting in less risky drinking behaviours. The exception is that of older female parents.  Further research is necessary to determine why their rates of risky drinking have risen over time.

In addition, further analysis is required in relation to the increasing rates of abstinence among disadvantaged parents and the impact of the global financial crisis.

[view the report](https://fare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Alcohol-consumption-of-Australian-parents-FINAL-30-JUNE-2017.pdf)