# Annual alcohol poll 2013: Attitudes and behaviours

FARE’s 2013 Annual Alcohol Poll was launched at the Cancer Council of Victoria’s office in Melbourne on Thursday 18 April.

[view the report](/wp-content/uploads/FARE-Alcohol-Poll-2013-FINAL-LR-2.pdf)

## Perceptions on alcohol by voting intentions

With 2013 being an election year, FARE asked Australians about their voting intentions to determine whether Australians perspectives on alcohol varied based on these intentions.

The majority of Australians for each of the major parties believe that Australia has a problem with excess drinking or alcohol abuse (Green 83%, ALP 78% and Coalition 72%) and that alcohol-related problems will remain the same or get worse in the next five to 10 years (Coalition 80%, Green 79% and ALP 75%).

A majority of voters were also in agreement that more needs to be done in Australia to reduce the harm caused by alcohol (ALP 77%, Green 76% and Coalition 73%).

A majority of voters also support two of the key policy measures to reduce alcohol-related harms. The first of these is implementing alcohol health information labels on alcohol products. Regardless of voting intentions a majority of voters, support health information labels on alcohol products (Green 66%, ALP 64% and Coalition 57%).

A majority of voters from each of the three parties also supported a ban of alcohol advertising before 8.30pm (ALP 69%, Green 66% and Coalition 59%).

### Why is this important?

The poll shows that regardless of voting intentions Australians believe that we have a problem with alcohol and more needs to be done to prevent further harms in the future.  These findings should be taken on board by each of the major parties, with the knowledge that there is significant support for reform from Australians within each political party.

### Key findings

* Coalition (51%) and ALP (46%) voters are most likely to believe that illicit substances are the most harmful drug, while Green voters (39%) are most likely to perceive alcohol as the most harmful drug.
* A majority of all voters believe that Australia has a problem with excess drinking or alcohol abuse (Green 83%, ALP 78% and Coalition 72%).
* A majority of voters believe that alcohol-related problems will remain the same or get worse in the next five to ten years (Coalition 80%, Green 79% and ALP 75%).
* A majority of Green (66%), ALP (64%) and Coalition (57%) voters support health information labels for alcohol products.
* A majority of all voters agreed (ALP 73%, Coalition 70% and Green 70%) believed that alcohol advertising influences the behaviour of young people under the age of 18 years.
* A majority of ALP (69%), Green (66%) and Coalition (59%) voters support a ban of alcohol advertising before 8.30pm.
* A majority of Green voters (52%) support an increase in alcohol tax to pay for health, education and treatment of alcohol problems, while 43% of ALP voters and 37% of Coalition voters support this.

## Drinking before going to a pub, club or bar (preloading)

In 2013, drinkers were asked if they consume alcohol before going out to a pub, club or bar. This behaviour is referred to as ‘preloading’. Drinkers who preload were also asked whether they drank more, less or the same amount before going out than while out and why they engage in this behaviour.

More than half of all drinkers (57%) consume alcohol before going out to a pub, club or bar, of which 4% always do this, 10% usually do this, 20% do this sometimes and 23% rarely. Preloading is highest among people who drink to get drunk (85%), Gen Y (76%) and regular drinkers (67%).

Of the drinkers that indicated that they preload, the majority (55%) tend to consume less before going out than while they are out, 25% drink about the same before and while going out, and 13% drink more before going out compared to while they are out and 7% don’t know.

When asked what the reasons are for preloading more than half of drinkers (51%) do so to save money, 41% preload to socialise with friends, 36% to feel relaxed, 14% to feel more confident, 9% to avoid queues at the bar, 6% to get as drunk as possible before going out, and 4% for other reasons.

### Why is this important?

The culture of preloading results in people attending pubs, clubs and bars having already consumed alcohol. This presents challenges for licensed premises, police and emergency service workers. The culture of preloading is a result of two key environmental factors. These are that alcohol is considerably cheaper in takeaway, as opposed to in-licence venues. Secondly, late trading hours mean that people go to bars, clubs and pubs later and consequently have time to consume alcohol in the intervening period. To address the harms that may result from preloading, the price of alcohol and trading hours of licensed premises needs to be addressed.

### Key findings

* More than half of all drinkers (57%) consume alcohol before going out to a pub, club or bar.
* People who drink to get drunk (85%), Gen Y (76%) and regular drinkers (67%) are most likely to consume alcohol before going out.
* 55% of people who preload drink less alcohol before they go out than while they are out.
* More than half (51%) of Gen Y who preload drink the same amount or more before going out than while they are out.
* More than half (51%) of Australian drinkers who preload do so primarily to save money.

## Alcohol and social media

This year’s poll explored what Australians are saying about alcohol on social media, including their own alcohol use, and how alcohol companies are using this platform.

Almost one-third (32%) of drinkers regretted some form of phone or internet communication while drunk, including 9% who regretted posting a comment on social media and 5% who regretted posting a photo of themselves or friends on social media. Young people aged 18 to 24 were most likely to regret activities on social media, with 18% regretting posting a comment on social media and 18% regretting posting a photo on social media.

A total of 14% of Australians have noticed alcohol advertising or promotions on social media. Of those who had noticed the advertisements, 44% had interacted with an alcohol brand (e.g. responding to a question on Twitter, ‘liking’ a Facebook page or ‘checking in’ at an alcohol brand’s bar at an event). Gen Y are particularly likely to have noticed alcohol advertising or promotions on social media (20%), with 45% of them having interacted with an alcohol brand.

### Why is this important?

Social media is providing both more avenues for Australians to engage in behaviours they may regret while drunk, and increased opportunities for alcohol companies to market their products to young people. This has important implications for policymakers as Australia’s current regulatory regimes on alcohol advertising do not effectively address these new forms of media, which are rapidly growing and highly accessible to young people.

As a first step, it is necessary to establish a Senate Inquiry to examine the marketing activities of the alcohol industry, including in social media, with the eventual aim of introducing effective independent regulation that covers all forms of alcohol marketing and has meaningful penalties for non-compliance.

### Key findings

* Almost one-third (32%) of Australian drinkers regretted some form of communication by phone or internet while drunk.
* 20% of drinkers regretted sending a text message, 19% regretted making a phone call, 9% regretted sending an email, 9% regretted posting a comment on social media and 5% regretted posting a photo on social media.
* Gen Y (47%) are more likely than Gen X (30%) who in turn are more likely than baby boomers (18%), to have regretted some form of phone or internet communication while drunk.
* 14% of Australians have noticed alcohol advertising or promotions on social media.
* Gen Y (20%) are more likely than Gen X (13%) and baby boomers (8%) to have noticed alcohol advertising or promotions on social media.
* Of those who had noticed alcohol advertising on social media, 44% have interacted with an alcohol brand.

## New South Wales poll

This report contains previously unreleased data on New South Wales (NSW) residents.

[view the nsw report](https://www.fare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Annual-Alcohol-Poll-NSW-Snapshot-FINAL.pdf)