# Drinking trends by age and over time among baby boomers and older drinkers

## Researchers

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## Summary

The last decade has seen a decline in overall alcohol consumption in Australia, primarily due to a decrease in consumption in young people.  In contrast, an increase in risky drinking of baby boomers in national survey data, has been found.  This report examines another data source (Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia study) to determine if baby boomers are decreasing their consumption as they age at the same rate as the generation before them.

Data came from the annual Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) study, which was collected between 2001 and 2016.   The proportion of drinkers, total volume consumed, average quantity per occasion and number of occasions per year were examined.

## Key findings

* The total volume of alcohol consumed over the past 15 years within cohorts consistently shows a pattern of steady consumption up until 70 years of age, followed by decreases in consumption. Between 2002 and 2008, consumption increased among 35-39 and 45-49 year olds by 13% and 7% respectively. In the same period, consumption decreased by 17-18% among 70-79 year olds.
* The number of drinks per occasion decreased steadily from the late thirties onwards for both genders, but this was offset, at least before drinkers’ late-seventies, by an increase in drinking frequency.
* While some younger cohorts, under the age of 50 in 2002, did increase their consumption between 2002 and 2008, when per capita consumption was increasing, it ceased to increase between 2009 and 2016. Meanwhile, consumption did decrease between 2009 and 2016 in multiple older age groups.
* The results of the current study do not find evidence for baby boomers failing to decrease their consumption at the same rate as older cohorts. However, significant harm is experienced by drinkers aged 50-59 years olds

## Recommendations

Given the significant harm from alcohol consumption being faced by baby boomers, health promotion efforts or policy changes that could facilitate a decrease in consumption in this group (similar to that of younger drinkers) would be beneficial.

Given that older drinkers consume most of their alcohol in the home, health promotion campaigns that focus on home drinking or price-based policy changes that increase the price of alcohol purchased for consumption outside of licensed premise, such as a minimum unit price, could help to decrease the consumption and thus harm to older drinkers.

[View the report](https://fare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Baby_Boomers_Report-FINAL.pdf)