# Harmed, drunk and dangerous: Aussies link alcohol to family and domestic violence

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### 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.

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.

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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.

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### Metadata