# One Sunday at a time: Evaluating Hello Sunday Morning

## Researchers

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## Summary

Hello Sunday Morning (HSM) is a blogging website that encourages people (HSMers) to undertake a period of sobriety and reflect on the role alcohol plays in their life. Participants write blogs as part of their participation.

Initially, the objective of the project was to engage an additional five university students in HSM and create digital mini documentaries of their HSM journeys (<https://vimeo.com/fare>). However, when HSM recruited in excess of 2,200 new HSMers during the timeframe of the evaluation project, the objectives of the project were extended to build an evidence base for the effectiveness of HSM and its social impact.

This research used qualitative analysis of blog posts, qualitative questionnaires and alcohol consumption surveys to examine what participants blogged about, what their motivations, goals and challenges were, and how their alcohol consumption and expectancies changed over time.

## Outcomes

### Analysis of blog posts

An analysis was undertaken of the HSM blog posts of 1,768 people generated between 11 January 2009 and 2 August 2011. The analysis found that HSMers blogged about their drinking practices and culture, and their attempts to change their individual behaviours and influence their peers. HSMers used the blog posts to offer strategies and ideas for changing drinking behaviours and cultures.

The analysis revealed three categories of blog post themes:

* The *Drinking culture* category encompasses themes of Australian drinking practices and culture.
* The *Life* category relates to the effects of the HSM experience on day-to-day lifestyle and behaviour.
* The *Changes* category relates to the impact of personal HSM experiences on HSMers and their social and cultural lives.

These themes were apparent at different stages of a HSMer’s journey without alcohol. It was found that typically, in the earlier parts of a HSM experience, a HSMer is more likely to describe their drinking practices, be conscious of peers’ reactions, be focused on individual goals, and seek advice from fellow HSMers. As their HSM experience progresses the thematic content of their blog shifts, first documenting efforts to make personal change and reflecting on their own drinking practices, to then reflecting on drinking culture and in turn offering their own advice and strategies for change to other HSMers. By the end of their HSM experience, many HSMers became more reflective, giving considerable thought to how their HSM experience has contributed to their personal growth and self-awareness.

### Goals and motivations

As part of their HSM registration, each HSMer was given the opportunity to specify their goals prior to embarking upon their HSM experience. The goals of 1,253 HSMers (70.1% of all HSMers) were recorded. HSMers were able to specify up to five personal goals in an open-ended format which were then coded into 15 goal categories. The top five goals types were to:

* improve health (70.5%)
* improve well-being (51.9%)
* change individual drinking behaviours (26.9%)
* learn to socialise without needing alcohol (23.6%) and
* save money (23.3%).

In addition, the qualitative questionnaire data (based on the responses of 229 HSMers) gives insight into the self-reported motivations, goals and challenges participants faced. The key themes and goals indicated that participants were motivated to change their behaviour to improve their quality of life. This was reflected in cited goals to improve participants’ health, well-being, social life and/or financial position.

The common reasons for not achieving these goals were a lack of personal commitment, a lack of support from peers and associated pressure in social situations or overly ambitious goals. In some cases, HSM was more than just a program of abstinence; it led to the confrontation of underlying issues which had previously been masked by alcohol use.

### Alcohol consumption surveys

The Alcohol Use and Disorder Identification Test (AUDIT) and Alcohol Outcome Expectancies Scale (AOES) were used to measure changes in consumption and well-being in 15 participants, before and after participation in an HSM experience. Although not statistically significant, the results suggested a reduction in consumption and an increase in well-being over time, as the participant continued through their HSM experience.

## Recommendations

One limitation of this project was not being able to collect representative consumption and well-being data. To reliably assess changes over time in consumption and well-being throughout the course of HSM it is recommend that the AUDIT and AOES surveys are conducted at sign-up, three months and 12 months after HSM.  By inviting all HSM participants to provide consumption data in this way, HSM would develop statistically significant data.

The HSM experience enables HSMers to stake out their own views, be accountable for their own actions, and honour their own achievements and challenges. Throughout the blog, HSMers report and reflect on the impact of HSM on their individual and social circumstances. While it is possible to measure changes in alcohol consumption as a measure of social impact, on-going analysis of the blog can also help to conceptualise how behaviour change is interconnected with changes in life outlook, well-being, and social and cultural norms, values and practices.

## Additional resources

[View the Hello Sunday Morning videos](https://vimeo.com/fare)

[View the Media Release](https://www.fare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/HSM-on-the-Hill-Launch-Final.pdf)

[Visit the Hello Sunday Morning website](https://www.hellosundaymorning.org/)

[view the report](/wp-content/uploads/HSM-Evaluation-Final.pdf)