

MEDIA RELEASE

Parents drinking more in isolation but they haven't been drinking alone

New data released today by the Alcohol and Drug Foundation shows Australian parents have been consuming more alcohol, more frequently, during the coronavirus lockdown, with almost one in six (14%) saying they've been drinking every day.

Since the start of lockdown, more than one in four (29%) parents have increased their alcohol intake, with millennial parents the most likely to be drinking more (35%), followed by Gen X parents (28%), then baby boomers (16%).

Parents of 9-12 year olds were found to be drinking the most, with one in 10 saying they were drinking "a lot more" following the introduction of coronavirus restrictions.

Impressionable 9-12 years olds were the most exposed to drinking, with almost a quarter of parents of this age group (23%) saying they have been consuming alcohol in front of their children daily or every other day during lockdown.

Pressures resulting from lockdown have been a considerable factor for increasing alcohol consumption. Almost two-fifths (38%) of Australian parents reported heightened levels of stress and anxiety as the reason for their increased alcohol intake, with one in four parents specifically pinpointing the challenges of home- schooling.

The data, based on a national poll of over 1,000 parents, has been released to support a new community health initiative: *'You haven't been drinking alone'*, launched today by the Alcohol and Drug Foundation.

It aims to encourage parents to consider how their drinking may have changed during lockdown, the implications it may be having on their own health and, importantly, how it may be influencing their children's attitudes and behaviours.

Alcohol and Drug Foundation CEO, Dr Erin Lalor AM, said: "Coronavirus has had a significant impact on our whole community but especially for parents, with many having to balance changes to their work life, increasing uncertainty and the challenges of home schooling.

"It's really concerning that more than one quarter of Australian parents have increased their alcohol consumption since the reality of COVID-19 hit.

"Parents may have been drinking in isolation, but they haven't been drinking alone. Since the start of lockdown, some children have seen their parents' occasional alcoholic drink turn into a daily ritual. Others have played in the background of their parents Zoom calls which can act as virtual pub tables.

“While many parents have been using alcohol as a coping mechanism, it is important to understand that exposure to regular or excessive drinking can influence children’s attitudes and future behaviours around alcohol, alongside increasing the parent’s risk of accidents, injuries, dependence and diseases like cancer.

“Our survey of parents across Australia suggests one of the primary reasons for increased alcohol consumption during coronavirus is heightened feelings of anxiety or stress. If you are feeling stressed or anxious, it’s best to avoid drinking alcohol because it can make these feelings worse. It’s also essential that children don’t learn to view alcohol as a coping mechanism or to think drinking alcohol is a healthy lifestyle choice.

“There is a strong body of evidence that demonstrates parental behaviours and attitudes towards alcohol and other drugs are the most important influencers in guiding children’s future behaviour and decisions.

“To reduce the risk of harm from alcohol-related injury or disease such as cancer, the draft national guidelines recommend people consume no more than 10 standard drinks per week and no more than four standard drinks on any day.

“The good news is, just as adults can easily form and pass on unhealthy behaviours, they can just as easily do the opposite.

“As the restrictions of coronavirus begin to ease, parents can quickly re-establish themselves as positive role models,” said Dr Lalor.

For more details on the ‘*You haven’t been drinking alone*’ campaign, visit <https://adf.org.au/>

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The Alcohol and Drug Foundation is strongly committed to supporting all Australians with quality information to prevent and reduce alcohol-related harm. For further information about alcohol use and ways to reduce related harms during COVID-19, please visit <https://adf.org.au/covid-19/>

For free and confidential drug information or support, ADF encourages people to visit www.adf.org.au or call the Alcohol and Drug Foundation’s DrugInfo line on 1300 85 85 84. The non-judgmental service provides the facts about alcohol and other drugs, advice on how to support loved ones, and connects people with relevant health and support services in their state and territory.

For media enquiries please call the Alcohol and Drug Foundation’s media team on 0430 948 380 or email media@adf.org.au.

About the Alcohol and Drug Foundation: Celebrating 60 years of service to the community, the Alcohol and Drug Foundation is one of Australia’s leading bodies committed to preventing and minimising alcohol and other drug harms in communities around the nation. The Foundation

reaches millions of Australians in local communities through sporting clubs, workplaces, health care settings and schools, offering educational information, drug and alcohol prevention programs and advocating for strong and healthy communities.

The Power of Words: There's power in the language we use to talk about alcohol and other drugs, and people who use alcohol and other drugs. Stigmatising language can negatively impact on a person's health, wellbeing and relationships. Using person-centric language, instead of focusing on an individual's substance use, has the power to reduce stigma and improve health and social outcomes. For a guide to using non-stigmatising language, please see the [Power of Words](#) or the [Mindframe Guidelines](#).