

## **AN EXPLORATION OF THE IMPACT OF GENDERED PERCEPTIONS OF ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION PATTERNS IN YOUNG WOMEN**

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**Introduction / Issues:** About 80% of Australians 14 or older have consumed alcohol in the past year. Further, 46-58% of 18-29 year-olds engage in heavy episodic drinking (HED) at least monthly. Males aged 18-24 are more likely to engage in (HED) compared to females. However, this gender gap in harmful levels of consumption is diminishing. As research has shown that women are more sensitive to the consumption and long-term effects of alcohol than men it is important to explore these changing patterns of drinking behaviours so as to obtain greater understanding some potential reasons for these changes.

**Method / Approach:** The overarching aim of this research was to explore norms, perceptions and attitudes around gendered alcohol consumption patterns as experienced by Australian young adults. As this is an under researched area qualitative methods were used. Participants were recruited via purposive and snowball sampling. Semi-structured interviews were used, which lasted approximately 30 minutes, were audio recorded and then transcribed verbatim and continued until saturation was reached. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data.

**Key Findings:** Analysis revealed many variations in perceptions of appropriate drinking behaviours of males and females. These included attitudes to: over-consumption; type of beverage consumed; abstinence behaviour; impact of venue. Further self-control and norms emerged as additional themes. Perspectives of both own and other behaviours were explored.

**Discussions and Conclusions:** A greater understanding of the social construction of gendered alcohol consumption will allow the design of tailored interventions to support reductions in alcohol consumption in at-risk groups.

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