

Alcohol laws have a preventive effect on young men

29 July 2015



When they reach for the glass, they often know no limits: Hazardous drinking is fairly common among young Swiss men. The good news: Based on a survey of around 5,700 young Swiss men with a mean age of 20, scientists from the University of Zurich reveal that legal regulations - such as the minimum legal drinking age and restrictions on the sale or advertising of alcoholic beverages - have a preventive effect on young consumers.

Around half of the respondents are high-risk drinkers, which means they consume at least six or more alcoholic drinks in a single session every month. Almost a third of them also have [alcohol problems](#), which manifest themselves in repeated drinking behavior with harmful consequences or risks. "Young adults and young men are most vulnerable to high-risk and abusive drinking, which can develop into an [alcohol addiction](#)," says Meichun Mohler-Kuo, a professor from the Epidemiology, Biostatistics and Prevention Institute at the University of Zurich. The high figures recorded in Switzerland tally with the results of studies from other countries.

The more cantonal regulations, the lower the consumption

The scientists studied the influence of legal [preventive measures](#) on alcohol consumption among survey respondents. The analysis revealed that fewer men drank alcohol hazardously or abusively in cantons with more preventive measures. This result also echoes international studies, which indicate that the introduction of alcohol laws led to a decrease in alcohol consumption and alcohol-related health problems.

By contrast, these preventive measures did not influence study participants with an above-average tendency towards "sensation-seeking" or antisocial behavior: Men who increasingly strive for new or exciting experiences, regardless of the risks, are more prone to risky consumption or alcohol-related problems. The same goes for men with a tendency to largely disregard laws and the concerns of others. "Evidently, it's very difficult to reach the men who are most at risk with the existing preventive measures," explains Simon Foster, a scientist at the Epidemiology, Biostatistics and Prevention Institute at the University of Zurich. In their case, personal predisposition has a greater influence on [alcohol consumption](#) than legal regulations. "This sub-group needs special preventive measures that are geared towards early detection and tailored to the personality profiles of the [men](#) affected," concludes Foster.

More information: Simon Foster, Leonhard Held, Natalia Estévez, Gerhard Gmel, and Meichun Mohler-Kuo. Liberal alcohol legislation: Does it amplify the effects among Swiss men of person-related risk factors on heavy alcohol use? *Addiction*. July 29, 2015. [DOI: 10.1111/add.13032](https://doi.org/10.1111/add.13032)

Provided by University of Zurich

APA citation: Alcohol laws have a preventive effect on young men (2015, July 29) retrieved 2 May 2021 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-07-alcohol-laws-effect-young-men.html>

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