

# Construction sector's risky drinking problems need to be addressed in economic downturn

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As a steep economic downturn looms, drug and alcohol experts are calling for more reduction measures to combat risky drinking behavior in the construction sector.

In spite of workplace safety issues, a study of more than 500 [construction workers](#) in New South Wales conducted last year found one in six workers reported workmates being visibly affected by alcohol on building sites.

Prevalence of risky drinking was higher than the national average, particularly for younger (under 25 years old) and mid-aged (45-54 years) workers.

"Clearly there remains a big need for appropriate workplace policy and programs to address risky alcohol use in this male-dominated industry, particularly in these two [age groups](#)," says Flinders University Professor Ann Roche, Director of the National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction (NCETA).

"Changes to these [cultural norms](#) need to target workplaces at both an individual and organizational level."

Risky drinking behavior was linked to poor perception of alcohol-related risks to safety. In addition, risky consumption among the middle-aged workers reflected midlife pressures, demanding work roles and emerging [mental health](#) or age-related health issues such as high blood pressure, weight gain or diabetes.

"Mid-life is the peak age for alcohol-related deaths and the time when work-related performance / pressure is often greatest," says Professor Roche. "Heavy drinking in this age group can result in disability or premature death, resulting in personal and substantial business losses."

Downsizing with downturns in construction cycles also adds to workplace stresses, respondents said.

Those questioned were asked about their perception of risky drinking, risk to workplace safety, quality of life and general health, and workplace attitudes to excessive alcohol consumption.

**More information:** Ann M. Roche et al. Construction workers' alcohol use, knowledge, perceptions of risk and workplace norms, *Drug and Alcohol Review* (2020). [DOI: 10.1111/dar.13075](https://doi.org/10.1111/dar.13075)

Provided by Flinders University

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