



GREAT EXPECTATIONS: ALCOHOL LEAVES AUSSIES DISAPPOINTED AND DISILLUSIONED

18 May 2016: There's a big difference between how Australians expect to feel when drinking alcohol and the reality of how they actually feel after their last drinking episode, with the nation's most comprehensive annual alcohol poll finding there's less upside and more downside than drinkers imagine.

Now in its seventh year, the *Annual alcohol poll 2016: Attitudes and behaviours* found the majority of those who drink to get drunk expect to feel happy (56 per cent), and relaxed (54 per cent), with 31 per cent of drinkers expecting to feel a sense of social belonging.

Yet in reality drinkers' expectations fell well short; with only 28 per cent of drinkers feeling happy after downing alcohol, 31 per cent feeling relaxed and just 15 per cent achieving that sense of belonging.

And when it comes to negative impacts, the difference between expectation and reality is just as pronounced; with 29 per cent of drinkers reporting feeling tired after the last time they were drunk, despite only 13 per cent expecting to feel drowsy. Similarly, 17 per cent were sick (although only five per cent anticipated this), seven per cent felt unattractive (in contrast to four per cent) and 13 per cent felt regret (where only six per cent had predicted that outcome).

Each year the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education's (FARE) national alcohol poll provides valuable trend data and insights into community perspectives on alcohol.

In 2016, it found that alcohol is consumed by 78 per cent of Australian adults, with bottled wine continuing to be the beverage of choice (preferred by 33 per cent), ahead of regular strength beer (19 per cent) and spirits (16 per cent). However, not all these people are responsible moderate drinkers, with 37 per cent of Australians admitting they drink alcohol with the specific intent to get drunk.

Conducted by Galaxy Research, the 2016 poll also once again highlighted the nation's concerns about alcohol; with almost eight in ten Australians indicating that our country has a problem with excess drinking or alcohol abuse (78 per cent), and the majority calling for more to be done to reduce the harm that alcohol causes (78 per cent).

Awareness of the issue and a concern for the level of alcohol use and misuse in the community is reflected in Australians' support for evidence-based policy measures that would reduce alcohol harms.

More than eight in ten Australians (82 per cent) support measures that would see pubs, clubs and bars close at 3am or earlier, 70 per cent of Australians support a ban on alcohol advertising on television before 8:30pm, and for the first time in the history of the poll, more than half of those surveyed (51 per cent) support increasing the tax on alcohol in order to pay for alcohol-related treatment and prevention initiatives.

FARE Chief Executive Michael Thorn says the alcohol industry is fast finding itself out of step with community attitudes wanting change to Australia's unhealthy relationship with booze and are ready and willing to embrace the measures which would reduce the harms.

He believes FARE's *Annual alcohol poll* contains an important message for policymakers and political leaders, both for jurisdictions that have already embraced effective and evidence-based measures to reduce alcohol harms as well as those states and territories still considering how best to deal with the problem.

"This is the nation's most comprehensive poll to examine Australians' attitudes towards alcohol and their drinking behaviours. Each year it consistently delivers three very clear messages: that Australians recognise we have a problem with alcohol in this country, that a clear majority support the evidence-based solutions which will reduce the harms, and that they want governments to embrace meaningful reform," Mr Thorn said.

2016 was the first year that the poll examines the differences between how Australians presume they'll feel when consuming alcohol and the reality of how they actually feel, with the findings suggesting that for most drinkers those expectations are not being met.

FARE Director of Policy and Research Caterina Giorgi says while alcohol industry advertising might try hard to suggest that Australians will find happiness, popularity and attractiveness in every bottle, the reality for most Australians is very different.

"When we look at the poll we see that Aussies who drink to get drunk expect to feel happy and relaxed, and tend to downplay the chances of feeling tired, sick or unattractive. They tend to buy into the alcohol industry advertising spin. The reality is very different, with drinkers far more likely to have experienced negative consequences, and far less likely to have felt happy or relaxed," Ms Giorgi said.

In addition to the emotional toll, Australians are engaging in a range of negative behaviours after knocking a few back; with reports of vomiting (40 per cent), driving a car (19 per cent), and having an argument (19 per cent) under the influence.

A further 29 per cent have been affected by alcohol-related violence, six in every ten Australians regard the city centre to be unsafe on a Saturday night, and 23 per cent of parents say their children have been harmed or put at risk because of someone else's drinking.

Mr Thorn says the poll provides an important but troubling insight into the extent of alcohol harms in Australia.

"In Australia, alcohol is responsible for 15 deaths and 430 hospitalisations every day. The poll tells us that almost three in ten Australians have been affected by alcohol-related violence I think it is very clear that we still have a long way to go with changing Australia's toxic relationship with alcohol that causes more harm than good," Mr Thorn said.

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Media notes

Michael Thorn and Caterina Giorgi are available for interview.

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The **Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE)** is an independent, not-for-profit organisation working to stop the harm caused by alcohol. Alcohol harm in Australia is significant. Over 5,500 lives are lost every year and more than 157,000 people are hospitalised making alcohol one of our nation's greatest preventative health challenges.

For over a decade, FARE has been working with communities, governments, health professionals and police across the country to stop alcohol harms by supporting world-leading research, raising public awareness and advocating for changes to alcohol policy. In that time FARE has helped more than 750 communities and organisations, and backed over 1,400 projects around Australia.



Galaxy Research is an Australian market researching company which conducts opinion polling throughout the country with results published in all major Australian newspapers.