



MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

BEYOND THE DRINKER: ALCOHOL HARMS UNRELENTING

13 March 2015: A new study has revealed that almost two thirds of people identified as being harmed by the drinking of others in a 2008 survey, were still being harmed three years later.

And it's not your age, gender or the number of times that you go out that is most likely to determine whether you are at risk of being harmed, but rather the number of heavy drinkers in your life.

The study, *Beyond the drinker: Longitudinal patterns in alcohol's harms to others*, followed up Australian adults first surveyed in 2008 to see what level of harm they were experiencing as a result of other people's drinking; whether this situation was remaining stable, improving or worsening; and what factors might predict patterns over time.

The study found that having been harmed in 2008 was a strong predictor of harms in 2011, with 65 per cent of people who were negatively affected in 2008 reporting that they are still being harmed by the drinking of others.

Funded by the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) and undertaken by the Centre for Alcohol Policy Research (CAPR) the study expands on the landmark research from Australia's first *Harm to Others* population survey, *The range and magnitude of alcohol's harm to others*, published in 2010.

CAPR Director Professor Robin Room says the longitudinal data presented a unique opportunity to examine how individual experiences of alcohol's harm to others persist or change over time.

"We wanted to see whether people harmed by the drinking of others three years ago are still being harmed, and to better understand the determining factors. This study clearly demonstrates the persistent and ongoing nature of alcohol's harm to others," Professor Room said.

The findings showed that the majority of Australians (62 per cent) have been harmed as a result of someone else's drinking in at least one of the two surveys. Almost one third (32 per cent) were negatively affected in both years.

The research also highlighted the influence of social circles; with the number of heavy drinkers in a person's household, including close relatives and intimate partners, being a strong predictor of experiencing alcohol-related harm from others. This was more significant than other variables examined, including the demographics and drinking habits of the person who was being harmed.



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Alarmingly, with each additional heavy drinker in their household this risk intensified, with respondents almost six times more likely to experience harm.

FARE Chief Executive Michael Thorn says that the findings are an important reminder for governments of the negative effects of alcohol consumption and the collateral damage alcohol frequently causes to women and children.

“This research highlights the scale and the persistence of alcohol harms that extend beyond the drinker and makes clear that, in order to address and reduce alcohol’s harm to others, Australia needs comprehensive measures such as those that impact on the price, availability and advertising of alcohol in order to diminish the prevalence of heavy drinking in the overall population,” Mr Thorn said.

[Read a summary of *Beyond the Drinker* and download the full research paper.](#)

Mr Thorn (@MichaelTThorn) and Professor Room are available for interview.

Media Contact:

Jeremy Henderson **0425 559 710**

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.

The **Centre for Alcohol Policy Research (CAPR)** is a world-class alcohol policy research institute led by Professor Robin Room. CAPR examines alcohol-related harms and the effectiveness of alcohol-related policies and is a joint undertaking of FARE, the Victorian Department of Health, Turning Point and the University of Melbourne.

For further information visit CAPR’s website: www.capr.edu.au.