



RESEARCH SUMMARY
Date Compiled: June 2026

Key takeaways from included research:

- A study of teens found that alcohol-related content is common across social media, TV, movies, and even posts from friends and family, increasing young people’s awareness of drinking. Teens said better alcohol education, more honest portrayals of alcohol harms, stronger regulation of alcohol content, and promoting sober lifestyles could help reduce the influence of alcohol messaging.
- An Australian survey of male sports fans found that most said alcohol was not an important part of attending professional sports events, with many drinking little or no alcohol during games. Researchers say the findings suggest attitudes around sports, drinking, and masculinity may be changing, with less focus on alcohol and fewer links to aggressive behavior at games.
- Researchers studied sexually and gender-minoritized teens and found that students had different experiences in Gender-Sexuality Alliances (GSAs), including levels of support, involvement, and school victimization. Researchers did not find differences in alcohol use between the groups, but they say GSAs may still help students build healthy coping skills and provide support around substance use discussions.
- A study in Australia and New Zealand found that alcohol companies often market zero-alcohol products by promoting friendship, health, fitness, and new occasions for drinking, such as at the gym or while driving. Researchers say these campaigns may still strengthen alcohol brand recognition and suggest stronger rules are needed for marketing alcohol-free products linked to alcohol brands.
- A review of more than 100 studies found that public health messages about alcohol and cancer often focus on warning labels and commonly explain that alcohol increases cancer risk, especially breast cancer risk. Researchers say these messages can help improve public awareness and support cancer prevention when they are carefully tested with different groups of people.

INSIGHTS ON MEDIA ALCOHOL EXPOSURE FOLLOWING DAILY SELF-MONITORING: STRATEGIES FOR PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION IN ADOLESCENTS

May 2026

Background: Adolescent exposure to alcohol-related media content is widespread and may contribute to early initiation and risky patterns of use. Using a sample of participants who self-monitored their alcohol exposure during adolescence, the aim of this qualitative study was to gain their perspectives on alcohol-related media exposure, its perceived influence, and potential strategies to mitigate associated risks.

Methods: Adolescents aged 15–18 were enrolled into a multi-burst (21 day bursts) ecological momentary assessment (EMA) study based on prior alcohol involvement (any lifetime use or having at least one close friend who consumed alcohol). Following completion of the EMA study, individuals who reported exposure to alcohol content in the media (minimum 10 instances across the EMA study period) were selected to participate in focus groups. Eight (N = 42; M age = 18.21; SD = 0.84; 42.9% woman; 40.5% White, 71.4% non-Hispanic) focus groups were conducted via Zoom. Transcripts were double-coded and thematically analyzed.

Results: During the focus groups, youth perceived an increased awareness of the prevalence and sources of alcohol-related content, including from peers and family members. Four themes emerged as strategies identified by youth to mitigate the impact of media alcohol exposure: increasing accurate portrayals of alcohol risks, earlier alcohol education, greater government regulation of alcohol-related content, and promoting sobriety and sober culture. Participants recommended several strategies for more accurately portraying alcohol risks and harms on social media, such as infographics, short-form videos, real-time polls, disclaimers, and personal stories.

Conclusions: In a sample of youth who had previously self-monitored their exposure to alcohol content in media, findings highlight their understanding of alcohol exposure from a variety of media sources, including television, movies, and social media, and suggest a need for alcohol prevention strategies that involve educators, parents, policymakers, and social media platforms.

Source: Meisel, M. K., J. E. Merrill, A. C. Clement, et al. 2026. "Insights on Media Alcohol Exposure Following Daily Self-Monitoring: Strategies for Prevention and Intervention in Adolescents." *Alcohol: Clinical and Experimental Research* 50, no. 5: e70322. <https://doi.org/10.1111/acer.70322>

THE CHANGING ROLE OF ALCOHOL AMONG MALE AUSTRALIAN SPORTS FANS: A PRELIMINARY SOCIAL PRACTICE ANALYSIS

May 2026

Abstract

This article presents the views of 692 adult male Australian sports fans, collected via an online survey from July 2024 to September 2024, regarding the role of alcohol when attending professional sports events in Australia. While the popular orthodoxy is that sport, alcohol, and masculinity are entwined, our data illustrates a different picture. Just under three-quarters of the sample (74%) explained how consuming alcohol was not an important part of their game-day experience, with just under half (46%) stating they consume no alcoholic drinks and just under a third (32%) stating they consume one or two. Focusing on the reasons behind this, we explore the contribution that social practice theory can add to studies of sport-related drinking. Our analysis suggests that the everyday social practices embedded in male sports fans watching sport and drinking alcohol reflect two core themes: (1) a declining focus on drinking alcohol and (2) changing associations between male violence and negative behaviors at games. This addition to the research on male fans, sport, and alcohol supports wider research that suggests that people are increasingly choosing to reduce or remove alcohol consumption from a range of social experiences, and that previous categorizations of men's drinking at professional sports events no longer reflect contemporary social patterns and practices.

Source: Cleland, J., & Palmer, C. (2026). The Changing Role of Alcohol Among Male Australian Sports Fans: A Preliminary Social Practice Analysis. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 01937235261450588. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01937235261450588>

EXPERIENCES IN GENDER-SEXUALITY ALLIANCES AND SCHOOL-BASED VICTIMIZATION SHOW LIMITED DIFFERENCES IN ALCOHOL USE AMONG SEXUAL AND GENDER MINORITY ADOLESCENTS

May 2026

Objective: Sexually and gender-minoritized (SGM) adolescents report higher rates of alcohol use and heavy episodic drinking than their heterosexual, cisgender peers. School-based victimization is a known risk factor, but less research considers protective school factors such as experiences in Gender-Sexuality Alliances (GSAs). The present study takes a person-centered approach to examine how experiences in GSAs and with school-based victimization relate to alcohol use and heavy episodic drinking among SGM members.

Method: Data stem from a study on members' GSA experiences (N = 469; M age = 15.57, SD = 1.35). We focused on support/socializing, advocacy, and information/resources in GSAs and school-based victimization. We conducted latent profile analyses to examine different patterns in GSA experiences and victimization. Then, we assessed the association between profile membership and alcohol use and heavy episodic drinking in a logistic regression.

Results: A 4-profile solution best fit the data. Profiles were characterized as broadly engaged GSA members and lower levels of victimization (n = 247; 52.7%); principally support/socializing GSA members and lower levels of victimization (n = 164; 35.0%); less engaged GSA members and lower levels of victimization (n = 37; 7.9%); and broadly engaged GSA members who are highly victimized (n = 58; 12.4%). No differences in alcohol use or heavy episodic drinking were found.

Conclusions: This study was the first to explore the association between GSA experiences and victimization with alcohol use and documented differing profiles of experiences. GSAs can play a potential role in fostering healthy coping and supporting discussions around substance use.

Source: Kiekens, W. J., Mereish, E. H., & Poteat, V. P. (2026). Experiences in Gender-Sexuality Alliances and School-Based Victimization Show Limited Differences in Alcohol Use Among Sexual and Gender Minority Adolescents. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, jsad-25. <https://www.jsad.com/doi/abs/10.15288/jsad.25-00449>

BRAND SHARING AND NEW DRINKING OCCASIONS: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF HOW ALCOHOL BRANDS IN AUSTRALIA AND AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND PROMOTE ZERO ALCOHOL PRODUCTS

April 2026

Introduction: The rapid expansion of zero alcohol products (ZAP) and associated marketing is of increasing public health interest. Investigating marketing approaches can provide insights to inform policy responses to this emerging issue.

Methods: We conducted a content analysis of marketing campaigns by alcohol-branded ZAPs in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand (NZ). We used publicly available information to systematically: (i) identify alcohol-branded ZAPs available in each country; (ii) collect information about marketing campaigns for each product; (iii) collect marketing assets; and (iv) identify campaign marketing strategies. The coding frame incorporated a combination of deductive (based on existing literature) and inductive codes.

Results: We identified 13 alcohol-branded ZAPs in Australia and six in NZ that were promoted in 20 and 10 marketing campaigns, respectively, between 2018 and 2024. Mateship/friendship was the most common strategy, present in 80% of campaigns. Almost two-thirds of all campaigns (63%) promoted the product in the context of new drinking occasions (e.g., at the gym, while driving). Benefits of ZAP use included providing choice of a viable alcohol alternative (73% of campaigns), taste (47%), fitness/health (27%) and productivity (23%).

Discussion and Conclusions: This study provides evidence from Australia and NZ of alcohol-branded ZAP marketing campaigns promoting novel drinking occasions, adding to concerns raised by public health professionals. Stronger community protections for alcohol marketing, including marketing of ZAPs that share branding with alcoholic products, are warranted. Established alcohol brands appear to be using ZAP marketing campaigns to also promote alcohol branding in new drinking contexts.

Source: Keric, D., Edwardes, F., Stafford, J., Harrison, N. J., Mandzufas, J., Bartram, A., & Pettigrew, S. (2026). Brand Sharing and New Drinking Occasions: A Content Analysis of How Alcohol Brands in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand Promote Zero Alcohol Products. *Drug and Alcohol Review*, 45(4), e70148. <https://doi.org/10.1111/dar.70148>

In the News: Consumer Health. (2026, April 27). Zero-alcohol products may still promote drinking, study finds. *InSight+*. <https://insightplus.mja.com.au/2026/16/zero-alcohol-products-may-still-promote-drinking-study-finds/>

ALCOHOL AND CANCER MESSAGING: A SCOPING REVIEW

April 2026

Abstract

Public health messaging is a key strategy for raising awareness of the alcohol–cancer link. This review summarizes research on messages communicating this link. Eligible studies were in English, involved human participants, and assessed messages about alcohol and cancer. A systematic search was conducted in July 2021 and updated in July 2023 across seven databases (PubMed/MEDLINE, Cochrane Library, Embase, Scopus, CINAHL, Web of Science, and PsycInfo) using keywords for alcohol, cancer, and messaging. Two coders independently screened and extracted data from eligible studies using Covidence. We identified 121 studies from 104 articles, yielding 236 alcohol–cancer messages. Most studies were published within the past decade (n = 80, 66%) and assessed alcohol beverage warning labels referencing cancer (n = 75, 62%). Most studies included adults who consumed alcohol (n = 85, 70%). Men comprised less than 50% of the sample in half of the studies. Breast cancer was the most mentioned cancer in messages (n = 85, 36%). Messages commonly used probabilistic causal language expressing uncertainty in the outcome [e.g., “alcohol increases cancer risk” (n = 149, 63%)]. Understanding public awareness of cancer-relevant health behaviors is critical to cancer prevention and control. Messages about the carcinogenic effects of alcohol can be an effective public health strategy if rigorously tested across broad populations.

Source: Greene, N. K., Seidenberg, A. B., Butera, G., Jesch, E., Fakhari, H., Wiseman, K. P., ... & Klein, W. M. (2026). Alcohol and Cancer Messaging: A Scoping Review. *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers & Prevention*, OF1-OF9. <https://doi.org/10.1158/1055-9965.EPI-25-2058>