

Which drinkers change their alcohol consumption due to energy content concerns?

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Introduction and Aims: Alcohol is a discretionary, energy dense, dietary component. Compared to non-drinkers, those who consume alcohol report higher total energy intake, and may be at increased risk of weight gain, overweight, and obesity, which are key preventable risk factors for illness. However, evidence shows that accurate consumer knowledge of the energy content in alcohol is low. This study investigated individual characteristics associated with changing alcohol consumption due to energy-related concerns.

Design and Methods: A cross-sectional online panel study was undertaken with 801 Australian adults (18-59 years, 50.2% female) who reported at least monthly alcohol consumption in the past year.

Results: Over half (55.8%) of the sample reported reducing their past-year alcohol consumption, most commonly for long-term health reasons, with 24.4% of those who had reduced consumption reporting they did so because of concerns about the energy content in alcohol. When prompted, 62.5% of participants reported changing alcohol consumption for energy-related reasons at least 'sometimes'. Women, those aged 30-44 years, metropolitan residents, those with household income \$80,001-120,000, parents, and risky/more frequent drinkers had increased odds of changing consumption due to energy-related concerns, and unemployed respondents had reduced odds.

Discussions and Conclusions: Some sociodemographic groups are changing alcohol consumption for energy-related reasons, but others are not. Further research should investigate whether messaging to increase awareness of alcohol energy content, including through systems-based policy actions such as nutritional/energy product labelling, would motivate reduced consumption across a broader range of drinkers.

Implications for Practice or Policy: The existing level of consumer interest in modifying alcohol consumption for reasons related to health, weight, and energy content demonstrates an underutilised opportunity for health promotion communication. Media and education campaigns highlighting the link between alcohol and weight gain risk should also be considered to reduce population alcohol consumption.

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