This study examined changes in alcohol consumption associated with the COVID-19 lockdown measures in NSW and whether or not changes in consumption were sustained. By evaluating the link between changes in alcohol policy, alcohol purchasing and consumption, we aim to use this information to inform future alcohol policy.

This first report draws on data about peoples drinking before lockdown (February), during lockdown (end March to middle of May) and post-full lockdown as restrictions started to ease (mid-May to end of June). Data were gathered using two surveys, in-depth interviews and an analysis of policy changes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Decreased consumption</th>
<th>Increased consumption</th>
<th>Stayed the same</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gen Z (18-24 years)</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
<td>43.6%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millennials (25-39 years)</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
<td>41.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen X (40-55 years)</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boomers (56-74 years)</td>
<td>42.4%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Those who increased their drinking did so on average by about 14 standard drinks per week (8.8 schooners of beer).

Those who did not increase their drinking continued to consume on average 10 standard drinks per week (or 6.3 schooners of beer).

*Where 1 schooner is 425ml and full strength beer contains 4.8% alcohol

Factors that influenced increases or decreases in drinking

- **Age:** Gen Zs (aged 18 to 24 years) were more likely than any other age group to decrease their drinking during lockdown.
Within the decrease group:
- 12% Decreased drinking during lockdown then decreased further after lockdown ended
- 41% Decreased drinking during lockdown then increased once lockdown finished although not to quite the same levels as before lockdown
- 47% Decreased drinking during lockdown then maintained this lower rate of drinking

Within the increase group:
- 71.5% Increased drinking during lockdown but decreased their drinking again to pre-lockdown levels after lockdown ended
- 9.5% Increased drinking during lockdown then continued to increase their drinking after lockdown ended
- 19% Increased their drinking during lockdown and maintained this new level of drinking once lockdown ended

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

These initial findings indicate:
- Many people (2/3) demonstrated self-care, resilience and agency under lockdown by decreasing or maintaining their pre-lockdown drinking levels
- Any future policies concerned with reducing excess alcohol consumption may benefit from being targeted rather than universal: there was no one pattern of change in alcohol consumption under lockdown
- Further research focused on home drinking seems warranted