

MEDIA RELEASE**Embargoed till 00.01 Sunday 9 August 2020****1 in 5 Aussies regret how much alcohol they drank during lockdown****NEW CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED TO TACKLE COVID-19 DRINKING**

Nearly one in five Australians wish they had drunk less alcohol during the COVID-19 lockdown, according to new survey data out today from the Alcohol and Drug Foundation.

The survey of 1,000 Australians aged 18-65 also found a similar number, nearly 20 per cent, want to reduce the amount of alcohol they've been consuming recently.

The release of the data comes as the Alcohol and Drug Foundation launches a new national health campaign – [Break the Habit](#) – revealing that it takes on average only around 66 days to form a habit – roughly the same amount of time many Australians spent in lockdown.

It's a fact that most Aussies are unaware of, with the poll data showing that fewer than 10 per cent of Australians were able to accurately estimate how long on average it takes to form a new habit.

Habit formation expert from the University of Melbourne, **Professor Terry Bowles**, said many of us may have picked up or formed new habits over the last few months without even realising it.

"The COVID-19 experience will have taught people different things, but for almost all of us, it has shown than we can quickly change our daily routines."

"Routine behaviours which can have a profound impact on our lives do not take a long time to form. So, as restrictions are gradually lifted across Australia and we emerge from months of isolation, we have passed the threshold of time required to establish new habits.

"That means the things we have been doing during isolation that we maybe didn't do before, such as increased levels of exercise or an earlier bedtime, will be easy to keep doing. Similarly, if we started or expanded on unhelpful or unhealthy behaviours in isolation, such as increased alcohol consumption, we may find it hard to revert back to pre-isolation levels."

The Alcohol and Drug Foundation's new data shows that while 20 per cent of Australians consumed less alcohol during the lockdown, a concerning number increased the amount they were drinking.

At least 12 per cent of people drank every day during lockdown, and 1 in 10 said that, on average, they drank more than the recommended National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) draft guidelines to reduce the risks from drinking alcohol, consuming more than 10 standard drinks per week. This increases the risk of alcohol-related injury and diseases like cancer.

The Foundation's *Break the Habit* campaign highlights that even small increases to the amount of alcohol you drink can become harder to shift over time.

The campaign video features a ‘creature’ representing the little habit of drinking more than usual that some Australians picked up during lockdown. The campaign encourages people to consider their recent drinking patterns, help them recognise any problem signs and what to do to turn them around.

Federal Minister for Health, the **Hon Greg Hunt MP**, welcomed the new campaign, which is funded by the Australian Government.

“The *Break the Habit* campaign has an important message in encouraging Australians to reflect on changes to their lifestyles in recent months, particularly around increased alcohol consumption,” Mr Hunt said.

“It’s more important than ever that we prioritise our health and wellbeing. The less alcohol people consume, the lower the risk of alcohol-related accidents, injuries, dependence and chronic illness, such as cancer. Less alcohol can also help people feel less stressed or anxious, sleep better, lose weight, improve relationships and save money.”

Alcohol and Drug Foundation CEO, **Dr Erin Lalor** said that given how tough this year has been, it’s not surprising people have looked for different ways to cope, including increasing their alcohol consumption.

“The last few months have been incredibly hard for everyone, particularly for those who have lost work, social connectedness and especially for those who have lost loved ones. We’ve all been trying our best under challenging, never-before-seen circumstances,” Dr Erin Lalor said.

“Enough time has passed for behaviours picked up in lockdown to become entrenched. Now is the time for Australians to reflect on their recent drinking, so that little habits developed over the past couple of months, don’t turn into a big problem in the future.

“The longer a habit is left to form, the harder it can become to change.

“If you want to reduce the amount of alcohol you’ve been drinking recently, you are not alone. Our new data shows overall, around one in five of us want to cut back.

“Half of the people who told us they drank more during this time said they want to reduce how much they’re drinking.

“The good news is there’s lots of practical support available right now on how to change behaviour. Even small steps such as introducing alcohol free days into your week, or having one less drink a day, can have a powerful impact.”

To find out how your drinking measures up, try out the Alcohol and Drug Foundation’s quick and interactive [Drinking Calculator](#).

For more information on the Break the Habit campaign, including advice on how to change behaviour and where to get support, visit <https://www.littlehabit.com.au/>.

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NOTES TO MEDIA

Media inquiries

For media enquiries please contact ADF@iconagency.com.au or call the Alcohol and Drug Foundation's media team on 0430 948 380 or email media@adf.org.au.

About the Alcohol and Drug Foundation

Celebrating 60 years of service to the community, the Alcohol and Drug Foundation is one of Australia's leading bodies committed to preventing and minimising alcohol and other drug harms in communities around the nation. The Foundation reaches millions of Australians in local communities through sporting clubs, workplaces, health care settings and schools, offering educational information, drug and alcohol prevention programs and advocating for strong and healthy communities.