

Alcohol Cultures Framework

A FRAMEWORK TO GUIDE PUBLIC HEALTH ACTION ON DRINKING CULTURES

SOCIETAL

Examples of factors that influence the way people drink and the risk of harm

- Affordability
- Access
- Availability
- Marketing and commodification
- Societal systems and structures
- Social position
- Cultural expectations on gender and masculinity
- National culture and identity

The role of whole-of-population controls is significant and efforts to improve national and state alcohol regulation should continue to be a priority. This framework acknowledges the influence of societal drivers and reinforces the strong existing evidence base for alcohol regulation reform, but its emphasis lies in exploring the setting and subculture frames for intervention. Importantly cultural change and regulation are allies and should not be viewed as alternatives.

SETTING

Examples of factors that influence the way people drink and the risk of harm

- Availability and the role of alcohol
- Layout and design of the drinking environment
- Social context of the setting
- Link between alcohol and the setting
- Formal rules and enforcement
- Settings-based advertising and promotions
- Subcultures that own/operate within the setting
- Role models, positive or negative influences
- Expectations about behaviour while drinking
- Acceptability of intoxication
- Peer influence and social pressure

SUBCULTURE

Examples of factors that influence the way people drink and the risk of harm

- Shared social customs
- Use-values
- Role models, positive or negative influences
- Modes of social control
- Cultural meanings of drunkenness
- Peer influence and social pressure
- Misperceptions around drinking
- Acceptability of intoxication
- Social norms
- Gendered norms (e.g. masculinity)
- Technology

FAMILY AND INDIVIDUAL

Examples of factors that influence the way people drink and the risk of harm

- Biological factors (e.g. age, sex)
- Personal values
- Intergenerational factors
- Role models positive or negative influences
- Priorities and responsibilities
- Religion and spiritual beliefs
- Own health wellbeing and resilience
- Physical and psychotropic responses to alcohol
- Isolation or lack of personal interactions/social connectedness

PROGRAM PLANNING CHECKLIST

The following elements could be considered when planning to influence alcohol cultures:

- Target subpopulations that engage in risky drinking practices, e.g. a specific occupational group that drinks heavily together, or tertiary students who drink heavily together to celebrate.
- Consider social position and the impact that proposed interventions may have on different population groups.
- Address structural and social factors that drive culture and behaviours, rather than behaviours only.
- Understand the frames for intervention by investigating the factors that socially shape the way people drink and asking critical questions about alcohol culture.
- Seek allies for change or champions to drive and model culture shifts within the target group.
- Co-design strategies with the targeted subpopulation and continually seek their input, and communicate findings with the group.
- Implement a flexible approach that allows adjustments as learnings emerge from the program.
- Work closely with other agencies on coordinated programs where regulation and programmatic efforts are mutually reinforcing.
- Plan for innovation and sustainability when designing and delivering strategies, acknowledging that alcohol culture change is a slow process.
- Evaluate strategies using the example questions outlined in this Framework as a starting point and share learnings.

