

# Problem-drinking is associated with frequent social media exposure and residing in higher-income neighbourhoods in South Africa: Implications for Policy



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# Introduction



- Excessive alcohol use is responsible for 3.3 million deaths annually and South Africa is one of the largest consumers of alcohol globally (WHO 2018)
- Risky or hazardous or harmful drinking in South Africa was reported as 9% in 2008 (Peltzer et al., 2011) and 10.3% in 2017 (Pengoid et al., 2021)
- During 2008, harmful drinking **among men** was associated with: the Coloured population group; **lower economic status**; and lower education while **among women**, it was associated with: Coloured Population urban residence; **lower education; but higher income** (Peltzer et al., 2011).
- However, during 2017 (Pengoid et al., 2021), harmful drinking was more common **among men** of middle age (25-34 year olds) with **higher education** and urban residence, while **among women** it was more common among those of middle age (25-34 year old) and mixed race, but **residing on rural farms and urban areas** (Pengoid et al., 2021).

# Introduction contd.....



- Data suggest distribution of overall binge drinkers had ***shifted towards the richer group*** between 2008 and 2014/15 (Marx et al., 2021).
- Alcohol advertising is associated with earlier alcohol initiation and heavier drinking per drinking occasion among adolescents (Jernigan et al., 2016) and its associated with social media exposure (Alhabash et al., 2022).
- Studies of South African adolescents (Morojele et al., 2018) and young adults have suggested that exposure to alcohol marketing in the media (including social media) carried greater risk for risky alcohol use (Chen et al. 2023).



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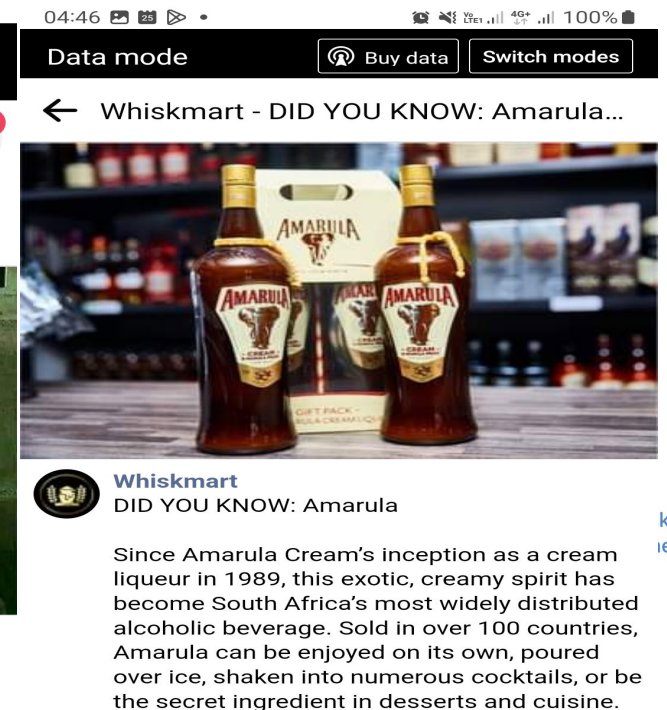
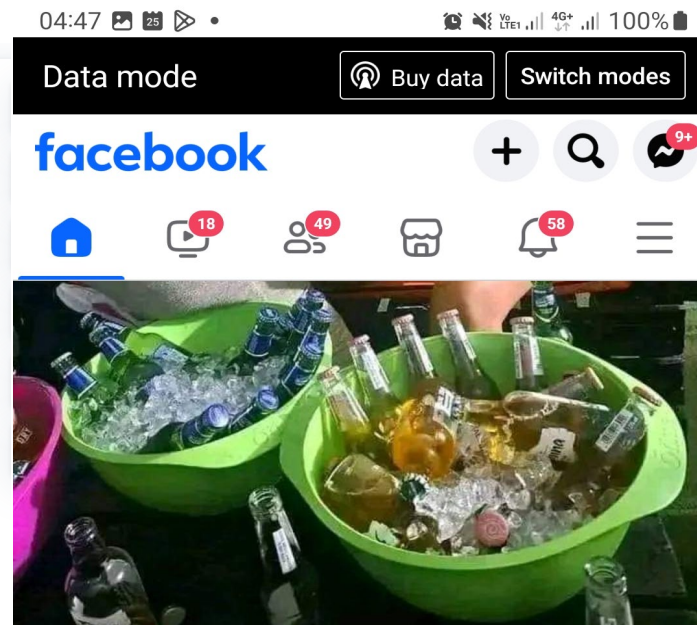
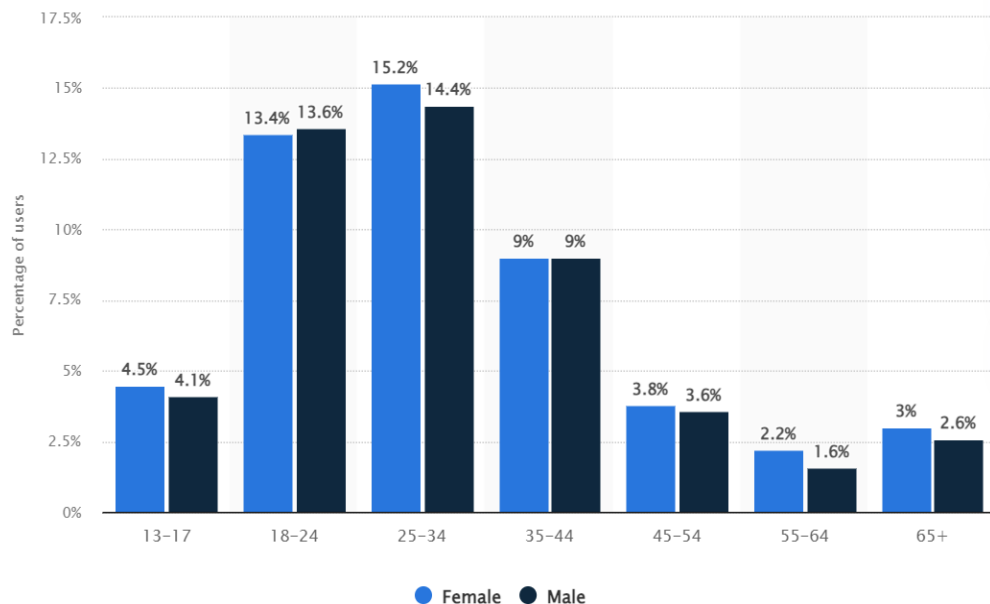
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# Introduction contd.....



- As of January 2023, there were 43.48 million active internet users in South Africa, of whom about 25.8 million (mostly 18-34yrs olds) used social media (<https://www.statista.com/statistics/685134/south-africa-digital-population/>).
- Alcohol has found its way online, and many Facebook, Instagram and Twitter profiles contain alcohol references, that is pictures, videos or texts in which alcohol is visible and/or referenced (Hendriks et al., 2018; Litt et al., 2018).



# Objective



- This study therefore sought to determine the association between frequency of social media use, neighbourhood socioeconomic status and self-reported problem drinking among South African Adults.



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# Methods



- This study involved South African adults  $\geq 16$ -years old who participated in the 2021 South African Social Attitude survey (SASAS)(n=2,837).
- The SASAS obtained data on participants' sociodemographic profile and problem-drinking measured using the CAGE questionnaire. Also measured change in drinking after COVID-19.
- Participants also indicated frequency of social media use in the past month [on scale 1 (never) – 5 (very often)].
- COVID-resilience – 'To what extent would you say you have recovered from the stress/shock brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic?' [5 – not at all affected .....1 – situation worse than before COVID]
- Neighbourhood socioeconomic status was obtained using a composite of asset ownership as reported by households who participated in the 2019 General household survey (GHS)(n=19,234 households) which was merged with the SASAS dataset.
- Analysis included mixed-effects GLM model.



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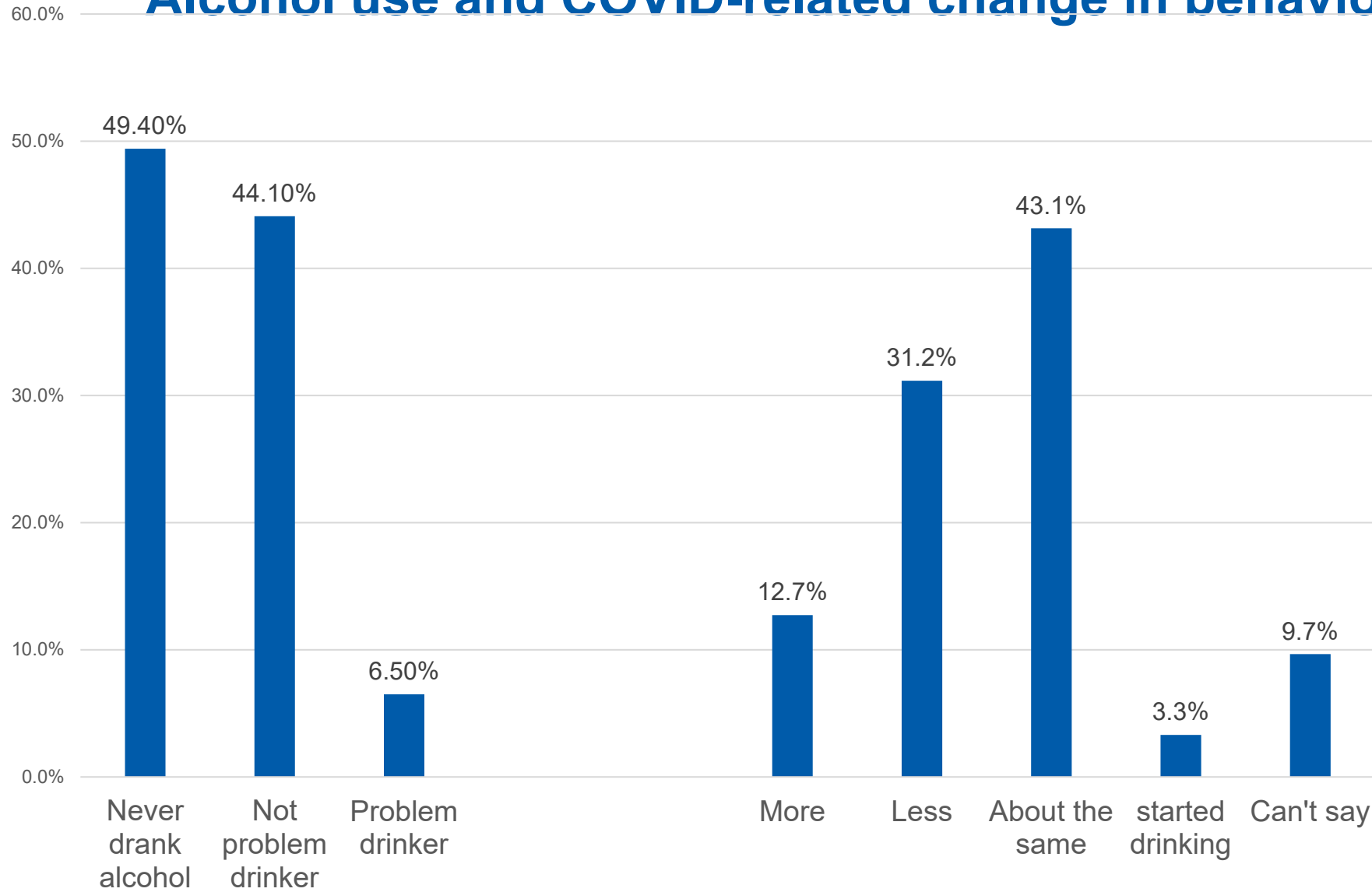
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# RESULTS



## Alcohol use and COVID-related change in behaviour in 2021



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# Results contd.....



- About 6.5% (95%CI: 5.1-8.3) of South African adults reported problem-drinking, while about 49.9% reported not drinking alcohol during 2021.
- Problem-drinking was highest among current smokers (13.2%), those 16-24 years-old (9.1%) and Males (8%).
- Problem-drinking was **lowest** among those individuals **in the highest third** socioeconomic status and among those **who live in lowest third** neighbourhood Socioeconomic status.



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		<b>Problem drinker</b>
Education level	<High school	7,6%
	High school	4,5%
	>High school	7,9%
Individual wealth (SES)	Lowest SES	5,9%
	Mid SES	8,3%
	Highest SES	<b>4,2%</b>
Geo-location/residence	Rural	4,7%
	Urban	7,1%
Area wealth (SES)	Lowest 3rd areas SES	<b>3,2%</b>
	Middle 3rd area SES	7,9%
	Highest 3rd areas SES	7,5%
Race (self-identified)	Black Africans	<b>6,9%</b>
	coloureds	<b>7,9%</b>
	Indian/Asians	1,5%
	Whites	3,4%



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## Final GLM of factors associated with problem-drinking

Explanatory variables		Odds Ratio (95% CI)
<b>Social media exposure</b>	Unit change	<b>1.10 (1.04 – 1.18)</b>
<b>Neighbourhood SES</b>	Lowest third SES	1 (ref)
	Mid third SES	1.07 (0.77 -1.49)
	Highest third SES	<b>1.50 (1.09 - 2.06)</b>
<b>Smoking status</b>	Never smoker	1 (ref)
	Former smoker	3.36 (2.41 - 4.70)
	Current smoker	<b>6.13 (5.01 - 7.51)</b>
<b>COVID-19 resilient</b>	Unit change	0.67 (0.56 - 0.80)
<b>Sex</b>	Male	1 (ref)
	Female	<b>0.58 (0.49 - 0.69)</b>
<b>Employment status</b>	Unemployed	1 (ref)
	Economically inactive (pensioner/student)	<b>0.66 (0.53 - 0.82)</b>
	Employed	0.94 (0.77 - 1.16)
<b>Race (self-identified)</b>	Black Africans	1 (ref)
	Coloureds	0.84 (0.65 - 1.09)
	Indian/Asians	<b>0.50 (0.36 - 0.69)</b>
	Whites	1.25 (0.95 - 1.67)



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# Conclusion and Policy recommendation



- Problem-drinking might have reduced, but remains more common among young adult males, frequently exposed to social media and unemployed, but live in wealthier neighbourhoods and affected by COVID-related stress.
- Study findings suggest need for targeted prevention intervention among youths in high-income neighbourhoods and the need for policy to restrict alcohol advertisements on social media by passing the long drafted Control of Marketing of Alcoholic Beverages Bill.



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# Thank you

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