



## Prevalence of harm from others' alcohol drinking and the relationships with demographics and the respondents' drinking behaviors in Thailand

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### ABSTRACT

**Aims:** To document the prevalence of various negative effects from others' alcohol drinking in Thailand and to examine their relationship with demographic variables and the respondents' drinking behaviors. **Setting, design, and participants:** A cross-sectional household survey using multistage sampling and face-to-face interviews of 1695 Thai respondents aged 18–70 years. **Measurements:** Respondents' experiences of adverse effects of others' drinking in psychological, social, economic, and physical aspects and their relationships with sociodemographic data and drinking patterns of respondents. **Results:** Seventy-nine percent of the respondents reported experiencing this problem within the last 12 months. The percentages experiencing psychological harm, social harm, economic harm, and physical harm were 76.8%, 42%, 22.6%, and 6.2%, respectively. Sources of harm makers included drinking neighbors, the husbands' respondents, and friends, especially of younger male respondents. Personal predictors include being a woman and being a drinker him- or herself. **Conclusions:** Harms from others' drinking are prevalent. This indicates a need for stronger alcohol control program.

### ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 21 July 2016  
Accepted 12 January 2017

### KEYWORDS

Alcohol; harm to others; low- and middle-income countries; social consequences; Thailand

### Introduction

The issue of “alcohol's harm to others (HTO),” alternatively called “secondhand effects of drinking,” “collateral damage” (Giesbrecht et al., 2010), or “negative externalities” (Greenfield et al., 2009) in an economic perspective, is an innovative approach concerning the negative effects of alcohol drinking on other people around the drinker (Room et al., 2010). This is supplemental to harms to individual drinkers themselves (Gmel & Rehm, 2003). The spectrum of HTO ranges from minor impact, such as annoyance, to most severe, such as assault. It includes intentional and unintentional injury such as physical assault and traffic accident, neglect or abuse to partner or household members, property damage and loss of amenity such as being kept awake or being frightened, as well as quality of life.

Recently, a few high-income countries have assessed comprehensively the phenomenon of HTO considering effects on personal and social relationships including family members, friends, work colleagues, and strangers. Over 70% of Australians reported experiencing negative effects from others' drinking (Laslett et al., 2011). It was 80% among New Zealanders (Casswell et al., 2011). On the other hand, several assessments were studied based on some specific events of HTO. Only 9% of the US population indicated experiencing at least one of these specific problems from another's drinking: family problems, assaults, accompanying intoxicated drunk-driver, vehicle accidents, financial problems, and vandalized property (Greenfield et al., 2009). Almost one-

third of Norwegians had experienced at least one of the seven HTO items which were being physically hurt, damage of personal belongings, being harassed in a private party, being harassed in public places, being scolded at, being frightened, and being kept awake at night by drunk people (Rossow & Hauge, 2004). These four studies have different emphases in their questions and thus different prevalence of problems. However, all pointed to the conclusion that it is a significant public problem.

So far, there has been no report on the magnitude of HTO among the low- and middle-income countries, where there is often a higher prevalence of risky drinking patterns and alcohol-related violence and social problems, as well as a less strong alcohol policy, than in high-income countries (World Health Organization, 2011). Therefore, studying HTO in Thailand, a middle-income country with a low prevalence of current drinkers (National Statistical Office, 2012), but a high volume consumed in a drinking occasion (Thamarangsi et al., 2013), can be useful to reflect the situation in a developing society (Schmidt et al., 2010).

Furthermore, a fuller and more concrete understanding of the harms to others from drinking is also important for designing prevention programs and policy initiatives to reduce the harms from drinking. It also has a potentially important role in policy debates about public health approaches to alcohol problems in the same way that the role of passive smoking has been important for international tobacco control policies (Giesbrecht et al., 2010; Room et al., 2010; World Health Organization, 2010).