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## 1 IN 10 VICTORIAN DRINKERS DRINK BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER SOCIAL EVENTS

New VicHealth research into 'loading' has shown that Victorian drinkers are liquoring up before they go out, between venues, and also after they get home.

VicHealth surveyed more than 2000 Victorians who had bought liquor from a bottle shop in the previous year about their drinking patterns on a typical night out.

The research, being presented today at the Australian Professional Society on Alcohol and other Drugs (APSAD) international conference in Brisbane, identified three different types of drinking. These include pre-loading (drinking alcohol before going to a licensed venue); side-loading (drinking while travelling between venues); and back-loading (drinking at home after being out).

Within the past year, one in three (28%) had pre-loaded and one in four had (24%) side-loaded and back-loaded (23%).

Overall, almost half (42%) of survey participants had done some sort of 'loading' on a night out. Interestingly, women were more likely to pre-load and men more likely to post-load.

VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter said the research shows drinking alcohol at home or at someone else's house on a night out is a common practice.

"If you're drinking at home as well as out at the pub, it will probably lead to unintentionally becoming more intoxicated than you intended to," Ms Rechter said.

"There isn't much information about exactly how much alcohol is consumed in Victorian homes, so we were concerned to find one in 10 people in our survey drink before and after they go out, as well as in between venues.

"The practice of loading up on alcohol is concerning. Evidence shows if you take a traveller, or have a few before or after you're out, you're much more likely to suffer verbal or physical abuse or wind up in a situation where you fear for your safety.

"People who never drink more than four standard drinks on a night out don't tend to do any loading at all, but if you have 20 or more, you've probably done all three types. There is a clear connection to risky drinking here.

"We need to ask what it is about our culture that drives and even excuses this sort of excessive drinking because we can't ignore the fact that alcohol is very harmful to health."

Other findings included:

- Pre-loading was most common among young women aged 18 to 24
- Post-loading was favoured among older men aged 45 to 59
- Drinking before, after and even in between venues was most common for both genders in the age group of 25 to 39.
- Older people aged 60 to 69 were highly unlikely to do any loading at all.

Australian research shows that preloading is associated with aggressive behaviour, alcohol-related accidents and injuries and driving under the influence.

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