

Alcoholics Anonymous may prevent murders

Relationship between male drinking, homicide tracked in Canada
Reuters

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WASHINGTON - Alcoholics Anonymous, the worldwide group that helps addicts stop drinking, may also help drive down the number of murders in a community, Canadian researchers reported Sunday.

As membership in the group in Ontario, Canada, increased between 1968 and 1991, murders there dropped off, said Robert Mann from the University of Toronto and Mark Asbridge from Dalhousie University.

Research has shown there is a significant relationship between drinking and homicide in Europe, the United States and Canada, they wrote in their report, published in the October issue of *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*.

But they found an increase of one AA member per 100,000 people was followed by a drop of 0.3 to 0.5 percent in Ontario's homicide rate.

The relationship was only apparent when it came to men. They did not find a relationship in the case of women.

"Males drink more often, more heavily and consume more beer and spirits than females," Asbridge said in a statement.

"Moreover, the nature of the link between alcohol consumption and violence is more readily a male experience, for example, drinking heavily in bar settings leads to aggression and violence."

For the study, Mann and Asbridge used Statistics Canada data to calculate per capita total alcohol consumption as well as murders of people aged 15 and older from 1968 to 1991.

Raise taxes, lower violence

Alcoholics Anonymous gave estimated membership data from surveys and mailing lists.

"Our study showed that total and male homicide rates in Ontario were strongly related to average levels of alcohol consumption," Mann said in a statement.

"These observations confirm previous research showing that alcohol is a leading contributor to violence, as well as violence-related mortality."

Asbridge said government officials might want to reduce drinking rates and, presumably, violence by raising taxes.

"Right now, in Canada, beer is typically taxed at a lower level than wine and thus is more economical to purchase with respect to its alcohol content (to) price per volume of alcohol," he said.

"By making beer more costly we might have some aggregate impact on consumption patterns and,

in turn, the negative consequences associated with its use.”

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