

# The DRAM, Vol. 21(2) - The impact of media consumption on alcohol use

February 25, 2025

In 2022, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled to [eliminate the constitutional right to an abortion](#), and thirteen [“trigger law” states](#) immediately implemented abortion bans. The ruling and its aftermath sparked widespread concern and received extensive media attention. Exposure to news coverage of distressing events can have [negative health implications](#), like worsened psychological and physical well-being. This week, The DRAM reviews a [study by Stacy M. Post and colleagues](#) that examined whether exposure to abortion-related media following the Supreme Court’s decision impacted alcohol use among women who reside in trigger law states and oppose the ruling.

## What were the research questions?

(1) Does consuming abortion-related media increase alcohol use among women who live in trigger law states and opposed the Supreme Court’s ruling? (2) Are these same women using alcohol to cope with the negative emotions that stem from consuming abortion-related media?

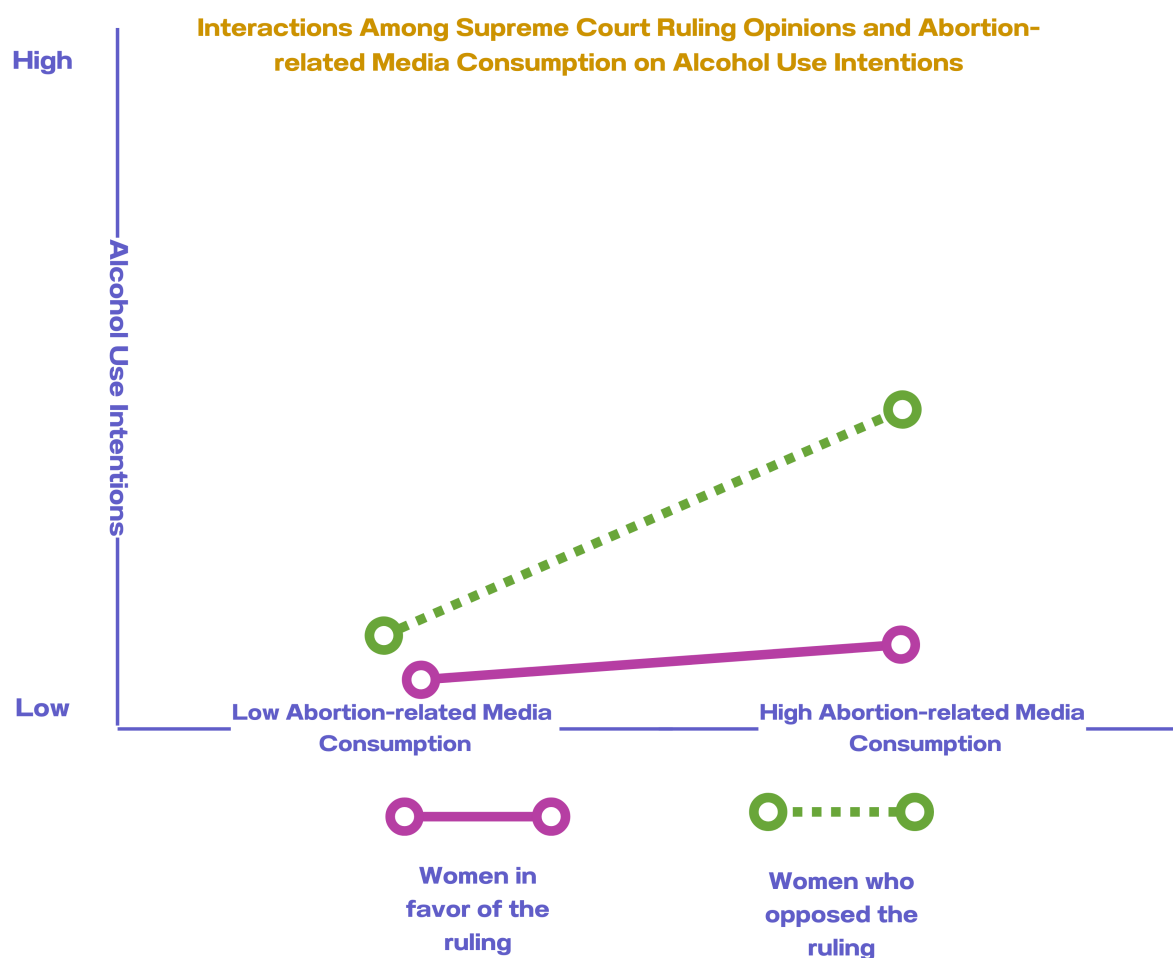
## What did the researchers do?

The researchers recruited and surveyed 196 women<sup>1</sup> living in trigger law states. Data were collected in July and August 2022, immediately following the Supreme Court’s ruling. Participants reported: (1) their daily consumption of abortion-related media since the ruling, (2) [negative emotions](#) experienced since the ruling, and (3) their intentions to use alcohol in the next seven days. They also indicated their support for/opposition to the ruling. Using [Hayes PROCESS macro](#), the researchers analyzed the impact of abortion-related media consumption and opposition to the ruling on alcohol use intentions, and whether negative emotions [mediated](#) this relationship.

## What did they find?

Women who opposed the Supreme Court’s ruling and consumed more abortion-related media had higher alcohol use intentions, compared to those who were in

favor of the ruling (see Figure). Negative emotions did not explain this relationship. However, these findings still align with [studies](#) that suggest that people may consume alcohol after negative experiences.



Adapted from Post et al. (2025)

Figure. Depicts the interactions between opposition and agreement with the Supreme Court’s ruling and abortion-related media consumption on alcohol use intentions. Click image to enlarge.

### Why do these findings matter?

It is important that the general public be up-to-date on abortion-related [laws](#) and [criminal proceedings](#), even though this information may be distressing to some. It is imperative that healthcare providers be prepared to screen, assess, and treat people for alcohol-related harms. This is particularly important during political events (e.g., presidential elections), especially among people opposed to or who may be personally impacted by political decisions. Providers can encourage their clients to use self-regulatory techniques, like [implementation intentions](#), to manage alcohol use after exposure to distressing media. This study did not find that negative emotions explained the effects of media consumption on alcohol use.

The authors suggest that those who support abortion access might have coped with negative emotions related to the Supreme Court's ruling by engaging in political advocacy, which might enhance the individual's [perceived control](#) over the situation and reduce feelings of stress.

**Every study has limitations. What are the limitations in this study?**

This study used [cross-sectional data](#); as such, [causality](#) can not be determined. The study sample consisted of primarily White women of middle/high socioeconomic status, so the findings might not be [generalizable](#) to women of color who might be [more affected](#) by stricter abortion access. Future research should prioritize more diverse samples of women who are at higher risk of negative health outcomes as a result of this ruling, including [women with disabilities](#).

**For more information:**

The [National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism](#) has tips and resources for people struggling with problem drinking. For additional drinking self-help tools, please visit our [Addiction Resources](#) page.

— Nakita Sconsoni, MSW

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1. By “women” we mean anyone capable of getting pregnant. This includes women, nonbinary people, and transmen. Individuals not capable of getting pregnant were not included in the study. The study sample included women between 18 and 44 years of age.

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