



# Alcohol & young people

Extracted from 2010 National Drug Household Survey report  
Released July 2011

## ***The good news...***

- 62% of 12–17-year-olds abstained from alcohol compared with 38% consuming alcohol in the last 12 months.
- The proportion of 12–15-year-olds abstaining from alcohol increased from 70% in 2007 to 77% in 2010.
- The proportion of 16–17-year-olds abstaining from alcohol increased from 24% to 32% 2010.
- Indigenous Australians were 1.4 times more likely to abstain from drinking alcohol than non-Indigenous Australians.

## ***The not so good news...***

- Drinking alcohol (daily, weekly or less than weekly) was higher for girls aged 12–17-year-olds (39%) compared with males (38%).
- People aged 18–29 years were more likely than any other age group to drink alcohol in a way that put them at risk of alcohol-related harm over their lifetime (32% for those aged 18–19 years and 27% for those aged 20–29 years).
- Indigenous Australians were about 1.5 times more likely to drink alcohol at risky levels than non-Indigenous Australians.

## ***The male † factor...***

- Males were twice as likely as females to drink alcohol in quantities that put them at risk of incurring an alcohol-related chronic disease or injury over their lifetime (29% and 11%, respectively).
- Males were far more likely than females to drink alcohol in quantities that placed them at risk from a single occasion of drinking (50% compared 30% for females).
- Males were more likely than females to take part in potentially harmful activities while under the influence of alcohol.
- Almost two-thirds (65%) of males aged 18–19 years, and more than half (55%) aged 20–29 years placed themselves at risk of an alcohol-related injury at least once a month.
- Males and people aged 18–19 years were more likely to be victims of alcohol-related verbal and physical abuse.

## ***What young people are drinking...***

- Pre-mixed spirits otherwise known as 'alcopops' was the preferred drink for those aged 12–17 years, but females were much more likely to nominate this as their preferred drink than males (62% for females compared with 38% for males).
- About 7% of recent drinkers changed their drink preference.
- Young people aged 14–19 years were the most likely age group to change their main drink preference in the last 12 months—about 1 in 6 people.

## ***The effects of drinking...***

- Younger recent drinkers were far more likely than older people to report losing their memory after drinking.
- In particular, younger risky drinkers were the most likely to report a loss of memory at least once in the previous month (38% for those aged 12–17 years and 37% for those aged 18–19 years).
- Swimming while under the influence of alcohol significantly increased in 2010 from 6% in 2007 up to 7%.



### **Where do they drink...**

- Younger recent drinkers were more likely to usually drink alcohol at a private party than at home (59% for those children 12–15 years and 72% for those aged 16–17 years).
- 71% of people aged 18–19 years were more likely to drink at licensed premises.

### **The influence of parents...**

- One-quarter (25%) of recent and ex-drinkers were supplied with their first glass of alcohol by their parents.
- There was a significant decrease in 2010 in the proportion of parents regularly buying alcohol for children aged 12–15 years (from 43% to 30%) and 16–17 years (34% to 23%).

### **What do the Australian guidelines say...**

- According to guideline 3, for those aged under 18 years, not drinking is the safest option, and this is especially important for children aged under 15 years.

#### **Box 4.2: Summary of the 2009 Australian guidelines to reduce health risks from drinking alcohol**

##### **Guideline 1: Reducing the risk of alcohol-related harm over a lifetime**

The lifetime risk of harm from drinking alcohol increases with the amount consumed. For healthy men and women, drinking no more than 2 standard drinks on any day reduces the lifetime risk of harm from alcohol-related disease or injury.

##### **Guideline 2: Reducing the risk of injury on a single occasion of drinking**

On a single occasion of drinking, the risk of alcohol-related injury increases with the amount consumed. For healthy men and women, drinking no more than 4 standard drinks on a single occasion reduces the risk of alcohol-related injury arising from that occasion.

##### **Guideline 3: Children and young people under 18 years of age**

For children and young people under the age of 18 years, not drinking alcohol is the safest option.

A: Parents and carers should be advised that children aged under 15 years are at the greatest risk of harm from drinking, and that for this age group, not drinking alcohol is especially important.

B: For young people aged 15–17 years, the safest option is to delay the initiation of drinking for as long as possible.

##### **Guideline 4: Pregnancy and breastfeeding**

Maternal alcohol consumption can harm the developing foetus or breastfeeding baby.

A: For women who are pregnant or planning a pregnancy, not drinking is the safest option.

B: For women who are breastfeeding, not drinking is the safest option.

Source: National Health and Medical Research Council 2009.

#### **Definitions:**

Recent drinkers—at least 1 standard drink in the previous 12 months

Risky drinkers—more than 4 standard drinks on a single occasion

% has been rounded to the nearest whole number. For more precise figures please refer to the report.

**Note :** This survey was the 10th in a series which began in 1985. More than 26,000 people aged 12 years or older participated in the survey, in which they were asked about their knowledge of and attitudes towards drugs, their drug consumption histories, and related behaviours.