



Commissioner for Children and Young People  
Western Australia



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# Reducing Alcohol Related Harm among Children and Young People

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## Methodology/ Introduction



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- How we collected the information

### Phase 1: Focus Groups

14 x Discussion Groups with 14 to 17 year olds (n = 72)

### Phase 2: Online Survey

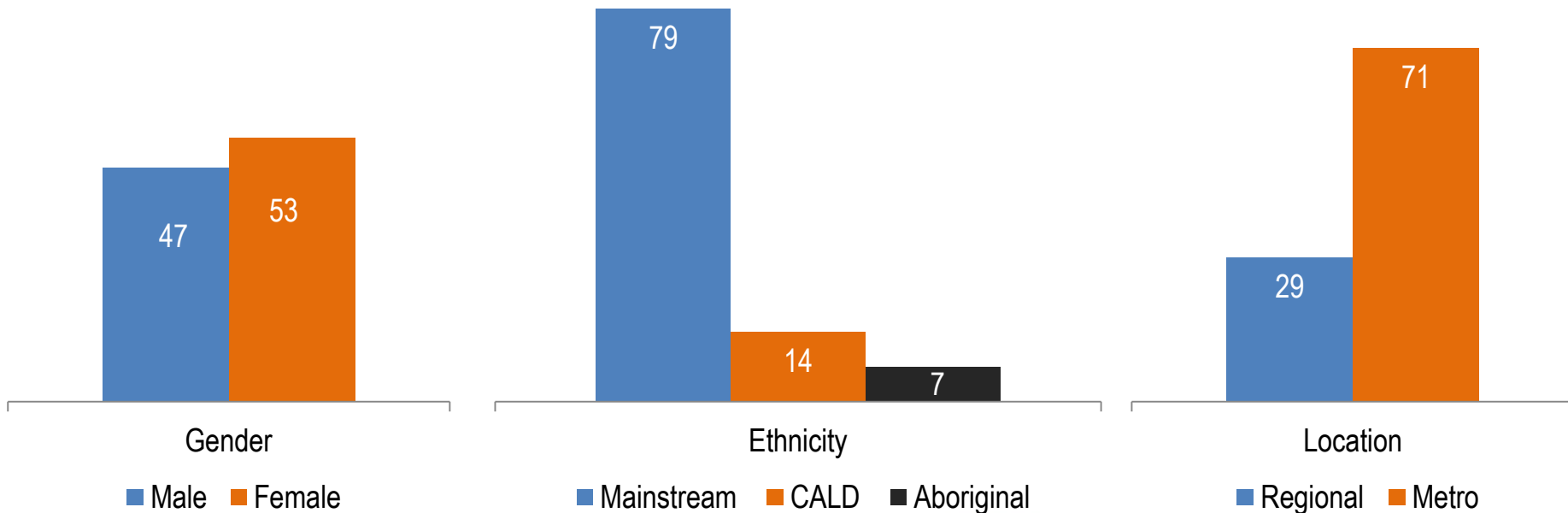
Online Survey of 14 to 17 year olds (n = 200)



- Young people were asked about their views on a broad range of topics like:
  - Alcohol in the Australian culture
  - Standard drink guidelines
  - Harms caused by alcohol
  - Influences on young people drinking
  - Strategies to reduce harm



- Demographics of participation



- Many sections of society were represented - regardless of whether minority or majority
  - Specific groups
  - Range of views



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## Culture of Drinking



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*"Its all part of the culture...  
you see drinking at all the events,  
like footy games and races."*

*"Australia Day,  
Christmas  
celebrations"*

*"You're the odd one out if you  
don't drink"*

*"The problem is with  
the culture. Australian  
is beer in one hand"*

*"Drinking is normal,  
see people drink at  
pubs, parks, houses"*

## Drinking in Australian culture

*"Yeah, drinking is just  
part of everyday life –  
nothing unusual  
about it"*

*"I reckon its part of the culture like especially  
you can see it on Australia Day a lot – everyone  
gets smashed"*

*"Every adult has  
drunk alcohol"*





*"If we have a family function, my parents would give me a drink or try."*

*"I steal it off my Dad"*

*"Ask random people (Outside the bottleshop) and give them money)"*

*"Everyone has older friends, you always get what you want"*



*"Young people get served in bottleshops all the time – they never ask for ID"*

*"Even when I was 12 I was drinking at like Christmas"*

*"Brother and sister, she is older and always busy so that is cool"*

*"I can pass as 18, especially in the Kimberley...I can go to the pub by myself"*



*"You have to say no over and over again."*

*"Media portrays a certain image"*

*"I don't want my parents seeing me drunk and losing respect for me"*

*"I worry for others well being and safety"*

Young people are  
not just one type  
of person  
Non Drinkers!

*"Its just too risky - what's the point?"*

*"Quiet nights in with the missus and stuff"*

*"My parents are not big drinkers, so I am not really interested in alcohol"*

*"We as young people shouldn't be stereotyped"*

*"You have to come up with excuses"*

*"Its my choice in the end"*



*"We all knows its illegal and we still drink."*

*"They don't have recommendations for under 18's because they're not supposed to drink"*

*"Some people can drink more or less, doesn't it depend on your own capacity"*

*"Eat bread to absorb the alcohol"*

**Understanding of Alcohol in young people**

*"It depends on how much of an alcoholic you are"*

*"You are having a good time so you keep drinking"*

*"Playing drinking games"*

*"Did you say guidelines? Is there guidelines"*

*"I have no idea about what's a standard drink"*



**“DRINKING to get drunk...isn't that the whole point of drinking?”**

**“Yeah, everyone thinks its cool to drink”**

**“They (girls) go on Facebook and tell you I'm drunk”**

**“Cant have a good time without it”**



**“Drink until you pass out...or its all gone”**

**“Everyone drinks, it's just a thing that happens”**

**“Girls drink for the brag factor, boys drink for the social factor”**

**“Its just the done thing”**

**“It takes away from the problem”**

**Most people just drink for fun**



*"Until you know its time to stop."*

*"You don't want to be that girl with her face in the garden"*

*"Your reputation being ruined"*

*"People don't want to lose their license once they get it"*

*"I am mostly worried about the violence"*

Levels of drinking and consequences

*"If anything ever happened I would call my parents"*

*"I don't remember anything"*

*"Main thing is fighting"*

*"We didn't know what to do, we were really scared"*

*"Getting locked up, getting into trouble...assault, street drinking"*



***“If they did (drink alone) they have some sort of problem”***

***“If we have a family function, my parents would give me a try.”***

***“The ones with the least confidence or the least social skills are the ones who go out and get plastered”***

***“Just for the fun of it”***

**Drinking and socialising**

***“Everybody drinks, its just a thing that happens”***

***“Makes socialising easier”***



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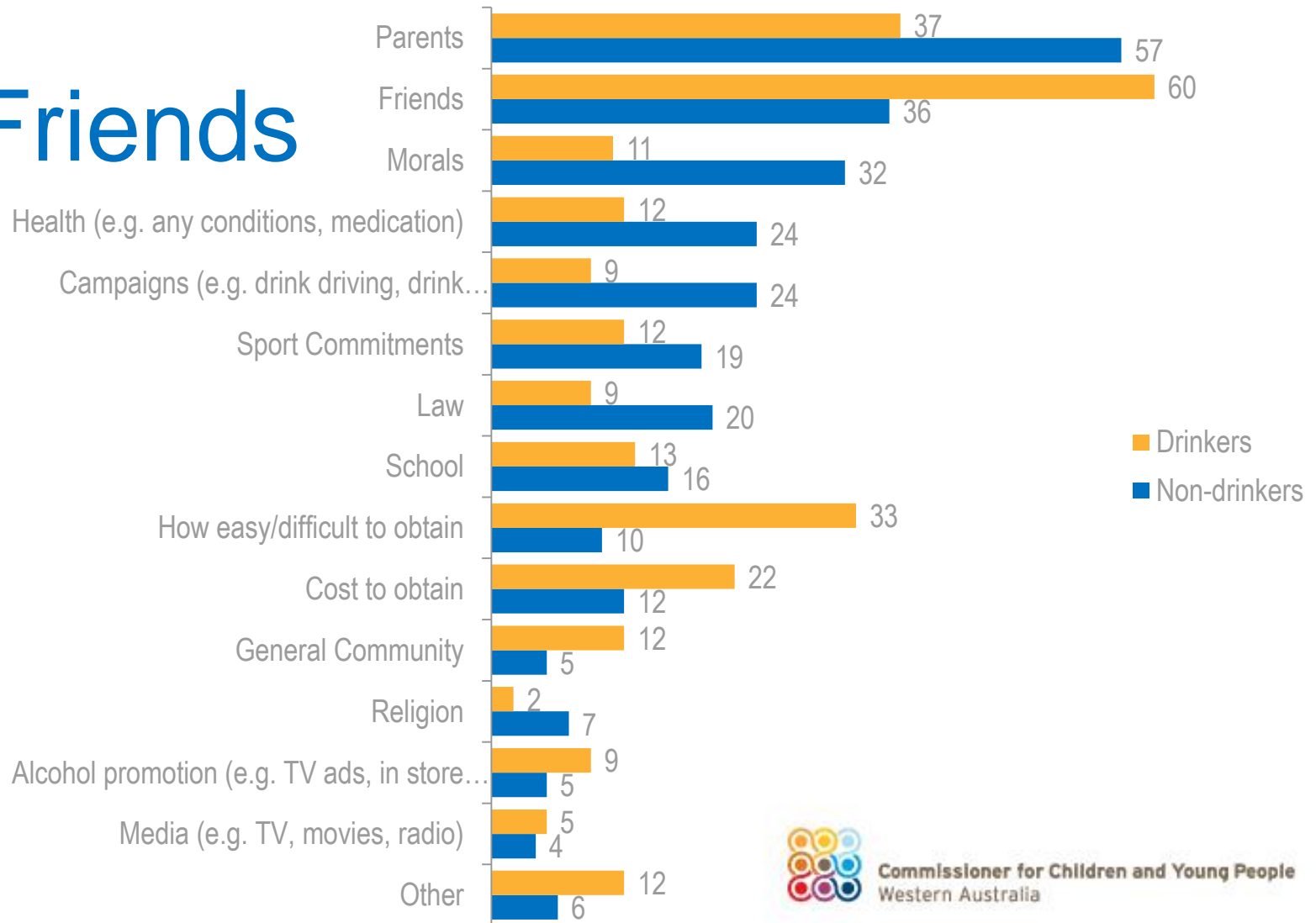


## Influences on Decisions about Alcohol



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# Friends





# Friends

- **It's the "Cool" thing to do**
- **Peer pressure/ They don't listen to "No"**
- **Social Activity**

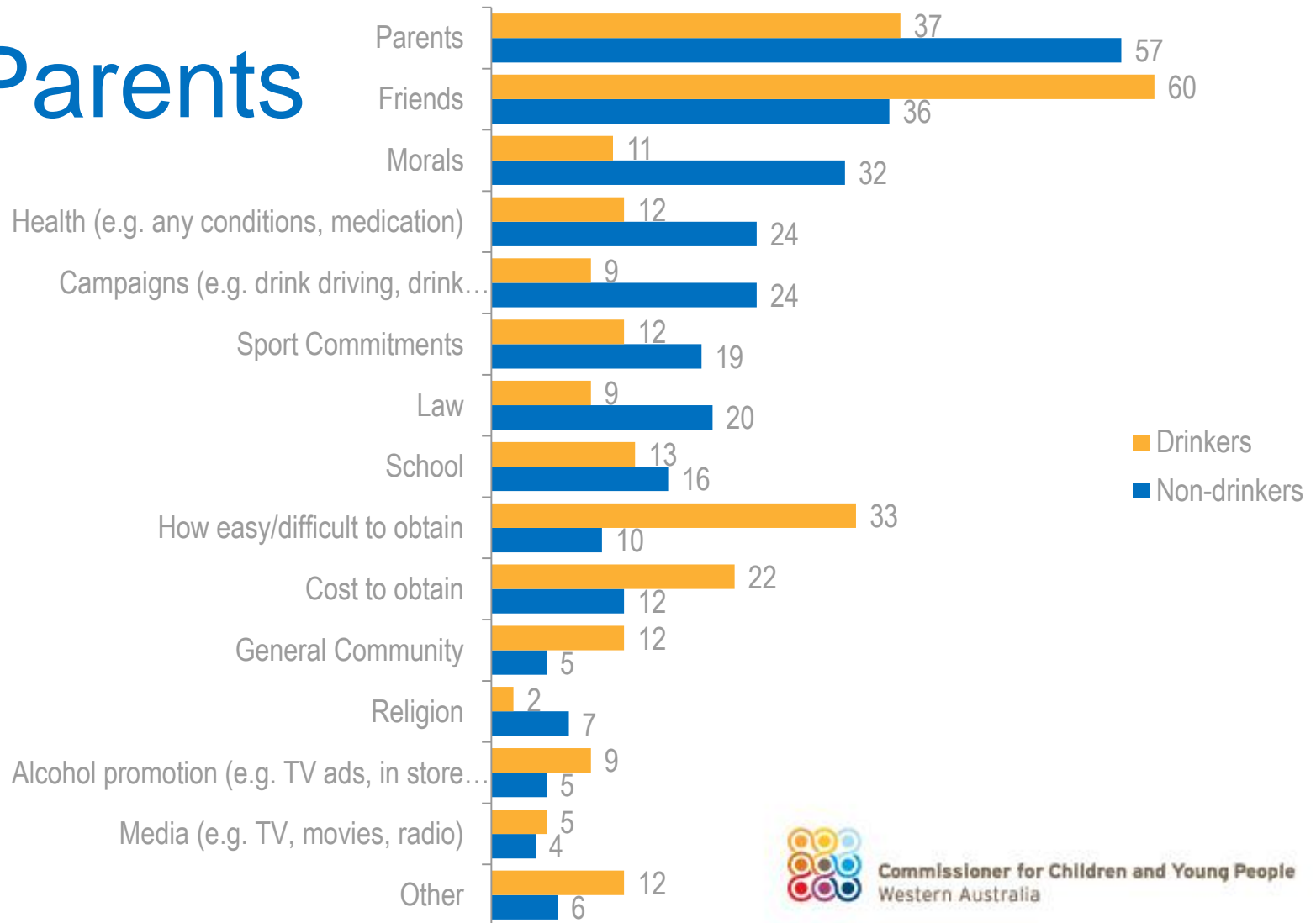
*"You have to come up with excuses"*  
Female

*"The drinking culture is to get smashed, not like everyone does, but its like the norm"*  
Female

*"Cant have a good time without it"*  
Female



# Parents



# Parents & Family

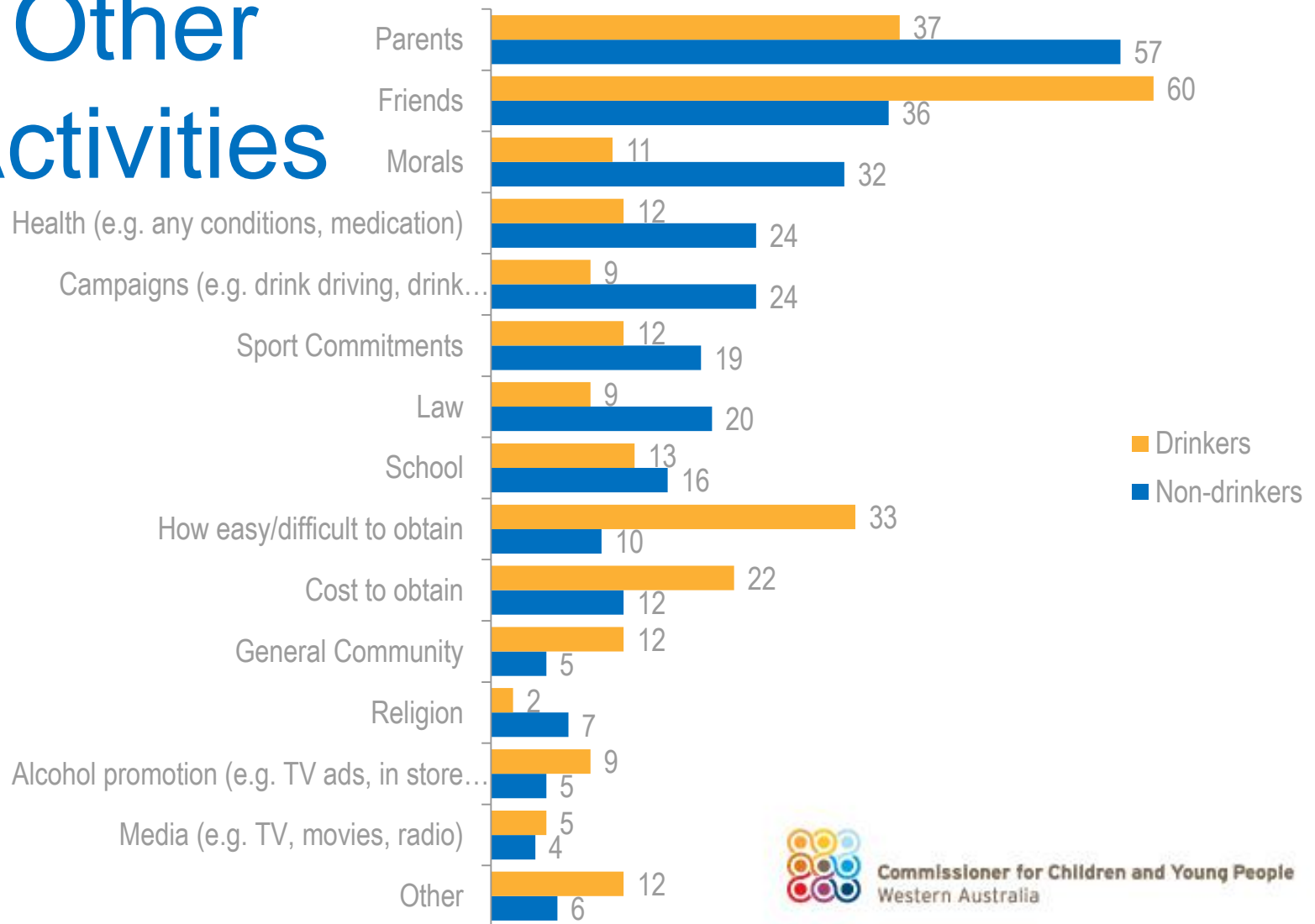
- **Drinking becomes more polite when done with family members**
- **Older siblings are examples of ways to be supplied with alcohol**
- **Teens are encouraged by parents in some families**

*“Brother and sister, she is older and always buys alcohol so that is cool”*

*“My mum used to drink wine so that is what I used to drink”*



# Other Activities



# Other Activities

## Acceptable Excuses

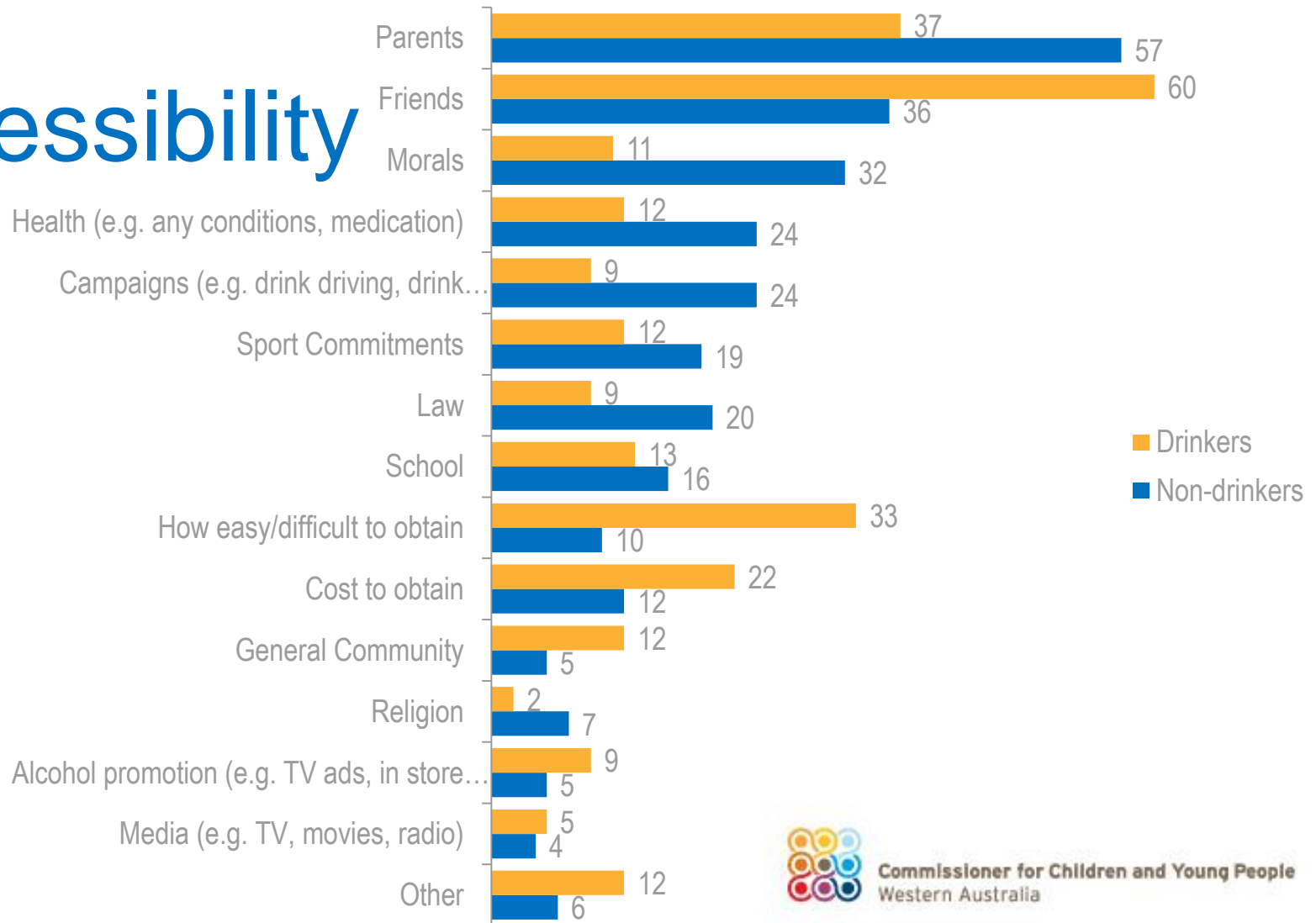
- **Sporting commitments**
- **School**
- **Extra-curricular activities**

*“Coach doesn’t like us drinking the day before the game.” Male*

*“I think whether someone has time to drink, like I mean like the people in your group that didn’t drink were people that were really into sport... And people that were really studious they just didn’t go out because of their studies.” Female*



# Accessibility



# Accessibility

- Alcohol is easy to obtain through purchase by parents or older siblings or friends
- Purchased underage without ID being requested

*"If you can get it,  
you drink it."  
male*

*"If someone  
offers you  
something....  
you're not going  
to say no!" male*

*"Young people  
get served in  
bottle shops all  
the time- they  
never ask for ID."  
female*



# Standard Drinks

The majority of people did not understand standard drink policy

- **It was confused with blood alcohol limits for driving**

Little understanding that the guidelines were about safe and harmful levels of alcohol consumption

- **Young people thought guidelines would depend on:**
  - **body type**
  - **gender**

*"I really don't know." female*

*"I have no idea about what's a standard drink." male*

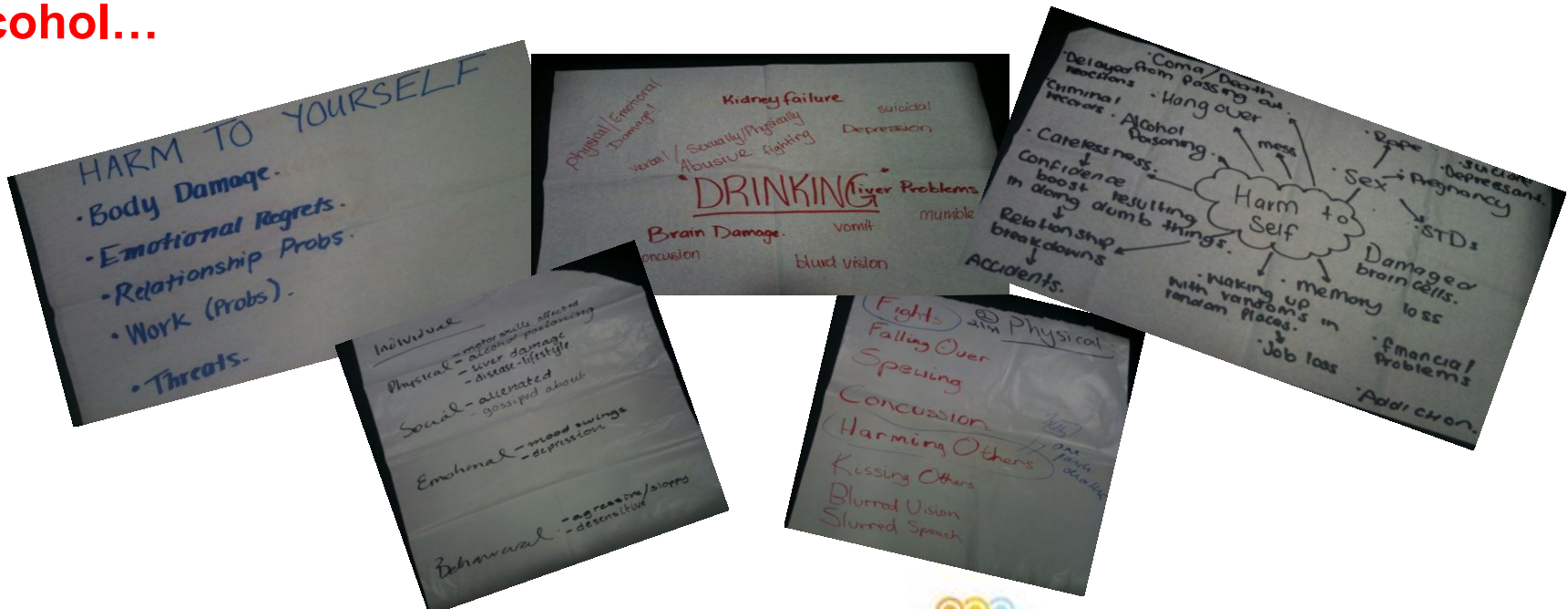
*"Men are meant to have four standard drinks a week and women only two." female*





# Knowledge about Alcohol-Related Harm

Young people could recite many harms that come from drinking alcohol...



# Knowledge about Alcohol-Related Harm

**...however the things they worried about the most were:**

- **violence**
- **drink driving**
- **damage to reputation**
- **looking after friends**
- **family conflict and violence**



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## Strategies to Reduce the Harm from Alcohol



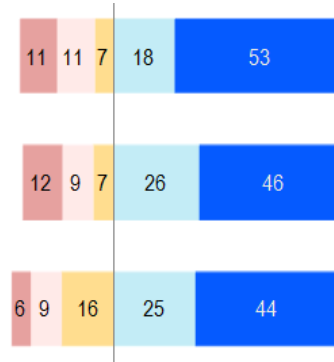
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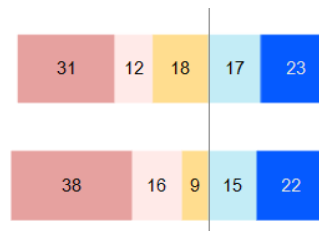


- Providing more alcohol free activities such as alcohol free music events, festivals, etc.
- Stronger enforcement of the laws that prohibit the sale of alcohol to intoxicated people and to people under the age of 18
- Education at school about the harms of alcohol (e.g. what the laws are, standard drinks, negative effects)



Most effective

Restricting alcohol availability by reducing opening hours of licensed venues and bottle shops



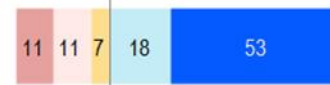
Least effective

Raising the drinking age from 18 to 19, 20 or 21. This means you cannot buy alcohol or drink on licensed premises until 20/21, but you could still drink on private premises with your parents' consent



# Alcohol Free Activities

Providing more alcohol free activities such as alcohol free music events, festivals, etc.



- **Bringing back culture and socialisation minus alcohol**
- **Knowing you had the best time of your life and being able to remember all of it.**
- **Encouraging alcohol free fun in teens**

*“Enjoying the festivities, the music and atmosphere, rather than listening from the toilet bowl in a port-a-potty”*

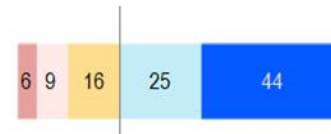
*“Provide alternative entertainment options that don’t involve alcohol”*

*“Can’t have a good time without it”*



# Better Education

Education at school about the harms of alcohol (e.g. what the laws are, standard drinks, negative effects)



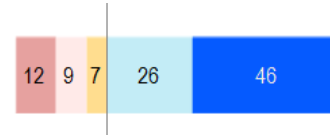
**More effective education for young people, older siblings and parents**

**Parents and siblings who supply alcohol need to be held responsible for the state they find their children and siblings in**



# Increasing and Enforcing Penalties

Stronger enforcement of the laws that prohibit the sale of alcohol to intoxicated people and to people under the age of 18



- All licenced venues and liquor stores must check IDs
- The government should closely monitor liquor stores

***“Liquor stores need to take this problem and their role in it more seriously.”***





# Increasing the cost

## Advantages

- Minimise the influence and limit that youth has on underage drinking as the following statistic shows:

***“Almost 50% think that raising the cost of alcohol prices will be effective in limiting underage consumption.”***

## Disadvantages

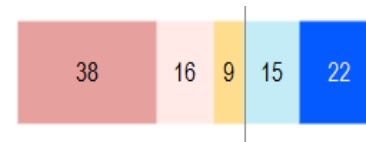
- Not being able to afford it
- People with addictions end up with nothing.
- Honesty within the liquor outlets.
- Always find ways to get alcohol e.g.: Friends or Parents

Increasing the cost of alcohol by raising taxes



# Raising the Drinking Age

Raising the drinking age from 18 to 19, 20 or 21. This means you cannot buy alcohol or drink on licensed premises until 20/21, but you could still drink on private premises with your parents' consent



**This statistic shows that more than 38% think that raising the drinking age will not be effective.**

**About one in three said that the strategy would be effective.**



# Raising the Drinking Age

## Advantages

- Young people will be more mature when they start drinking
- It might raise the age at which people start drinking underage – i.e. 15/16 rather than 13/14 as it is now

## Disadvantages

- There will be more underage people and therefore more people who could be drinking under age
- Mixed messages – you are considered an adult at 18 in every other respect except for drinking



# Advertising

Ban on alcohol advertising at sports and other events



Ban on alcohol companies sponsoring sports and other events



## • Advantages

- It will reduce the exposure of alcohol to young people
- It will stop 'glamorising' alcohol
- It should stop impulsive purchases because people will not be reminded about alcohol



Stop advertising on television.

## • Disadvantages

- There will be a lot of money lost by organisations that rely on the money from alcohol advertising
- Drinking is legal and so long as it is, why shouldn't it be advertised?



# More recognition for young people who don't drink...

**Not all young people drink and this should be acknowledged**

More alcohol free activities where young people can socialise and interact without needing to boost their self-esteem with alcohol

Respect individual choice. It takes a lot of courage for young people to say no to alcohol and not succumb to peer pressure. Let them say no the first time.



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Four points we would like to  
leave you with...



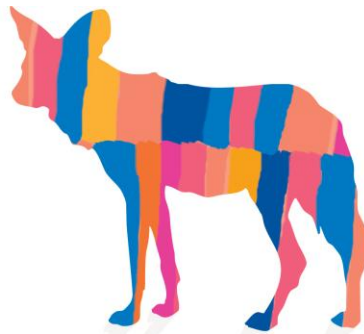
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1. **Culture:** culture influences behaviour and the Australian culture is linked with alcohol.
2. **Education:** education needs to be improved and meaningful to be impactful.
3. **Diversity:** no strategy will work alone, there must be a diverse and strategic approach.
4. **Young people:** our voices must be heard in this debate.



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This research was carried out by



Painted Dog Research

on behalf of the Commissioner for Children and Young People.



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