

9.2 Alcohol consumption

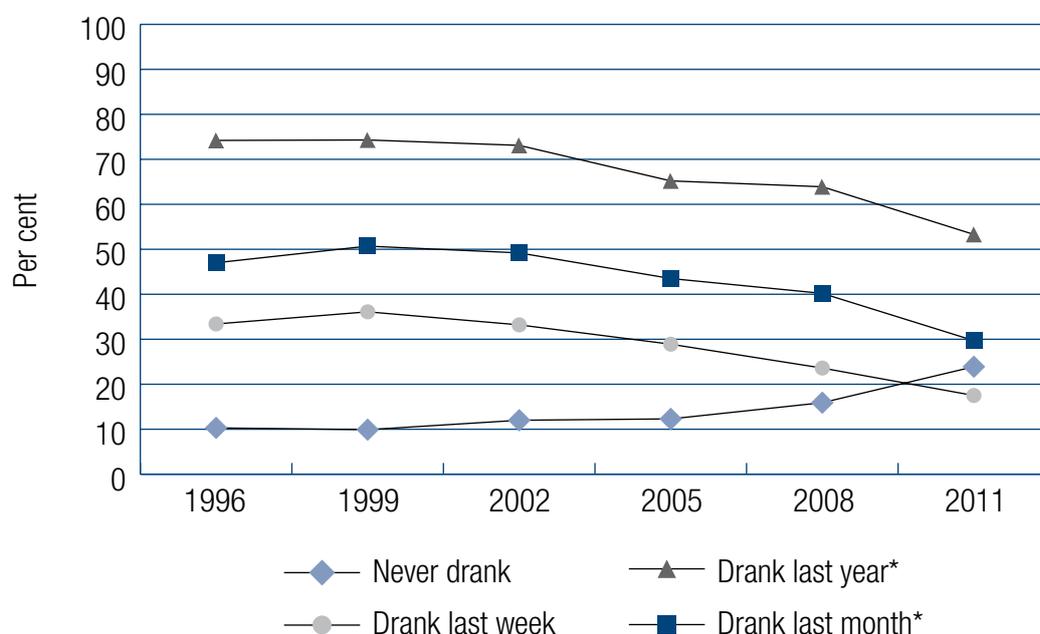
Why this measure is included

Research indicates alcohol can adversely affect brain development in adolescents and be linked to health complications and alcohol-related problems later in life.⁴⁷⁴ Chronic health conditions linked to alcohol include heart problems, cancer and liver damage.⁴⁷⁵

Young people’s alcohol use is also associated with increased risk-taking behaviour including risky sexual behaviour, sexual coercion, drug use, anti-social behaviour, violence and self-harm.⁴⁷⁶ Alcohol is a contributing factor to the three leading causes of death among adolescents – unintentional injuries, homicide and suicide.⁴⁷⁷

Evidence suggests that the earlier young people commence risky drinking the greater the likelihood of alcohol dependency and associated problems in later life.⁴⁷⁸

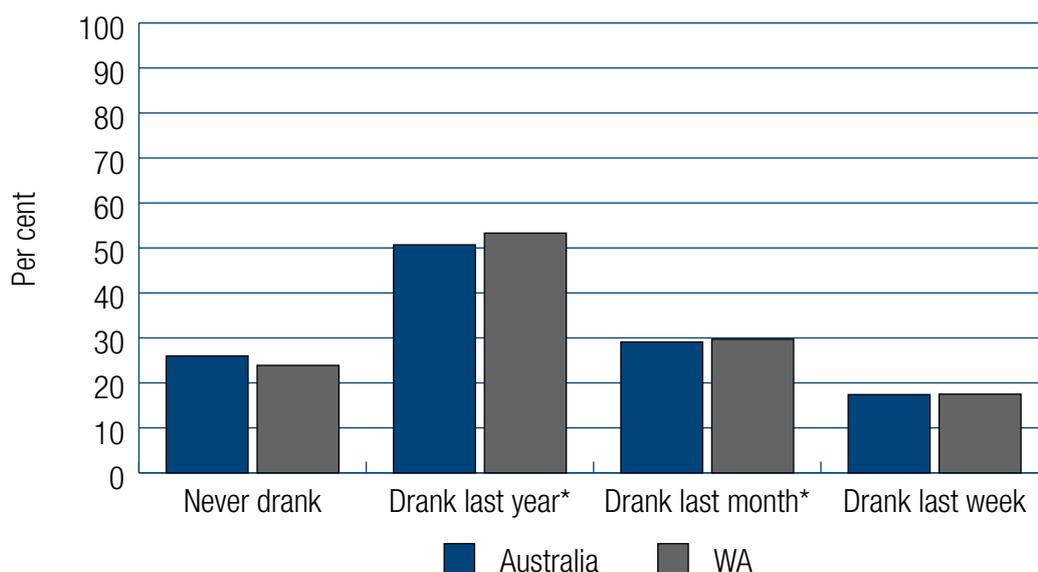
Figure 9.3: Prevalence of alcohol consumption of 12 to 17 year-old school students: in per cent, by recency of use, Western Australia, 1996 to 2011



Source: Bridle R et al 2012, *Australian School Student Alcohol and Drug Survey: Alcohol Report 2011* – Western Australian results, Drug and Alcohol Office Surveillance Report: Number 8

* ‘Drank last year’ includes those who drank last month and last week. ‘Drank last month’ includes those who drank last week.

Figure 9.4: Prevalence of alcohol consumption of 12 to 17 year-old school students: in per cent, by recency of use, Western Australia and Australia, 2011



Source: Bridle R et al 2012, *Australian School Student Alcohol and Drug Survey: Alcohol Report 2011 – Western Australian results*, Drug and Alcohol Office Surveillance Report: Number 8

* 'Drank last year' includes those who drank last month and last week. 'Drank last month' includes those who drank last week.

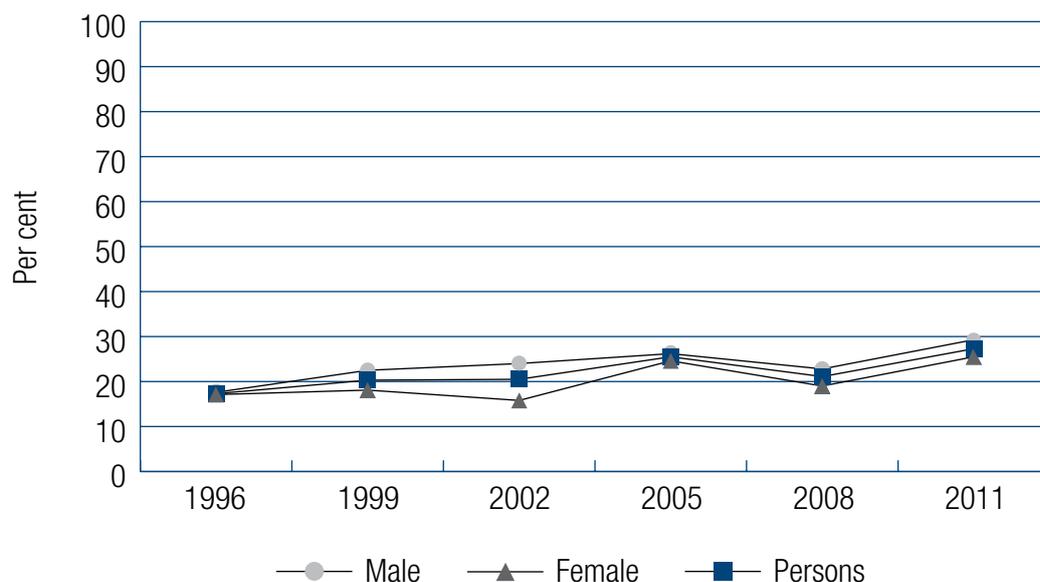
Table 9.3: Prevalence of alcohol consumption of 12 to 17 year-old school students: in per cent, by age and gender, Western Australia, 2011

	12 years	13 years	14 years	15 years	16 years	17 years	12 to 17 years
Never drank							
Male	42.8	28.7	21.7	18.6	13.8	3.7	23.7
Female	40.7	37.4	16.9	19.5	12.2	7.7	24.1
Persons	41.8	32.9	19.3	19.0	13.0	5.7	23.9
Drank last year*							
Male	25.4	42.0	56.5	63.2	75.0	89.9	54.8
Female	12.0	36.6	56.1	64.9	75.9	86.8	51.7
Persons	18.9	39.4	56.3	64.0	75.4	88.3	53.3
Drank last month*							
Male	15.7	14.6	26.7	33.3	51.6	65.0	30.8
Female	6.9	17.2	24.6	35.8	50.3	51.1	28.5
Persons	11.4	15.9	25.7	34.5	50.9	58.1	29.7
Drank last week							
Male	1.9	7.6	14.8	20.6	33.3	41.8	17.3
Female	6.3	13.3	13.2	20.9	28.0	35.6	17.8
Persons	4.0	10.3	14.0	20.8	30.7	38.7	17.5

Source: Bridle R et al 2012, *Australian School Student Alcohol and Drug Survey: Alcohol Report 2011 – Western Australian results*, Drug and Alcohol Office Surveillance Report: Number 8

* 'Drank last year' includes those who drank last month and last week. 'Drank last month' includes those who drank last week. Students who have consumed alcohol at some point in their life but had not drunk in the past 12 months are not included in this table.

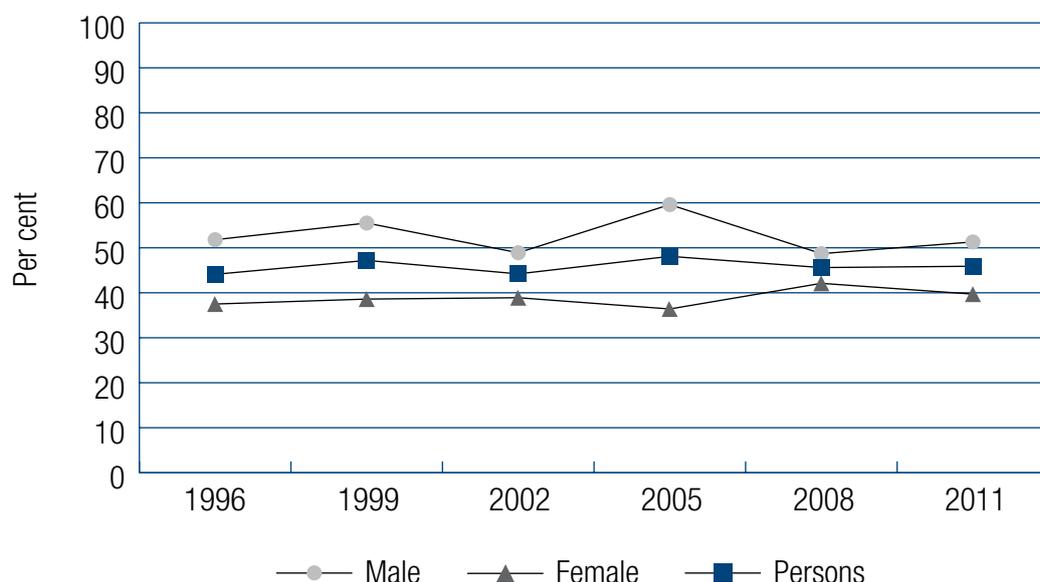
Figure 9.5: Current drinkers* drinking 'at-risk' among 12 to 15 year-old school students: in per cent, by gender, Western Australia, 1996 to 2011



Source: Bridle R et al 2012, *Australian School Student Alcohol and Drug Survey: Alcohol Report 2011 – Western Australian results*, Drug and Alcohol Office Surveillance Report: Number 8

* Current drinkers are respondents who 'drank in the last week'. In this report, a risky drinking student drank at risk of single occasion harm (eg injury) if they consumed at least five but no more than 20 standard drinks on any one day in the past week.

Figure 9.6: Current drinkers* drinking 'at-risk' among 16 and 17 year-old school students: in per cent, by gender, Western Australia, 1996 to 2011



Source: Bridle R et al 2012, *Australian School Student Alcohol and Drug Survey: Alcohol Report 2011 – Western Australian results*, Drug and Alcohol Office Surveillance Report: Number 8

* Current drinkers are respondents who 'drank in the last week'. In this report, a risky drinking student drank at risk of single occasion harm (eg injury) if they consumed at least five but no more than 20 standard drinks on any one day in the past week.

Table 9.4: Prevalence of alcohol consumption among school students aged 12 to 17 years: in per cent, by gender and region, Western Australia, 2008 and 2011

Prevalence of alcohol consumption		2008		2011	
		Metropolitan	Non-metropolitan	Metropolitan	Non-metropolitan
Never drank	Male	13.5	12.6	23.9	22.6
	Female	19.4	16.8	25.5	15.1
	Persons	16.6	14.6	24.7	18.6
Drank last year*	Male	63.2	68.2	54.7	55.4
	Female	63.0	61.9	49.9	63.1
	Persons	63.1	65.3	52.4	59.5
Drank last month*	Male	38.8	44.3	31.0	29.1
	Female	40.0	38.3	27.2	36.8
	Persons	39.4	41.6	29.2	33.2
Drank last week	Male	24.4	25.4	17.4	16.6
	Female	23.0	20.9	17.2	21.3
	Persons	23.7	23.4	17.3	19.1

Source: Bridle R et al 2012, *Australian School Student Alcohol and Drug Survey: Alcohol Report 2011 – Western Australian results*, Drug and Alcohol Office Surveillance Report: Number 8

* 'Drank last year' includes those who drank last month and last week. 'Drank last month' includes those who drank last week.

What is this measure?

This measure looks at the incidence of alcohol use among children and young people in WA.

This information is derived from the Australian Secondary Students' Alcohol and Drug (ASSAD) survey which has been conducted every three years since 1984. The latest survey was conducted during the academic school year of 2011. The national report presents estimates of the prevalence of use of different substances in 2011 by males and females at each age between 12 and 17 years.⁴⁷⁹ WA-specific data is prepared and published by the Drug and Alcohol Office.⁴⁸⁰ Due to the small sample size reliable data on Aboriginal students is not available.

This measure presents data from both the ASSAD 2011 national report as well as WA-specific data for the years 1996 to 2011 provided by the Drug and Alcohol Office.

Comparison data for Australia is taken from the published report on the national results of the ASSAD 2011 survey.⁴⁸¹

Commentary

The 2011 data indicates that almost one in four WA students aged 12 to 17 years (23.9%) had never tried alcohol compared to one in ten students in 1996 (10.3%) and one in six students in 2008 (15.9%). The increase in the number of students who had not tried alcohol corresponds to the decrease in the number of students who drank alcohol: in the last year (53.3% in 2011 compared to 63.9% in 2008); in the last month (29.7% compared to 40.2%); and in the last week (17.5% compared to 23.6%)⁴⁸² (Figure 9.3).

However, for those students who drank in the last week there has been an increase in drinking at risky levels.^{483 484} In 2011, more than one-quarter (27.3%) of 12 to 15 year-old current drinkers drank at risky levels and almost half (45.9%) of 16 to 17 year-old current drinkers drank at risky levels. This represents an increase compared to previous proportions recorded in 2008 (21.1% and 45.6%) and earlier (Figures 9.5 and 9.6).

WA's rates of alcohol use are slightly higher than the national rates across all measured categories (last twelve months, last four weeks and last seven days). Consequently WA also has a lower proportion of students who never drank alcohol than Australia overall (23.9% compared to 26.0%) (Figure 9.4).

Alcohol consumption becomes more common as age increases. For instance, 4.0 per cent of 12 year-olds drank in the last week compared to 38.7 per cent of 17 year-olds. Similarly, a little over 40 per cent of 12 year-olds had never tried alcohol compared to just under six per cent of 17 year-olds⁴⁸⁵ (Table 9.3).

There was very little difference in the prevalence of females and males reporting that they had never drank alcohol (24.1% of females said this compared to 23.7% of males) (Table 9.3). However, the 2011 survey found that males typically consume alcohol more frequently than females across all ages.⁴⁸⁶

Students in non-metropolitan areas of WA were more likely to have consumed alcohol across all surveyed categories. They were also less likely than students in the metropolitan area to have never drunk alcohol: almost one in four students in the metropolitan area had never tried alcohol compared to less than one in five students in non-metropolitan WA (24.7% compared to 18.6%).⁴⁸⁷

There were several differences between male and female students in non-metropolitan areas. While male students in non-metropolitan areas generally consumed alcohol at similar levels to their metropolitan counterparts, female students in non-metropolitan areas consumed alcohol more frequently than their metropolitan peers and also male non-metropolitan peers. For instance, 21.3 per cent of female students in regional areas were current drinkers compared to 16.6 per cent of male regional students and 17.2 per cent of female metropolitan students. A similar pattern was observed for students who drank last month and last year: Females aged 12 to 17 years in non-metropolitan areas represent the largest proportions of students who consume alcohol across all recency periods and the smallest proportion of students who have never tried alcohol⁴⁸⁸ (Table 9.4).

Additionally, there appears to have been a shift from 2008 to 2011 where non-metropolitan females are consuming more alcohol at each frequency compared to other groups. In comparison, consumption amongst students from metropolitan areas and males from non-metropolitan areas has declined during the same time period⁴⁸⁹ (Table 9.4).

The ASSAD survey also asked about attitudes towards alcohol and about the knowledge of its health effects. While almost four-fifths of students aged 12 to 17 years (78.4%) agreed that 'drinking can harm your health', this declined by 2.4 per cent since 2008.⁴⁹⁰ More than half of all students have a positive expectation⁴⁹¹ concerning alcohol consumption (55.7%) although this has also declined by 5 per cent since 2008.⁴⁹²



Strategies

Drug and Alcohol Interagency Strategic Framework for Western Australia 2011–2015, Government of Western Australia

This framework guides the approach that the Drug and Alcohol Office, other government agencies, non-government agencies and the community may adopt to counter harmful alcohol consumption and illicit drug use in WA. The framework includes five key strategic areas focusing on:

- prevention
- intervening before problems become entrenched
- effective law enforcement approaches
- effective treatment and support services
- strategic coordination and capacity building.

The framework is available from the Drug and Alcohol Office website at www.dao.health.wa.gov.au/DesktopModules/Bring2mind/DMX/Download.aspx?Command=Core_Download&EntryId=483&PortalId=0&TabId=211

The Western Australian Health Promotion Strategic Framework 2012–2016, Government of Western Australia

The framework sets out the Department of Health's strategic directions and priorities for the prevention of chronic disease and injury over the next five years. The goal of the framework is to lower the incidence of avoidable chronic disease and injury by improving healthy behaviours and environments.

The framework focuses on the main lifestyle risk factors including:

- overweight and obesity
- nutrition
- physical activity
- tobacco use
- harmful levels of drinking.

There is also a section on injury prevention. Further information is available at www.public.health.wa.gov.au/cproot/4462/2/wa_health_promotion_strategic_framework.pdf

Strong Spirit Strong Mind: Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Framework for Western Australia 2011–2015, Government of Western Australia

This framework guides stakeholder agencies in delivering culturally secure programs and supporting Aboriginal ways of working to manage and reduce alcohol and other drug related harm in Aboriginal communities. Key action areas are capacity building, working together, access to services and information and workforce development. Information on the framework is available from Drug and Alcohol Office website www.dao.health.wa.gov.au/

National Drug Strategy 2010–2015: A framework for action on alcohol, tobacco and other drugs, Commonwealth Government

The National Drug Strategy provides a national framework for action to minimise the harms to individuals, families and communities from alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. Further information is available at [www.nationaldrugstrategy.gov.au/internet/drugstrategy/publishing.nsf/Content/DB4076D49F13309FCA257854007BAF30/\\$File/nds2015.pdf](http://www.nationaldrugstrategy.gov.au/internet/drugstrategy/publishing.nsf/Content/DB4076D49F13309FCA257854007BAF30/$File/nds2015.pdf)



National Binge Drinking Strategy, Commonwealth of Australia (released 2008)

This strategy aims to address Australia's harmful binge drinking culture, especially among young people. The strategy focuses on raising awareness of the short and long-term impacts of harmful or 'risky' drinking, and over time contributing to the development of a more responsible drinking culture within Australian society.

Of particular relevance to young people's alcohol consumption, the 'Be the Influence – Tackling Binge Drinking' initiative is part of this strategy. The initiative aims to connect with young people to bring about a cultural shift that encourages a more responsible attitude towards alcohol consumption, and to provide them the tools to challenge the acceptability of binge drinking in their peer groups.

Further information is available from the Australian National Preventive Health Agency website at <http://anpha.gov.au/internet/anpha/publishing.nsf/Content/harmful-alcohol-use>

Want to know more?

Data on alcohol consumption

The WA report on the ASSAD survey series is available at the Drug and Alcohol Office website www.dao.health.wa.gov.au

The national report on the 2011 ASSAD is available from the National Drug Strategy website www.nationaldrugstrategy.gov.au

The National Drug Research Institute (NDRI) at Curtin University is funded under the National Drug Strategy to conduct and disseminate high quality research that contributes to the primary prevention of harmful drug use and the reduction of drug-related harm in Australia. Further information is available at <http://ndri.curtin.edu.au/>

The National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre at the University of NSW, also funded under the National Drug Strategy, generates high quality research and evidence to develop and improve approaches to the prevention and treatment of addiction-related problems <http://ndarc.med.unsw.edu.au/>

Research, reports and articles

The Commissioner for Children and Young People WA has published an Issues Paper on alcohol, *Young people and alcohol*, which is available at [www.cryp.wa.gov.au/files/resource/Issues%20Paper%20-Young%20people%20and%20alcohol\(1\).pdf](http://www.cryp.wa.gov.au/files/resource/Issues%20Paper%20-Young%20people%20and%20alcohol(1).pdf)

The Commissioner has also released the report *Speaking Out About Reducing Alcohol-Related Harm on Children and Young People*. This report is available at www.cryp.wa.gov.au/files/Speaking%20Out%20About%20Reducing%20Alcohol-Related%20Harm.pdf



Other information

Healthway, Government of Western Australia

Healthway was established in 1991 as an independent statutory body. The key priorities for Healthway are reducing harm from tobacco, reducing harm from alcohol, reducing obesity and promoting good mental health.

Healthway provides sponsorship to sports, arts, and racing organisations to promote healthy messages, facilitate healthy environments and increase participation in healthy activities. Healthway also provides grants to a diverse array of organisations to encourage healthy lifestyles and advance health promotion programs.

Further information about Healthway is available from their website www.healthway.wa.gov.au/

School Drug Education and Road Aware, Government of Western Australia

School Drug Education and Road Aware (SDERA) is the State government's primary drug (including tobacco and alcohol) and road safety education program and provides best practice road safety, resilience and drug education. Further information is available at www.det.wa.edu.au/sdera/detcms/portal/

The 'Alcohol. Think Again' campaign for reducing alcohol-related harm in the community is available at www.alcoholthinkagain.com.au

The McCusker Centre for Action on Alcohol and Youth aims to reduce levels of drinking, harmful drinking and alcohol problems among young people. Further information is available at www.mcaay.org.au

