

Alcohol and Violence in Australia

Alcohol use, particularly at high levels, is a significant risk factor for violence.¹ Alcohol-related violence affects the whole community, well beyond those directly involved in an alcohol-related incident.



of WA adults are concerned about alcohol-related violence.²

While alcohol-related violence is widely recognised as a substantial problem, many assaults go unreported due to a combination of attitudinal and structural barriers.³ The best available estimates are presented here.

Alcohol-related violence in Australia is cause for concern

66.9% of victims of physical assault in WA in 2011-12 believed alcohol or another substance contributed to their assault.⁴

In 2005, over **70,000** Australians were victims of alcohol-related assault.³

One in four Australians aged 14 years and over have been a victim of alcohol-related verbal abuse in the previous year.⁵

Alcohol is estimated to be involved in **25%** of threatening behaviour, **38%** of assaults, and **53%** of aggravated assault offences in WA.⁶

Alcohol contributes to **44.4%** of deaths due to interpersonal violence in WA.⁷

Males are more likely than females to be victims of alcohol-related verbal and physical abuse. However, the proportion of female victims of alcohol-related physical abuse more than doubled between 2007 and 2010 (**3.1% to 6.6%**).⁵

In 2011/12, **46.9%** of all domestic assaults in WA and **37.2%** of all non-domestic assaults were related to alcohol.⁸

In 2005, **59%** of victims of alcohol-related assault were injured during the incident. Victims of alcohol-related assault are more likely to suffer injuries such as cuts and fractured or broken bones, compared to victims of non-alcohol-related assault.³

Alcohol consumption increases the risk of sexual assault, as victims become less able to detect dangerous situations. A significant proportion of offenders and victims of sexual assault have consumed alcohol. As sexual assault crimes often go unreported, no reliable estimates are available.^{1,9}

Young people are more likely to experience alcohol-related violence

Young people are more likely to report being verbally abused, physically abused or put in fear by someone under the influence of alcohol than any other age group.⁵

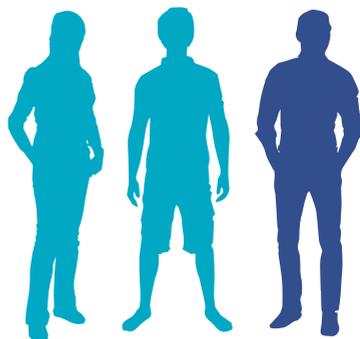
One in five Australians aged 18 to 19 years have been a victim of physical abuse by someone under the influence of alcohol. For 20 to 29 year olds, more than one in seven have been a victim.⁵

Undergraduate Australian university students report a range of harms as a result of others' drinking in the previous month: **nearly 9%** of male students reported being pushed, hit or otherwise assaulted by others who had been drinking; **14%** of female students had experienced an unwanted sexual advance; and **1%** of students had been sexually assaulted.¹⁰

79% of 18 to 25 year old males charged with assault on a Friday or Saturday night consumed alcohol in the 48 hours prior to their arrest.¹¹ Young males who were drinking prior to their arrest consumed an average of 16 standard drinks.

Alcohol consumption is an important risk factor for child abuse, maltreatment and neglect. Children whose parent/s misuse or abuse alcohol are more likely to be subjected to physical or verbal abuse.¹ In 2006/07, almost **20,000** children across Australia were victims of alcohol-related child abuse.³

19.6% of current drinkers aged 12 to 17 in WA reported verbally abusing someone after drinking in the past 12 months; **13.0%** reported that they hit someone or had a fight after drinking.¹²



Alcohol-related violence places a financial burden on the community

- › Nationally, police use one quarter of their budgets responding to alcohol-related incidents.⁶
- › In 2004-05, the social cost of alcohol-related violence (excluding costs to the criminal justice system) was estimated at \$187 million.¹³ This would equate to **\$234 million** in 2012.¹⁴
- › In 2005, alcohol-related assault costs across Australia were estimated to be \$117million.³ This would equate to **\$142 million** in 2012.¹⁴
- › Domestic violence involving alcohol was conservatively estimated to cost \$46.4 million in 2005.³ This would equate to **\$56.5 million** in 2012.¹⁴



Curtin University

MCAAY

McCusker Centre for Action
on Alcohol and Youth

Contact us: Web www.mcaay.org.au Web www.alcoholadreview.com.au
Email mcaay@curtin.edu.au Phone (08) 9266 9079 February 2014

References:

1. Morgan A, McAtamney A. Key issues in alcohol-related violence. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology; 2009.
2. Independent market research commissioned by the McCusker Centre for Action on Alcohol and Youth, November 2012. Available from: www.mcaay.org.au.
3. Laslett A-M, Catalano P, Chikritzhs T, et al. The Range and Magnitude of Alcohol's Harm to Others. Fitzroy, Victoria: AER Centre for Alcohol Policy Research, Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre, Eastern Health; 2010.
4. Australian Bureau of Statistics. Crime Victimization, Australia, 2011-12. ABS publication 4530.0 [Internet]. 2013 [updated 2013 Feb 19; cited 2013 Feb 25]. Available from: <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4530.0Main+Features12011-12?OpenDocument>.
5. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. 2010 National Drug Strategy Household Survey report. Drug statistics series no. 25. Cat. no. PHE 145. Canberra: AIHW; 2011.
6. Auditor General Western Australia. Raising the Bar: Implementing key provisions of the Liquor Control Act in licensed premises. Perth: Government of Western Australia; 2011.
7. Ballestas T, Xiao, J, McEvoy, S, et al. The Epidemiology of Injury in Western Australia, 2000 - 2008. Perth: Department of Health WA; 2011.
8. Western Australian Police. Submission to the Review of the Liquor Control Act [Internet]. 2013 [updated Feb 2013; cited Jun 2013]. Available from: <http://www.rgl.wa.gov.au/Default.aspx?NodId=159&DocId=267030>.
9. Testa M, Livingston J. Alcohol consumption and women's vulnerability to sexual victimization: can reducing women's drinking prevent rape? *Substance Use & Misuse*. 2009; 44(9-10):1349-1376.
10. Hallett J, Howat P, Maycock B, et al. Undergraduate student drinking and related harms at an Australian university: web-based survey of a large random sample. *BMC Public Health*. 2012; 12(37).
11. Sweeney J, Payne J. Alcohol and assault on Friday and Saturday nights: Findings from the DUMA program. 2011.
12. Bridle R, J M, King T, Christou A. Australian School Student Alcohol and Drug Survey: Alcohol Report 2011 – Western Australian results. Drug and Alcohol Office Surveillance Report: Number 8. Perth: Drug and Alcohol Office; 2012.
13. Collins DJ, Lapsley HM. The costs of tobacco, alcohol and illicit drug abuse to Australian society in 2004/05. Canberra: Australian Government National Drug Strategy; 2008.
14. Reserve Bank of Australia. Inflation Calculator [Internet]. 2013 [updated Oct 30 2013; cited Oct 30 2013]. Available from: <http://www.rba.gov.au/calculator/annualDecimal.html>.