

## **Alcohol-related harms and risky drinking among young people in Victoria, Australia**

### **Authors:**

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**Introduction and Aims:** Most studies of alcohol-related harms have focused on the most severe and least common harms (e.g. physical assault). Multiple binge-drinking campaigns have targeted these severe harms, which young people have evaluated as unrelatable and ineffective. This study investigated a broader spectrum of alcohol-related harms and risky drinking among young people.

**Design and Methods:** *Sex, Drugs and Rock 'n' Roll* is an annual online survey of Australian 15-29 year olds. In 2017, participants reported on a range of alcohol-related harms across physical, social, criminal, transport and sexual domains. The AUDIT-C categorised participant's alcohol consumption as low (<6) or high (7-12) risk. Logistic regression identified if there was an association between each alcohol-related harm and high-risk alcohol consumption in the past year, adjusting for age, gender and age at first alcohol consumption.

**Results:** Overall, 1272 participants completed the survey. In the past year, 1163 (91%) participants consumed alcohol. Sixty-five percent had experienced at least one alcohol-related harm in the past year. The most common harms included forgetting parts of the night (46%), not getting up for plans (26%), arguing (25%), difficulties getting home (18%) and regretted/unwanted sexual activity (14%). Participants categorised as high-risk drinkers had higher odds of experiencing each alcohol-related harm in the past year compared to low-risk drinkers (Table 1).

### **Discussions and Conclusions:**

Participants experienced a broad range of alcohol-related harms including low severity harms (e.g. arguing, not getting up in time for plans) and higher severity harms (e.g. memory loss, regretted/unwanted sexual activity). Harms were more common among high-risk drinkers.

**Implications for Practice or Policy:** In order to design more effective alcohol harm prevention measures, it is essential to better understand the full range of negative effects experienced by young, risky drinkers. This knowledge can inform tailored alcohol risk reduction measures and broader population-level strategies.

### **Disclosure of Interest Statement:**

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**Table 1. Alcohol-related harms experienced by participants in the past 12 months**

<b>Alcohol-related harms</b>	<b>Total (n=1163) n(%)</b>	<b>Low-risk drinkers (n=959) n(%)</b>	<b>High-risk drinkers (n=204) n(%)</b>	<b>Odds ratio (95% confidence interval)<sup>A</sup></b>
Created a public disturbance or nuisance	135 (11.6)	80 (8.3)	55 (27.0)	3.4 (2.3-5.1)**
Stolen something	66 (5.7)	25 (2.6)	41 (20.1)	8.8 (5.1-15.4)**
Had an argument with someone	290 (24.9)	193 (20.1)	97 (47.6)	3.3 (2.4-4.6)**
Got in a physical fight	28 (2.4)	8 (0.8)	20 (9.8)	11.1 (4.6-26.3)**
Caused damage to property	43 (3.7)	20 (2.1)	23 (11.3)	5.4 (2.8-10.5)**
Driven a motor vehicle	60 (5.2)	37 (3.9)	23 (11.3)	2.7 (1.5-4.7)**
Had an accident or got injured	79 (6.8)	43 (4.5)	36 (17.7)	4.5 (2.7-7.3)**
Attended work or school while under the influence	114 (9.8)	59 (6.1)	55 (27.0)	5.2 (3.4-7.9)**
Sexual activity that you regretted or was unwanted	167 (14.3)	112 (11.7)	55 (27.0)	2.9 (1.9-4.2)**
Got kicked out of a venue (before it was closed)	95 (8.2)	47 (4.9)	28 (23.5)	5.7 (3.6-8.9)**
Passed out somewhere unexpected	125 (10.8)	75 (7.8)	50 (24.5)	3.6 (2.4-5.5)**
Found it difficult to get home	213 (18.3)	139 (14.5)	74 (36.3)	3.1 (2.2-4.4)**
Got stuck and could not get home at all	27 (2.3)	11 (1.2)	16 (7.8)	6.5 (2.9-14.7)**
Did not get up in time for plans the next day	301 (25.9)	184 (19.2)	117 (57.4)	5.3 (3.9-7.4)**
Could not remember parts of the night	533 (45.8)	373 (38.9)	160 (78.4)	5.4 (3.8-7.9)**
Experienced at least one alcohol-related harm	751 (64.6)	561 (58.5)	190 (93.1)	8.8 (5.0-15.5)**

A. Adjusted for age, gender and age at first alcohol consumption, \*\*p<0.001