



Northern Territory: Young Risky Drinkers' Most Recent Risky Drinking Session



We asked what a drinking session looked like

One in five Australian 14-19 year olds drink at levels considered to be putting them at risk of injury at least once a month (1).

The heaviest teenage drinkers tend to disproportionately experience more alcohol related harms while being underrepresented in many health surveys which examine the Australian population as a whole.

This study, the Young Australians Alcohol Reporting System (YAARS), aimed to investigate the drinking occasions that were associated with a risk of harm.

We were interested in the most recent occasion when a teenager drank more than what the national guidelines describe as lower-risk. We asked questions such as how much they drank, where they drank, the types of beverages they had, and about some of the outcomes of this drinking.

We asked about these experiences to determine which factors contribute to, or protect young people from alcohol related harms.

The 14-19 year old participants were amongst the riskiest drinking 25% of their age-bracket

Risky drinking teenagers were surveyed all over Australia

In 2016 and 2017 we conducted over 3,400 face-to-face interviews and online surveys with young people aged 14-19. This bulletin presents the findings from our 86 Northern Territory based teenagers (31 face-to-face interviews and 55 online surveys).

The participants represented the riskiest drinking 20-25% of their age-bracket (most were consuming 5+ standard drinks in a single session, at least twice a month).

Participants were recruited through social media advertising, peer-referral, and posters at educational facilities and services frequented by young people.

This study is not representative of all 14-19 year old drinkers. Our sample represents a minority subset who engage in risky alcohol consumption. Please refer to our other publications for further information on the project's methods, and comparisons with age-matched groups recruited using representative sampling techniques (2).

Where did they drink?

- A friend's home (51%)
- Their own home (30%)
- A bar or pub (20%)
- Club (34%)
- Most (83%) drank in at least one non-licensed location such as a home, car, park, or beach during their session

Young risky drinkers described the most recent occasion when they drank beyond national guideline quantities*

* These quantities were different for each age and gender group. E.g. it was 5+ standard drinks for those aged 16-17 years.

When did they drink?

- More than half (57%) described this drinking session as occurring 7 or fewer days ago and 75% reported it occurred 14 or fewer days ago.
- Almost three quarters of the drinking sessions were held on Fridays (19%) or Saturdays (54%).
- The first drink was most commonly consumed in the early evening, between 6 and 8pm (53%), and the last drink between midnight and 3am (62%).
- The drinking session ran for an average of 6.6 hours.

Popular beverage types

- The most popular drink types were spirits (83%), beer (44%) and ready to drink beverages 'RTDs' (41%). Females were more likely to report drinking liqueur or cocktails, wine and energy drinks packaged with alcohol than males. Males were more likely to report drinking beer.

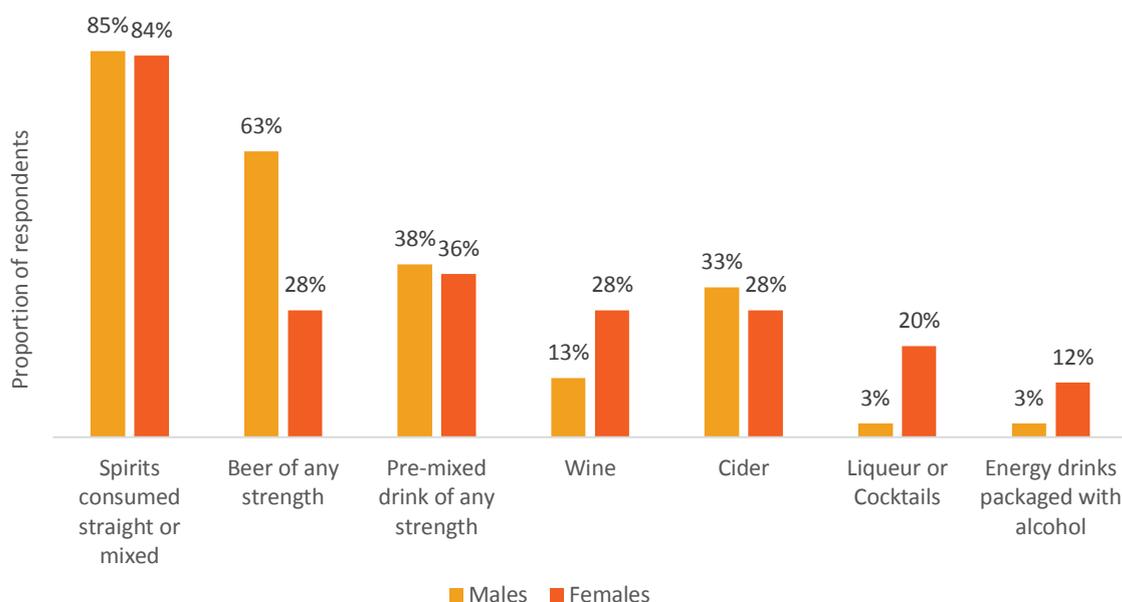


Figure 1. Beverage types consumed at the last risky drinking session

Half pre drank

Just over half the survey participants (56%) pre-drunk at the last risky drinking session. There were no significant differences in engagement by gender. However, participants aged 18-19 years were more than twice as likely to pre-drink than those aged 14-17 years (76% vs. 32%).

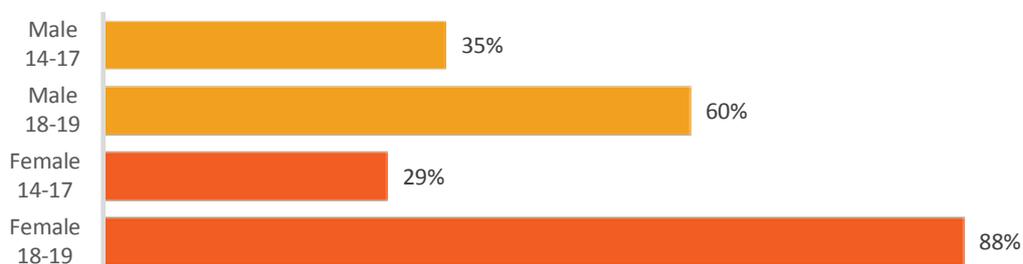


Figure 2. Proportion of participants who had pre-drunk on their last risky drinking session

How much did they drink?

On average females drank 2.6 fewer drinks than males (14.7 compared to 17.3 drinks).

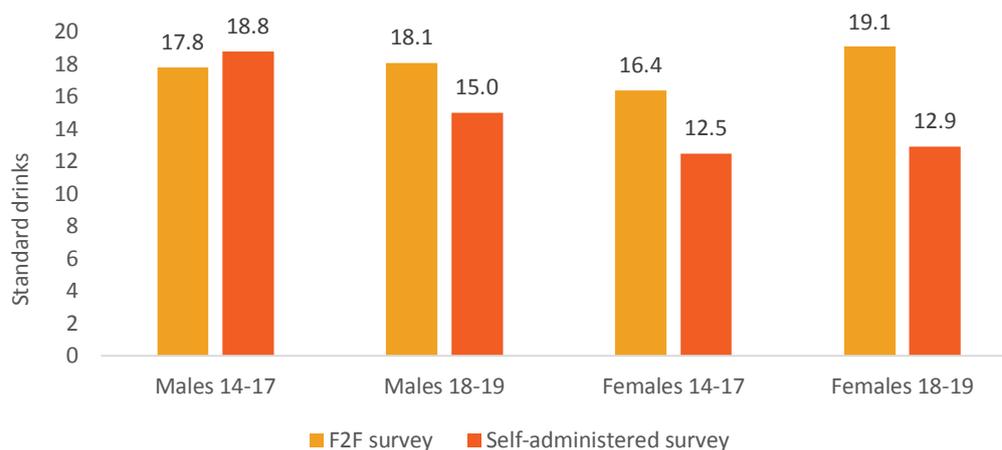


Figure 3. Average alcohol use at the last risky drinking session by age, gender and survey administration modality

Alcohol-related outcomes from this drinking session

Harms reported to have occurred as a result of this drinking session included:

- Hangover (47%)
- Saying or doing embarrassing things (44%)
- Having less energy or feeling tired because of my drinking (20%)
- Feeling very sick to my stomach or thrown up after drinking (29%)
- Needing larger amounts of alcohol to feel any effect, or finding I could no longer get high or drunk on the amount that used to get me high or drunk (20%)
- Not being able to remember large stretches of time while drinking heavily (19%)
- Finding it difficult to limit how much I drink (19%)
- Been injured due to my drinking (inc. cuts & bruises; 21%)
- When drinking, I have done impulsive things I regretted later (15%)

How did they try to keep safe?

Safety strategies are used to reduce alcohol consumption or to limit alcohol-related problems. These behaviours can limit alcohol-related problems even after controlling for the quantity of alcohol consumed (3). Females were much more likely than males to stop drinking at a predetermined time (27% compared to 3%); and more likely to know where their drink had been (81% compared to 63%). Males, on the other hand, were more likely than females to drink water while drinking alcohol (60% compared to 43%).

Table 1. Safety strategies 'always' or 'usually' engaged in while drinking in the past 12 months

	Male	Female
Determine not to exceed a set number of drinks	17%	24%
Alternate alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks	34%	22%
Have a friend let you know when you have had enough to drink	29%	27%
Leave the bar or party at a predetermined time	23%	30%
Stop drinking at a predetermined time	3%	27%
Drink water while drinking alcohol	60%	43%
Put extra ice in your drink	23%	24%
Avoid drinking games	6%	14%
Drink shots of spirits (risk behaviour)	71%	59%
Avoid mixing different types of alcohol	20%	32%
Drink slowly, rather than gulp or scull	26%	19%
Avoided trying to "keep up" or out-drink others	31%	24%
Use a designated driver	80%	81%
Made sure that you go home with a friend	66%	65%
Know where your drink has been at all times	63%	81%
N	35	37

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The Young Australians Alcohol Reporting System is a project led by the National Drug Research Institute (NDRI; Curtin University, WA) in collaboration with their partners at the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC; University of New South Wales), Eastern Health Clinical School (Monash University and Turning Point; VIC), The University of Tasmania, Flinders University (SA), ACT Health, Charles Darwin University (NT), and the University of Queensland. This study was funded by the Australian Government's Department of Health and Ageing (grant D16-451850) to promote good health in general, with an emphasis on young people. **For further information** contact Dr Tina Lam at the National Drug research Institute on +61 8 9266 1600 or tina.lam@curtin.edu.au

References (1) Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2016 key findings. 2017. (2) Lam T, Lenton S, Ogeil R, Burns L, Aiken A, Chikritzhs T, Gilmore W, Lloyd B, Wilson J, Lubman D, Mattick R, Allsop S. Most recent risky drinking session with Australian teenagers. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*. 2017;41(1). (3) Martens MP, Ferrier AG, Cimini M. Do Protective Behavioral Strategies Mediate the Relationship Between Drinking Motives and Alcohol Use in College Students? *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*. 2007;68(1).