

# YOUNG AUSTRALIANS ALCOHOL REPORTING SYSTEM (YAARS)

(BULLETIN 2: PRE DRINKING 2)



## ‘WHAT’ WAS CONSUMED, AND ‘HOW MUCH’ TIME AND MONEY WERE INVESTED PRE-DRINKING

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This second instalment addresses how much alcohol was consumed and how much time was spent pre-drinking, what types of drinks were consumed and how much money was spent by participants who took part in the face-to-face surveys.

Pre-drinking, also known as having ‘pre’s’ or ‘pre-loading’, is consuming alcohol before going out to another venue. Some of the reasons for pre-drinking include: to reduce the costs associated with purchasing alcohol in a venue, to hasten drunkenness, to socialise with friends or to reduce social anxiety (1).

Evidence suggests that pre-drinking contributes to alcohol related harm and the UK government’s recent alcohol strategy stated that ‘pre-drinking’ needs to be addressed in the context of addressing ‘binge episodes’ or periods of heavy episodic drinking (2).

To date the majority of studies addressing pre-drinking have been undertaken in US college student populations (e.g. 3), or in European studies that have focused on the impact of

pre-drinking on people entering the night-time economies (e.g. pubs and clubs) (4). However, pre-drinking in the Australian context may have distinguishing features. For example, the minimum legal purchase age in the US is higher than in Australia.

Given the paucity of Australian research, these bulletins address pre-drinking of young risky drinkers aged 16-19 in Sydney, Melbourne, Perth and Bunbury.

Bulletin 1 in this series focused on who was pre-drinking, where they were chose to pre-drink, and why participants reported pre-drinking. This second installment addresses how much alcohol and time was spent pre-drinking, what types of drinks were consumed and how much money was spent by participants who took part in the face-to-face surveys.

## How were the data collected?

This study, the Young Australians Alcohol Reporting System (YAARS) surveyed young risky drinkers in Perth, Melbourne, Sydney and the regional city of Bunbury in Western Australia. Face-to-face interviews and online surveys were conducted with 958 young people aged 16-19.

The participants represented the riskiest drinking 20-25% of their age-bracket (they drank 7 or more standard drinks twice a month; or 11 or more standard drinks twice a month if the participant was male and aged 18-19).

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 16-19 year old risky drinkers. However, this sample reported similar rates of high risk drinking (11+ standard drinks at least twice monthly) to age-matched risky drinkers recruited using representative sampling techniques (5-6).

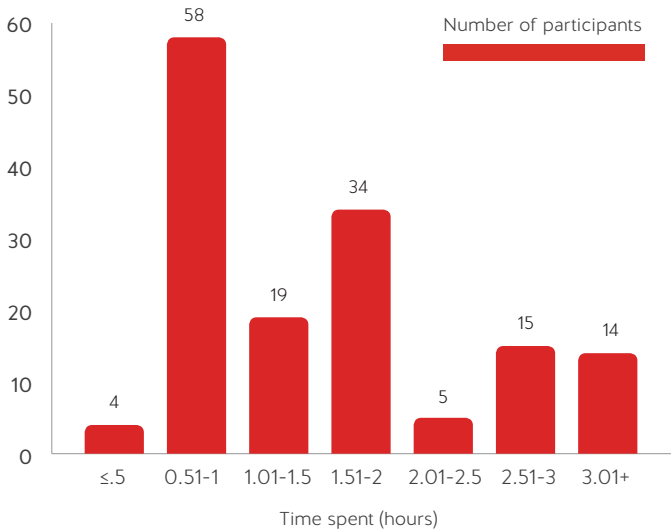
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# Time spent pre-drinking

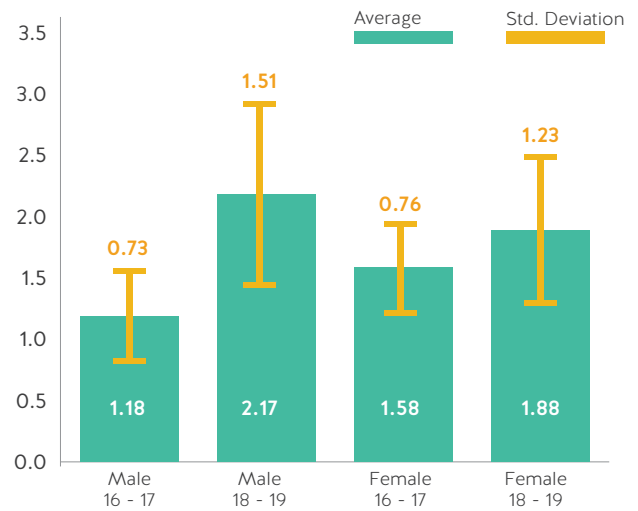
Participants were asked about the last drinking session where they had seven or more standard drinks. Participants who reported pre-drinking on their last 7+ drinking occasion (n=149) spent an average of 1.82 hours doing so. There was great variety in the length of time participants spent pre-drinking. Figure 1 shows the overall time spent pre-drinking for the face-to-face sample.

As seen in Figure 1, the most common response provided by participants was that pre-drinking occurred for 30-60 mins.

The time spent pre-drinking varied as a function of a participant's demographic - Figure 2 shows that older participants (18-19) years old tended to pre-drink for longer compared with the 16-17 year old age groups.



**Figure 1.** Time Spent pre-drinking by number of participants who pre-drank on their last 7+ drinking occasion.



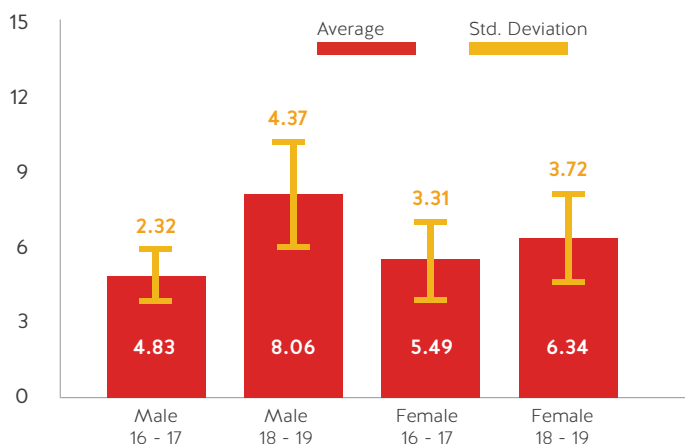
**Figure 2.** Average time pre-drinking by participants demographics.

# Amount of alcohol consumed

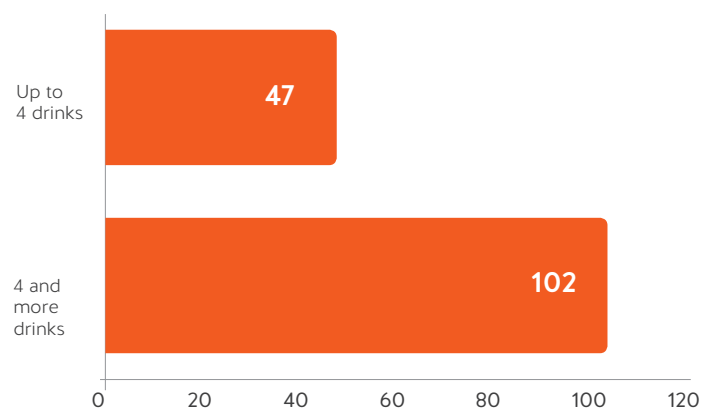
In general, participants aged 18-19 consumed a greater number of pre-drinks compared with those aged 16-17.

The mean quantity consumed while pre-drinking was 6.54 standard drinks, with responses ranging from 1-20 standard drinks.

Figure 3 shows this amount of alcohol consumed exceeds the most recent NHMRC guidelines for single occasion risky drinking.



**Figure 4.** Number of standard drinks consumed as pre-drinks by age and gender demographic.



**Figure 3.** Number of pre-drinkers consuming >4 standard drinks while pre-drinking.

# What kinds of drinks were consumed as pre-drinks?

Participants were able to nominate different types of alcohol that they consumed as pre-drinks. The following graphs show the number of times different drinks were nominated by participants using multiple response sets.

The most common drinks consumed as pre-drinks were spirits, beer and wine. Figure 5 shows that there are different preferences for pre-drinks between demographics, particularly with the 18-19 year old drinkers. Females in this demographic had a preference for spirits as pre-drinks, while males most commonly nominated beer.

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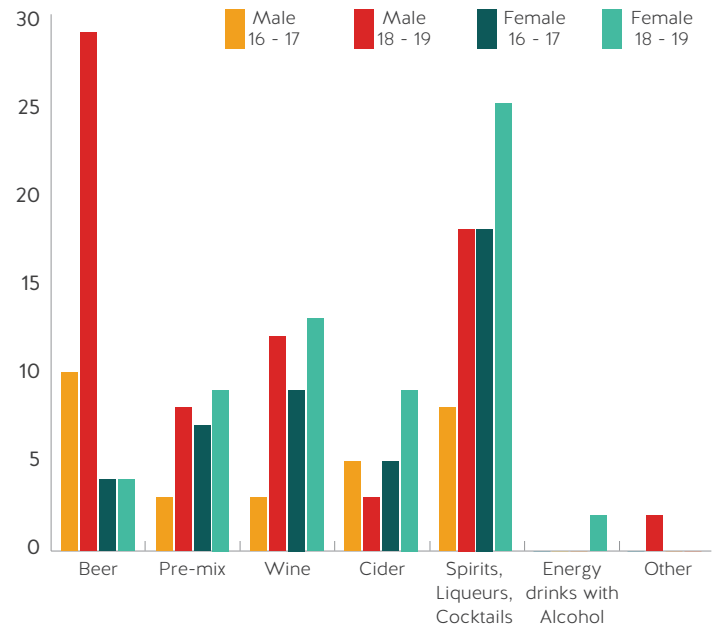


Figure 5. Types of drinks consumed as pre-drinks

There were also differences in pre-drink choice based on drinking location.

Figure 6 shows that when pre-drinking occurred at either the participants' or their friends' house, a greater variety of beverages was consumed.

While pre-drink choices between participants own house and a friend's house were similar, there were more substantially nominations of pre-mix drinks and wine that was pre-drunk at a friend's house compared with their own home.

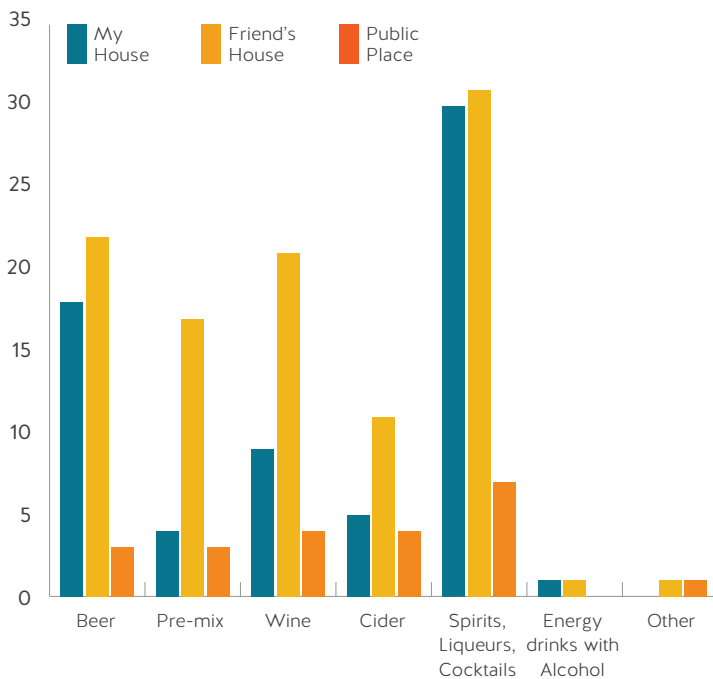


Figure 6. Types of drinks consumed by location

## How much was spent on these pre-drinks?

Figure 7 shows that participants in all groups except the younger males spent between \$20 and \$30 on pre-drinks. The younger male group tended to spend less.

The average amount of money spent on pre-drinks was \$24

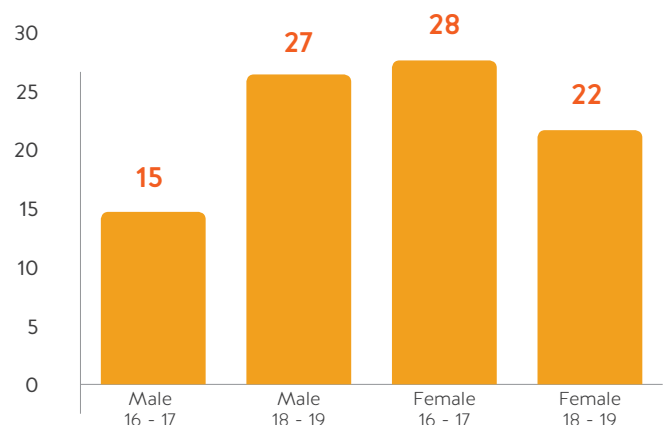


Figure 7. Mean (number of dollars) spent on pre-drinks by demographic.

# Why did you choose these pre-drinks?

The most common reasons participants nominated for choosing their pre-drinks were:

1. They liked the taste,
2. Price, or
3. Because that drink was the participant's favourite.

There were differences based on participants demographic for their reasons for pre-drinking.

The 16-17 year old female group was more likely to choose alcohol strength as the reason for pre-drinking compared with the other groups.



Figure 8. Why pre-drinks were chosen by proportion of respondents

The older male and female demographics were more likely to nominate price and they liked the taste as reasons for pre-drinking.

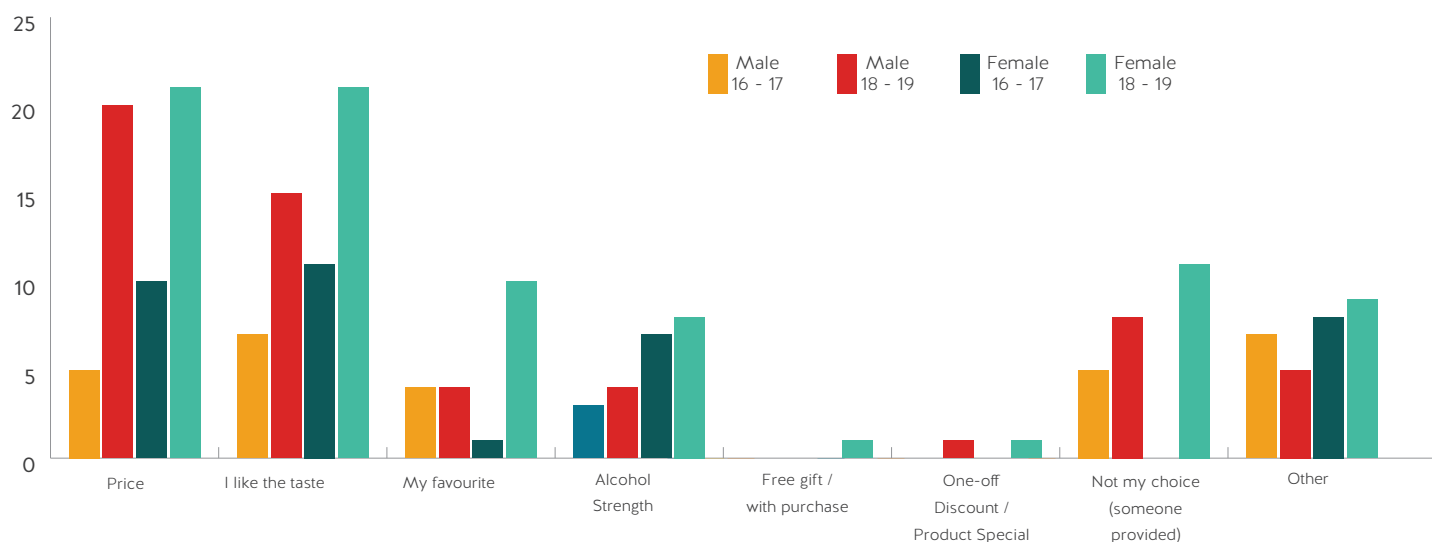


Figure 9. Differences in pre-drinking motivation based on demographic

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The Young Australians Alcohol Reporting System is a project led by the National Drug Research Institute (NDRI; Curtin University), in collaboration with their partners the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC; University of New South Wales), Eastern Health Clinical School (Monash University and Turning Point) and St John of God Hospital (Bunbury). The project is funded by the Australian National Preventative Health Agency. NDRI and NDARC are supported by funding from the Australian Government under the Substance Misuse Prevention and Service Improvement Grants Fund.