

## Media &amp; Marketing – The marketing of alcohol

## How much do young people drink?

By the age of 12, around 73% of students have tried alcohol, increasing to around 80% by age 13, 86% by age 14, and 91% by age 15.<sup>1</sup>

The proportion of students reporting drinking in the week prior to the 2005 Australian School Students Alcohol and Drugs Survey also increased steadily with age, from 10% of 12-year-olds to 27% of 14-year-olds and 49% of 17-year-olds.<sup>1</sup>

The most recent National Drug Strategy Household Survey found that 71% of people aged 14-19 had consumed alcohol in the last 12 months, with 20.9% consuming alcohol weekly.<sup>2</sup> Among underage drinkers, 29.8% of 12-15 year olds and 72.7% of 16-17 year olds had consumed alcohol in the last 12 months; and 1.0% and 20.0% respectively consumed alcohol weekly.<sup>2</sup>

Alarmingly, 30% of 15-year-olds and 44% of 17-year-olds reported consuming at levels that placed them at risk of alcohol-related harm (i.e., drinking seven or more standard drinks on one day for males and five or more for females) in the last week. However, it is important to note that the majority of young people are not drinking regularly, and that not drinking is the 'norm' for young people, especially those under 16.

**What are the consequences?**

In 2007, more than one-quarter of 14-19 year olds reported putting themselves at risk of alcohol related harm at least once a month during the last year; with the incidence being higher for females (28.3%) than males (24.5%).<sup>2</sup>

This continues into young adulthood, with 39.6% of 20-29 year olds putting themselves at risk of alcohol related harm at least once a month, although in this group the rates are higher for males (43.8%) than females (35.3%).<sup>2</sup>

As well as the obvious long term risks associated with excessive alcohol consumption, binge drinking is associated with a range of short-term risks including alcohol poisoning, unsafe sex, sexual assault, physical violence, motor vehicle accidents, property damage and other criminal activities.<sup>3,4,5,6</sup>

It has been estimated that over 80% of all alcohol consumed by 14-17 year olds is drunk at a level that poses short-term risk of injury.<sup>7</sup>

Each year over 3,000 under-aged drinkers are hospitalised for alcohol-attributable injury in Australia.<sup>7</sup>

Between 1993 and 2002, over 2,500 young people aged between 15 and 24 years died from alcohol-attributable injury and disease and more than 100,000 were hospitalised.<sup>7</sup>

**Class Activity Rates of drinking**

1. Prepare a summary on rates of drinking among young people in Australia, and the risks associated with alcohol consumption.

Useful sources of information on consumption include the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's National Drug Strategy Household Survey (2007: <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10674>) and the Australian School Students Alcohol and Drug Survey (<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/publichealth/surveys/hss/index.asp>)

2. As a class (or in small groups), turn your report into a presentation. This information should be prepared at a level that is suitable for Year 7 students and their parents.
3. You might choose to present your report as:
  - A Powerpoint presentation
  - A poster which can be placed on the wall at school
  - A brochure which can be handed out to students
  - An article for the school newsletter

**Teacher Note**

Depending on the time available for this activity, students could produce something in class for discussion, or could work on it at home (or in class over a period of weeks) and actually display or distribute their materials.

## REFERENCES

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3. Perkins H (2002) Social Norms and the Prevention of Alcohol Misuse in Collegiate Contexts. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, Supplement 14, 164-172.
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7. Chikritzhs, T., Pascal, R. & Jones, P. (2004) Under-aged Drinking Among 14–17 year olds and Related Harms in Australia. National Alcohol Indicators, Bulletin No. 7: National Drug Research Institute, Curtin University, WA

