

ALCOHOL FACTS & FIGURES

AUSTRALIAN ALCOHOL GUIDELINES – FACT SHEET

Alcohol consumption in Australia

- ❑ In 2001, 1.3 million Australians consumed alcohol daily, 6.2 million on a weekly basis and a further 5.4 million on a less than weekly basis. (*Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2002: 2001 National Drug Strategy Household Survey: First Results*)
- ❑ In 2000, Australians consumed 7.8 litres of pure alcohol per person.
- ❑ On a per person basis in 2000, Australians consumed 95 litres of beer (9th in the world), 19.7 litres of wine (18th in the world), and 1.3 litres of spirits (34th in the world).

Patterns of risky alcohol consumption in Australia

- ❑ At all ages, there is a greater proportion of the population that drinks alcohol at levels that are risky or high risk for short term harm to their health compared to risk for long term harm to their health. (*Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2002: 2001 National Drug Strategy Household Survey: First Results*)
- ❑ Alcohol use is heaviest and most frequent among young adults, while high risk drinking is particularly prevalent among young people. In 2001, amongst those aged 14-17 years, 64% of males and 69% of females were current drinkers, and 21% of males and 25% of females drank at least once a month at levels that placed them at risk of short-term harm.

Alcohol deaths and hospitalisations

- ❑ Alcohol caused death rates between 1990-97, were consistently higher for males than for females. In 1997, out of 3,290 deaths caused by risky levels of drinking, 70% were male and due mainly to liver cirrhosis, road injuries, stroke, suicide or alcohol dependence and 30% were female, due mainly to stroke and alcoholic liver cirrhosis.
- ❑ In 1997, older people (aged 40-70 years) were more likely to die from chronic conditions, related to long term alcohol misuse, and younger people (aged 15-29 years) from acute conditions related to bouts of intoxication.
- ❑ Between 1990-97, males accounted for 70% of the alcohol caused hospitalisations mainly for alcohol dependence, falls, assault and road injuries whereas females accounted for 30% mainly for falls and alcohol dependence.

Trends in alcohol related injury and violence

- ❑ Alcohol is the major cause of road injury. Between 1991-97, 31% of all driver and pedestrian deaths on Australian roads were alcohol related. On average over 70% of people with serious alcohol related road injuries were male, while only 56% of people with non alcohol related serious road injuries were male.
- ❑ About 52% of people with alcohol related serious road injuries were between 15-24 years and the average age of alcohol related crash victims was 27.5 years. Only 26% of non alcohol related serious road injuries were between 15-24 years and the average age of non alcohol related road injuries was 37.6 years.
- ❑ Alcohol is a major contributing cause of violence in Australia. In 1998/99, it was estimated that there were 8,661 hospitalisations (4.6 per 10,000 people) for alcohol caused assaults, of whom 74% were male and 64% were aged 15-34 years.

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