

# Alcohol consumption and harms in the Australian Capital Territory



## Alcohol consumption

The 2010 National Drug Strategy Household Survey found that 86.5 per cent of Australian Capital Territory (ACT) residents over the age of 14 years consume alcohol, and, of these 5.4 per cent consume alcohol daily, and 45.6 per cent consume alcohol weekly.<sup>1</sup> One in five (19.5 per cent) ACT residents aged 14 years and over consume alcohol at levels that place them at risk of lifetime harm (more than two standard drinks per day). This is the fourth highest consumption rate across all jurisdictions and close to the national average of 20.1 per cent of people.

The 2010 National Drug Strategy Household Survey also found that 44.5 per cent of ACT residents aged 14 years and over consumed alcohol at levels that placed them at risk of an alcohol-related injury from a single occasion of drinking.<sup>2</sup> This is the third highest consumption rate of single occasion risky drinking across all jurisdictions (44.9 per cent in Queensland and 50.8 per cent in the Northern Territory) and above the national average of 39.8 per cent.<sup>3</sup>

In the ACT, men are more likely than women to consume alcohol at levels that place them at risk of lifetime harm (29.9 per cent compared to 9.4 per cent respectively). Men are also more likely than women to consume alcohol at levels that place them at risk of an alcohol-related injury (55.6 per cent compared to 33.5 per cent respectively).<sup>4</sup>

## Young people's alcohol consumption

The 2008 Australian Secondary Student Alcohol and Drug Survey found that one in four (24.2 per cent) ACT secondary school students were current drinkers (consumed alcohol in the past week). This is a decrease from 29.1 per cent of students in 1996.<sup>5</sup> In the same year 7.1 per cent of ACT students reported drinking at harmful levels (five or more drinks on any day of last week for young women and seven or more drinks for young men).<sup>6</sup> This is higher than the national average of 6.3 per cent of Australian students drinking at harmful levels.

## Alcohol-related health harms

A range of indicators are available to understand the significance of alcohol-related harms in the ACT. These have been outlined below using the latest available data for each indicator. The available indicators of alcohol-related harms in the ACT include:

- alcohol-related ambulance attendances;
- alcohol-related emergency department presentations;
- alcohol-related hospital separations;
- treatment episodes where alcohol was the principal drug of concern; and
- alcohol-related deaths.

## Alcohol-related ambulance attendances

In 2009, there were 390 ambulance attendances for high level intoxication involving alcohol in the ACT. Overall, the ACT Ambulance Service attended 933 overdose incidents, with alcohol accounting for 42 per cent.<sup>8</sup>

## Alcohol-related emergency department presentations

In 2008-09 there were 616 alcohol-related emergency department presentations for ACT residents.<sup>9</sup>

It is important to note that this figure does not indicate the definitive number of alcohol-related presentations to emergency departments as a number of other presentations such as injury or accident diagnoses may be related to alcohol consumption and not recorded as the primary diagnosis.

## Alcohol-related hospital admissions

From 2000-01 to 2009-10, the rate of alcohol-related injury hospital separations among the ACT population increased overall.<sup>10</sup> From 2000-01 to 2009-10, the rate of alcohol-related injury hospital separations among the ACT population (where injury was the primary diagnosis) increased by 53 per cent for men and 35 per cent for women.<sup>11</sup>

The main causes of alcohol-implicated injury were suicide and intentional self-harm (32.8 per cent), falls (26.8 per cent), assault (10.6 per cent), transport incidents (9.6 per cent), and events of undetermined intent (9.6 per cent).<sup>12</sup>

## Treatment episodes where alcohol was the principal drug of concern

Overall, there has been a 43.5 per cent increase in the number of treatment episodes in the ACT where alcohol was the principal drug of concern over the ten year period between 2001-02 and 2010-11. In 2001-02, 41.6 per cent of treatment episodes involved alcohol as the principal drug of concern.<sup>13</sup> This increased to 53.8 per cent of treatment episodes in 2010-11.<sup>14</sup>

Year	Alcohol treatment episodes (no.)	Total (% of all treatment episodes)
2001-02	1,164.8	41.6
2002-03	1,192.01	40.3
2003-04	295*	22.4
2004-05	1,795.96	42.7
2005-06	2,056.17	45.4
2006-07	2,400.02	55.3
2007-08	1,790.72	48.9
2008-09	1,963.29	54.1
2009-10	1,874.71	54.8
2010-11	1,672.1	53.8

\*The total number of closed treatment episodes for the ACT in 2003-04 is an undercount due to data collection issues

## Alcohol-related deaths

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In 2009, there were a total of 21 deaths where the underlying cause of death was due to alcohol consumption in the ACT.<sup>15</sup> The main diagnoses of alcohol-implicated deaths were alcoholic liver disease (67 per cent), mental and behavioural disorders due to alcohol use (19 per cent), and accidental poisoning by, and exposure to, alcohol (14 per cent).<sup>16</sup> From 1997 to 2007 there was an average of seven injury deaths per annum in the ACT where alcohol was recorded as a known contributing factor.<sup>17</sup>

## The current alcohol regulatory environment

The Liquor Act 2010 (the Act) provides the framework for regulating of the promotion, sale and supply of alcohol in the ACT. The Office of Regulatory Services oversees the regulation of the Act, with the Department of Justice and Community Safety holding responsibility for policy development.

The Act sets out clear provisions in which the promotion, sale and supply of alcohol must occur under the objects of the Act. These objects include the minimisation of the harms associated with alcohol consumption. Along with the objects of the Act, the Act also includes harm minimisation and community safety principles, which are referred to when decisions are being made under the Act.

## Availability of alcohol

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There are currently 674 active liquor licenses in the ACT.<sup>18</sup> In the ACT there is one liquor licence for every 430 persons aged over the age of 18 years.<sup>19</sup> Of these 674 licenses the majority are on-licence (383).

Livense type	Number
Club	58
General	16
Off-licence	197
On-licence	383
Special	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>674</b>

The ACT allows for alcohol to be sold in the supermarkets in the same transaction as groceries. In the ACT trading hours depend on the type of licence category, the standard trading hours for off-licence is the between 9.00am and 11.00pm.

The standard trading hours for clubs, general, on-licence and special licences are 7.00am to midnight. The trading hours that operate outside of the standard trading hours depend on the hours approved by decision makers, the earliest these licence categories can sell alcohol is 7.00am with the latest being 5.00am.

These trading hours are regulated under the Act and specified in the *Liquor Regulation 2010*.



## Promotion and price of alcohol

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The ACT Government has a regulatory and enforcement role to restrict harmful discounting and promotions under the Act. The Liquor (Responsible Promotion of Liquor) Guidelines 2012 (No 1)<sup>20</sup> (Guidelines) sit under section 223 of the Act. These Guidelines outline a set of liquor promotion principles that are consistent with the harm minimisation and community safety principles in the Act to ensure that the promotion of alcohol does not encourage irresponsible or excessive alcohol consumption.

Along with these Guidelines, regulation 29 of the Liquor Regulation 2010 (the Regulation) sets out advertising and promotional practices that are prohibited. These include that “Advertisements or promotions involving discounted or free alcoholic beverages must not go beyond reasonable limits” such as discounts of 50 per cent or more, and happy hour periods of longer than two hours or that extend beyond midnight.

## Data collection

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Under the Act the collection of alcohol wholesales data is regulated. The ACT is one of four jurisdictions in Australia that collects alcohol wholesales data. The other jurisdictions are Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

## Support for policy measures to reduce alcohol-related harms in the ACT

The 2010 National Drug Strategy Household Survey also reports on ACT support for a range of policy measures to reduce alcohol-related harms. In 2010, 49.3 per cent of residents aged over 14 years were in support for reducing trading hours for pubs and clubs, this is higher than the national average of 48.2 per cent.<sup>21</sup> Support for restricting late night trading hours in the ACT was consistent with the national average, 63.6 per cent compared to 63.9 per cent respectively.<sup>22</sup>

In 2010, 29.1 per cent of ACT residents over the age of 14 years supported increasing the price of alcohol.<sup>23</sup> This is higher than the national average of 28.5 per cent.<sup>24</sup>

The 2010 National Drug Strategy Household Survey found that support for banning alcohol sponsorship of sporting events is the highest in the ACT compared to all other jurisdictions with 52.4 per cent of ACT residents supporting this policy. This is also higher than the national average of 48.3 per cent.<sup>25</sup>

## Opportunities for strengthening alcohol regulation to prevent harms

There are several opportunities to strengthen the regulation of alcohol availability and the price and promotion of alcohol in order to reduce the harms associated with alcohol. The NSW ACT Alcohol Policy Alliance’s policy position paper outlines these options for reform in more detail. For more information visit [www.naapa.org.au](http://www.naapa.org.au).

## References

- <sup>1</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). (2011). 2010 National Drug Strategy Household Survey report. July. Drug Statistics Series Number 25P. Canberra: AIHW.
- <sup>2</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>5</sup> ACT Health, ASSAD, confidential unit record files, 1996-2008. Cited in: Kelly, P., Baker, C., Kee, C. (eds). (2012). Australian Capital Territory Chief Health Officer's Report 2012. Canberra: Epidemiology Branch, Population Health Division of the ACT Health Directorate, p.29.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>7</sup> ACT Health unpublished Ambulance Service Attendance 2009 data, February 2010. Cited in: ACT Government. (2010). ACT Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Strategy 2010-2014. Canberra: ACT Health Directorate, p.17
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>9</sup> ACT Health unpublished EDIS data 2008-2009. Cited in: ACT Government. (2010). ACT Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Strategy 2010-2014. Canberra: ACT Health Directorate, p.17.
- <sup>10</sup> ACT Health, Admitted Patient Care Data Collection, confidentialised unit record file, 1999-2010. Cited in: Kelly, P., Baker, C., Kee, C. (eds). (2012). Australian Capital Territory Chief Health Officer's Report 2012. Canberra: Epidemiology Branch, Population Health Division of the ACT Health Directorate, p.51.
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>13</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). (2012). Alcohol and other drug treatment services in Australia 2001-02: report on the National Minimum Data Set. Drug treatment series no. 2. AIHW Cat. no. HSE 28. Canberra: AIHW.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>15</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). (2011). Causes of Death, Australia 2009. Cat. no. 3303.0. Canberra: ABS. Cited in: Kelly, P., Baker, C., Kee, C. (eds). (2012). Australian Capital Territory Chief Health Officer's Report 2012. Canberra: Epidemiology Branch, Population Health Division of the ACT Health Directorate, p.29.
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>17</sup> Kelly, P., Baker, C., Kee, C. (eds). (2012). Australian Capital Territory Chief Health Officer's Report 2012. Canberra: Epidemiology Branch, Population Health Division of the ACT Health Directorate, p.29.
- <sup>18</sup> ACT Government Justice and Community Services. (2013). Webpage: Liquor Licence Public Registers as at 28 June 2013. Available at:  
[http://www.ors.act.gov.au/community/liquor/liquor\\_licence\\_public\\_registers](http://www.ors.act.gov.au/community/liquor/liquor_licence_public_registers)
- <sup>19</sup> Trifonoff, A., Andrew, R., Steenson, T., Nicholas, R. and Roche A.M. (2011). Liquor Licensing Legislation in Australia: An Overview. National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction (NCETA). Adelaide: Flinders University
- <sup>20</sup> ACT Government. (2013). Liquor (Responsible Promotion of Liquor) Guidelines 2012 (No 1). Available at: <http://www.legislation.act.gov.au/ni/2012-127/current/pdf/2012-127.pdf>
- <sup>21</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). (2011). 2010 National Drug Strategy Household Survey report. July. Drug Statistics Series Number 25P. Canberra: AIHW, p.175.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid.

## Founding members

The following organisations are founding members of NAAPA:

1. Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education
2. Network of Alcohol and Drug Agencies
3. Darlinghurst Resident Action Group
4. Newcastle Community Drug Action Team
5. Police Association of NSW
6. Australian Medical Association NSW
7. The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons
8. Public Health Association NSW Branch
9. Cancer Council NSW
10. National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre
11. Centre for Health Initiatives, University of Wollongong
12. Australasian College of Emergency Medicine
13. Jewish House Limited
14. Inspire Foundation
15. The Asia Pacific Centre for Crime Prevention Griffith University (Sydney)
16. University of Newcastle
17. Ulladulla Community Drug Action Team
18. Drug and Alcohol Research and Training Australia
19. Bondi Residents Association
20. Ted Noffs Foundation
21. St Vincent's Hospital
22. Australian Drug Foundation
23. Health Services Union
24. Pedestrian Council of Australia
25. The Salvation Army NSW
26. Awabakal Newcastle Aboriginal Co Operative Ltd
27. The Royal Australasian College of Physicians
28. Hello Sunday Morning (HSM)
29. Byron Bay Youth Service
30. Law Enforcement Against Prohibition (LEAP)
31. NSW Nurses and Midwives Association
32. 2011 Residents Association
33. Karralika Programs Inc.
34. Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drugs Association ACT (ATODA)
35. Ted Noffs Foundation (ACT)
36. Canberra Recovery Service, Salvation Army
37. Public Health Association of Australia ACT Branch
38. Bondi Beach Precinct
39. Cancer Council ACT

## Contact

If you would like to find out more information about NAAPA, please visit [www.naapa.org.au](http://www.naapa.org.au) or contact us at:

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