

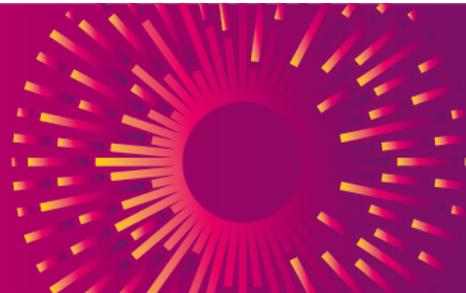


Australian Government

Australian Institute of Family Studies



Families in focus  
for 40 years 1980-2020



## MEDIA RELEASE

**Embargoed until 12.01am, Thursday 8 October 2020**

### **Australian males drinking during adolescence linked to riskier drinking later on, finds new report**

Young adult men are drinking alcohol at riskier levels than older men, and adolescent males are carrying early drinking habits with them into adulthood, according to research released today by the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS).

The latest *Ten to Men: The Australian Longitudinal Study on Male Health* report found alcohol use to be prevalent among adult males, with around nine in ten (88%) Australian men aged 18 and over having consumed alcohol in the past 12 months.

AIFS Research Fellow, Dr Brendan Quinn, said that while the majority of Australian men typically drank at levels considered to be 'low risk', young adult males aged 18-24 were significantly more likely to engage in moderate-to-high risk alcohol use than older men.<sup>1</sup>

National guidelines<sup>2</sup> recommend that adolescents and children avoid alcohol until the age of 18 years. However, approximately four in 10 [41%] adolescent Australian males aged 15–17 years were estimated to have consumed alcohol in the past 12 months. Of that group, a further four in 10 [39%] usually engaged in 'binge' drinking, consuming more than four standard drinks in a single session, and around one in 10 consumed 10 or more standard drinks in a typical session," Dr Quinn said.

"Of adolescent males aged 15–17 years who had drunk alcohol in the past year, 31 per cent drank on a monthly basis, and a further 17 per cent drank weekly or more often."

The report, which investigated the drinking habits of Australian males aged 10 years and older, also found that drinking before the recommended age of 18 years was associated with more frequent alcohol use in early adulthood. Almost half of adolescent drinkers surveyed in 2013/14 had gone on to drink alcohol at moderate-to-high-risk levels in early adulthood – compared to just 20% who had not been drinking at all in adolescence.

Anne Hollonds, Director of AIFS, said that reducing the number of males starting to drink in adolescence was crucial to the long term health of men.

"Our research shows that males who start drinking in adolescence are likely to carry high risk patterns of alcohol use into adulthood.

"It is important that parents and adolescents understand that avoiding alcohol until adulthood is best to prevent harmful habits forming early," she said.

Ms Hollonds said the negative consequences of alcohol use in Australia were well known, but that risks were heightened for young adult men.

"Compared to females, males, and especially young males who binge drink, are more commonly affected by alcohol-related harms. These harms can range from relatively common feelings of guilt or regret, blackouts, or failure to show up for work or family, but can also include alcohol related injury, diseases like cirrhosis and cancer or death," Hollonds said.

<sup>1</sup> 'Risk' was measured by the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test which assesses volume consumed, frequency of use and experience of harms.

<sup>2</sup> [National Health and Medical Research Council Draft Australian guidelines to reduce health risks from drinking alcohol 2019](#)



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Of concern, most adult Australian males who were engaging in moderate-to-high risk alcohol use in 2013/14 were still doing so the following year. Only 26% of this group had changed their alcohol use to become low-risk drinkers between data collection waves, suggesting that once drinking habits are established, they tend to persist.

“These findings are consistent with others from the latest wave of *Ten to Men* research. They suggest many Australian males experiencing adverse health or engaging in certain risk behaviours can become stuck in an unhealthy cycle. And then they find it difficult to make changes to improve their health and lifestyles,” Hollonds said.

“We need to create a culture and initiatives that support Australian men to make changes to stop them drinking at high risk levels.”

“Data collected in future waves of the *Ten to Men* study will further help improve understanding of pathways of alcohol use and other health-related behaviours among Australian males.”

Access the chapter, [Alcohol use among Australian males](#), from the *Ten to Men* study’s latest report.

### **Other key findings from *Ten to Men: Alcohol use among Australian males*:**

#### **Young boys and teens**

- The prevalence of recent alcohol use among boys aged 10–12 was less than 10%, but increased as they hit their teenage years; an estimated one-fifth of Australian boys aged 14 years had drunk at least a full a serve of alcohol (more than a sip or taste) in the past 12 months.
- Approximately 45% of Australian males aged 15–17 years were estimated to have ever consumed alcohol at least once, and 41% were estimated to have consumed alcohol in the past 12 months.
- Overall, peers’ alcohol use was important; significantly more boys with one or more friends who had consumed alcohol without their parents’ knowledge in the past year had drunk alcohol in their lifetime (52%). By comparison, out of boys with no friends who had drunk alcohol without their parents’ knowledge, only 20% had ever tried alcohol.

#### **All age groups**

- Around one-third of Australian men engage in alcohol consumption at levels associated with medium or high risk of experiencing associated harms, which include accidents, injuries and alcohol-related cancers.
- Older men aged 45 and above were significantly less likely to be engaging in medium- or high-risk (henceforth ‘riskier’) levels of alcohol use compared to those aged 18–24 years.
- Around 28% of adult men who had consumed alcohol in the last year had experienced a feeling of guilt or regret after a session of drinking at least once, or been unable to remember what happened the night before due to alcohol consumption.
- 10% of adult males had a relative, friend and/or health worker (e.g. doctor) indicate concern or suggest cutting down drinking in the past year, and 3% had injured themselves and/or someone else in the past year due to alcohol use.
- Men who resided in outer regional areas had a significantly greater likelihood of engaging in riskier alcohol use (compared to those living in a major city). Poorer mental health and overall wellbeing were also associated with an increased likelihood of engaging in riskier alcohol use.

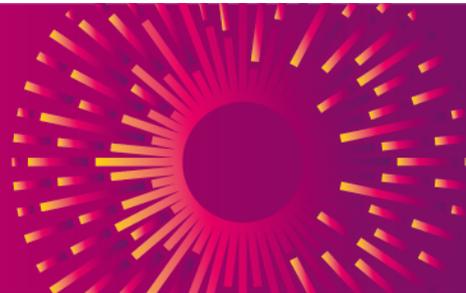


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### **About the study**

*Findings outlined above draw on data from the first two rounds of data collection for Ten to Men: The Australian Longitudinal Study on Male Health (TTM). The survey involved a sample of almost 16,000 men and boys ranging in age from 10 – 57 years.*

*The first of its kind in Australia, the TTM study follows participants over time and aims to fill gaps in knowledge about why males on average have poorer health outcomes than females, and why certain groups of males have poorer health than males in general.*

*The study is being conducted by researchers at the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) and is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health.*

*Knowledge gained in the study will be used to improve programs and policies for male health in Australia.*

### **ENDS**

#### **Media contact:**

**Lauren Everett (m) 0481 755 355 (e) [lauren.e@think-hq.com.au](mailto:lauren.e@think-hq.com.au)**

**Emma Schwarzer (m) 0466 492 520 (e) [emma@think-hq.com.au](mailto:emma@think-hq.com.au)**

AIFS conducts original research to increase understanding of Australian families and the issues that affect them. See [aifs.gov.au](http://aifs.gov.au) for more.