

3 Alcohol

Introduction

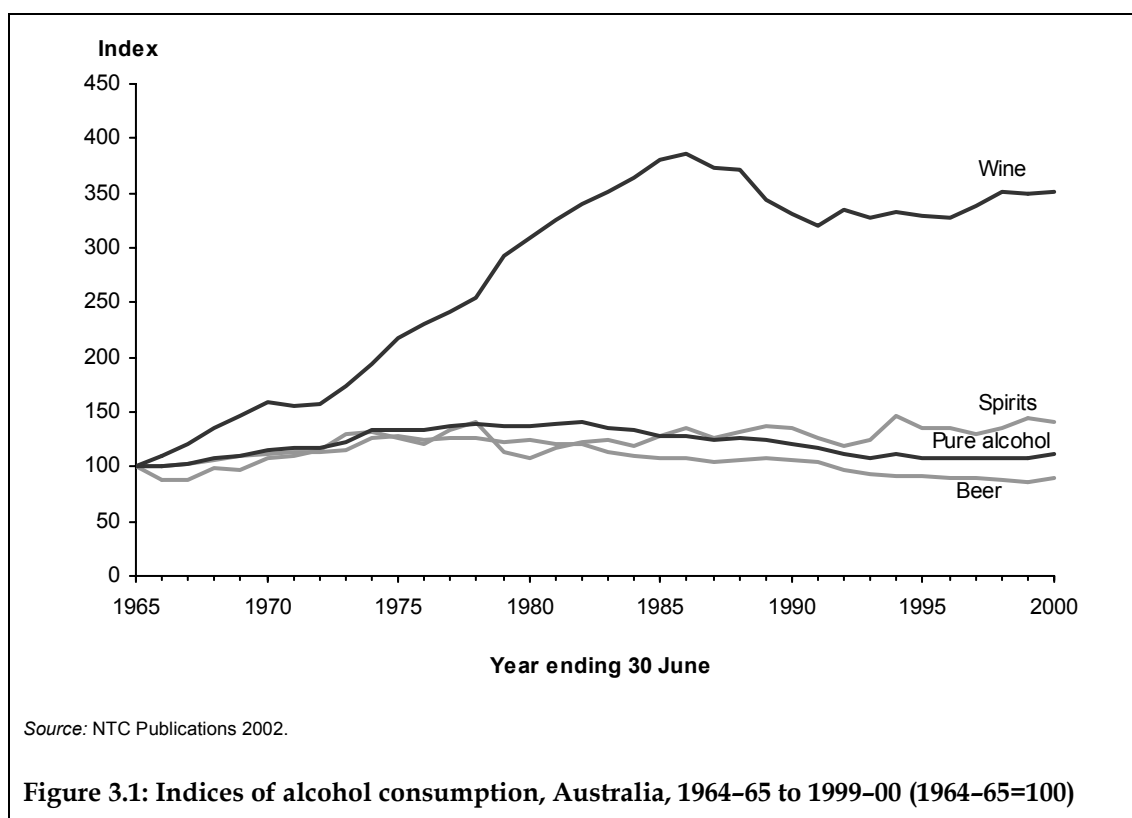
This chapter presents information on direct and indirect measures of alcohol consumption in Australia. For international comparisons of alcohol use, refer to Chapter 6. Alcohol consumption in Australia may be measured in two ways:

- official clearances through excise and customs
- estimates derived from population health surveys.

This chapter also looks at trends in apparent alcohol consumption and reported consumption from national population surveys. The latter sections of the chapter present the age and sex risk profiles associated with alcohol-related harms in the long term and the short term, and government revenue derived from the sale of alcohol.

Apparent consumption trends

There was a steady increase in the apparent consumption of alcohol in Australia for the period 1964–65 to 1981–82 as expressed by litres of pure alcohol per capita (Figure 3.1). This was followed by a decline from 9.8 litres per capita in 1981–82 to 7.8 litres per capita in 1999–00.



Consumption of beer in Australia rose steadily from 1964–65 to peak in the mid-1970s (136.5 litres per person per year in 1974–75). It has been in decline since then, although has remained stable around 95 litres per person per year since the mid-1990s.

Consumption of wine in Australia has increased almost fourfold from 5.6 litres per person in 1964–65 to 19.7 litres per person in 1999–00. This increase occurred in the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s and peaked at 21.6 litres per person in 1985–86.

Consumption of spirits in Australia rose steadily over the period from 0.9 litres of pure alcohol per person in 1964–65 to 1.3 litres of pure alcohol per person in 1999–00.

Reported consumption trends

Population trends in alcohol consumption have remained relatively unchanged over the period 1991 to 2001 (Table 3.1).

Based on results of the 2001 NDSHS, 82.4% of the population aged 14 years and over consumed alcohol in the previous 12 months, while 8.3% reported drinking every day. Daily drinkers made up between 8.3% and 10.2% of the population over the period 1991 to 2001.

Weekly drinkers – those consuming alcohol at least once per week but not every day – made up 39.5% of the population aged 14 years and over in 2001. This proportion has remained fairly stable over the period 1991 to 2001.

Ex-drinkers – those who had consumed a full serve of alcohol in their life and no alcohol in the previous 12 months – made up 8.0% of the population in 2001. This was a decrease from previous surveys.

About 10% of the population had never consumed a full serve of alcohol in their life. This was a decrease from 1993 and 1995 and about the same as in 1998.

Table 3.1: Alcohol drinking status: proportion of the population aged 14 years and over, Australia, 1991 to 2001

Alcohol drinking status	1991	1993	1995	1998	2001
			(per cent)		
Daily	10.2	8.5	8.8	8.5	8.3
Occasional ^(a)					
Weekly	41.0	39.9	35.2	40.1	39.5
Less than weekly	30.4	29.5	34.3	31.9	34.6
Total occasional ^(a)	71.4	69.4	69.5	72.0	74.1
All drinkers	81.6	77.9	78.3	80.5	82.4
Ex-drinker ^(b)	12.0	9.0	9.5	10.0	8.0
Never a full serve of alcohol	6.5	13.0	12.2	9.4	9.6

(a) An occasional drinker is a person who drinks alcohol less than daily, that is, weekly or less than weekly.

(b) An ex-drinker has consumed at least a full serve of alcohol, but not in the last 12 months.

Sources: National Campaign Against Drug Abuse Household Survey 1991, 1993; National Drug Strategy Household Survey 1995, 1998, 2001.

Consumption by age and sex

In 2001, the proportion of the population aged 14 years and over that consumed alcohol peaked in 20–29-year-olds (90.1%) then decreased with age (Table 3.2).

Conversely, the proportion of the population that consumed alcohol every day increased with age from 0.4% of 14–19-year-olds to 16.1% of those aged 60 years or more.

Overall, males were twice as likely as females to drink alcohol every day, with 22.7% of males aged 60 years or more consuming alcohol compared with 10.6% of females.

Table 3.2: Alcohol drinking status: proportion of the population aged 14 years and over, by age and sex, Australia, 2001

Alcohol drinking status	Age group						All ages
	14–19	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60+	
	(per cent)						
	Males						
Daily	0.3	4.2	6.6	11.5	17.6	22.7	11.1
Occasional ^(a)							
Weekly	31.2	54.8	53.0	48.2	47.0	36.3	46.0
Less than weekly	41.2	32.5	30.5	28.8	22.9	20.8	28.8
<i>Total occasional^(a)</i>	<i>72.4</i>	<i>87.4</i>	<i>83.5</i>	<i>77.0</i>	<i>69.9</i>	<i>57.1</i>	<i>74.8</i>
All drinkers	72.7	91.6	90.1	88.5	87.5	79.8	85.8
Ex-drinker ^(b)	5.6	3.2	4.6	7.2	7.7	11.9	6.8
Never a full serve of alcohol	21.7	5.2	5.3	4.3	4.8	8.2	7.4
	Females						
Daily	0.5	1.8	2.9	6.3	9.1	10.6	5.6
Occasional ^(a)							
Weekly	25.4	39.4	35.2	39.0	33.6	25.2	33.2
Less than weekly	48.7	47.5	45.9	38.2	35.3	30.7	40.3
<i>Total occasional^(a)</i>	<i>74.1</i>	<i>86.8</i>	<i>81.1</i>	<i>77.3</i>	<i>68.9</i>	<i>55.9</i>	<i>73.5</i>
All drinkers	74.6	88.6	84.0	83.6	78.0	66.5	79.1
Ex-drinker ^(b)	3.9	5.8	9.5	8.0	11.5	13.5	9.2
Never a full serve of alcohol	21.5	5.6	6.5	8.4	10.5	20.0	11.7
	Persons						
Daily	0.4	3.0	4.7	8.9	13.4	16.1	8.3
Occasional ^(a)							
Weekly	28.3	47.2	43.9	43.7	40.4	30.3	39.5
Less than weekly	44.9	39.9	38.4	33.4	29.0	26.2	34.6
<i>Total occasional^(a)</i>	<i>73.2</i>	<i>87.1</i>	<i>82.3</i>	<i>77.2</i>	<i>69.4</i>	<i>56.5</i>	<i>74.1</i>
All drinkers	73.6	90.1	87.0	86.1	82.8	72.6	82.4
Ex-drinker ^(b)	4.8	4.5	7.1	7.6	9.6	12.8	8.0
Never a full serve of alcohol	21.6	5.4	5.9	6.3	7.6	14.6	9.6

(a) Occasional drinkers are those who drink alcohol less than daily, that is, weekly or less than weekly.

(b) Has consumed at least a full serve of alcohol, but not in the last 12 months.

Source: National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2001.

Risk of alcohol-related harm in the long term

Around 76% of males and 70% of females aged 14 years and over consumed alcohol at levels at which there is minimal risk of alcohol-related harm (Table 3.3). For males, 'low risk' is defined as the consumption of up to 28 standard drinks per week on average in the 12 months before the 2001 NDSHS. For females, this was the consumption of up to 14 standard drinks per week on average over the same period.

Overall, 9.9% of the population consumed alcohol at levels that are considered 'risky' or 'high risk' for alcohol-related harm in the long term. For males, the peak occurred among 20–29-year-olds, of whom 14.5% consumed an average of 29 or more standard drinks every week in the previous 12 months. For females, the peak also occurred among 20–29-year-olds of whom 14.9% consumed on average 15 or more standard drinks each week in the previous 12 months.

In 2001, 17.5% of the population aged 14 years and over did not drink a full serve of alcohol in the previous 12 months.

Table 3.3: Risk of harm in the long term: proportion of the population aged 14 years and over, by age and sex, Australia, 2001

Age group	Abstainers ^(a)	Level of risk ^(b)		
		Low risk	Risky	High risk
(per cent)				
Males				
14–19	27.2	64.0	6.1	2.7
20–29	8.4	77.1	9.5	5.0
30–39	9.8	81.4	5.8	3.1
40–49	11.4	79.0	6.4	3.2
50–59	12.5	75.8	7.3	4.3
60+	20.1	71.9	5.4	2.6
All ages	14.1	75.6	6.7	3.5
Females				
14–19	25.3	60.1	9.9	4.7
20–29	11.3	73.7	10.9	4.0
30–39	16.0	75.4	6.8	1.9
40–49	16.4	73.9	7.8	1.9
50–59	21.9	70.7	5.9	1.5
60+	33.0	62.6	3.7	0.7
All ages	20.8	69.8	7.2	2.2
Persons				
14–19	26.2	62.1	8.0	3.7
20–29	9.9	75.4	10.2	4.5
30–39	13.0	78.3	6.3	2.5
40–49	13.9	76.5	7.1	2.6
50–59	17.1	73.3	6.6	2.9
60+	27.1	66.8	4.4	1.6
All ages	17.5	72.7	7.0	2.9

(a) Not consumed alcohol in the last 12 months.

(b) For males, the consumption of up to 28 standard drinks per week is considered 'Low risk', 29 to 42 per week 'Risky', and 43 or more per week 'High risk'. For females, the consumption of up to 14 standard drinks per week is considered 'Low risk', 15 to 28 per week 'Risky' and 29 or more per week 'High risk'.

Source: National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2001.

Risk of alcohol-related harm in the short term

One in three persons aged 14 years or more consumed alcohol in a way that put themselves at significantly increased risk of alcohol-related harm in the short term (Table 3.4). Around 39% of males consumed 7 or more standard drinks and 29.6% of females consumed 5 or more standard drinks on at least one day in the previous 12 months.

In 2001, 64.2% of males aged 20–29 years consumed 7 or more standard drinks on at least one day in the last 12 months, which includes 14.6% of 20–29-year-old males that consumed this amount every week during the same period. Around 46% of females aged 14–19 years consumed 5 or more standard drinks on at least one day in the last 12 months, including 11.8% of 14–19-year-old females that consumed this amount every week during the same period.

About half of the population consumed alcohol at levels for which there was minimal risk of harm in the short term, while 17.5% did not consume alcohol at all.

Table 3.4: Risk of harm in the short term: proportion of the population aged 14 years and over, by age and sex, Australia, 2001

Age group	Abstainers ^(a)	Low risk ^(b)	Risky and high risk ^(c)			Total risky and high risk
			At least yearly but less than monthly	At least monthly but less than weekly	At least weekly	
(per cent)						
Males						
14–19	27.2	30.0	13.3	19.8	9.6	42.8
20–29	8.4	27.4	21.7	27.8	14.6	64.2
30–39	9.8	39.7	22.2	20.4	7.8	50.4
40–49	11.4	50.7	17.2	12.9	7.7	37.9
50–59	12.5	59.1	11.7	8.5	8.2	28.4
60+	20.1	66.5	5.8	3.6	4.0	13.4
All ages	14.1	46.5	15.5	15.3	8.5	39.4
Females						
14–19	25.3	28.3	13.4	21.2	11.8	46.4
20–29	11.3	32.1	20.4	26.8	9.3	56.5
30–39	16.0	47.5	18.9	12.8	4.8	36.6
40–49	16.4	55.1	14.7	9.3	4.6	28.6
50–59	21.9	62.0	8.6	4.3	3.3	16.1
60+	33.0	62.3	2.0	1.3	1.3	4.7
All ages	20.8	49.6	12.7	11.6	5.3	29.6
Persons						
14–19	26.2	29.2	13.4	20.5	10.7	44.6
20–29	9.9	29.8	21.1	27.3	12.0	60.4
30–39	13.0	43.7	20.5	16.5	6.3	43.3
40–49	13.9	52.8	16.0	11.1	6.2	33.3
50–59	17.1	60.5	10.2	6.4	5.8	22.3
60+	27.1	64.2	3.7	2.4	2.6	8.7
All ages	17.5	48.1	14.1	13.4	6.9	34.4

(a) Not consumed alcohol in the last 12 months.

(b) For males, the consumption of up to 6 standard drinks on any one day. For females, the consumption of up to 4 standard drinks on any one day.

(c) For males, the consumption of 7 or more standard drinks on any one day. For females, the consumption of 5 or more standard drinks on any one day.

Source: National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2001.

Government revenue

There are four areas related to alcohol consumption from which State, Territory and Commonwealth governments earn revenue: excise on domestic goods, customs duty on imported products, sales tax (to June 2000) or goods and services tax (from July 2000) and business franchise fees. In August 1997, the High Court ruled that the States and Territories could no longer collect State business franchise fees. Between August 1997 and June 2000 the Commonwealth Government collected additional tax and refunded this to the States and Territories. Information on sales tax and goods and services tax is not available at the commodity level.

In the context of the above, the net government revenue associated with alcohol increased from \$2.4 billion in 1995–96 to \$3.1 billion in 2000–01 (Table 3.5). The amount of revenue raised from excise remained relatively stable over the period 1995–96 to 2001–02, given that from 2000–01, the increase in excise on beer was offset by the decrease in State franchise fees following the August 1997 High Court decision. The revenue raised from customs duty on imported products has increased from \$577 million in 1995–96 to \$1,111 million in 2001–02.

Table 3.5: Government revenue from duty paid and State business franchise fees related to the sale of alcohol, Australia, 1995–96 to 2001–02

Duty	1995–96	1996–97	1997–98	1998–99	1999–00	2000–01	2001–02
	(\$m)						
Excise							
Beer	864	870	882	873	878	1,705	1,654
Spirits ^(a)	201	163	142	144	150	201	101
<i>Total excise</i>	<i>1,065</i>	<i>1,033</i>	<i>1,024</i>	<i>1,017</i>	<i>1,029</i>	<i>1,906</i>	<i>1,756</i>
Customs							
Beer	7	9	12	14	14	36	45
Wine	4	3	4	4	4	3	4
Spirits	565	645	717	720	751	1,074	1,062
<i>Total customs</i>	<i>577</i>	<i>657</i>	<i>732</i>	<i>737</i>	<i>770</i>	<i>1,113</i>	<i>1,111</i>
State franchise taxes ^(b)	735	774	532	921	973	97	n.a.
Total	2,377	2,464	2,288	2,675	2,772	3,116	2,867 ^(c)

(a) There was a decrease in excise duty for spirits in 1996–97 due to a policy change which treated imported spirits for mixed drinks as customable rather than excisable.

(b) On 5 August 1997 the High Court determined that State business franchise taxes are an excise and cannot be imposed by the States and Territories. Effective from 7 August 1997, the Commonwealth is collecting the tax on behalf of the States and Territories as an equivalent amount of additional tax.

(c) Excludes State franchise taxes which were not available at the time of publication.

Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics, unpublished data; Australian Bureau of Statistics 2002a.