



Drug and Alcohol Services South Australia  
Statistical Bulletin

Number 12 - June 2017

Health Omnibus Survey 2016: a summary of the results  
relating to alcohol consumption.

Public - I1 - A1

***Health Omnibus Survey 2016: a summary of the results relating to alcohol consumption***

This Bulletin is the twelfth in a series providing the most up-to-date data available on the prevalence of alcohol and other drug use, the harms associated with use, and alcohol and other drug treatment services in South Australia.

The Health Omnibus Survey (HOS) is an annual survey of a representative sample of South Australian residents, which collects data that can be used to plan, monitor and evaluate health programs and other initiatives in South Australia. Information gathered for Drug and Alcohol Services South Australia (DASSA) focuses on alcohol consumption, including risky drinking<sup>1</sup>.

In 2016, survey results were based on 3,046 face-to-face interviews conducted by Harrison Research between September and December 2016 in both metropolitan and regional South Australia. Approximately equal numbers of men ( $N=1497$ ; 49%) and women ( $N=1549$ ; 51%) participated in the survey, and the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents (2%) was representative of the South Australian population.

A total of 10 questions relating to alcohol consumption were included in the 2016 survey. Questions were adapted from the National Drug Strategy Household Survey (NDSHS)<sup>2</sup>. The NDSHS questions were first included in the HOS in 2011; comparisons are therefore made from 2011 to 2016. Information on risky drinking is presented separately for single occasion and lifetime use.

## **Key findings**

### **Alcohol consumption: frequency**

In 2016, 80% of South Australians aged 15 years and over had consumed alcohol at least once in the previous 12 months (47% drank at least weekly and 7.5% daily), and 20% were abstainers<sup>3</sup>. This has remained stable since 2011, although there are sex and age differences.

A greater proportion of men consume alcohol than women (82% compared with 77%) and nearly twice as many drink daily (9.6% compared with 5.5%). However, daily drinking decreased among men between 2011 (12%) and 2016 (9.6%), and there has been a decrease in the proportion of women who have never consumed alcohol.

Older age groups are consuming alcohol more often, with at least weekly consumption in 2016 highest among those aged 50-59 years (58%), followed by those aged 40-49 years (56%). Daily drinking was highest among those aged 60 years and over (16%).

***Men and those aged 40-59 years consume alcohol more often; daily drinking is highest among those aged 60 years and over.***

### **Alcohol consumption: quantity**

For the majority (79%) of South Australians in 2016, quantities of alcohol *usually* consumed in a session fell within the national guidelines for consumption at levels that would not put them at risk of injury from a single drinking occasion (four drinks or less). Half of South Australians reported usually drinking quantities of alcohol that fell within the national guidelines for consumption at levels that would not put them at risk of disease or injury over a lifetime (two drinks or less on average).

Men consume larger quantities of alcohol than women, with 27% usually drinking five drinks or more (15% of women). In addition, the proportion drinking larger quantities increased among those aged 40-49 years, from 18% to 25%. Although the youngest age group (15-19 years) was most likely to consume five drinks or more in 2016 (36%), this has decreased over time, from 51% in 2011.

***Men and young people drink larger quantities of alcohol, although this has decreased among 15-19 year olds and increased among 40-49 year olds.***

## **Risky drinking**

In 2016, 26% of South Australians aged 15 years and over drank at levels that put them at risk of injury on a single occasion at least monthly, unchanged from both 2011 and 2015. A higher proportion of men (35%) than women (17%) drank at these levels monthly, but there was a decrease in men drinking at these levels at least weekly (from 22% to 16%).

In 2016, 17% of South Australians aged 15 years and over drank at levels that put them at risk of injury or disease over a lifetime. Again, a higher proportion of men (24%) than women (9.1%) drank at these levels, but there was a decrease between 2011 and 2016 (from 29% to 24%).

***A higher proportion of men drink at risky levels both on a single occasion of drinking and over a lifetime, but there have been decreases over time in both risk measures.***

From 2011 to 2016, 20-29 year olds had the highest proportion drinking at risky levels at least monthly (ranging from 39% to 48%); in 2016 this was followed by those aged 40-49 (34%) and 15-19 years (30%). Risky drinking at least weekly decreased from 2011 to 2016 among those aged 20-39 years, and increased among those aged 40-49 years.

From 2014 to 2016, the highest proportion drinking at levels that put them at risk of injury or disease over a lifetime were aged 40-49 years (25% in 2016) and 50-59 years (23% in 2016), in contrast to previous years where the highest proportion was aged 20-29 years. There were decreases in the proportions between 2011 and 2016 for those under 40 years, and an increase among those aged 50-59 years.

***The 20-29 year age group includes the highest proportion of single occasion risky drinkers, although this has decreased over time. Lifetime risky drinking is more prevalent among those aged 40-59 years.***

## Frequency of alcohol consumption<sup>4</sup>

### **Men consume alcohol more often but there has been a decrease in women who have never consumed alcohol.**

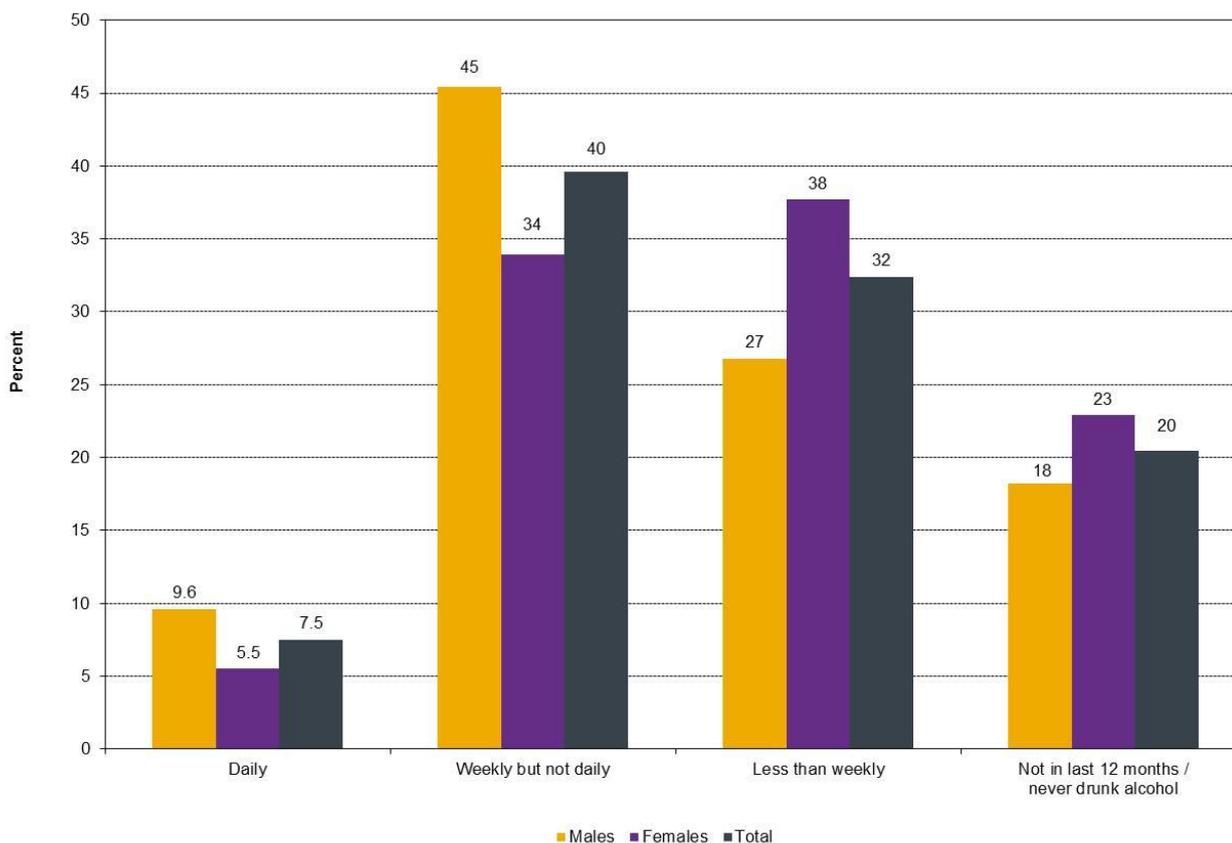
In 2016, 80% of South Australians reported consuming alcohol in the last 12 months. This has remained relatively stable since data collection began in 2011 (79%). Just under half (47%) drank at least weekly; 40% weekly and 7.5% daily (see Figure 1).

One-fifth of South Australians were abstainers: almost three-fifths of these (57%) were women and 56% were 40 years and over, with a median age of 45 years. Although there was a significant decrease between 2011 and 2015 in the proportion of women who abstained (from 25% to 21%), suggesting increased consumption among women, this was not maintained in 2016 (23%). However, when excluding ex-drinkers and comparing those who had consumed alcohol in the last 12 months with those who had never consumed alcohol, there was a significant decrease among women between 2011 (15%) and 2016 (12%). This suggests that there has been a decrease over time in the proportion of women who have never consumed alcohol.

Between 2011 and 2016 there was a significant increase in the percentage of South Australians who drank 2-3 days a week (from 9.3% to 13%) and a decrease in drinking less often (from 15% to 12%). This suggests that there has been a decrease over time in the proportion of South Australians who consumed alcohol at low frequencies.

A significantly higher proportion of men (82%) than women (77%) reported alcohol consumption in the previous 12 months. Men were significantly more likely to consume alcohol at least once a week (55% compared with 39% of women), and almost twice as likely to drink daily (9.6% compared with 5.5% of women). The difference in drinking frequency between sexes was unchanged from previous years, although daily drinking has decreased significantly among men, from 12% in 2011 to 9.6% in 2016. Men consistently drink alcohol more often than women, although daily drinking has decreased.

Figure 1: Alcohol consumption in the previous 12 months among South Australians aged 15 years and over, 2016



Source: South Australian Health Omnibus Survey 2016

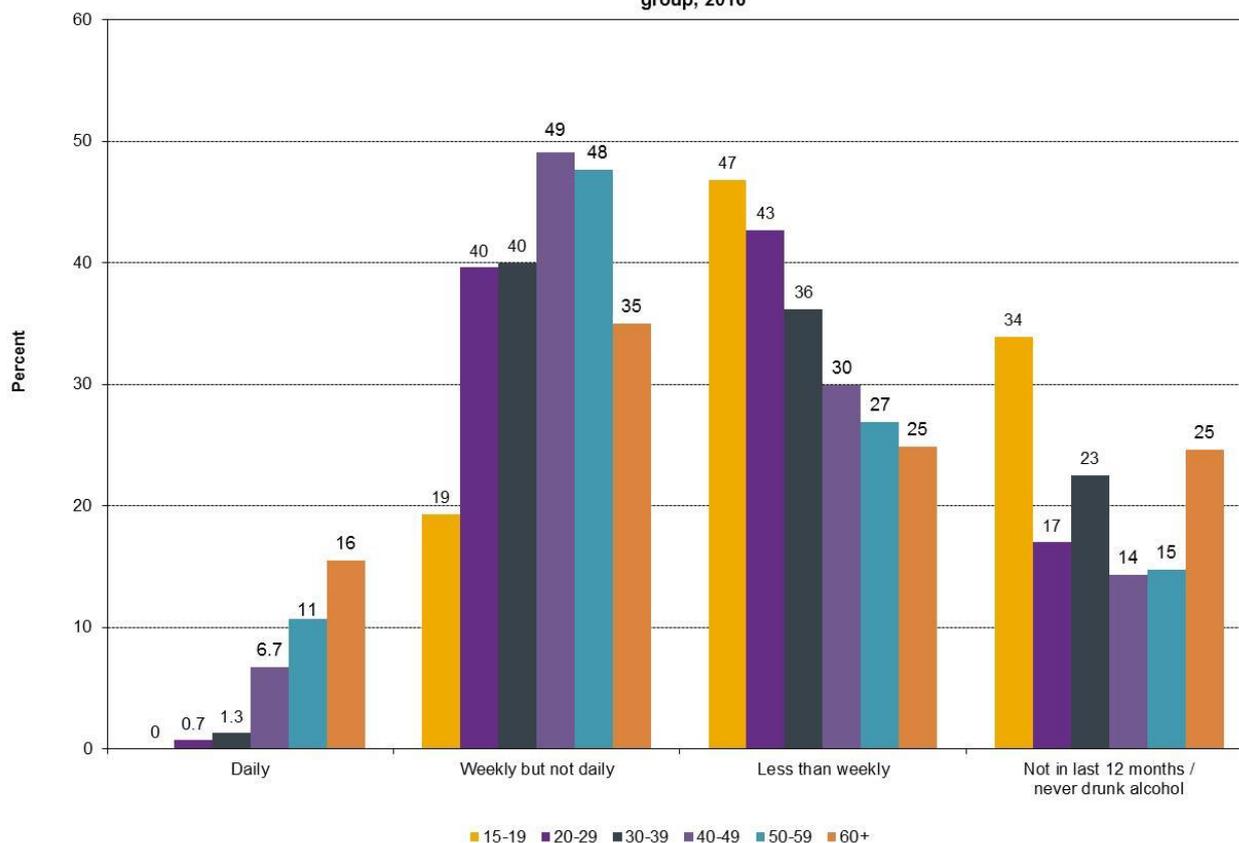
**Older age groups are consuming alcohol more often.**

Figure 2 shows the proportion of South Australians in 2016 who reported consuming alcohol by age group. At least weekly consumption was highest among those aged 50-59 and 40-49 years (59% and 56%, respectively), and lowest among those aged 15-19 years (19%).

Daily drinking was highest among those aged 60 years and over (16%), and there was a significant decrease in those aged 60 years and over who had never consumed alcohol (from 13% in 2011 to 8.1% in 2016). Conversely, there was a significant decrease in daily drinking among those aged 30-39 years, from 3.7% in 2011 to 1.3% in 2016.

No 15-19 year olds reported daily drinking in 2016. There have been no significant changes in consumption patterns among this age group over time.

Figure 2: Alcohol consumption in the previous 12 months among South Australians aged 15 years and over by age group, 2016



Source: South Australian Health Omnibus Survey 2016

**Quantity<sup>1</sup> of alcohol consumption<sup>5</sup>**

The majority of South Australians (79%) in 2016 reported that they usually consumed between a half and four standard drinks on a drinking day; this has not changed since 2011.

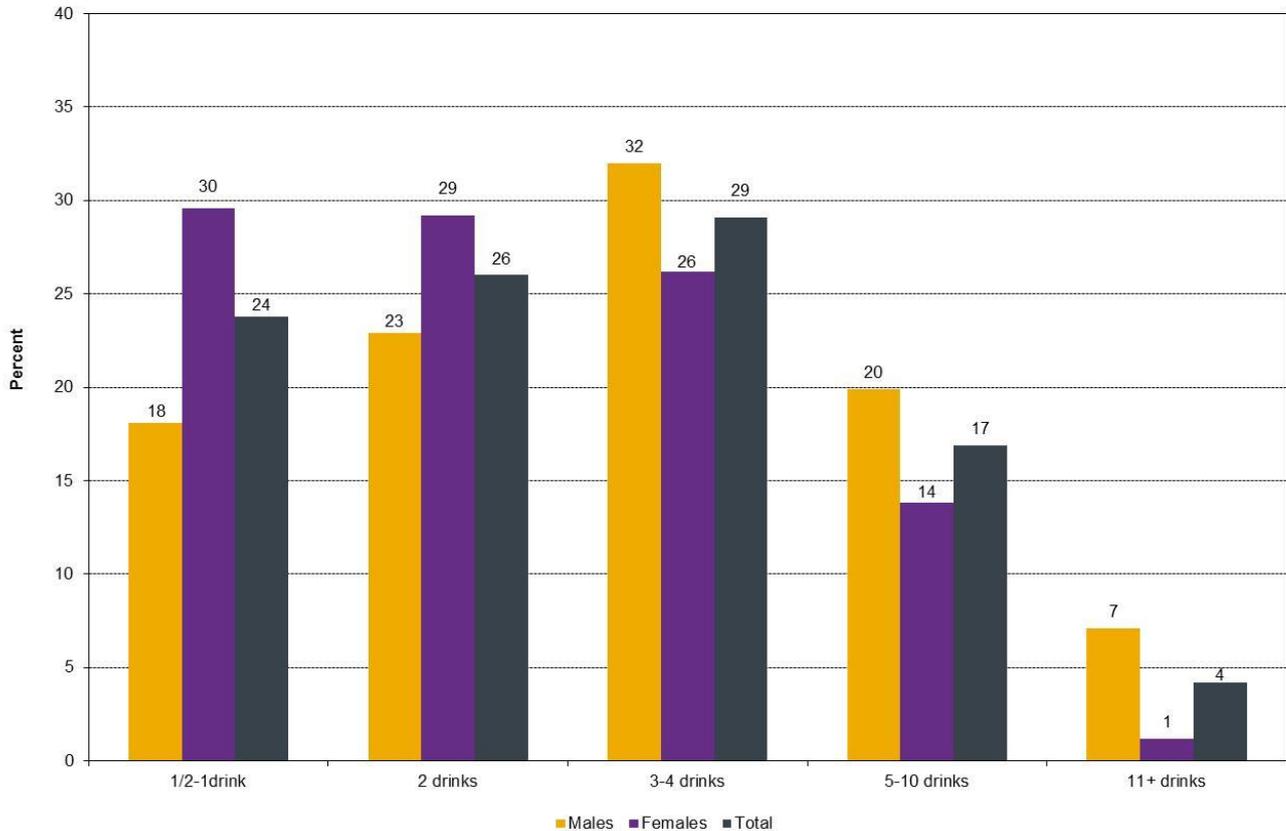
**Men consume larger quantities of alcohol than women.**

On a single drinking occasion, a significantly lower proportion of men (73%) than women (85%) reported *usually* having between a half and four standard drinks (Figure 3). Thus, 27% of men and 15% of women reported usually consuming five or more drinks on a drinking day (an amount that exceeds the national guidelines for consumption at levels that would not put them at risk of injury from a single drinking occasion<sup>6</sup>).

<sup>1</sup> This section excludes participants who had not consumed alcohol in the last 12 months, or had never consumed alcohol.

Of those who drank, the majority (91%) reported having at least one alcohol-free day per week in the previous 12 months; 88% of men and 93% of women. This is unchanged from previous years.

Figure 3: Number of standard drinks usually consumed by South Australians aged 15 years and over on a drinking day, by sex, 2016

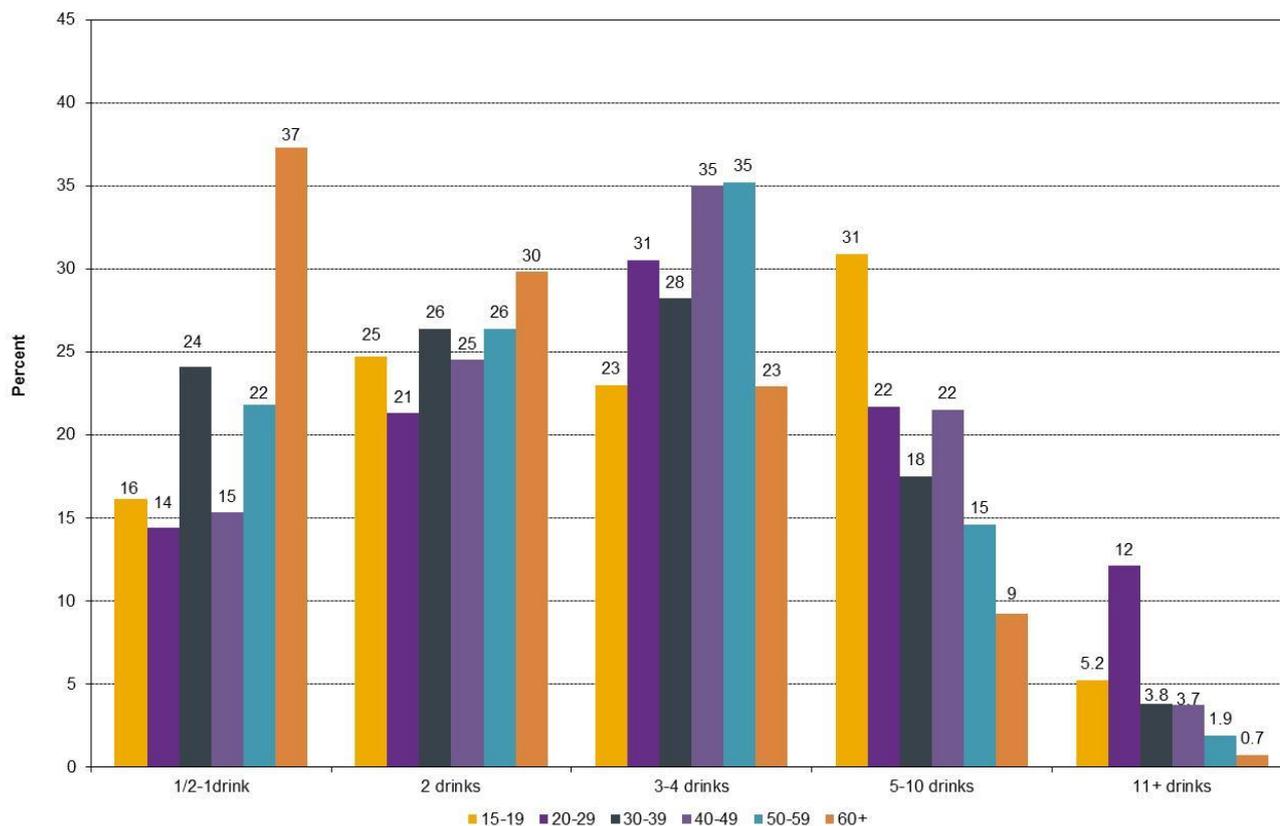


Source: South Australian Health Omnibus Survey 2016

**Drinking larger quantities decreased among 15-19 years, and increased among 40-49 years.**

The proportion that usually consumed four drinks or less on a single drinking occasion (within the guidelines) generally increased with age (see Figure 4). Almost two-thirds (64%) of those aged 15-19 years consumed four drinks or less, followed by 66% of those aged 20-29 years, and 79% of those aged 30-39 years. This increased to 82% of those aged 40-49 years and 83% of those aged 50-59 years. Ninety percent of those aged 60 years and over usually consumed four drinks or less on a single drinking occasion. There was a significant decrease between 2011 and 2016 in the percentage consuming five or more drinks among those aged 15-19 years, from 51% to 36%, and a significant increase between 2015 and 2016 among those aged 40-49 years, from 18% to 25%. There were no changes among other age groups.

Figure 4: Number of standard drinks usually consumed by South Australians aged 15 years and over on a drinking day, by age group, 2016



Source: South Australian Health Omnibus Survey 2016

## Risky alcohol consumption – single occasion

***Single occasion risky drinking at least monthly has remained stable over time among men and women but single occasion risky drinking at least weekly has decreased among men.***

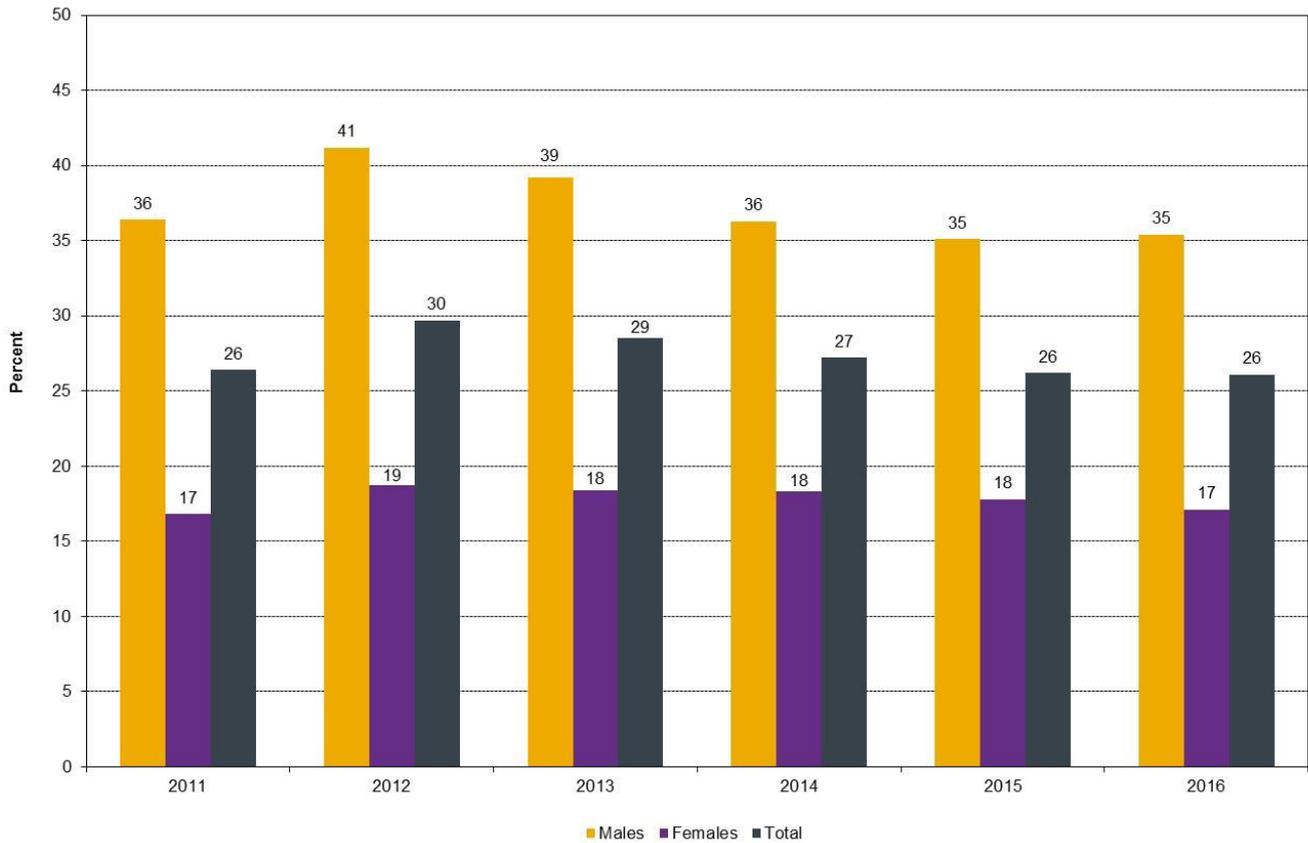
In 2016, 26% of South Australians aged 15 years and over drank at levels that put them at risk of injury on a single occasion **at least monthly** (Figure 5). There was no significant trend over time (2011 to 2016); the increase seen between 2011 (26%) and 2013 (29%) was not sustained in the subsequent three years. In addition, there was no change between 2011 and 2016 in the proportion of South Australians that reported drinking at levels that increased their risk of injury from a single occasion **at least once in the previous 12 months** (44% in both years). In 2016, men were significantly more likely to drink at these levels at least monthly (35% compared with 17% of women).

While single occasion risk at least monthly has not changed over time, there was a significant decrease between 2011 and 2016 in the proportion that reported drinking at these levels **at least weekly**, from 14% to 11%.

As was found for all South Australians, single occasion risky drinking at least monthly did not change among men between 2011 (36%) and 2016 (35%). There was also no change in the proportion that drank at these levels at least yearly (55% in both years). However, there was a significant decrease between 2011 (22%) and 2016 (16%) in the proportion that reported drinking at these levels at least weekly.

There was no change among women between 2011 and 2016 in the proportion that reported drinking at these levels that at least monthly (17% in both years). There was also no significant change in the proportion that drank at these levels at least yearly (34% in both years) or at least weekly (6.7% in 2011 and 6.9% in 2016).

**Figure 5: The proportion of South Australians aged 15 years and over who drank at levels that put them at risk of injury from a single drinking occasion at least monthly, 2011-2016**



Source: South Australian Health Omnibus Survey 2011-2016

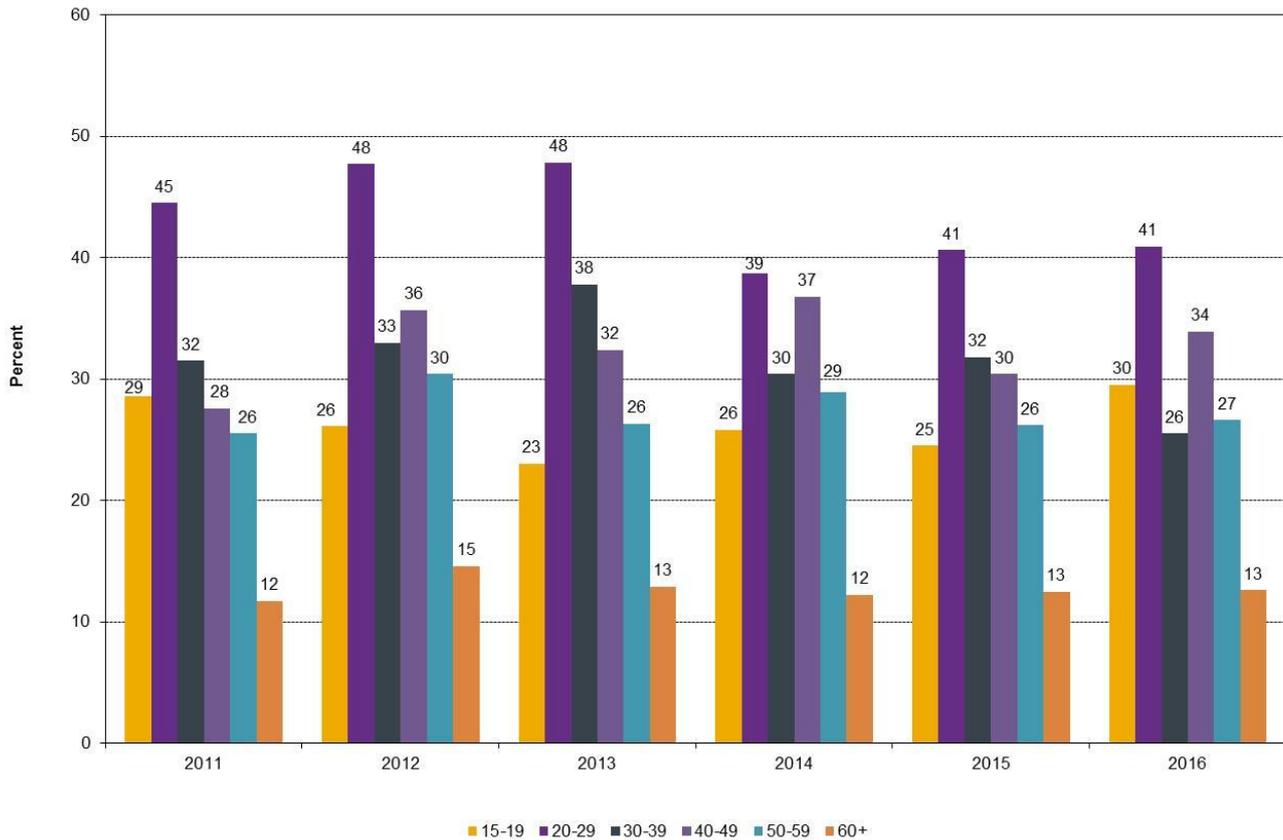
***Single occasion risky drinking at least monthly is highest among 20-29 and 40-49 year olds, but there has been a decrease over time for 20-29 year olds.***

Figure 6 shows that in all six years (2011 to 2016), the group with the highest proportion drinking at risky levels was aged 20-29 years (ranging from 39% to 48%). In 2016 this was followed by those aged 40-49 (34%) and 15-19 (30%). The group with the lowest proportion in 2016 was aged 60 years or over (13%) and 30-39 (26%). This differs from 2015, where the group with the second highest proportion drinking at risky levels was aged 30-39 (32%), followed by those aged 40-49 (30%).

Although 20-29 year olds had the highest proportion that drank at risky levels at least monthly, there was a significant decrease among this group since its peak in 2012 (48%), to 41% in 2016. There were no significant changes between 2011 and 2016 among any other age group.

There was a significant decrease over time (2011-2016) in the proportion of South Australians who drank at levels that put them at risk of injury on a single occasion at least weekly among those aged 20-29 years (26% to 13%) and 30-39 years (15% to 10%), and an increase among those aged 40-49 years (15% to 19%).

**Figure 6: The proportion of South Australians aged 15 years and over who drank at levels that put them at risk of injury from a single drinking occasion at least monthly, by age group, 2011-2016**



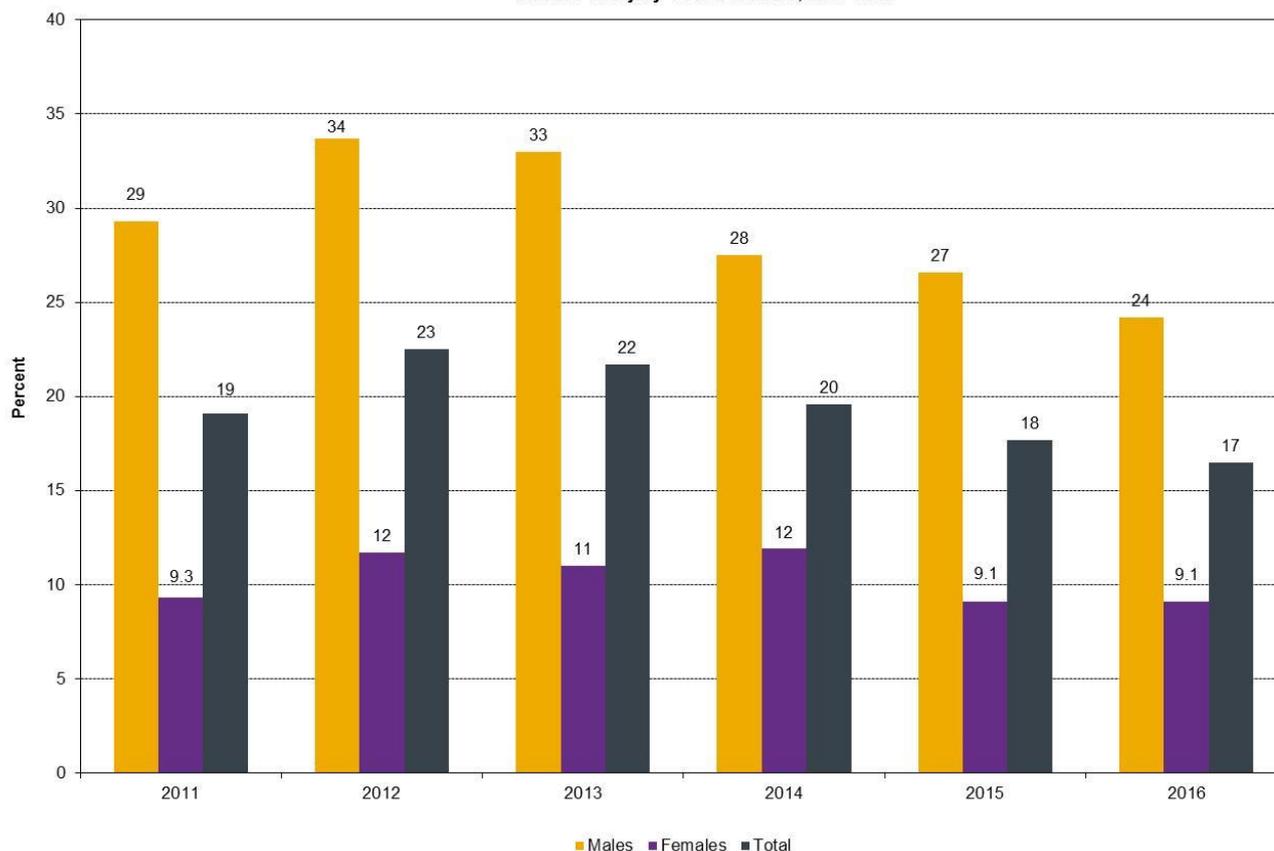
Source: South Australian Health Omnibus Survey 2011-2016

## Risky alcohol consumption – lifetime

### *Lifetime risk has decreased significantly over time among men.*

Figure 7 shows that in 2016, 17% of South Australians aged 15 years and over drank at levels that put them at risk of injury or disease over a lifetime. There was a significant increase between 2011 (19%) and 2013 (22%) for both men and women, followed by a return to 2011 levels in 2014 (20%). However, there has been a significant decrease since data collection began, from 19% in 2011 to 17% in 2016. Lifetime risky drinking decreased significantly between 2011 and 2016 among men (29% to 24%) but not women (9.3% to 9.1%).

**Figure 7: The proportion of South Australians aged 15 years and over who drank at levels that put them at risk of disease or injury over a lifetime, 2011-2016**



Source: South Australian Health Omnibus Survey 2011-2016

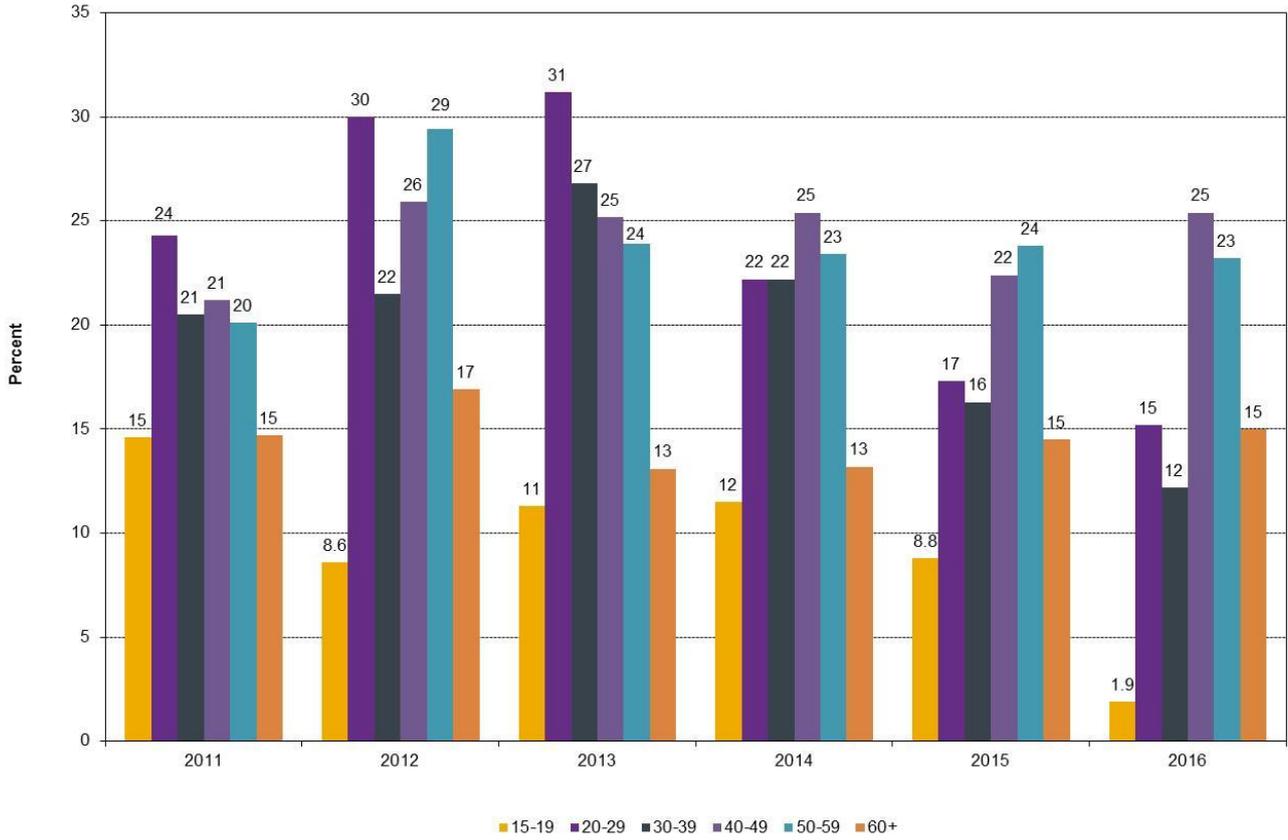
***Lifetime risky drinking is now highest among 40-49 and 50-59 year olds and has decreased among the younger age groups.***

Figure 8 shows that from 2011-2013, the group with the highest proportion drinking at levels that put them at risk of injury or disease over a lifetime was aged 20-29 years (ranging from 24% in 2011 to 31% in 2014). However, by 2016 the proportion had decreased significantly to 15%.

From 2014 to 2016, the highest proportion drinking at these levels were aged 40-49 years (25% in 2016) and 50-59 years (23% in 2016). In addition, there was a significant increase in lifetime risk among those aged 50-59 years (from 20% in 2011 to 23% in 2016).

There were significant decreases between 2011 to 2016 for those aged 15-19 years (from 15% to 1.9%), 20-29 years (from 24% to 15%), and 30-39 years (from 21% to 12%).

**Figure 8: The proportion of South Australians aged 15 years and over who drank at levels that put them at risk of disease or injury over a lifetime by age group, 2011-2016**



**Source:** South Australian Health Omnibus Survey 2011-2016

## For more information

This Bulletin was produced by Marie Longo and Richard Cooke, Population Health and Clinical Monitoring, Drug and Alcohol Services South Australia.

For more information, please contact:  
Population Health and Clinical Monitoring Unit  
Telephone: 08 7425 5101  
Email: [richard.cooke@sa.gov.au](mailto:richard.cooke@sa.gov.au)

Drug and Alcohol Services South Australia acknowledges the contribution of Kamalesh Venugopal, Unit Head, and Iordan Kostadinov, Epidemiologist, both from the Health Statistics Unit, Epidemiology Branch, SA Department of Health and Ageing, for their ongoing statistical assistance and advice.

---

1 Statistical tests include: The Pearson chi-squared statistic and linear regression. The Pearson chi-squared is corrected for the survey design with the second-order correction of Rao & Scott (1984: On chi-squared tests for multi-way contingency tables with cell proportions estimated from survey data. *Annals of Statistics* 12: 46-60) and is converted into an F statistic. Statistical significance was accepted at  $p < 0.05$ . All figures presented in this report are rounded to one decimal place in graphs and to zero decimal places in the text unless values fall below 10%. Two types of analyses are carried out on the risky drinking data: (1) Two-level ordinal variable: 'not risky at least monthly' and 'risky at least monthly' for single occasion risk, and 'no risk' 'risk' for lifetime risk; (2) Multi-level ordinal variables that include all levels of risk, including abstainers. Analyses on alcohol quantity and frequency are based on both multi-level ordinal variables: five for quantity and 11 for frequency, as well as more specific comparisons ('four drinks or less' vs 'five drinks or more' for quantity, and 'abstainers' vs 'less than weekly' vs 'at least weekly', 'any alcohol use' vs 'abstainers', 'never drank alcohol' vs 'drank alcohol' for frequency). SF-12 data were analysed using mean estimation scores for PCS and MCS, and the Adjusted Wald test to look for overall significant differences between groups. Once differences were found, pairwise comparisons (t-tests) were carried out to establish the groups for which differences were significant. For age and sex breakdowns, unless otherwise stated, comparisons are as stated above for the total sample.

2 The NDSHS is conducted triennially by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) since 1995. The survey provides information on drug use patterns, attitudes and behaviours among South Australians aged 12 years and over. <http://www.aihw.gov.au/alcohol-and-other-drugs/ndshs-2013/>

3 Abstainers include both ex-drinkers who had not consumed alcohol in the last 12 months, or non-drinkers, who had never consumed alcohol.

4 'In the last 12 months, how often did you have an alcoholic drink of any kind?' (N=3046).

5 'On a day that you drink, how many standard drinks do you usually have?' (N= 2420).

6 [http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/files\\_nhmrc/publications/attachments/ds10-alcohol.pdf](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/files_nhmrc/publications/attachments/ds10-alcohol.pdf)