

Drug and Alcohol Services South Australia

# DASSA Statistical Bulletin

Number 11 – June 2016

Health Omnibus Survey 2015: a summary of the results  
relating to alcohol consumption

Public – I1 - A1



Government  
of South Australia

SA Health



***Health Omnibus Survey 2015: a summary of the results relating to alcohol consumption***

This Bulletin is the eleventh in a series providing the most up-to-date data available on the prevalence of alcohol and other drug use, the harms associated with misuse, 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 2015, survey results were based on 3,005 face-to-face interviews conducted by Harrison Research between September and December 2015 in both metropolitan and regional South Australia. Approximately equal numbers of men ( $N=1478$ ; 49%) and women ( $N=1527$ ; 51%) participated in the survey, and the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents (2.2%) was representative of the wider South Australian population.

A total of 10 alcohol-related questions were included in the 2015 survey by DASSA, all relating to alcohol consumption. 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 2015. Information on risky drinking is presented separately for single occasion and lifetime use.

**Key findings**

***Alcohol consumption: frequency***

In 2015, 80% of South Australians aged 15 years and over had consumed alcohol at least once in the previous 12 months and 19% were abstainers. Almost half (47%) reported drinking at least weekly; this has remained stable over time. Daily drinkers comprised 7.5% in 2015; not significantly different from 2014 (8.1%).

A significantly higher proportion of males reported consuming alcohol (84% compared with 79% of females). This difference in consumption was more striking for those drinking daily (11% compared with 4.4%) and at least weekly (56% compared with 38%). Between 2014 and 2015 there were significant decreases in the proportion of abstainers, both overall (from 22% to 19%) and among women (from 26% to 21%). There was a resultant significant increase in the proportion who drank less than weekly (from 30% to 35% overall and from 34% to 41% among women).

The frequency of alcohol consumption was highest among those aged 50-59 years, with 55% drinking at least weekly. This was followed by those aged 40-49 years (53%). The proportion of abstainers decreased significantly between 2014 and 2015 among those aged 30-39 years (from 23% to 16%) and 50-59 years (from 19% to 12%). Among these two age groups there were also significant increases in drinking less than weekly (from 33% to 42% and from 27% to 33%, respectively).

### ***Alcohol consumption: quantity***

For the majority (79%) of South Australians in 2015, 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). For 49% of South Australians, quantities of alcohol consumed over the last 12 months 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).

A significantly higher proportion of women reported usually drinking four drinks or less (85% compared with 72% of men); the proportion of men who reported usually drinking five drinks or more was almost twice that of females (28% compared with 15%). The proportion of South Australians who reported usually drinking four drinks or less increased with age, with the youngest age group (15-19 years) least likely to drink this amount (59%) and those aged 60 years and over most likely (92%).

### ***Risky drinking***

In 2015, 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 (26%) and 2014 (27%). A higher proportion of men (35%) than women (18%) drank at levels that put them at risk of injury on a single occasion at least monthly, but there were no changes over time among either group.

From 2011-2015, 20-29 year olds had the highest proportion drinking at single occasion risky levels at least monthly (ranging from 39% to 48%); there was a significant decrease between 2014 (20%) and 2015 (13%) in the proportion of 40-49 year olds drinking at these levels at least weekly.

In 2015, 18% of South Australians aged 15 years and over drank at levels that put them at risk of disease or injury over a lifetime. There was a significant difference between men (27%) and women (9.1%), as well as significant decreases between 2014 (12%) and 2015 (9.1%) for women, and among those aged 30-39 years (22% to 16%).

From 2011-2014, 20-29 year olds again had the highest proportion drinking at lifetime risky levels (ranging from 22% to 30%); in 2015, this changed to those aged 40-49 (22%) and 50-59 (24%) years. There was also a significant trend over time (2011-2015) in the proportion of lifetime risky drinkers among those aged 20-29 years (decreasing from 24% in 2011 to 17% in 2015) and those aged 50-59 years (increasing from 20% in 2011 to 24% in 2015).

### **Quantity and frequency of alcohol consumption**

***'In the last 12 months, how often did you have an alcoholic drink of any kind?' (N=3005).***

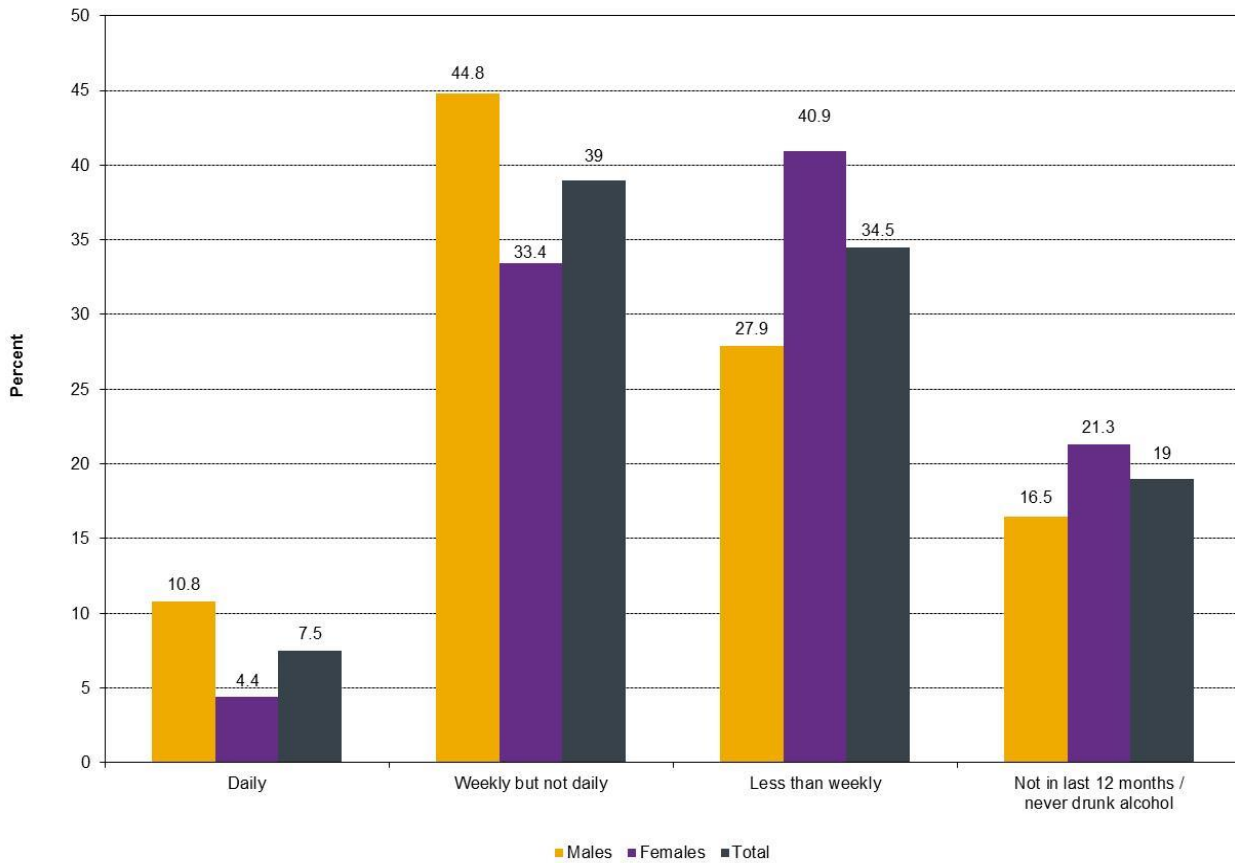
In 2015, 80% of South Australians reported consuming alcohol in the last 12 months. This has increased slightly since 2014 (78%) but has remained relatively stable since data collection began in 2011. Around 47% drank at least weekly; (39% at least weekly and 7.5% daily: see Figure 1).

Between 2014 and 2015 there were significant decreases in the proportion of abstainers, both overall (from 22% to 19%), the lowest since 2013, and among women (from 26% to 21%). The decrease between 2011 (25%) and 2015 was also significant. Almost three-fifths of abstainers in 2015 were female (57%, a decrease from 59% in 2014), and 56% of abstainers were 40 years and over with a median age of 44 years.

A significantly higher proportion of men reported alcohol consumption in the previous 12 months in 2015: 84% compared with 79% of women. The same difference was found in 2014 (82% of men and 74% of women), although there has been an increase in consumption among both sexes. The increase in less than weekly consumption among women was statistically significant (from 34% to 41%), while daily drinking decreased significantly, from 5.6% in 2014 to 4.4% in 2015.

Men were significantly more likely to consume alcohol at least once a week: 56% compared with 38% of women, and almost twice as likely to drink daily (11% compared with 4.4%). The difference in drinking frequency between the sexes was unchanged from previous years (in 2014, 55% of men consumed alcohol at least once a week compared with 40% of women).

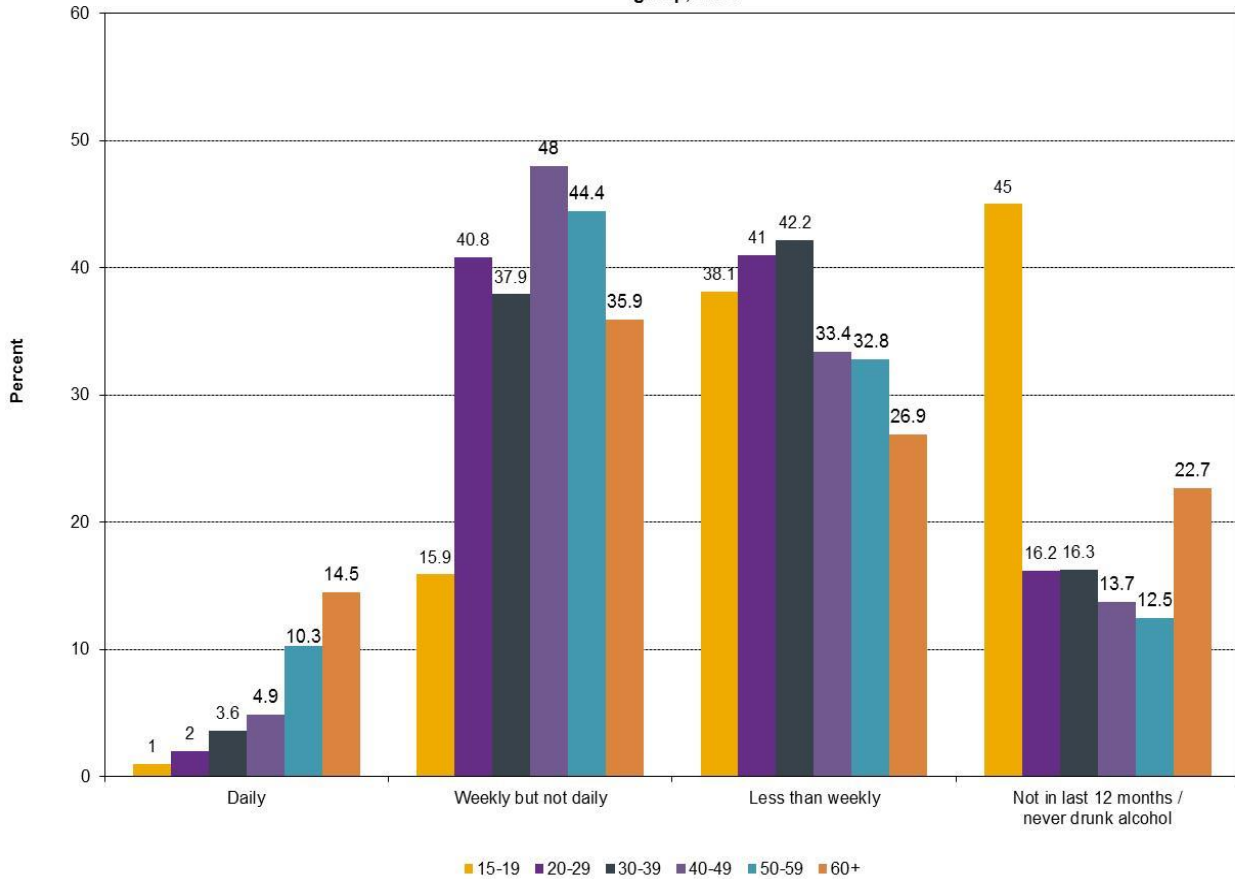
**Figure 1: Alcohol consumption in the previous 12 months among South Australians aged 15 years and over, 2015**



**Source:** South Australian Health Omnibus Survey 2015

Figure 2 shows the proportion of South Australians who reported consuming alcohol by age group. At least weekly consumption was highest among those aged 50-59 and 40-49 years (55% and 53%, respectively), and abstainers comprised 12% and 14%, respectively. Only 1% (*N*=2) of 15-19 year olds reported daily drinking, and this group had the lowest level of consumption (55% reported use in the previous 12 months; 17% at least once a week). The proportion of abstainers decreased significantly between 2014 and 2015 among those aged 30-39 years (from 23% to 16%) and 50-59 years (from 19% to 12%). Among these two age groups there were also significant increases in drinking less than weekly (from 33% to 42% and from 27% to 33%, respectively).

Figure 2: Alcohol consumption in the previous 12 months among South Australians aged 15 years and over by age group, 2015



Source: South Australian Health Omnibus Survey 2015

***‘On a day that you drink, how many standard drinks do you usually have?’ (N= 2436)<sup>1</sup>.***

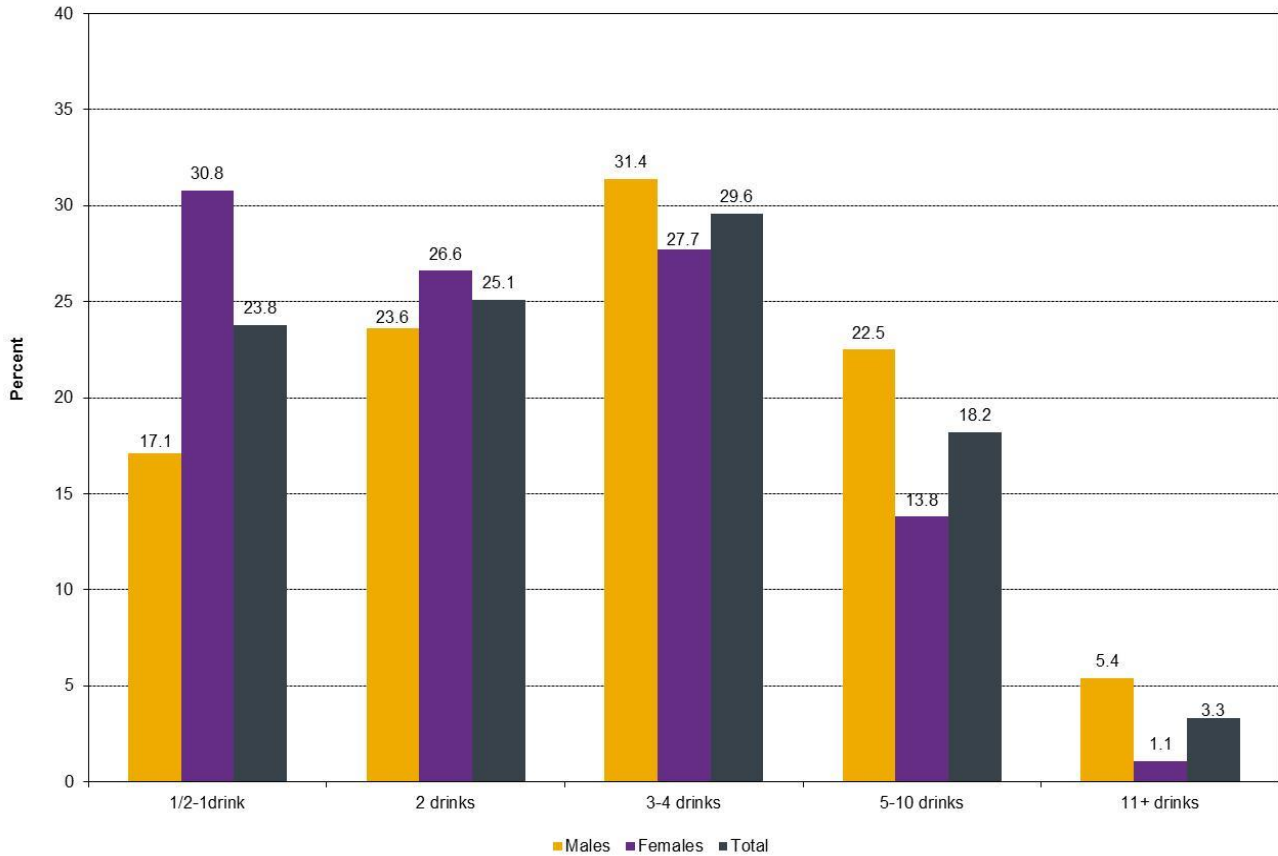
The majority of South Australians (79%) in 2015 reported that they usually consumed between a half and four standard drinks on a drinking day (Figure 3); this has not changed since 2011.

On a day in which alcohol was consumed, 72% of men and 85% of women reported usually having between a half and four standard drinks (Figure 3). This difference was statistically significant, and the proportion of men who reported usually drinking five or more drinks on a drinking day was almost twice that of women (28% vs. 15%).

Of those who drank, the majority (91%) reported having at least one alcohol-free day per week in the previous 12 months; 87% of men and 94% of women. This is similar to 2014 (90%; 87% of men and 92% of women).

<sup>1</sup> This section excludes participants who reported that they had not consumed alcohol in last 12 months, no longer drank alcohol or had never consumed alcohol in their lifetime

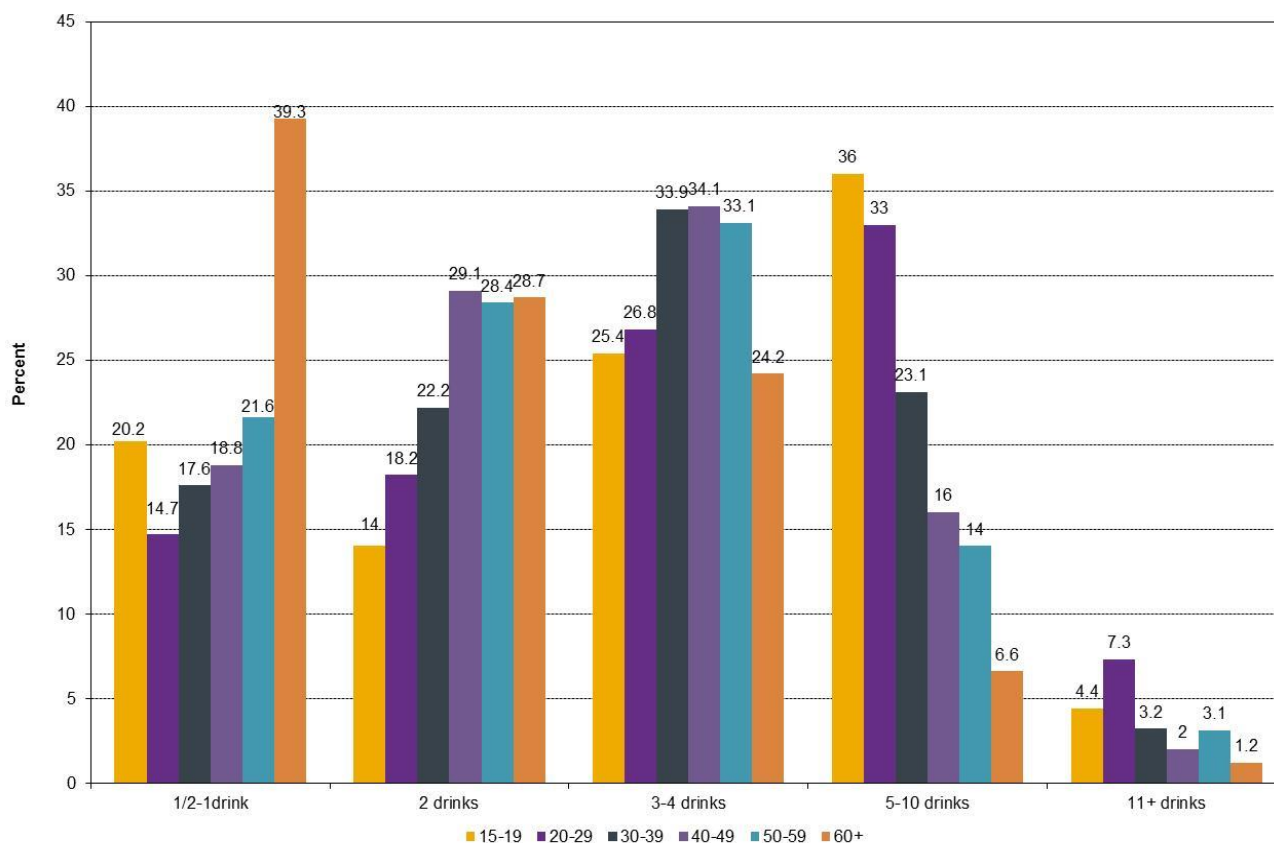
Figure 3: Number of standard drinks usually consumed by South Australians aged 15 years and over on a drinking day, by sex, 2015



Source: South Australian Health Omnibus Survey 2015

The proportion that usually consumed four drinks or less on a drinking day generally increased with age (see Figure 4). Almost three-fifths (59%) of those aged 15-19 years consumed four drinks or less, followed by 60% of those aged 20-29 years, and 74% of those aged 30-39 years. This increased to 82% of those aged 40-49 years and 83% of those aged 50-59 years. Only 8% of those aged 60 years and over usually consumed five or more drinks. There were no significant changes between 2014 and 2015.

**Figure 4: Number of standard drinks usually consumed by South Australians aged 15 years and over on a drinking day, by age group, 2015**



Source: South Australian Health Omnibus Survey 2015

## Alcohol consumption at risky levels

### Single occasion risk

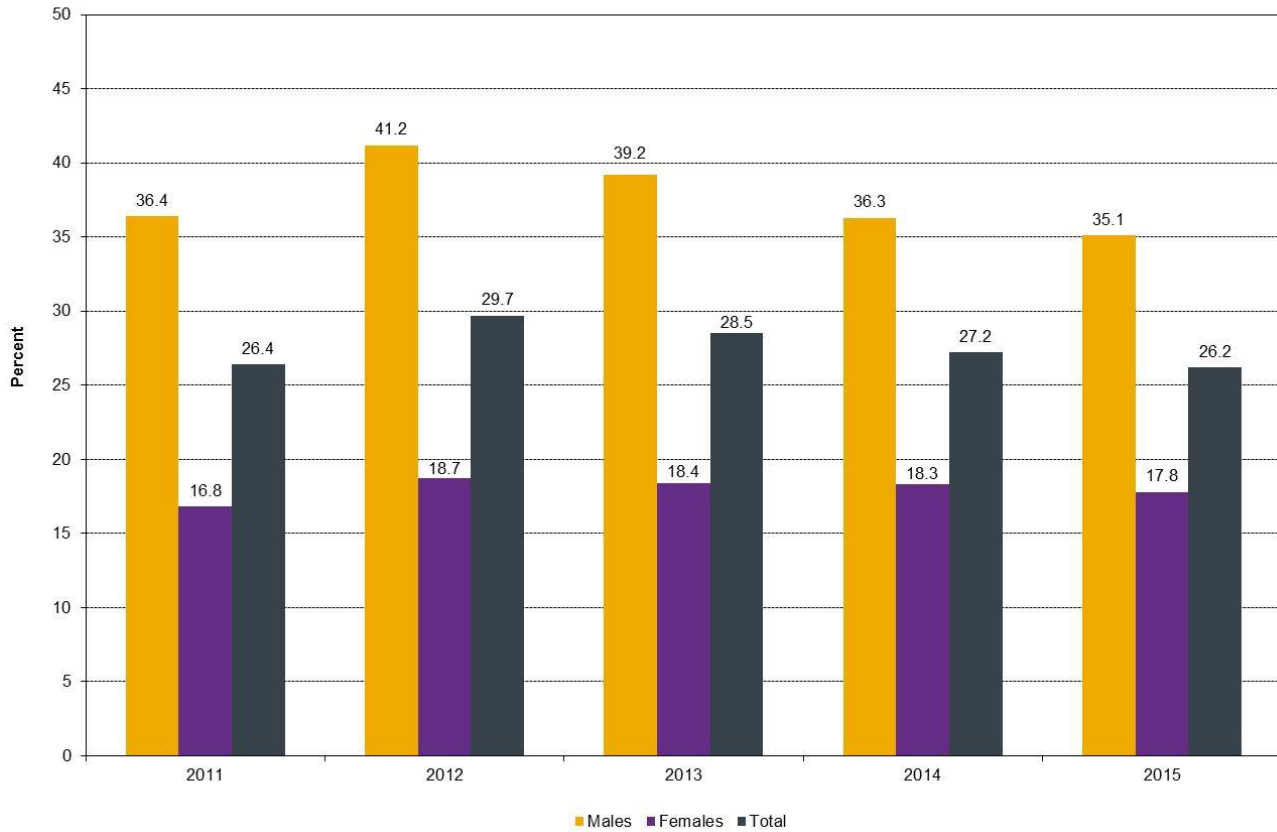
Figure 5 shows that in 2015, 26% of South Australians aged 15 years and over drank at levels that put them at risk of injury on a single occasion at least monthly. There was no significant trend over time (2011 to 2015) among all South Australians, and the significant increase seen between 2011 (26%) and 2013 (29%) was not sustained during 2014 and 2015. In addition, there was no significant change between 2011 and 2015 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), nor between 2014 (42%) and 2015 (44%). In 2015, men were significantly more likely to drink at these levels at least monthly (35% compared with 18% of women).

There was a significant overall trend from 2011 to 2015 in the proportion that reported drinking at these levels at least weekly, with an increase between 2011 (14%) and 2012 (17%) followed by a steady decrease to 13% in 2015. However, when only testing for differences between 2011 (14%) and 2015 (13%), there was no change, nor was there a significant change between 2014 (15%) and 2015 (13%).

There was no change between 2011 (36%) and 2015 (35%) among men in the proportion that reported drinking at levels that increased their risk of injury on a single occasion at least monthly, nor was there a change between 2014 (36%) and 2015. There was also no significant change in the proportion that drank at these levels at least yearly (55% in both 2011 and 2015; 52% in 2014). As was found for all South Australians, there was a significant overall trend from 2011 to 2015 in the proportion of men that reported drinking at these levels at least weekly, with an increase from 2011 (22%) to 2012 (26%), followed by a steady decrease to 20% by 2015. However, there was no change when only testing for differences between 2011 (22%) and 2015 (20%), nor was there a significant change between 2014 (21%) and 2015 (20%).

For women, there was also no change between 2011 (17%) and 2015 (18%) in the proportion that reported drinking at levels that increased their risk of injury on a single occasion at least monthly, and no change between 2014 (18%) and 2015. There was also no significant change in the proportion that drank at these levels at least yearly (34% in 2011 and 35% in 2015; 32% in 2014). However, there was a significant change between 2014 and 2015 in the proportion drinking at these levels at least weekly, from 9.7% to 7.2%.

**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, 2011-2015**



**Source:** South Australian Health Omnibus Survey 2011-2015

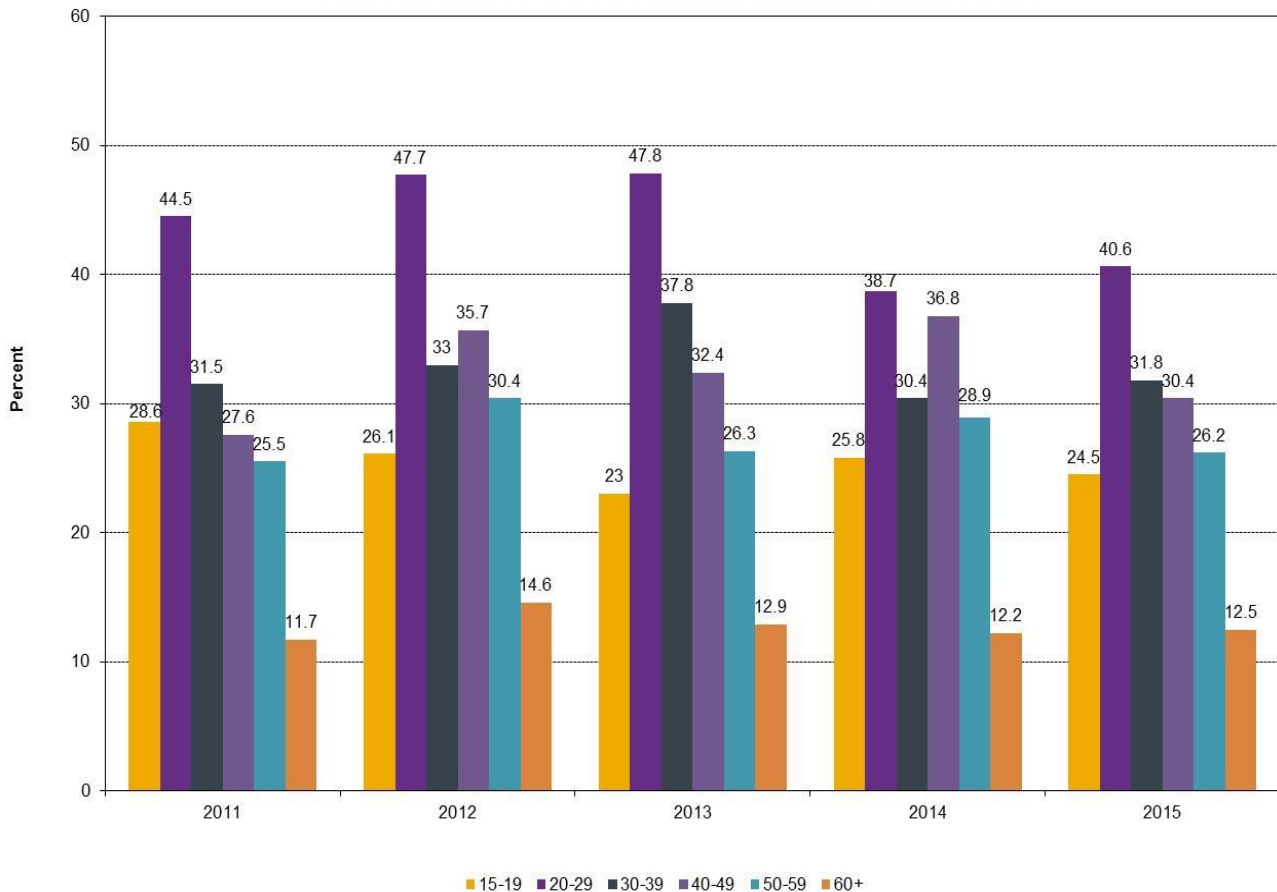
Figure 6 shows that in all five years (2011 to 2015), the group with the highest proportion drinking at risky levels was aged 20-29 years (ranging from 39% to 48%). In 2015 this was followed by those aged 30-39 years (32%; 30% in 2014) and 40-49 years (30%; 37% in 2014). The group with the lowest proportion was aged 60 years or over (13% in 2015) and 15-19 years (25% in 2015).

There was a significant trend over time (2011-2014) in the proportion of South Australians aged 20-29 years who drank at levels that put them at risk of injury on a single occasion at least monthly, with a decrease from 45% to 39%. However, the trend was not significant when 2015 data are included. The decrease in the proportion of 20-29 year olds who drank at risky levels at least monthly was significant between 2013 (48%) and 2014 (39%), but not significant between 2014 and 2015 (41%).

There was a significant trend over time (2011-2015) in the proportion of South Australians aged 40-49 years who drank at risky levels at least monthly, with an increase from 28% to 30%, but no change between 2014 (29%) and 2015 (30%). Also among this age group, there was a significant decrease between 2014 (20%) and 2015 (13%) in the proportion drinking at these levels at least weekly. There were no significant changes between 2011 and 2015 among any other age groups.



**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, 2011-2015**



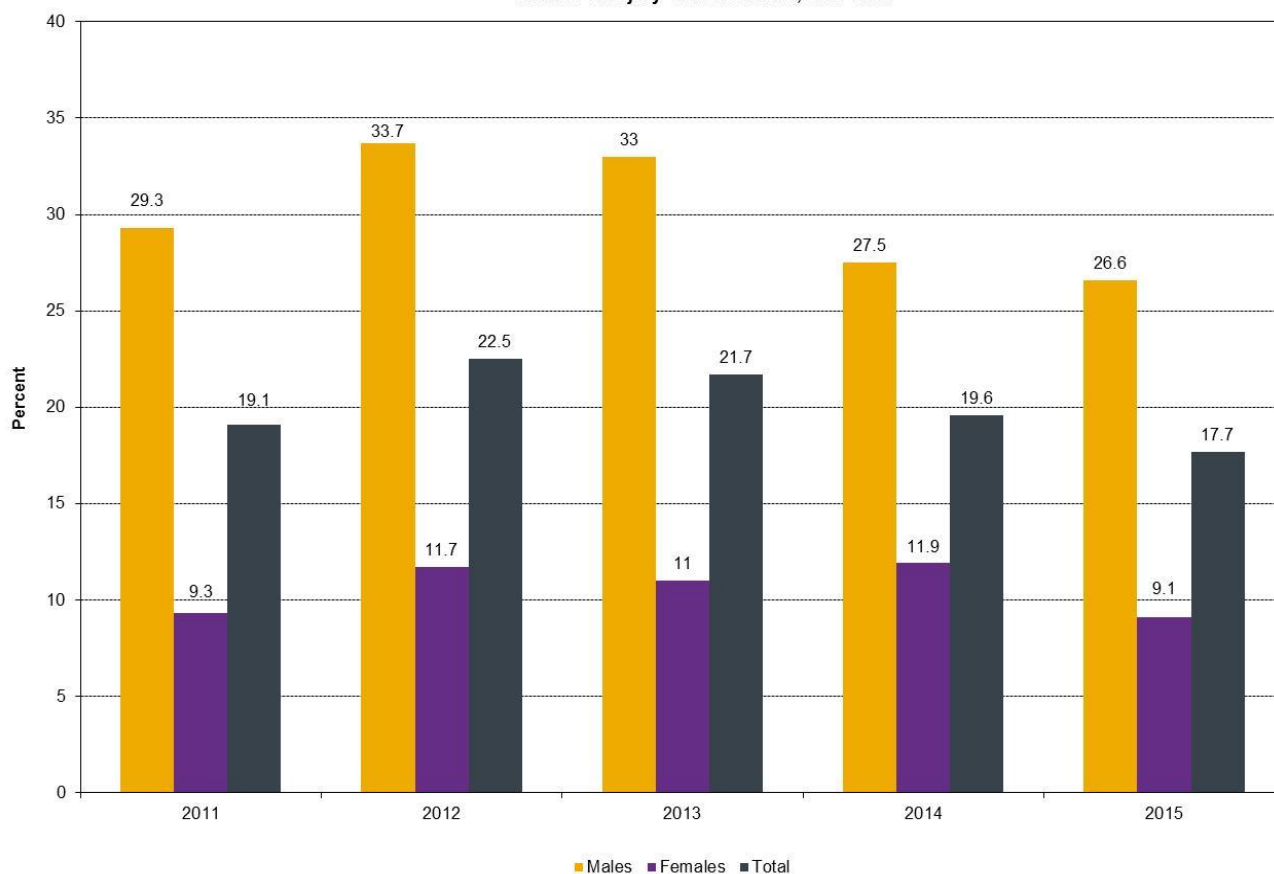
**Source:** South Australian Health Omnibus Survey 2011-2015

### *Lifetime risk*

Figure 7 shows that in 2015, 18% of South Australians aged 15 years and over drank at levels that put them at risk of disease or injury over a lifetime. There was a significant increase between 2011 (19%) and 2012 (23%) for both men and women, which was sustained in 2013 (22%). This was followed by a return to 2011 levels in 2014 (20%). There were no significant changes when comparing 2011 and 2015, or 2014 and 2015.

Lifetime risky drinking decreased overall between 2012 and 2015 (23% to 18%), and among both men (34% to 27%) and women (12% to 9.1%). These decreases were statistically significant between 2011 and 2015 for men (from 29% to 27%), and between 2015 and 2015 for women (from 12% 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, 2011-2015**

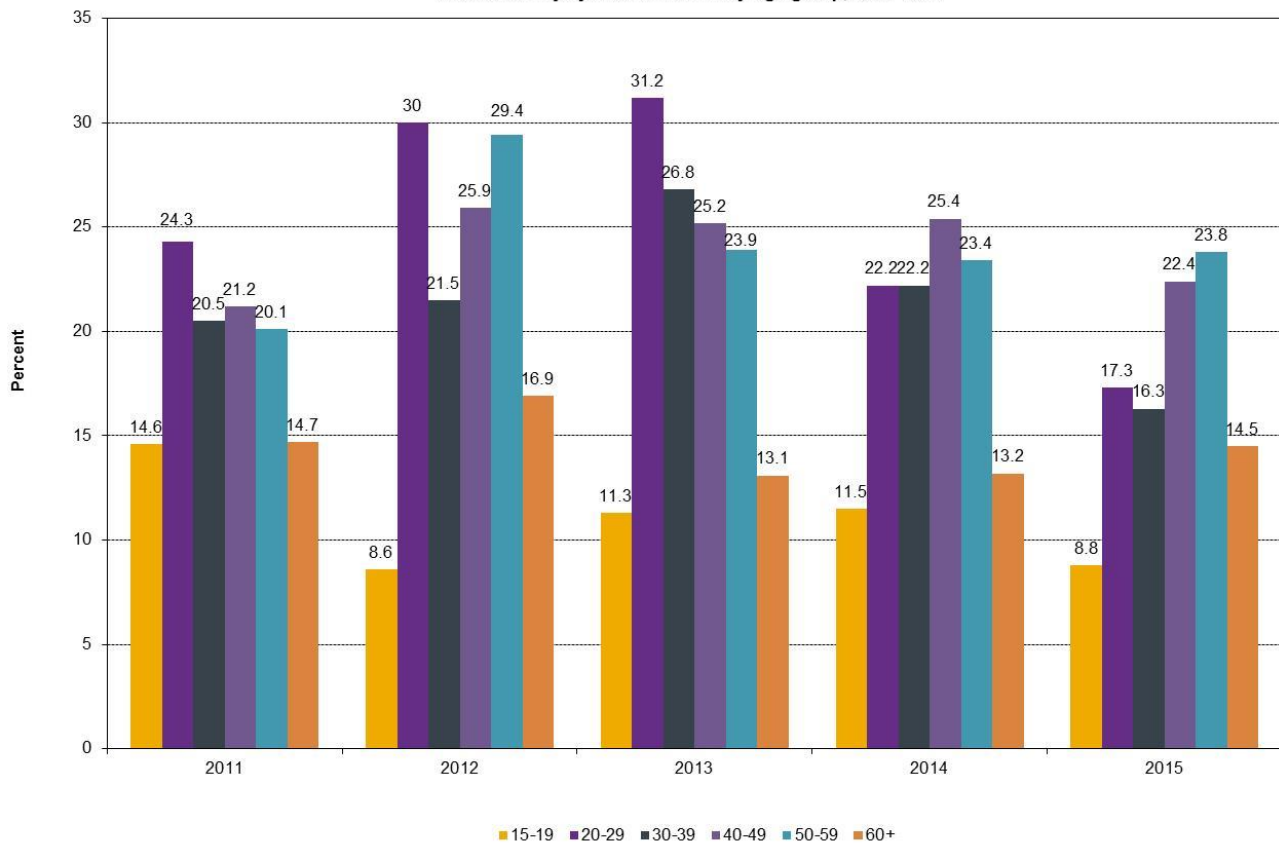


Source: South Australian Health Omnibus Survey 2011-2015

Figure 8 shows that from 2011-2013, the group with the highest proportion drinking at levels that put them at risk of disease or injury over a lifetime was aged 20-29 years (ranging from 24% in 2011 to 31% in 2014). There was a significant trend over time (2011-2015) in the proportion of 20-29 year old lifetime risky drinkers: an increase between 2011 (24%) and 2013 (31%), followed by a decrease to 17% by 2015.

In 2014 and 2015, the highest proportion drinking at levels that put them at risk of disease or injury over a lifetime were aged 40-49 years (25% and 22%, respectively) and 50-59 years (23% and 24%, respectively). There were significant decreases between 2014 and 2015 among those aged 30-39 years (from 22% to 16%). There was also a significant trend over time (2011-2015) in the proportion of lifetime risky drinkers among those aged 50-59 years (increasing from 20% in 2011 to 24% in 2015).

**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, 2011-2015**



Source: South Australian Health Omnibus Survey 2011-2015

### For more information

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Drug and Alcohol Services South Australia acknowledges the contribution of Kamallesh Venugopal, Unit Head, and Anh-Minh Thi Nguyen, Senior Epidemiologist, both from the Health Statistics Unit, Epidemiology Branch, SA Department of Health and Ageing, for their 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' for frequency). 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/>