



Drug and Alcohol Services South Australia Statistical Bulletin

Number 5 - April 2013

Health Omnibus Survey 2012: a summary of the results relating to alcohol consumption, attitudes toward public drunkenness and perceptions of responsible and safe levels of alcohol consumption

This Bulletin is the fifth 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.

Introduction

The Health Omnibus Survey (HOS) is an annual survey of a representative segment of South Australian residents that examines their lives and attitudes about health and wellbeing. Information gathered for DASSA focuses on alcohol consumption, attitudes towards public drunkenness and perceptions of responsible and safe quantities of consumption.

In 2012, survey results were based on 3,055 face-to-face interviews conducted by Harrison Research between September and December 2012 in both metropolitan and regional South Australia. Approximately equal numbers of males (N=1500; 49%) and females (N=1555; 51%) participated in the survey, and the percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents was representative of the wider South Australian population (N=72; 2.4%).

A total of 14 alcohol-related questions were included in the 2012 survey: 10 questions relating to alcohol consumption, two questions on people's opinions of public drunkenness and two questions relating to perceptions of responsible and safe levels of consumption. Questions on alcohol consumption were adapted from the National Drug Strategy Household Survey (NDSHS). Data in this bulletin are taken from the 2007 and 2010 NDSHS, which has been 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. Additional questions pertaining to public drunkenness and responsible consumption were developed by the Stakeholder Engagement Unit within Drug and Alcohol Services South Australia (DASSA).

The NDSHS questions and those relating to safe / responsible quantities of consumption were first included in 2011; comparisons are therefore made between 2011 and 2012 and statistically significant differences are highlighted. Information on risky drinking is presented separately for single occasion and lifetime use. For the purposes of examining possible trends using the data sources currently available, comparisons are made using NDSHS data from 2007 and 2010 and HOS data from 2011 and 2012; age groups used are slightly different from those reported in other sections, in order to be consistent with the NDSHS. However, due to different methods of data collection and a slightly different age range, statistical significance testing was not carried out between the two surveys.



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Summary

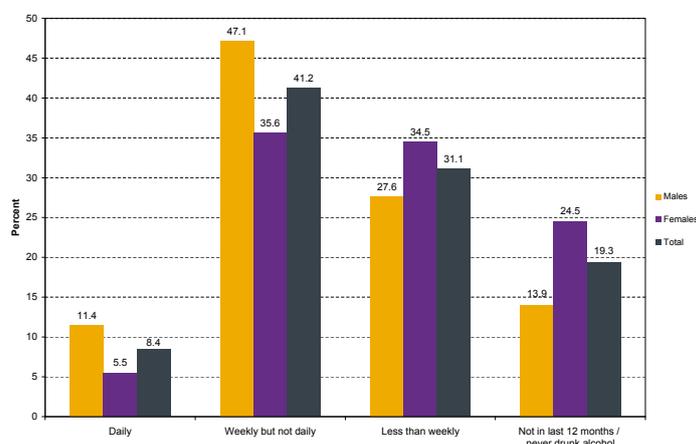
- > 81% reported alcohol consumption in the last 12 months.
- > Over three-quarters (78%) reported 'usually' drinking four drinks or less on a drinking day, with 38% consuming this quantity at least once a week.
- > Overall, males reported drinking greater quantities than females and more frequently.
- > The proportion drinking at levels that put them at risk of injury from a single drinking occasion at least once a month increased from 26.4% in 2011 to 29.7% in 2012 (statistically significant).
- > The proportion drinking at levels that put them at risk of injury or disease over a lifetime increased from 19.1% in 2011 to 22.5% in 2012 (statistically significant).
- > 22% reported being drunk in public in the last 12 months. This behaviour was more prevalent among males and younger age groups.
- > 35% believed that it is acceptable to get drunk in public on certain occasions. Again, this was more prevalent among males and younger age groups.
- > The median number of standard drinks that was believed could be **safely consumed** on a single occasion was four (range zero to 22 drinks), with the highest reported medians found among males and younger age groups.
- > The median number of drinks that was believed could be consumed when wanting to **drink responsibly** was three (range zero to 28 drinks), with the highest reported medians found among males and younger age groups.

Quantity and frequency of alcohol consumption

Survey respondents were asked "In the last 12 months, how often did you have an alcoholic drink of any kind?" (N=3055).

- > 81% reported alcohol consumption in the last 12 months. This is slightly higher than in 2011 (79%). Almost 50% drank at least weekly; (41% weekly but not daily and 8.4% daily: Figure 1).
- > 19.3% were abstainers: 11% had never consumed alcohol and 8.3% had not consumed alcohol in the last 12 months. Abstainers were more prevalent among those aged 15-24 years (32%; 28% in 2011) and those aged 65 years and over (28%; 30% in 2011).
- > A significantly higher proportion of males reported alcohol consumption in the previous 12 months: 86% compared with 76% of females ($p<0.01$). This is similar to 2011 (84% of males and 75% of females).
- > Males were significantly more likely to consume alcohol at least once a week: 59% compared with 41% of females ($p<0.01$). Males were also almost twice as likely as females to drink daily (11% compared with 6%; $p<0.01$). This is similar to 2011 (58% of males consumed alcohol at least once a week compared with 38% of females).
- > There was a significant decrease in the proportion of 15-19 year olds reporting weekly alcohol consumption: from 21% in 2011 to 15% in 2012 ($p<0.05$).
- > Those aged 45-54 years had the highest proportion of those consuming alcohol, with 89% reporting use in the previous 12 months; 63% of these drank alcohol at least once a week. Those aged 15-24 years had the lowest proportion of those who consumed alcohol, with 68% reporting use in the previous 12 months (of whom 28% drank at least once a week).

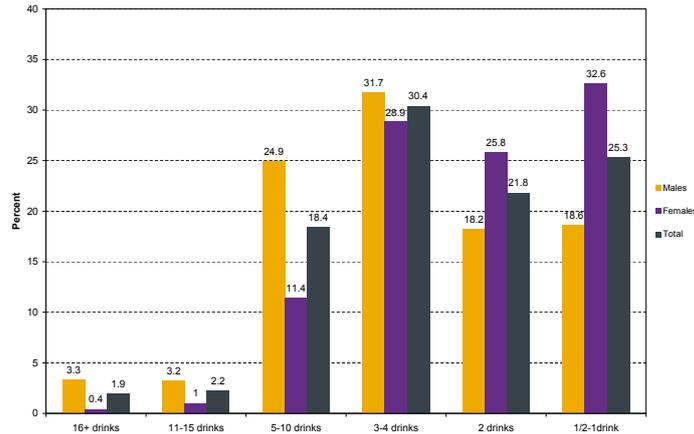
Figure 1: Alcohol consumption in the previous 12 months among South Australians aged 15 years and over, by sex, 2012.



Survey respondents were asked "On a day that you drink, how many standard drinks do you usually have?" (N= 2466).

- > The majority (78%) reported that they usually drank between a half and four standard drinks on a day in which alcohol is consumed (Figure 2); this has not changed since 2011.
- > 69% of males and 87% of females reported usually drinking between a half and four standard drinks on a day when alcohol is consumed (Figure 4). Although similar proportions usually drank three to four drinks per occasion, females were significantly more likely to have two or less (58% compared with 37% of males; $p < 0.01$). This is similar to 2011.
- > The majority of the sample (86%) reported having at least one alcohol-free day per week in the previous 12 months; 83% of males and 89% of females. Again, this is similar to 2011 results (85%).
- > The proportion who usually consumed four drinks or less increased with age: 15-24 years - 53%; 25-34 years - 69%; 35-44 years - 76%; 45-54 years - 82%; 55-64 years - 87%; 65 years and over - 94%. This was similar to 2011, although the proportion of 15-24 year olds drinking four drinks or less increased from 50% and the proportion of 35-44 year olds drinking four drinks or less decreased from 83%.

Figure 2: Number of standard drinks usually consumed on a day when drinking alcohol, by sex, 2012.

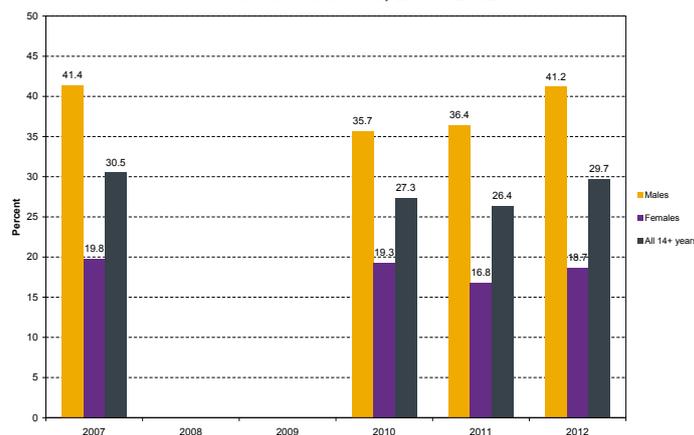


Alcohol consumption at risky levels

Single occasion risk

- > Figure 3 shows that 29.7% of South Australians aged 15 years and over drank at levels that put them at risk of injury on a single drinking occasion at least once a month in 2012. This represents a statistically significant increase from 2011 (26.4%; $p < 0.05$). Compared to NDSHS data, there has been a small decrease from 30.5% in 2007 to 29.7% in 2012.
- > There was an increase among both males and females in the proportion who reported drinking at levels that increased their risk of injury from a single occasion at least monthly (from 36.4% in 2011 to 41.2% in 2012 for males, and from 16.8% to 18.7% for females). These changes were statistically significant for males only ($p < 0.05$).
- > In 2012, the groups with the highest proportion drinking at levels that put them at risk of injury from a single drinking occasion at least monthly were those aged 20-29 years (47.3%), followed by those aged 40-49 years (35.6%). The groups with the lowest proportion were those aged 60 years or over (14.5%) and 15-19 years (25.5%). These proportions have either slightly increased or remained stable since 2011, with the exception of those aged 15-19 years, where there was a decrease of three percentage points (from 28.6% to 25.5%). Changes were only statistically significant among those aged 40-49 years (increased from 27.6% to 35.6%; $p < 0.05$).

Figure 3: The percentage of South Australians aged 14 years and over who drank at levels that put them at risk of injury from a single drinking occasion at least once a month, 2007 - 2012.



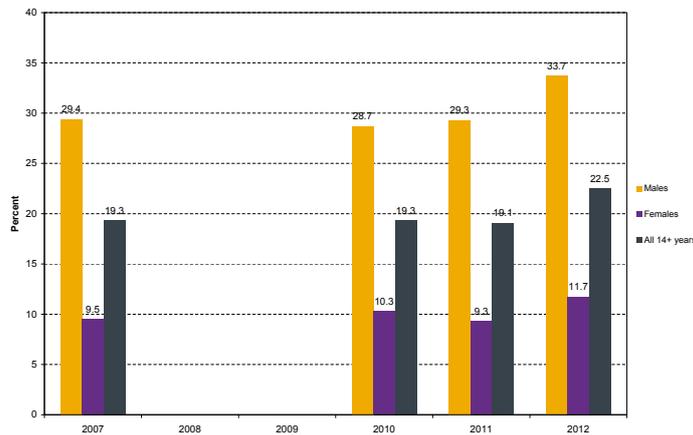
Lifetime risk

Figure 4 shows that 22.5% of South Australians aged 15 years and over drank at levels that put them at risk of disease or injury over a lifetime in 2012. This represents a statistically significant increase from 2011 (19.1%; $p < 0.01$). Compared with NDSHS data, the proportion remained stable between 2007 and 2010.

Increased proportions between 2011 and 2012 also occurred for both males and females (from 29.3% to 33.7% and from 9.3% to 11.7%, respectively); changes were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

As was found with single occasion risk, there were increases among all age groups between 2011 and 2012 except for the group aged 30-39 years, which remained stable at 21%, and a decrease among those aged 15-19 years (from 14.6% to 8.6%). Changes were only statistically significant among those aged 50-59 years (increased from 20.1% to 29.8%; $p < 0.01$).

Figure 4: The percentage of South Australians aged 14 years and over who drank at levels that put them at risk of disease or injury over a lifetime, by sex, 2007 - 2012.

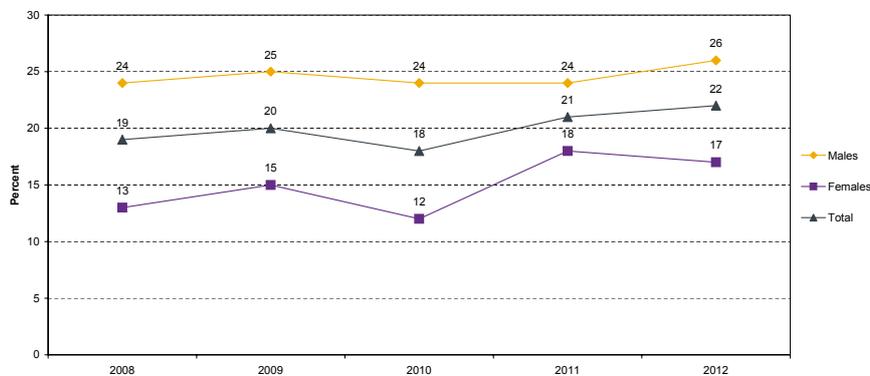


Prevalence of public drunkenness in the past 12 months

Survey respondents who had consumed alcohol in the past 12 months were asked to indicate whether or not they had been drunk in a public place in the last 12 months (N=2466).

- > Figure 5 shows the proportion of males and females who reported being drunk in a public place between 2008 and 2012. Only small variations in the proportions occurred during this period.
- > In 2012, 21% reported being drunk in public in the last 12 months (26% of males and 17% of females). Of those who reported being drunk in public, 63% were male, a small increase since 2011 (59%).
- > The prevalence of public drunkenness was highest amongst the 15-24 age group: 52% (49% in 2011). Prevalence declined with increasing age and was lowest amongst the oldest age group (65 years and over: 1.2%).
- > The prevalence of public drunkenness was identical among respondents residing in regional areas and metropolitan Adelaide (22%).

Figure 5: Proportion of the sample who have been drunk in a public place in the past 12 months, 2008 - 2012.

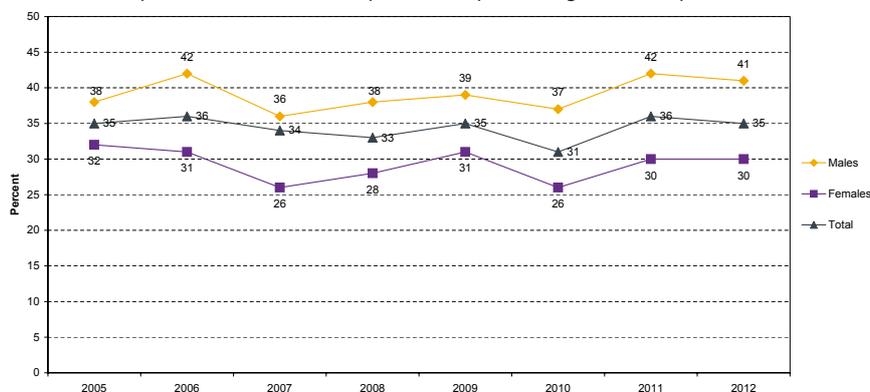


Acceptability of public drunkenness

Survey respondents were asked whether or not they believe it is acceptable for a person to get drunk in public on certain occasions (N=3055). Note that this question was asked of everyone, irrespective of whether they had consumed alcohol in the previous 12 months.

- > Figure 6 shows the proportion of males and females between 2005 and 2012 who believed it was acceptable for person to get drunk in public on certain occasions. Little variation has occurred in these proportions during this period.
- > In 2012, 35% believed that it was acceptable to get drunk in public on certain occasions.
- > More males (41%) than females (30%) believed that getting drunk in public on certain occasions was acceptable, and this has remained stable since 2011.
- > The belief that it is acceptable to get drunk in public on certain occasions was more prevalent among those aged 25-34 years (55%) followed by those aged 15-24 years (54%), but declined with increasing age (9.7% among those aged 65 years and over). In 2011 this was most prevalent among the youngest age group (55%).
- > Acceptability of public drunkenness on certain occasions was slightly higher among respondents residing in regional areas (36%) compared to metropolitan Adelaide (30%). Although the proportion in 2011 was identical among regional South Australians, there has been a decrease in acceptability among those living in metropolitan Adelaide (35% in 2011).

Figure 6: Proportion of the sample who believed it is acceptable for a person to get drunk in public on certain occasions, 2005 - 2012.



Perceived safe number of standard drinks

Survey respondents were asked "What do you think would be a safe number of standard drinks for a person to consume on a single occasion?" (N=2323).

- > The median number of standard drinks that was believed could be safely consumed on a single occasion was four (range zero to 22 drinks). This remained unchanged from 2011.
- > The median number of standard drinks that was believed could be safely consumed on a single occasion was higher among males (4.4 drinks) compared with females (three drinks).
- > The median number of standard drinks that was believed could be safely consumed on a single occasion was highest for males aged 25-34 years (six drinks) and lowest for females aged 65 years and over.
- > There was no difference between respondents residing in regional and metropolitan areas in the median number of drinks believed could be consumed safely on a single occasion (four).
- > The median number of standard drinks that was believed could be safely consumed on a single occasion was higher among those who had consumed alcohol in the previous 12 months (four compared with three for abstainers).

Responsible alcohol consumption

Survey respondents were asked, "If you wanted to drink responsibly, after how many drinks would you stop drinking?" (N=2753).

- > The median number of drinks that was believed could be consumed when wanting to drink responsibly was three (range zero to 28 drinks). This is only slightly higher than in 2011 (2.8 drinks).
- > The median number of drinks that was believed could be consumed when wanting to drink responsibly was higher among males (3.2 drinks) compared with females (two drinks).
- > The median number of standard drinks that was believed could be consumed when wanting to drink responsibly was highest for males aged between 25 and 34 (4.2 drinks) and lowest for both males and females aged 65 years and over, as well as females aged 45-54 years (two drinks).
- > There was only a small difference between respondents residing in regional and metropolitan areas in the median number of drinks believed could be consumed when wanting to drink responsibly: 2.8 in regional areas compared with three in metropolitan areas.
- > The median number of standard drinks that was believed could be consumed when wanting to drink responsibly was higher among those who had consumed alcohol in the previous 12 months (three compared with two for abstainers).

Data sources

Figures 1 and 2: South Australian Health Omnibus Survey 2012.

Figures 3 and 4: National Drug Strategy Household Surveys 2007, 2010 (South Australian data; 14+ years); South Australian Health Omnibus Survey 2011-2012 (South Australian data, 15+ years).

Figures 5 and 6: South Australian Health Omnibus Survey 2008 - 2012.

Acknowledgements

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For more information

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