

# Alcohol expenditure

## Indicator overview

### VicHealth Indicators Survey

VicHealth Indicators are used to measure community wellbeing with a focus on social determinants of health.

Survey topic areas include: wellbeing, healthy eating and sedentary behaviour, use of green space and safety, smoking policy, alcohol, using of social networking, participation in arts activities and the community, social attitudes, and work, life and time.

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### Introduction

Alcohol expenditure data provides an account of alcohol spending per capita, at a local level. By understanding alcohol expenditure, we can gauge drinking behaviours in the community. Most Australians drink alcohol within the recommended guidelines for relaxation and social reasons. However, a proportion of Australians drink alcohol at harmful levels (NHMRC 2009, AIHW 2011). The harms associated with alcohol use are well-established and include both short-term and long-term health consequences (Donath et al. 2011, Laslett et al. 2002).

### Health consequences

Short-term health consequences arise from drinking alcohol to excess on a single occasion, generally defined as consuming more than four standard drinks on any day for both men and women (NHMRC 2009). Excessive alcohol intake is associated with an increase in risk-taking and anti-social behaviours and can lead to delayed reaction time, decreased co-ordination and accidents (NHMRC 2009). Loss of consciousness, heart problems, stroke, intestinal irritation, inflammation of the pancreas, sexual problems, suicidal behaviour and aggravation of sleep disorders are also associated with the short-term misuse of alcohol (Donath et al. 2011).

Long-term health consequences have been shown to arise from drinking more than two standard drinks per day<sup>1</sup> on a regular basis (NHMRC 2009). These include cirrhosis of the liver, cancer, heart and blood vessel disease, stroke, problems with the nerves of the limbs, harm to unborn babies, impotence and other sexual problems, alcohol addiction, acquired brain injury, and problems with memory and reasoning (Laslett et al. 2002).

### Packaged liquor (off-premise consumption)

Off-premise sales, or 'packaged liquor', refers to purchases where alcohol is taken away from the point of sale to be consumed elsewhere. Community level harms associated with the sale of packaged liquor can include alcohol-related chronic disease and assault (Livingston 2011, Liang and Chikritzhs 2011). Strategies to influence alcohol consumption patterns by targeting packaged liquor sales include regulating the type, strength and packaging of the alcohol, as well as availability through opening hours, cost and location of alcohol sales.

<sup>1</sup> For standard drinks table please see [http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/\\_files\\_nhmrc/file/your\\_health/healthy/alcohol/std-drinks.pdf](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/_files_nhmrc/file/your_health/healthy/alcohol/std-drinks.pdf)

## Licensed premises (on-premise consumption)

Alcohol consumption in licensed premises, such as restaurants and pubs, has been associated with a number of harms, including drink driving, alcohol-related injury and assault (Livingstone 2011, Chikritzhs and Stockwell 2006). There is significant scope to influence what happens during and after the purchase of alcohol at licensed premises. Regulations may include limiting drink sizes, prohibiting discounting, requiring staff to undertake training in responsible service of alcohol, regulating the design and furnishing of premises, and placing requirements on food service and/or entertainment outlet by proprietors (Babor et al. 2010).

## Find out more

*Alcohol policy*, Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre.  
[www.turningpoint.org.au/Research/Alcohol-Policy.aspx](http://www.turningpoint.org.au/Research/Alcohol-Policy.aspx)

*Alcohol*, Better Health Channel.  
[www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Alcohol](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Alcohol)

*Australian guidelines to reduce health risks from drinking alcohol*, Department of Health and Ageing, Canberra.  
[www.alcohol.gov.au/internet/alcohol/publishing.nsf/Content/guidelines](http://www.alcohol.gov.au/internet/alcohol/publishing.nsf/Content/guidelines)

*Drug information*, Australian Drug Foundation.  
[www.druginfo.adf.org.au/drug-facts/drug-information](http://www.druginfo.adf.org.au/drug-facts/drug-information)

*Alcohol and other drugs services in Victoria*, Department of Health, Melbourne.  
[www.health.vic.gov.au/aod/](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/aod/)

*Australian guidelines to reduce health risks from drinking alcohol*, National Health and Medical Research Council, Canberra.  
[www.nhmrc.gov.au/\\_files\\_nhmrc/publications/attachments/ds10-alcohol.pdf](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/_files_nhmrc/publications/attachments/ds10-alcohol.pdf)

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