# Alcohol is harming millions of Australians. New data highlights the need for change

The less alcohol you drink, the lower the risk of harm.

That’s why the [Australian Alcohol Guidelines](https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/health-advice/alcohol) recommend healthy adults limit alcohol use to no more than 10 standard drinks a week and no more than 4 standard drinks on any one day.

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) has formulated the guidelines to keep the lifetime risk of dying from alcohol for an average, healthy Australian adult to 1 in 100.

**But new data shows 6.6 million Australians aged 14 and over are exceeding the guidelines**, and almost one in ten people (9.2%) who drink alcohol do so at a level that may indicate an alcohol use disorder – and few are accessing support.

The figures come from the [National Drug and Alcohol Strategy Household Survey 2022-23](https://www.aihw.gov.au/about-our-data/our-data-collections/national-drug-strategy-household-survey/2022-ndshs) published by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW).

The survey found, of those people who may have an alcohol use disorder, only 12.5% have been in a treatment program in the last 12 months.

At a time when [alcohol-induced deaths are at their highest rate in a decade](https://fare.org.au/alcohol-induced-deaths-in-australia/), these numbers are concerning.

They highlight the need to address the stigma that prevents far too many people from reaching out for help, and the predatory marketing by alcohol companies targeting community members who are most at risk of harm.

https://vimeo.com/755343199

## A comprehensive survey of alcohol use and attitudes



The NDSHS is the most comprehensive survey of Australians' alcohol and other drug consumption, along with attitudes and perceptions.

Between July 2022 and May 2023, the AIHW surveyed 21,500 people across Australia, in the first time this data was collected since 2019.

The latest survey shows worrying trends, while also showing what people think of some potential measures to reduce harm.

## More women are experiencing alcohol harm



An extra 200,000 women were physically or verbally abused or put in fear by someone using alcohol in the lead-up to the 2022-23 survey, the NDSHS found.

**This is an alarming trend we should be doing all we can to prevent.**

More broadly, the survey found, one in five Australians – 4.6 million people – have been verbally abused, physically abused, or put in fear by someone under the influence of alcohol in the previous 12 months.

These harms have increased for women, with the NDSHS 2022-23 suggesting 2.4 million women experienced this type of harm, up from 2.2 million in 2019.

## The concerning misconception about alcohol and young people



The survey found a quarter of people believed it was beneficial to give 16-17-year-olds a small amount of alcohol.

**This misconception is concerning and highlights the need for evidence-based public health messaging** to raise awareness about the [Australian Alcohol Guidelines](https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/health-advice/alcohol), which advise children and young people under the age of 18 to not drink any alcohol.

Research shows the younger a person drinks alcohol, the more likely they are to drink at riskier levels early and into the future.

There is no benefit to introducing alcohol to children.

## Support for common-sense measures to reduce alcohol harm



There are a range of common-sense policy measures which must be introduced to ensure our communities are safe and well.

Increasingly, [alcohol companies sell products designed to appeal to young people](https://fare.org.au/alcohol-marketing-online/), particularly young women, through tailored packaging, flavours and digital marketing. Meanwhile, the [online sale and rapid delivery of alcohol](https://fare.org.au/policy/online-sale-and-delivery/) has expanded without checks and balances, increasing the risk of alcohol harms.

Community members want to see common sense measures to reduce alcohol harms and keep up with how alcohol is marketed and sold in a digital environment.

First the first time, the NDSHS 2022-23 asked people about measures to reduce harm by limiting alcohol advertising online and on social media.

The results are encouraging, with 66.8% indicating support, while just 7.9% opposed these measures and 25.3% saying they neither support, nor oppose.

We need government-led regulation of alcohol marketing, sale and delivery online, to stop predatory tactics being used by alcohol companies to sell more alcohol to those at the highest risk, and prevent the harms this causes.