# Alcohol now leading risk factor for disease and injury in young men, new data reveals

*Content warning: This blog discusses alcohol-related death and disease. We recognise that these statistics represent real people – our loved ones, our neighbours, and our community – and acknowledge each life impacted and lost is a tragedy.*

New data released this week from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) paints a concerning picture of the impact the alcohol industry is having on our communities.

According to the AIHW *Burden of Disease* data release, alcohol is now the number one risk factor for disease and injury in Australian men aged 15-44 and is the second highest risk factor for deaths of all people in this age group.

This data forms part of a series of releases this week from the AIHW, which reflect the latest rates at which alcohol is responsible for not just disease but ambulance attendances and hospitalisations.

Here’s what the data tells us:

* There were 92,383 alcohol intoxication-related ambulance attendances in 2022 in the six states that provide data (excludes WA and SA), with a high proportion of these (over 70%) requiring transport to hospital
* There were 80,439 alcohol-related hospitalisations in 2022-23, with over half (52% or 42,124) requiring an overnight stay
* The rate of alcohol-related hospitalisations peaked in 2020-21 and has since decreased, but has not returned to pre-pandemic levels

The AIHW *Burden of Disease* data measures the impact of living with illness and injury and dying prematurely, and has also shown alcohol use was responsible for:

* 39% of the burden from liver cancer, 11% of the burden from breast cancer and 13% of the burden from other cancers
* 20% of the burden from chronic liver disease
* 26% of the burden from road traffic injuries
* 13% of the burden from suicide and self-inflicted injuries
* 13% of the burden from poisoning

It is deeply troubling that despite such serious rates of harm across our communities, we continue to see the alcohol industry take advantage of a lack of regulation, particularly in online spaces, to [deploy sales tactics targeting people most at risk of harm](https://fare.org.au/facebook-alcohol-and-gambling-companies-target-ads-at-australians-most-at-risk-of-harm/).

At the same time, the industry body responsible for blocking gambling advertising reform is currently proposing to [extend alcohol advertising on television](https://fare.org.au/community-opposes-code-changes/) during weekends, public holidays and during school holidays.

Governments across Australia can be doing more to prevent the significant harms from alcohol, including injury and death.

Yet we are also seeing evidence-based alcohol harm minimisation measures such as [Minimum Unit Pricing being wound back by the newly-elected Northern Territory government](https://fare.org.au/urgent-call-for-nt-government-to-retain-floor-price-on-alcohol-to-prioritise-health-and-safety-of-territorians/). This is in contradiction to the [commitment made by all Chief Ministers and Premiers at National Cabinet in September](https://fare.org.au/fare-welcomes-national-cabinet-decision-to-act-on-alcohol-to-help-prevent-gendered-violence/) this year to address the role harmful industries like alcohol play in fuelling violence against women and children.

And all of this is occurring against the backdrop of alcohol-induced deaths last year reaching their highest level this century.

Heading into 2025, there is so much that can be done to help our communities to keep safe and to hold the industry that prioritises profit over people to account.

We will continue to work alongside community voices, lived experience experts and health leaders to encourage state and federal governments to improve safeguards for keeping people safe and shining a light on the harmful activities of the alcohol industry.

Why? Because each of these numbers represents a person whose life, loved ones and community deserve better.

*Support is available by calling the National Alcohol and Other Drug hotline (1800 250 015) or Lifeline (13 11 14). A full list of support services is available* [*here*](https://fare.org.au/resources/support/)*.*

**Sources**

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2024). [*Australian Burden of Disease Study 2024*](https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/burden-of-disease/australian-burden-of-disease-study-2024/contents/summary)*.*

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2024). [*Alcohol, tobacco & other drugs in Australia.*](https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/alcohol/alcohol-tobacco-other-drugs-australia/contents/about)(for alcohol-related ambulance attendances, and alcohol-related hospitalisations).