



Government of **Western Australia**
South Metropolitan Health Service

City of Fremantle Alcohol Profile 2018

Alcohol-related harm, hospitalisations,
conditions and deaths.



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Introduction

The City of Fremantle plays a significant role in managing alcohol-related issues and is ideally placed to facilitate a coordinated response to prevent and manage alcohol-related harm.

The collated information will help inform the City of Fremantle and its residents, partners and other stakeholders about alcohol-related harms at a local level. This snapshot can also be used for effective evidence-based planning to reduce alcohol-related harm.

In addition, the publication *Pathway to reducing harm from alcohol consumption: A guide for local government* (South Metropolitan Population Health Unit, 2014) supports local government to manage the major contributors to harm from alcohol consumption.



Figure 1: Major contributors to harm from alcohol consumption (Dibley G, 2007).

Drinking patterns and harms in Australia

Alcohol plays a complex role in Australian society. Most people drink alcohol for enjoyment, relaxation and sociability at levels that cause few adverse effects. However, a substantial proportion of people drink at levels that increase their risk of alcohol-related harm. Alcohol is responsible for a considerable number of deaths, diseases and injuries. In addition to health risks, harmful consumption of alcohol inflicts significant social and economic burden on individuals, families, bystanders and the community.

In 2016, 77 per cent of people aged 14 years of age or older reported that they had consumed alcohol in the past year, while 26 per cent of people who consume alcohol exceed the single-occasion risk guidelines at least monthly. Since 2013, there have been improvements with more people aged between 12-17 abstaining or delaying the initiation of drinking alcohol for the first time (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2014).

The harms from alcohol are related to the volume of alcohol consumed and patterns of drinking. Harms emerge from drinking patterns that result in either intoxication and/or high consumption levels over long periods of time. It is the effects of intoxication that lead to the most visible impact on the community. The greatest amount of alcohol-related harm occurs for people who often drink moderately and on occasion drink to harmful levels (Chikritzhs, Jonas, Stockwell, Heale, & Dietze, 2001).

'The Australian Guidelines to Reduce Risks from Drinking Alcohol' aims to provide health professionals, policy makers and the community with evidence-based advice about the health effects of drinking alcohol. It is also used as a tool to help individuals make informed decisions about their drinking habits (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2009).

Australian guidelines to reduce health risks from drinking alcohol

The National Health and Medical Research Council recommend that for:

- healthy men and women, drinking no more than two standard drinks on any day reduces the lifetime risk of harm from alcohol-related disease or injury
- healthy men and women, drinking no more than four standard drinks on a single occasion reduces the risk of alcohol-related injury arising from that occasion
- parents and carers should be advised that children under 15 years of age are at the greatest risk of harm from drinking and not drinking alcohol is especially important for this age group
- young people aged 15–17 years, the safest option is to delay the initiation of drinking for as long as possible
- women who are pregnant or planning a pregnancy, not drinking is the safest option
- women who are breastfeeding, not drinking is the safest option.

Australian and international health authorities **do not recommend drinking alcohol** as a way of preventing or treating heart disease (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2009).

How much is too much?



Figure 2: Measure your standard drinks. (Australian Drug Foundation, 2018).

Health impact of alcohol

Harmful levels of alcohol consumption increase the risk of chronic diseases, injuries and premature deaths. In the short term, single-occasion risky drinking can impair judgement and coordination which may lead to anti-social behaviour, crime, violence, accidents and injury (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2014).

Alcohol is a leading risk factor for injury in WA, contributing to 32 per cent of emergency department injury presentations. Leading injury areas associated with alcohol include violence, suicide, land transport and falls. In 2016, there were 62 fatalities in WA related to alcohol (Know Injury, 2017).

In WA, alcohol is responsible for nearly one in five injury deaths and one in eight injury hospitalisations. In 2012, the total lifetime cost of alcohol-related injury was about \$1.9 billion due to health care costs, long-term care needs, loss in both paid productivity and quality of life (Hendrie, 2016).

Over the long-term, lifetime risky drinking patterns can result in alcohol dependence, high blood pressure, some cancers, cardiovascular disease, cirrhosis of the liver, types of dementia and mental health problems. Every year in Australia, it is estimated that five per cent of all cancers are attributable to alcohol use (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2014).

Adolescents and pregnant women, in particular, are at high-risk. The brain continues to develop into the early twenties and risky drinking during adolescence can cause irreversible damage leading to problems with memory, decision-making, impulse control and mood regulation. People reporting risky alcohol consumption during adolescence tend to consume alcohol in risky quantities in adulthood and have a much higher likelihood of developing alcohol-related problems. Therefore it is important that efforts are directed towards delaying the onset of alcohol use (Dewit, Adlaf, Offord, & Ogborne, 2000).

Drinking alcohol during pregnancy has the potential to cause significant harm to the developing fetus and can lead to problems later in life. Alcohol consumption during pregnancy is the leading cause of preventable birth defects, including Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders.

Not all children who are exposed to alcohol during pregnancy will be affected or affected to the same degree. The level of harm caused to the fetus is resultant of the amount of alcohol consumed, the frequency of consumption and the timing of exposure (Popova et al., 2016).

A 'safe' amount of alcohol that women can drink during pregnancy has not been determined, which is why no alcohol during pregnancy is the safest choice.



Alcohol-related harm in the City of Fremantle

12.3%

City of Fremantle residents reported drinking at high-risk levels on a single occasion in 2015.

Harms include motor vehicle accidents, suicide and self-inflicted injuries, homicide and violence and poisoning.

Hospitalisations attributed to harms from single-occasion risky drinking, 2011–2015.

- 120** assaults/abuses
- 349** falls
- 148** motor vehicle accident injuries
- 45** poisonings

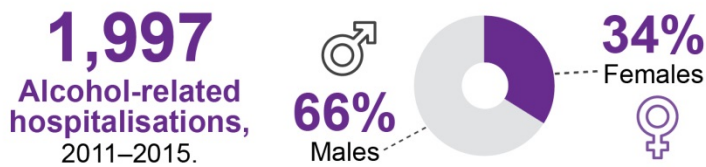


St John Ambulance

457
alcohol-related call outs,
2015–2017.



37%
were adults aged
18–44 years.



1,817 bed days
associated with alcohol-related
hospitalisations in 2015.
Estimated cost (CPI)
\$1.48m.



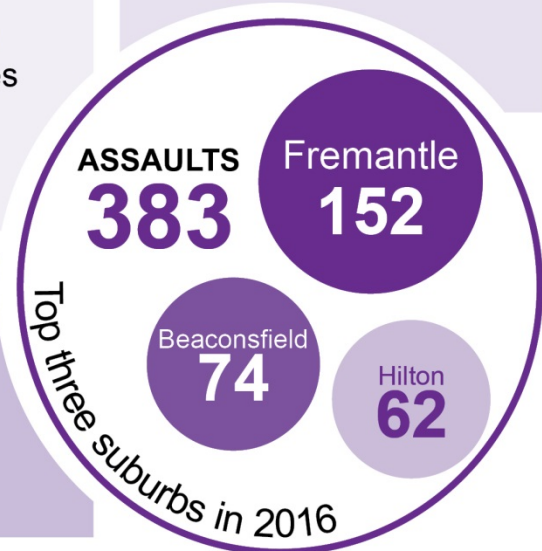
87 deaths attributed to alcohol
for adults 18 years of age or over, 2011–2015.

The **top 3 causes**
of alcohol-related deaths 2011–2015.

Cancer

Alcoholic mental
and neurological
disorders

Alcoholic
liver
disease



References available.

Social, economic and environmental impact of alcohol

The effects of alcohol consumption go beyond diseases, accidents and injuries. There are adverse social consequences for the drinker and others - their families, friends, colleagues, bystanders and people in the community. There are also consequences for the community through noise, litter, offensive behaviour, aggression, crime, assault and road safety issues. The cost of alcohol-related harm to others includes lost productivity, consequences of alcohol-related assaults or child abuse and time lost caring for heavy drinkers (Laslett, 2010). Approximately \$14 billion dollars per annum is attributed as the tangible cost of alcohol's harms to others and more than \$6 billion dollars in intangible costs.

Alcohol-related harm places a major burden on our health and law enforcement resources. In 2016, an average of fourteen ambulances per day, were called to attend incidents involving alcohol intoxication. In 2012, the WA Police Service directed \$232.5 million towards providing support for alcohol-related issues in the community. Between 2011-2012, three quarters of WA Police Service responses were alcohol-related with 66.9 per cent of those responses physical assaults. Alcohol intoxication is a factor in up to 80% of all police attended incidents (Doherty, 2003)

In 2010, the estimated cost of alcohol-related harm to the Australian society was \$14.3 billion. Of this, 20 per cent (\$2.95 billion) represented costs to the criminal justice system, 11 per cent (\$1.68 billion) to the health system, 42 per cent per cent (\$6.04 billion) to Australian productivity and 25 per cent (\$3.66 billion) were costs associated with traffic accidents (Laslett et al 2010).

The associated environmental harm that occurred as a result of broken glass, incorrect disposal of packaging and containers also resulted in significant costs to people and animals.



Harm from alcohol consumption in Fremantle

Single-occasion risky drinking

The more alcohol a person drinks on a single occasion the greater their risk of an immediate alcohol-related injury. To reduce health risks from drinking alcohol, The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Guidelines recommends that healthy adult men and women drink no more than four standard drinks on a single occasion. With every drink, the risk of accidents and/or injury increases for the person drinking and others around them. Alcohol increases the likelihood of a person being involved in anti-social behaviour and conflict, which can lead to assaults and violence, injury due to falls, burns, car crashes, unprotected or unwanted sexual encounters and problems that occur with friends and family members. There is also a clear link with risky drinking and domestic violence (MCAAY and Curtin University, 2017).

Between 2011-2015, 12 per cent of adults in the City of Fremantle (3,209 people) aged 16 years of age and over reported drinking more than four standard drinks on any one day (Epidemiology Branch., 2017). Any alcohol consumption by a person aged 16-17 years of age is considered high-risk. It is important to measure the proportion of the population drinking at risky levels in accordance with the NHMRC guidelines and to examine the drinking patterns of those who are drinking in excess of the guidelines. The National Drug Strategy Household Survey (2016) states that people in their late teens and early twenties are more likely to drink more than 11 drinks in the last month than any other age group. This report also explains that the rate for people aged in their 50's has increased significantly between 2013–2016.

Table 1. Number and percentage of acute alcohol-related hospitalisations by alcohol-related conditions, City of Fremantle, 2011-2015.

Single-occasion risky drinking – hospitalisations		
Condition	Number of hospitalisations	Percentage
Motor-vehicle accident injuries	148	15.5
Falls	349	36.5
Self-inflicted injuries	106	11.0
Assaults/abuse	120	12.5
Poisoning	45	5.0
Other alcohol-related injuries	187	19.5
Total	955	100%

Source: Epidemiology Branch (2017) Alcohol-related hospitalisations and deaths, WA Department of Health.

Lifetime risky drinking

The more alcohol a person drinks, the greater their risk of developing an alcohol-related injury or disease during their lifetime. For healthy men and women, drinking no more than two standard drinks on any day reduces the lifetime risk of harm from alcohol-related disease.

Nearly 1 in 14 West Australians drink every day, and nearly 1 in 5 drink at levels that place them at risk of alcohol-related harm and ill-health over their lifetime. In the City of Fremantle, between 2011-2015, 31.8 per cent of adults aged 16 years and older drank at lifetime risky levels (Epidemiology Branch, 2017). Any alcohol consumption by a person aged 16-17 years of age is considered high risk.

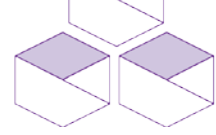
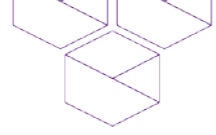
In the City of Fremantle between 2011-2015, the leading causes of alcohol-related hospitalisations due to lifetime risky drinking were alcoholic mental and neurological disorders (59 per cent) and other digestive system diseases (18 per cent). There were 2.4 times more hospitalisations due to alcoholic mental and neurological disorders, alcoholic liver disease and other digestive system disease than in the WA state. There is a slightly higher proportion of chronic alcohol-related hospitalisations (52.2 per cent) compared with acute alcohol-related hospitalisations (47.8 per cent) (Epidemiology Branch., 2017).

Table 2. Number and percent of chronic alcohol-related hospitalisations by alcohol-related conditions, City of Fremantle, 2011–2015.

Lifetime risky drinking – hospitalisations		
Condition	Number of hospitalisations	Percentage
Alcoholic liver disease	80	8.0
Other digestive system diseases	187	18.0
Alcoholic mental and neurological disorders	618	59.0
Cancers	86	8.0
Stroke	<5	Not applicable
Other alcohol-related diseases	<70	Not applicable
Total	1042	100%

Note: Counts of less than 5 have been suppressed in this report to protect privacy and data confidentiality. Other numbers have been suppressed to prevent back-calculations of smaller numbers.

Source: Epidemiology Branch (2017) Alcohol-related hospitalisations and deaths, WA Department of Health.



Alcohol-related hospitalisations

In 2015, there were 344 alcohol-related hospitalisations in the City of Fremantle. This rate was significantly higher when compared to the WA population. (Epidemiology Branch., 2017).

Table 3. Number of alcohol-related hospitalisations by year, age group and gender, 2011–2015.

Alcohol-related hospitalisations by year, age and gender					
Year	Age group		Gender		Total
	Less than 18 years	18 years and above	Male	Female	
2011	9	419	275	153	428
2012	10	415	277	148	425
2013	7	426	298	135	433
2014	<5	<370	252	115	367
2015	7	337	225	119	344
Total	<40	<1970	1328	670	1997

Note: Counts of less than 5 have been suppressed in this report to protect privacy and data confidentiality. Other numbers have been suppressed to prevent back-calculations of smaller numbers.

Source: Epidemiology Branch (2017) Alcohol-related hospitalisations and deaths, WA Department of Health.

Alcohol-related deaths

Between 2011–2015, there was a higher proportion of chronic alcohol-related deaths (69 per cent) compared with acute alcohol-related deaths (31 per cent) in the City of Fremantle. In terms of broad categories of alcohol-related conditions, the top causes of alcohol-related deaths were cancers (23 per cent), followed by alcoholic mental and neurological disorders (13.8 per cent) and alcoholic liver disease (11.5 per cent). There were 87 alcohol-related deaths between 2011–2015 with a larger proportion of these being male residents.

Table 4: Number of alcohol-related deaths by broad categories of alcohol-related conditions, City of Fremantle, 2011–2015.

Alcohol related deaths by condition		
Broad Category	Number	Percentage
Chronic		
Alcoholic liver disease	10	11.5
Other digestive system diseases	<10	Not applicable
Alcoholic mental and neurological disorders	12	13.8
Cancers	20	23.0
Stroke	<5	Not applicable
Other alcohol-related diseases	7	8.0
Acute		
Motor-vehicle accidents injuries	5	5.7
Falls	5	5.7
Self-inflicted injuries	8	9.2
Assaults / abuses	<5	Not applicable
Poisoning	6	6.9
Other alcohol-related injuries	<5	Not applicable
Sub-total chronic	60	69.0
Sub-total acute	27	31.0
Total	87	100.0

Source: Epidemiology Branch (2017) Alcohol-related hospitalisations and deaths WA Department of Health.

Table 5: Number of alcohol-related deaths by year and gender, aged 18 years and above City of Fremantle, 2011–2015.

Alcohol-related deaths by year and gender

Year	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
2011	17	6	23
2012	8	5	13
2013	<20	<5	19
2014	10	6	16
2015	<15	<5	16
TOTAL	<65	<25	87

Note: Counts less than 5 have been suppressed in this report to protect privacy and data confidentiality. Other numbers have been suppressed to prevent back-calculations of small numbers.

Source: Epidemiology Branch (2017) Alcohol-related hospitalisations and deaths, WA Department of Health.



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