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Binge drinking: who's doing it and how's their health?

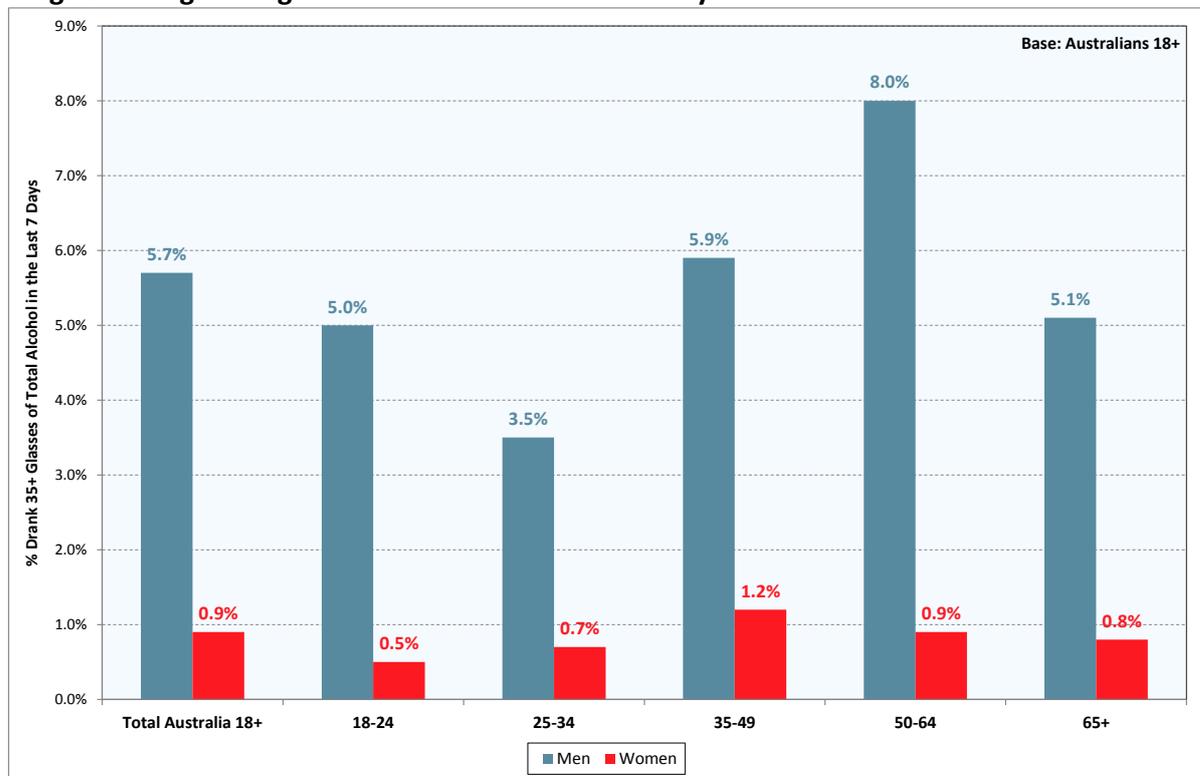
From the national 'alcopops tax' in 2008 to the recent 'one-punch' laws in NSW, a range of laws have been passed in the last few years in an effort to curb binge drinking and alcohol-related violence among young people. But what exactly constitutes 'binge drinking', and are the young really to blame? Roy Morgan Research investigates.

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) guidelines refer to binge drinking as 'drinking too much on a single occasion of drinking', with 'too much' being classified as five or more standard alcoholic drinks at one time, or 35+ per week for daily drinkers. Using these guidelines, the latest data from Roy Morgan Research shows that in an average week, 583,000 Australians 18+ (or 3.3% the adult population) could be classified as binge drinkers in the year to September 2013, unchanged from the previous 12 months.

With 5.7% (or 501,000) of them reporting that they drink 35 or more alcoholic drinks in an average seven days, Aussie men are roughly six times more likely to be binge drinkers than women (0.9% or 82,000). But while young male binge drinkers may be the target of most public (and media) scrutiny, men aged 35 and older are actually more likely to be binge drinkers than their 18-24 year-old counterparts.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Binge Drinking – 35+ glasses of alcohol in the last 7 days



Source: Roy Morgan Single Source (Australia), October 2012 – September 2013, n = 47,071.

Are binge drinkers any less healthy than the average Australian?

The NHMRC advises Australians to drink 'no more than two standard drinks on any day' if they want to reduce the risk of alcohol-related harm over their lifetime.

So what *is* the health profile of binge drinkers? [The Alere Wellness Index powered by Roy Morgan Research](#) tracks the changing health of the nation and provides an opportunity to compare the health of binge drinkers with that of the population average. Based on a survey of more than 50,000 Australians every year, the Index is comprised of detailed questions relating to 7 sub-indices: exercise; psychological wellbeing; nutritional health; alcohol; smoking; medical conditions and BMI. Scores were set at 100 in 2007 with subsequent scores above 100 showing improvements in health and lower scores indicating deterioration.

Both male and female binge drinkers record lower overall health scores than the average Australian adult. Compared to the population average, binge drinkers have poorer nutrition, smoke more, are more likely to be overweight and suffer from more illnesses and other medical conditions. With overall health scores 13% lower than the national average, women seem especially adversely affected by binge drinking.

Geoffrey Smith, General Manager - Consumer Products, Roy Morgan Research, says:

"Excessive alcohol consumption creates problems for the public, the police and the health system. The good news is that we're seeing a gradual decline in the proportion of Australian adults who binge drink. The bad news is that curfews on admission to clubs and time restrictions around calls for last drinks will have little effect on the majority of binge drinkers, who are aged over 35 and generally less likely to go out clubbing and pubbing til the wee hours.

"For health departments and agencies developing programs to curb excessive alcohol consumption, Roy Morgan's ground-breaking [Helix Personas](#) profiling tool identifies those segments of the population most likely to consume more than 35 alcoholic drinks in an average week, where they live, and how campaigns should be targeted to reach them.

"For example, of all Australians 18+ who drank alcohol in the last seven days, people belonging to the competitive, middle-class [Career & Kids](#) persona are among those with an elevated likelihood of binge drinking. Typically based in up-coming suburbs like South Morang (Melbourne) and Glenmore Park (Sydney), they watch a lot of commercial and Pay TV and listen to the radio regularly, but tend to be light newspaper readers. So a TV or radio ad campaign would be a more effective way of gaining their attention than, say, a newspaper advertisement."

[Click here](#) to learn more about [Helix Personas](#), Roy Morgan's new classification system for Australia's multi-dimensional communities.

Visit the [Roy Morgan Online Store](#) to access an extensive range of [Health and Wellbeing Reports](#), including our [Alcohol Consumption Reports](#). The profiles provide an overview of the target group including information on their demographics, attitudes, activities and media usage.

For comments or more information please contact:

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About Roy Morgan Research

Roy Morgan Research is the largest independent Australian research company, with offices in each state of Australia, as well as in New Zealand, the United States and the United Kingdom. A full service research organisation specialising in omnibus and syndicated data, Roy Morgan Research has over 70 years' experience in collecting objective, independent information on consumers.

In Australia, Roy Morgan Research is considered to be the authoritative source of information on financial behaviour, readership, voting intentions and consumer confidence. Roy Morgan Research is a specialist in recontact customised surveys which provide invaluable and effective qualitative and quantitative information regarding customers and target markets.

Margin of Error

The margin of error to be allowed for in any estimate depends mainly on the number of interviews on which it is based. Margin of error gives indications of the likely range within which estimates would be 95% likely to fall, expressed as the number of percentage points above or below the actual estimate. Allowance for design effects (such as stratification and weighting) should be made as appropriate.

Sample Size	Percentage Estimate			
	40%-60%	25% or 75%	10% or 90%	5% or 95%
20,000	±0.7	±0.6	±0.4	±0.3