

The Range and Magnitude of Alcohol's Harm to Others



SUMMARY

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This research was funded by the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education, an independent not-for-profit organisation working to stop the harm caused by alcohol.

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ABOUT THE FOUNDATION FOR ALCOHOL RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

The Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) is an independent, not-for-profit organisation working to stop the harm caused by alcohol.

Alcohol harm in Australia is significant. More than 5,500 lives are lost every year and more than 157,000 people are hospitalised - making alcohol one of our nation's greatest preventative health challenges.

For over a decade, FARE has been working with communities, governments, health professionals and police across the country to stop alcohol harms by supporting world-leading research, raising public awareness and advocating for changes to alcohol policy. In that time FARE has helped more than 750 communities and organisations, and backed over 1,400 projects around Australia.

FARE is guided by the World Health Organization's 2010 *Global Strategy to Reduce the Harmful Use of Alcohol* for stopping alcohol harms through population-based strategies, problem directed policies, and direct interventions.

If you would like to contribute to FARE's important work, call us on (02) 6122 8600, email info@fare.org.au or visit FARE's website: www.fare.org.au.

ABOUT THE CENTRE FOR ALCOHOL POLICY RESEARCH

The Centre for Alcohol Policy Research (CAPR) is a world-class alcohol policy research institute, led by Professor Robin Room. The Centre examines alcohol-related harms and the effectiveness of alcohol-related policies. CAPR is a joint undertaking of the Victorian Government, the University of Melbourne, Turning Point, Eastern Health and the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE). It operates as one of Turning Point's research programs, with core funding from FARE.

CAPR not only contributes to policy discussions in Australia but also contributes to international studies of significance for the World Health Organization (WHO). An example of its international work is the GENACIS project, which examines gender, alcohol and culture in more than 40 countries.

CAPR has also undertaken a pioneering study in Australia: *The Range and Magnitude of Alcohol's Harm to Others* (also known as the 2008 HTO Study) measured alcohol-related harms to people other than the drinker ('third party harms'). The results were included in the WHO's Global Status Report on Alcohol and Health 2011, and the study is being used by the WHO as a model for such studies globally.

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FOREWORD

While there is no doubt about the value and importance of evidence, statistics, costs and systems analysis, it is what happens to real people in real situations that I find most compelling.

The Range and Magnitude of Alcohol's Harm to Others seeks to reveal some of the interconnections between areas such as child protection, health, law enforcement and others. It provides insight into how individual acts of alcohol misuse ripple through families and communities.

The harm caused to others by alcohol misuse has been the missing dimension in discussions about alcohol-related harm in our community.

Our siloed system of counting and measuring health, social or legal costs has failed to account for the real costs of alcohol-related harm that are often incurred in shamed secrecy.

It is no surprise that there is a paucity of evidence in relation to these hidden dimensions of alcohol-related harm. Researchers measure costs within systems where data can be linked to individual experiences: health systems, social welfare systems, law enforcement and justice systems are responsive to those they see, the individuals seeking help or support.

Researchers can readily document and describe case experience in these areas, usually in terms of the services used. However, rarely is data from different systems connected, compared or used to create a new picture showing how individual experiences in each of these systems may be inter-related.

This report extends what can be learnt from raw statistics and discusses the broader experience of people harmed by the drinking of others. It includes factors such as well-being and social problems, and is not constrained by body count statistics. The report draws on the harms we can identify within systems to create a bigger picture, one that most readers will find disturbing.

The authors of this report have produced an important report that adds further weight to the need for reform of current alcohol policies and practices in Australia.

If ever our leaders needed the courage to tackle the vested interests that resist effective alcohol policy reform in Australia, this report provides ample evidence that the ongoing tragedy of alcohol-related harm in the Australian community cannot continue unabated.

This is a commendable piece of research that demands more attention be paid to the human costs of alcohol misuse in our community.

TIM COSTELLO

Director FARE 2001-2011

August 2010

INTRODUCTION

The Range and Magnitude of Alcohol's Harm to Others represents a sustained, comprehensive effort to quantify alcohol's harms to others.

The impacts from the drinking of others vary dramatically. At one end of the spectrum Australians are affected by nuisance inconveniences, such as street noise or having to avoid public parks, or petty costs from damaged property. At the other end harms can be severe, such as child abuse or physical violence or death. The public health impacts of alcohol from others' drinking are of major concern.

The Range and Magnitude of Alcohol's Harm to Others also reports for the first time on the previously largely hidden financial costs of alcohol abuse on others, including family members of drinkers, friends, workmates and strangers.

Previous estimates have focused largely on the problems of drinkers themselves and their direct costs to society in terms of absenteeism and lost productivity, and their demands on government services such as health care, law enforcement, the courts, social welfare and on community groups.

This study looks at the impact that drinkers have on those around them and the additional costs incurred by their friends, family, workmates and even strangers. The report provides cost estimates for major additional elements that would make up a total figure which represents the annual cost of alcohol's harm to others.

The study examined the following critical questions:

1. How many Australians are affected by the drinking of others?
2. Who is affected?
3. What is the relationship between those affected and the drinker?
4. How are Australians affected or harmed?
5. What are the costs for others – in trouble, time and money?

The study provides answers to these questions and also looks at the strategies, policies, actions and further information needed to measure and limit the harm from others' drinking.

In seeking answers to these questions, this study draws on and analyses a wide variety of existing and newly developed data.



***The Range and Magnitude of Alcohol's Harm to Others* reports for the first time on the previously largely hidden financial costs of alcohol abuse on others, including family members of drinkers, friends, workmates and strangers.”**

METHODS

ALCOHOL'S HARM TO OTHERS SURVEY

The 2008 national survey of 2,649 Australians aged 18 or older provided a systematic and detailed insight into how many Australians believe they have been negatively affected by other people's drinking, including people they know well and those they do not know well, or at all. The survey also examined the ways they had been harmed across the full range of possible impacts, from the less severe to the serious.

The *Alcohol's Harm to Others Survey* data were weighted using the Australian population figures from the 2006 Census.

SERVICE DATA ANALYSIS

This study made use of data obtained from numerous sources, ranging from government departments to drug and alcohol treatment agencies. Secondary data sources include both national surveys that have been re-analysed to determine harms to others and routinely collected service agency data.

The data quoted in this report was taken from many sources, including:

- Pre-existing surveys including the 2007 Gender, alcohol and culture: An international study (GENACIS), the 2007 National Drug Strategy Household Survey (NDSHS), the 2005 Personal Safety Survey (PSS) and the 2005 Household income and labor dynamics in Australia survey (HILDA).
- Agency data including national mortality data, morbidity data, hospital data, police data and alcohol and other drugs data.

The agency data provided specific details of some of the more serious harms caused by drinkers to other people, but they alone, do not provide a complete picture of the range and magnitude of the problem. The people who these statistics represent are often those that have been so seriously affected that they need to access health and police services.

COSTING ALCOHOL'S HARM TO OTHERS

The cost of alcohol's harm to others was derived from the data collected for this study and data from the following sources:

- *Average weekly earnings*, Australian Bureau of Statistics;
- Australian Institute of Criminology's report on crime costs;
- *National hospital cost data collection*, Department of Health and Ageing;
- *Emergency department costs*, Department of Health and Ageing;
- State and Territory Government real recurrent expenditure on child protection, out-of-home care services and intensive family support services, Productivity Commission; and
- Valuing intangible harm, World Health Organization value of a quality adjusted life year (corresponding to \$50,000).

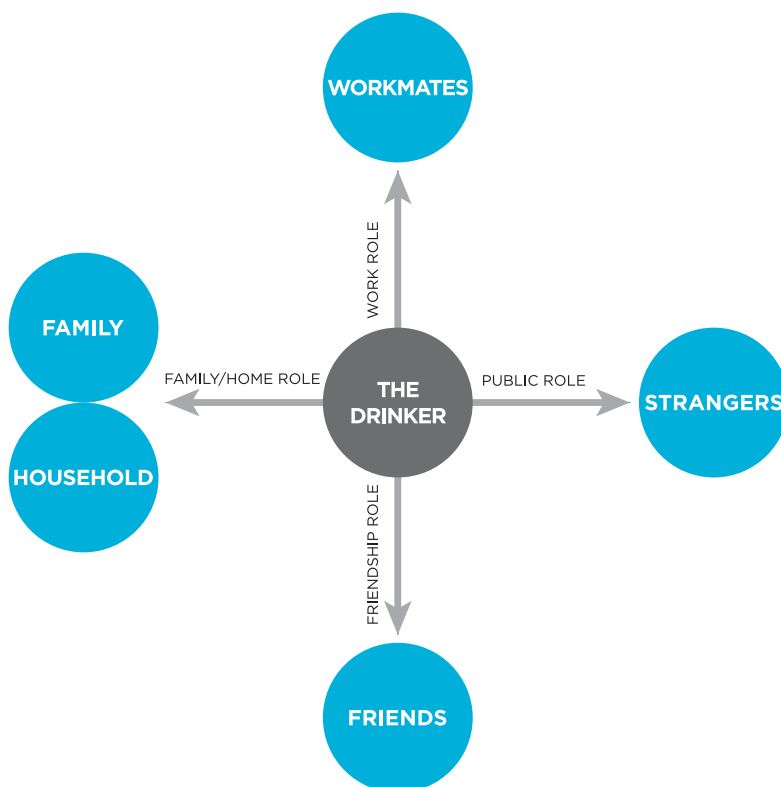
This data was used to determine estimates in the cost of alcohol's harm to others reported in this study.

FINDINGS

- In 2008 73 per cent of Australians were negatively affected by the drinking of others, equating to 10.5 million Australians.
- In 2008 70 per cent of Australians were affected in some way by the drinking of strangers or people they did not know well.
- In 2008 29 per cent of Australians were negatively affected by the drinking of people known to them.
- In 2005 there were 367 deaths and 13,669 hospitalisations because of the drinking of others.
- In 2005 69,433 Australians were victims of alcohol-related assaults, among whom 24,581 were victims of alcohol-related domestic violence.
- In 2006-07 19,443 cases of child abuse involved alcohol.
- Alcohol's harm to others costs Australians more than \$20.6 billion, including \$14.3 billion in tangible costs and \$6.4 billion in intangible costs.

ALCOHOL'S HARM TO OTHERS SURVEY FINDINGS

The survey sample was representative of the national population. The survey included detailed questions on heavy and episodic drinkers who were family members, household members, friends and work colleagues, as well as many questions on adverse effects from others' drinking in public spaces. Respondents were also asked how much the drinking behaviour of others had negatively impacted upon them. The figure below depicts the relationships explored.



Almost three quarters (73 per cent) of the survey respondents reported being negatively affected during the previous year by the drinking of others in some way. Applied to the Australian population aged 18 or older, this represents around 10.5 million Australians who had been adversely affected by others' drinking.

2008 Harm to Others Survey findings		
SELECTED CATEGORIES OF HARM	NUMBERS OF PEOPLE AFFECTED	
	AFFECTED A LITTLE	AFFECTED A LOT
Negatively affected by a co-worker's drinking	496,700	120,400
Had one or more children negatively affected by the drinking of a carer	888,100	210,700
Negatively affected by the drinking of a household member, relative or friend	2,905,000	1,294,500
Negatively affected by drinking of a stranger or someone not known well	5,463,900	617,100
Affected negatively by someone else's drinking	10,536,400	

* From Table 13.1 of the Research Report. Projected to the adult population of the 2006 Census.

PEOPLE AFFECTED BY FAMILIES, FRIENDS AND CO-WORKERS

The survey showed that of the 29 per cent of the population reporting negative affects from people known to the drinker. A total of 16 per cent of these were negatively affected by the drinking of someone they lived with or were intimate with. More than one in ten Australians were affected by a friend's drinking in the survey year, and five per cent were affected by a co-worker's drinking.

Among those who reported that drinking by household members, relatives, friends and co-workers negatively affected them:

- Close family members were the most common category of relationship nominated (37 per cent);
- Friends were the next most common category (28 per cent);
- Extended family members were also often nominated by a significant group (10 per cent); and
- Co-workers were also fairly commonly nominated (10 per cent).

The more common concerns, reported by one quarter to one third of those adversely affected by the drinking of people known to them, included: feeling threatened; having to stop seeing the drinker; and (for household members) having less money for household expenses.

The most frequently reported negative outcomes (reported by more than half of those affected) were: behaviour that spoiled a party or other social occasion; serious arguments; emotional hurt or neglect; and failures by drinkers 'to do something they were being counted on to do'.

When respondents were asked which person, of those they knew, had most negatively affected them because of their drinking, the most common answer was a partner or close family relative, mostly male. Women were more likely than men to report being negatively affected by the drinking of a household member or relative.

PEOPLE AFFECTED BY A STRANGER'S DRINKING

Individuals can be negatively affected by the drinking of people they do not know. This includes alcohol-related violence, property damage, and fear of alcohol-related violence from intoxicated individuals.

Seventy per cent of the survey respondents reported they were affected in some way by the drinking of strangers or people they did not know well. This included being kept awake at night, or acts of urination or littering by drinkers. However, 43 per cent of them reported somewhat more serious effects, such as being threatened, physically assaulted, or having had their property or belongings damaged as a result of a stranger's drinking.

Men and women were equally likely to have been affected by strangers' drinking, but younger people were three times more likely to have been affected. The survey indicates that younger women are more likely to report harms from the drinking behaviour of family members, while both younger men and younger women were more likely to report harms from the drinking of friends or strangers. Women are more likely than men to report being kept awake or disturbed at night (40 per cent vs. 34 per cent) and women reported slightly more commonly that they felt unsafe in a public place because of strangers' drinking (26 per cent vs. 23 per cent).

Men were more likely to report being verbally abused (22 per cent vs. 16 per cent), physically abused (5 per cent vs. 3 per cent), threatened (15 per cent vs. 8 per cent), in a serious argument (14 per cent vs. 9 per cent), and experiencing trouble or noise related to licensed venue (24 per cent vs. 20 per cent).

HARM TO OTHERS SERVICE DATA FINDINGS

The study examined existing data held by government agencies to more fully assess the harm caused to others in cases where drinkers were linked to violence, assaults, traffic accidents and child abuse.

The people these statistics represent are often those who have been so seriously affected that they need support by government, health and social services. The study noted that when taken together, the health system, parts of the welfare system and the criminal justice systems are all providing services not only for drinkers, but also for those who have been affected by the drinking of others.

2005 Harm to others service data findings	
SELECTED CATEGORIES OF HARM	NUMBERS OF PEOPLE AFFECTED
Deaths due to another's drinking	367
Hospitalisations due to another's drinking	13,669
Substantiated child protection cases involving a carer's drinking	19,443
Alcohol-related domestic assault in police records	24,581
Alcohol-attributable assaults in police records	69,433

* From Table 13.1 of the Research Report. Projected to the adult population of the 2006 Census.

The service data reveals that there were 367 deaths because of the drinking of others.

A total of 277 people were killed due to another's drinking and driving, with 31 of these being pedestrian deaths. A total of 3,643 people were hospitalised because of drink driving.

Interpersonal violence resulted in 77 deaths which were caused by another person's drinking and 9,209 people were hospitalised as a result of interpersonal violence.

According to police data, 69,433 Australians were victims of alcohol-related assaults in 2005 alone, among whom 24,581 were victims of alcohol-related domestic violence.

This figure substantially underestimates the actual number of alcohol-related assaults because only one third (34 per cent) of victims of alcohol-related assaults report the crime to police.

Based on national child protection data and Victoria's measurement of alcohol involvement, it is estimated that there were 19,443 substantiated cases of child protection involving a carer's drinking in 2006-07. Throughout Australia, alcohol was recorded as a factor in 34 per cent of all the substantiated cases of child maltreatment.

The study concluded that the drinking of others was associated with large numbers of hospitalisations, deaths and significant economic burdens. While the numbers of people affected by the drinking of others was large, the figures did not include people who may have been unintentionally injured by the drinking of others, or affected where the drinker was in a situation of supervision and responsibility — for example, parents and carers or managers in work and recreational situations.

THE COST OF ALCOHOL'S HARM TO OTHERS

One of the key aims of the study was to develop methods for costing alcohol's harm to others, and applying these methods to establish a first set of figures on how much heavy drinkers have cost other Australians.

The study does not claim to provide a complete set of costs. However, based on estimates developed in conjunction with the survey responses, the study has identified three areas in which the drinking of others has cost Australians in total more than \$20.6 billion. In terms of tangible costs reported by a representative sample of the Australian population, heavy drinkers have cost \$14.2 billion including \$13.4 billion in out-of-pocket costs and in forgone wages or productivity, and \$765 million in hospital and child protection costs. In addition, there are large intangible costs, conservatively estimated at a minimum of \$6.4 billion dollars. Intangible costs are the costs assigned to pain and suffering, and more generally, a diminished quality of life.

Few of these costs have been included in earlier studies on alcohol abuse, which have focused largely on the costs of social welfare and government services such as police and the courts and costs such as lost productivity from early deaths.

The study estimates that out-of-pocket expenses amounted to an estimated \$2.6 billion. This included costs such as property and personal damage, money that was 'commandeered' by drinkers which was needed for household expenses, the cost of having to leave home and stay elsewhere or the cost of professional counselling to cope with the drinker.

The out-of-pocket estimates were based on self-reporting from the *Alcohol's Harm to Others Survey*, from which data was extrapolated to reflect the whole of Australia's adult population.

The time lost or spent by people looking after the needs and impositions of drinkers was also based on responses to the survey and was valued in accordance with the ABS average weekly earnings. Total time lost was valued at around \$10.9 billion during the survey year. The biggest single component of this was \$9 billion, representing the worth of people's time absorbed by the demands of drinkers known to them. This includes time spent outside their workplace or normal routine caring for the drinkers, or for the children the drinkers were responsible for, cleaning up after the drinkers, or providing transport.

Respondents also reported spending substantial time, valued at \$720 million, seeking or receiving help from the police or health services because of the drinking of others.

Intangible costs were measured on the basis of each quality-adjusted year of life valued at \$50,000. Intangible costs for loss of well-being caused by the impact of drinking on other people was estimated at \$6.4 billion.

Summary of cost estimates from others' drinking for different categories of problems and relationships for one year*					
	OUT OF POCKET COSTS	COST OF TIME LOST/ SPENT	INTANGIBLE COSTS	HOSPITAL / HEALTH SERVICE COSTS	CHILD PROTECTION COSTS
<----- ALL COSTS ARE IN MILLIONS OF DOLLARS ----->					
Morbidity/mortality:					
Child abuse	-	-	-	\$0.95	-
Child road crash	-	-	-	\$2.65	-
Adult road crash	-	\$3.33	-	\$27.06	-
Adult assault	-	\$5.32	-	\$38.23	-
Wellbeing:					
Drinker in household	-	-	\$1,500.72	-	-
Drinker elsewhere	-	-	\$7,032.98	-	-
Assault victims	\$0.66	\$57.68		\$58.92	-
Domestic violence victims	\$0.26	\$22.93		\$23.21	-
Child protection	-	-	-	-	\$671.61
Family, friends drinker	\$845.85	\$9,333.80	\$6,389.58	-	-
Workplace drinker	-	\$801.00	-	-	-
Stranger drinker	\$1,619.00	-	\$5,331.81	-	-
Services use:					
Alcohol treatment system	-	-	-	\$2.86	-
Phone helpline	-	\$0.06	-	\$0.21	-
Survey: help-seeking	\$109.79	\$720.35	-	-	-

* From Table 13.2 of the Research Report

NB: The figures in the chart cannot simply be added together to arrive at a total: there are areas of overlap both within the categories investigated, and also with categories covered in other studies.

CONCLUSION

The Range and Magnitude of Alcohol's Harm to Others has provided many first approximations of how many people are affected by the drinking of others, who is affected, and what the costs are in terms of trouble, time and money.

These numbers cannot be glossed over. Behind each of these statistics lie personal, family and community problems and stories that stem from the harms associated with the drinking of others — people close to the drinkers, as well as strangers. Although the qualitative details of the stories behind these statistics are not known, the majority of Australians will know of times when they themselves, or those close to them, have been affected by others' drinking.

The survey provides insight into the broad ways in which individuals are affected. Over half of those identifying a drinker who had negatively affected them reported that the person's drinking had impacted on social occasions, caused serious arguments, or meant the person failed to do what the respondent was counting on them to do. Further, over a third reported financial effects of the other's drinking, and that they had to spend time caring for the drinker because of their drinking. More serious harms, including physical and sexual abuse, were less commonly reported, although over a third of respondents reported having to stop seeing the person because of their drinking.

The Range and Magnitude of Alcohol's Harm to Others highlights the significant harm, both in social and financial terms caused to others by alcohol misuse and demonstrates that this issues must be an important consideration in making public policy decisions about the availability and control of alcohol in Australia.

Australians that care for and cope with drinkers and the harms they cause have their own service, health and emotional needs that are largely unknown. Preventing harm to others from drinking is as cogent and urgent a public health goal as preventing drinkers from harming themselves.

Only in the specific area of drink driving have the effects of drinking on others been seriously addressed with prevention measures. Lessons from the policy experience of reducing casualties from drink driving should be studied and implications for reducing other kinds of harm from others' drinking should be explored.



***The Range and Magnitude of Alcohol's Harm to Others* highlights the significant harm, both in social and financial terms caused to others by alcohol misuse and demonstrates that this issues must be an important consideration in making public policy decisions about the availability and control of alcohol in Australia.”**

“Harmful use of alcohol can ruin the lives of individuals, devastate families, and damage the fabric of communities. The World Health Organization’s global strategy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol underlines that special attention needs to be given to reducing harm to people other than the drinker. The findings in this report gives further evidence for this need and it is an important contribution to fulfilling the aims and objectives of the global strategy.”

DAG REKVE

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