



# How much is a binge? Young adults' perceptions of heavy drinking

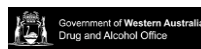
Nicole Biagioni – WA Cancer Prevention Research Unit, Faculty of Health Sciences, Curtin University 9 November, 2015

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## The Research Team

- Simone Pettigrew (Curtin University)
  - Nicole Biagioni (Curtin University)
  - Tanya Chikritzhs (Curtin University)
  - Mike Daube (Curtin University)
  - Sandra Jones (Australian Catholic University)
  - Gary Kirby (Western Australian Department of Health)
  - Julia Stafford (Curtin University)
- Funding granted by DAO

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## The Study

- Aim: exploring alcohol related beliefs and behaviours among 18-21 year old Western Australian drinkers
- 60 participants
- 6 months
- 2 interviews (face-to-face)
- 12 fortnightly introspections (email)
- 1 focus group (5-10 people in each)

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## Sample composition: n = 60 drinkers

Attribute	n
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	30
Female	30
<b>Age</b>	
18	12
19	17
20	12
21	19
<b>Work status</b>	
Student	35
Employed	16
Unemployed	9
<b>SES</b>	
Low	21
Medium	12
High	27
<b>Drinking status</b>	
Low risk (<15 drinks/wk)	20
High risk (15+ drinks/wk)	40

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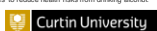
## Defining 'Binge Drinking'

'Binge drinking' is explicitly not included in NHRMC guidelines, as it is difficult to quantify.

- NHMRC Guideline 1**  
"drinking **no more than two standard drinks per day on any day** reduces the lifetime risk of harm from alcohol-related disease or injury"
- NHMRC Guideline 2**  
"drinking **no more than four standard drinks on a single occasion** reduces the risk of alcohol-related injury arising from that occasion"

National Health and Medical Research Council. Australian guidelines to reduce health risks from drinking alcohol. Canberra: Australian Government 2009.

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## Defining 'Binge Drinking'

*I don't think they have an actual defined number for binge drinking as such (Female, 19, low-risk drinker).*

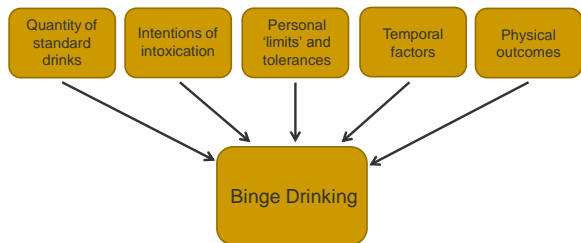
*(Binge drinking) could be defined in all different extremes (Female, 20, high-risk drinker).*

*Everyone has their different version of binge drinking (Female, 19, high-risk drinker).*

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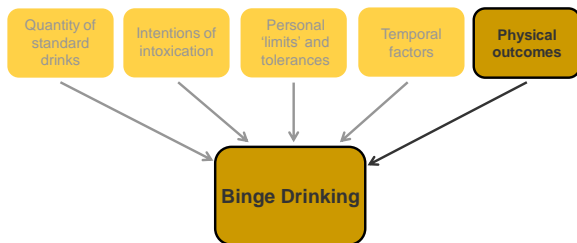
## Defining 'Binge Drinking'



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## Defining 'Binge Drinking'



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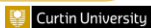
## Binge Drinking = Physical Outcomes

*I think the way I'd classify binge drinking would be drinking to the point of vomiting (Female, 20, high-risk drinker).*

*There's not so much of an idea of limits or why you should stop. It's just keep going until you can puke...That's the definition of binge drinking (Male, 21, high-risk drinker).*

*(Binge drinking is) probably just like vomiting or something, so like alcohol poisoning (Male, 19, high-risk drinker).*

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## Binge Drinking = Physical Outcomes

*(Binge drinking) is just drinking so much you pass out, so drinking a lot in one session (Male, 20, low-risk drinker).*

*I think (binge drinking) is the mentality to just sort of want to pass out (Male, 18, high-risk drinker).*

*(Binge drinking is) when you get so drunk that you wake up and you don't remember going to bed (Female, 20, high-risk drinker).*

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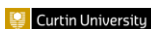


## Binge Drinking = Physical Outcomes

*These are binge drinkers... drink till their body can't handle any more, often needs to be admitted to hospital (Male, 18, high-risk drinker).*

*I think a lot of the younger population see binge drinking as going 20, 30 drinks, then passing out, hospital visits, stomach pumping (Female, 21, low-risk drinker).*

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## Why is this bad?

- Failing to recognise their own consumption as binge drinking, unless experiencing these adverse physical outcomes.
- Most do not think they are at risk of short or long term effects, as they do not identify their drinking as 'high risk'.

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## Binge Drinking is...

*I don't see binge drinking as always not remembering the night or passing out or doing stupid things...It doesn't have to end in a hangover, doesn't have to end in you feeling good, bad or indifferent about yourself. If you drink more than doctors recommend, I think that should be considered binge drinking...I think it doesn't have to be that severe to be binge drinking* (Female, 21, low-risk drinker).

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## Binge Drinking is...

*I would probably imagine the definition will just be relating to the standard drinks per hour, maybe even a threshold of how many standard drinks you have to have. I wouldn't myself know what the best amount of standard drinks is* (Male, 19, high-risk drinker).

*I'm pretty sure the actual Australian Institute of Health and Welfare or whatever it is...I think it's like four for guys and three for females. I think it's something like that, I might be wrong...It's very loosely defined, I don't think there's any agreed definition specifically* (Female, 19, low-risk drinker).

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## Conclusions

- General lack of knowledge of NHMRC guidelines for low-risk alcohol consumption
- Misunderstanding of what excessive drinking actually is
  - Defining it in terms of adverse physical outcomes, and failing to identify their own consumption as 'bingeing'
- Inability to identify themselves to be at risk of the adverse short and long term side-effects of drinking in excess
  - No motivation to reduce consumption

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## Questions?

*"I guess that's generally the mindset, just go hard or go home."*

*Male, 21, high-risk drinker*

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