

A HEALTH BEHAVIOUR OVERVIEW - an example from HEALTHeRESOURCE

RISK ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION IS RISKY BUSINESS

According to NHMRC Australian Alcohol Guidelines (2001), risk alcohol consumption is defined as one or more of the following:

- » consuming alcohol everyday;
- » consuming on average more than [4 if male/2 if female] standard drinks; or
- » consuming more than [6 if male /4 if female] on any one occasion.

Regular risk alcohol consumption has hazardous effects on the health of the individual and the broader community. Risk alcohol consumption is thought to be responsible for the rising rates of assault, domestic violence, unintentional injuries, driving offences and alcohol related hospitalisations (National Health and Medical Research Council 2009, Australian Guidelines to Reduce Health Risks from Drinking Alcohol, Commonwealth of Australia 2009).

RISK ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

General trends

Consistent with NSW trends, the Hunter New England Health region has observed a continued reduction in the reported prevalence of risk alcohol consumption.

Despite these reductions, HNE Health region residents (38%) in 2008 remain more likely than their NSW (33.8%) counterparts to consume risk amounts of alcohol.

Gender breakdown

Consistent with NSW trends, in 2008, males living in the HNE Health region (47.6%) reported higher rates of risk alcohol consumption when compared to their female (28.9%) counterparts [graph 1].

Age breakdown

Consistent with NSW (48%) trends, residents living in the HNE Health region (52.4%) aged 16-24 years reported the highest rates of risk alcohol consumption in 2008 [graph 2].

Of particular interest however are the growing rates of reported risk alcohol consumption in residents aged 35-44 years. The reported rates of risk alcohol consumption in this age group (44.9%) were statistically higher than those reported by their NSW (34.9%) counterparts in 2008 [graph 2].

CONCLUSION

Despite the consistent downward trend being observed across the HNE Health region and NSW, residents living in the Hunter, New England and Lower Mid North Coast regions continue to remain more likely than their NSW counterparts to consume risk amounts of alcohol. If we are likely to reduce the reported prevalence of risk alcohol consumption across the HNE Health region, targeted interventions are required.

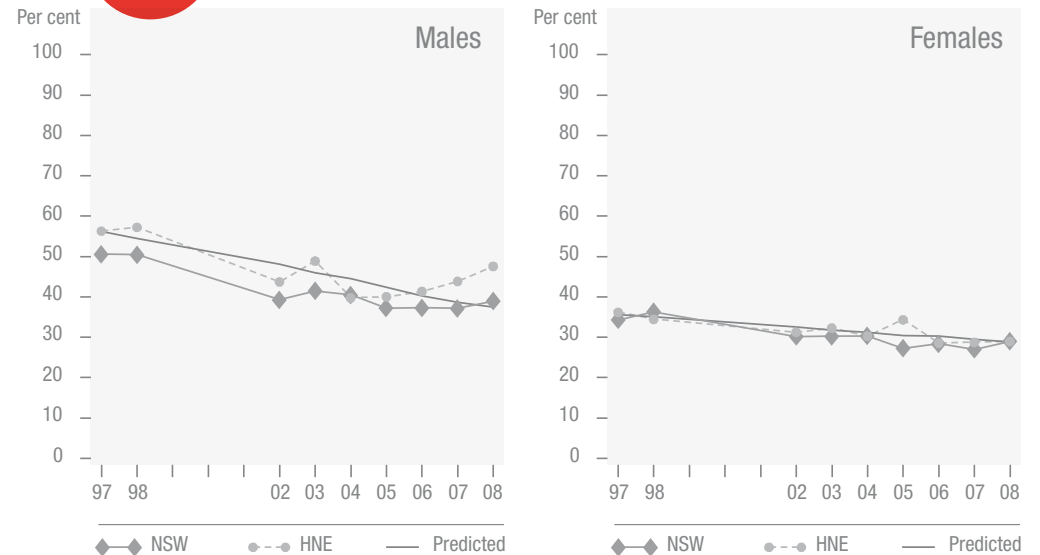
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HUNTER NEW ENGLAND
NSW HEALTH

Graph 1.

Hunter & New England, risk alcohol drinking by year, persons aged 16 years and over, NSW, 1997-2008



Graph 2.

Hunter & New England, risk alcohol drinking by age, persons aged 16 years and over, NSW, 2008

