



# Alcohol Use in Western Australia.

## Long term harms from alcohol

Alcohol is classified as a **Group 1 carcinogen** and is linked to more than 200 diseases, including at least **7 types of cancer**.

The more alcohol is drunk by Australians, the more harm individuals, families and our broader community experiences.

National guidelines recommend that to reduce the risk of long-term harm from alcohol, healthy adults should have no more than **2 standard drinks** on any one day.<sup>1</sup>

### Alcohol causes 7 types of cancer

Mouth and pharynx

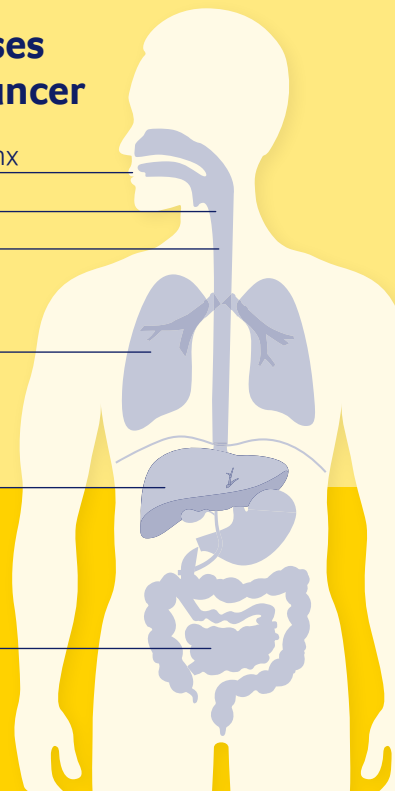
Larynx

Oesophagus


Breast

Liver

Bowel



## A significant proportion of West Australians drink alcohol at high risk of long-term harm

**1 in 6 (17.2%)** 

West Australians aged 14+ drank more than 2 standard drinks per day on average in 2019.<sup>2</sup> This means that around **400,000** West Australians drank at levels considered to be harmful for their long-term health.

WA men are

**2-3 times more likely** 

than women to drink at levels considered risky for long-term health.<sup>2,3</sup>

## Alcohol contributes significantly to a wide range of chronic diseases in WA

### Alcohol-caused cancers

including cancer of the **liver, breast, mouth** and **throat**; **chronic liver disease**; **coronary heart disease**; **stroke** and **epilepsy** are some of the most common long-term harms from alcohol.<sup>4</sup>

In 2018, West Australians were hospitalised **8045** times for long-term, alcohol-attributable conditions, equating to **22 per day**.

#### Each week in WA in 2012-13,

**22** hospitalisations occurred due to **alcohol-caused cancers**,

**26** due to **alcohol-caused cardiovascular disease**, and

**31** due to **alcohol-caused digestive conditions** among people aged 15+ years.<sup>8</sup>

Alcohol use causes around



and



Alcohol causes around

**3%**

of all cancers, equivalent to **3500 cancer cases**, in Australia each year.<sup>5</sup>

## We have lost many West Australians to alcohol-caused disease

In 2015,

**193** people died from alcohol-related cancer,

**88** from alcohol-related cardiovascular disease, and

**82** due to alcohol-related digestive conditions in WA.<sup>8</sup>

In 2017,

**7 people died each month**

from alcoholic liver disease in WA (total 82 people died).<sup>9</sup>



The cost of long-term alcohol-related harm in Western Australia is high. In 2018, **35,671 bed-days** were used for long-term alcohol-related conditions in WA at a cost of

**\$59.6 million.**<sup>7</sup>



## The more a person drinks, the higher their risk of alcohol-caused cancers



### The link between alcohol and cancer has been known for a long time

When it comes to cancer risk, there is no safe level of alcohol use. The risk of cancer increases with increased alcohol use.<sup>10</sup>

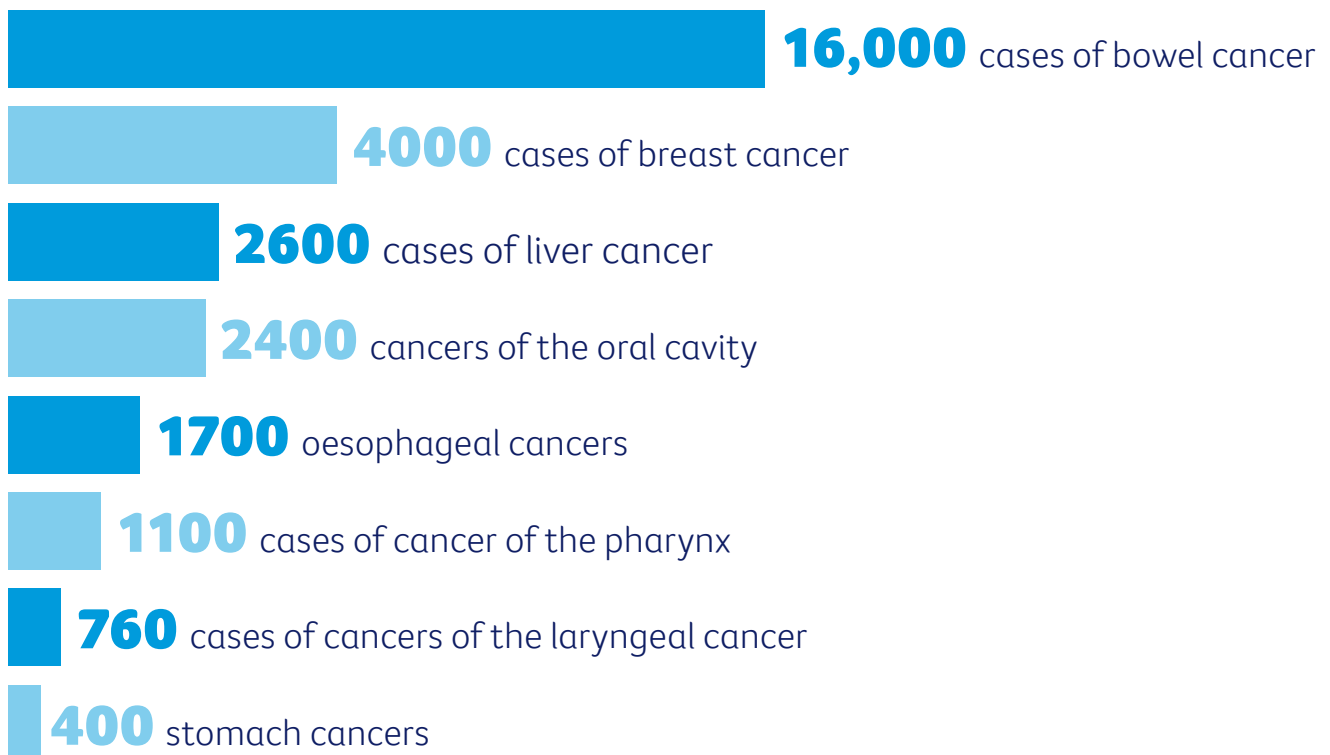
### However, community awareness of the link between alcohol and cancer and the low-risk drinking guidelines is low

- Fewer than **3 in 10** (28%) West Australians are aware of the link between alcohol and cancer.<sup>11</sup>
- While **72%** of WA adults are aware of the low-risk drinking guidelines, only **55%** know that 2 standard drinks is the maximum amount recommended to minimise long-term harm from alcohol.<sup>11</sup>



## Thousands of cancers could be prevented if no Australians drink above low-risk levels

Over the next 25 years, if no Australian drank more than 2 standard drinks per day these cancers could be prevented:<sup>12</sup>



# References.

- <sup>1</sup> National Health and Medical Research Council. Australian guidelines to reduce health risks from drinking alcohol. 2009. Available from: <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/australian-guidelines-reduce-health-risks-drinking-alcohol>
- <sup>2</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2019. Drug Statistics series no. 32. PHE 270. Canberra: AIHW; 2020.
- <sup>3</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics. National Health Survey: First Results 2017-18. ABS; December 2018. Available from: <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4364.0.55.001~2017-18~Main%20Features~Western%20Australia~10006>
- <sup>4</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Australian Burden of Disease Study 2015: Interactive data on risk factor burden [web report]. AIHW; June 2019. Available at: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/burden-of-disease/interactive-data-risk-factor-burden/contents/alcohol-use>
- <sup>5</sup> Wilson LF, Antonnson A, Green AC, et al. How many cancer cases and deaths are potentially preventable? Estimates for Australia in 2013. International Journal of Cancer. 2018; 142(4): 691-701.
- <sup>6</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Australian Burden of Disease Study: Impact and causes of illness and death in Australia 2015. Canberra: AIHW; 2019. Available from: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/burden-of-disease/burden-disease-study-illness-death-2015/contents/table-of-contents>
- <sup>7</sup> Epidemiology Branch, WA Department of Health, cited by Alcohol.Think Again. Alcohol and your long-term health. May 2020. Available from: <https://alcoholthinkagain.com.au/Alcohol-Your-Health/Alcohol-and-Your-Long-Term-Health>
- <sup>8</sup> Lensvelt, E., Gilmore, W., Liang, W., Sherk, A. and Chikritzhs, T. Estimated alcohol-attributable deaths and hospitalisations in Australia 2004 to 2015. National Alcohol Indicators, Bulletin 16. Perth: National Drug Research Institute, Curtin University; 2018.
- <sup>9</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics. Causes of Death Australia 2017: Deaths due to harmful alcohol consumption in Australia. September 2018. Available from: <https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/3303.0Main+Features12017?OpenDocument>
- <sup>10</sup> GBD 2016 Alcohol Collaborators. Alcohol use and burden for 195 countries and territories, 1990-2016: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study. The Lancet. 2018; 392(10152):1015-1035.
- <sup>11</sup> Kantar Public and Mental Health Commission. Alcohol Attitudes 2019: Adults Data Dictionary. Unpublished; 2019.
- <sup>12</sup> Wilson LF, Baade PD, Green AC, et al. The impact of reducing alcohol consumption in Australia: an estimate of the proportion of potentially avoidable cancers 2013-2037. International Journal of Cancer. 2019; 145(11):2944-2953.