

Alcohol harm to others among adults in Australia: Findings from the 2022-2023 National Drug and Health Household Survey

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Introduction: Alcohol's harm to others (AHTO) is a significant public health and social concern, yet data on specific harm types across population subgroups in Australia are limited.

Methods: Data were drawn from the 2022–2023 National Drug Strategy Household Survey (N = 21,097 adults). Weighted prevalence estimates were calculated for three types of harm (verbal abuse, physical abuse, being put in fear) across sociodemographic subgroups. Adjusted logistic regression models identified independent predictors of each harm.

Results: In adjusted models, First Nations status and being not partnered were significantly associated with elevated odds of all harms. Women had higher odds of reporting being put in fear (aOR = 1.73). Older age was associated with lower odds of all harms. Outer regional and rural residence was associated with higher odds of physical abuse, and the Northern Territory had the highest prevalence across all harm types. Risky drinking was associated with elevated odds of verbal and physical abuse but not being put in fear.

Discussions and Conclusions: AHTO remains prevalent in Australia, with distinct risk profiles across harm types. These figures likely underestimate true prevalence, as the survey excludes populations at heightened risk such as those who are homeless or incarcerated. Verbal and physical abuse were associated with risky drinking, while fear-based harms disproportionately affected women. Further research is needed to examine trends over time and the contexts in which these harms occur.

Implications on communities, practice, policy and/or First Nations communities:

Population-level alcohol policies may reduce contact-based harms, while fear-based harms may require integration with family violence frameworks. First Nations Australians experienced elevated odds across all harms, highlighting the need for culturally safe, community-led prevention approaches. Geographic disparities point to the need for targeted responses in regional and remote areas.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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