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**Epidemiology of elevated alcohol use and
probable alcohol use disorder among gender
and sexuality diverse (LGBTQ+) youth in
Australia**

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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present.



Alcohol use among LGBTQ+ young people

- International literature suggests elevated alcohol use among LGBTQ+ individuals compared to their cisgender, heterosexual peers.
- However, current Australian scholarship focuses on LGBTQ+ **adults** and recent alcohol use irrespective of duration/intensity with little consideration of support-seeking experiences.
- Existing literature suggest social support correlates of AOD use:
 - Bailey et al. (2024): trans youth who experienced high levels of discrimination were more likely to report substance use, including alcohol.
 - Hatzenbuehler et al. (2010) demonstrated that LGBTQ+ youth with higher levels of perceived social support were less likely to engage in hazardous drinking.

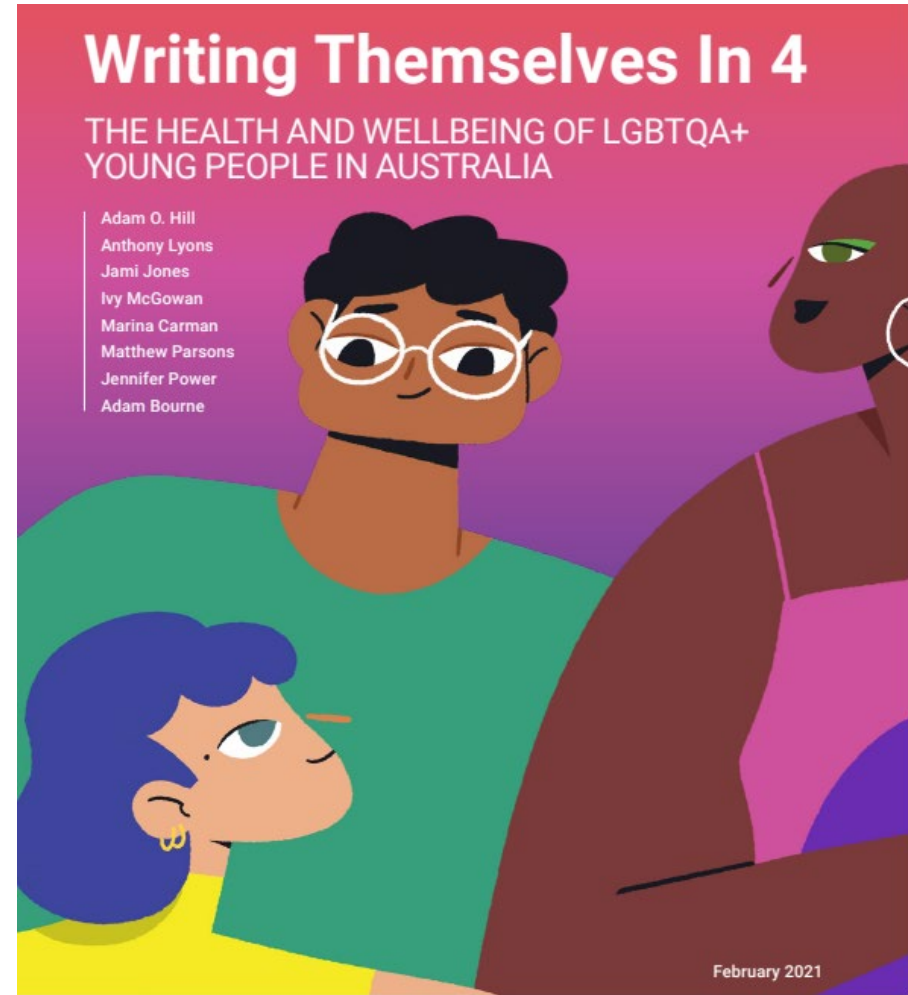
How does investigating alcohol consumption behaviours and support-seeking help LGBTQ+ young people?

Investigating hazardous alcohol use and AUD among trans and queer youth is of paramount importance for several reasons:

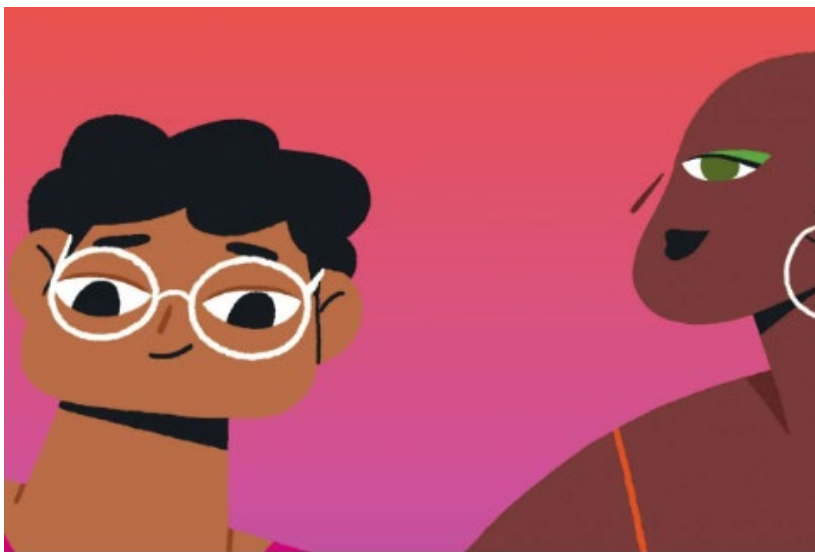
- Understanding the (i) prevalence and (ii) demographic and behavioural predictors of these behaviours can inform targeted interventions and support services aimed at reducing alcohol-related harm.
- Contribute to the broader public health goal of reducing health disparities by addressing the specific needs of marginalized groups.
- Insights gained can enhance the effectiveness of prevention and treatment programs by maximising affirming and preferential approaches that recognize the unique challenges faced by trans and queer youth.

AIMS

- (i) **Estimate the prevalence of alcohol use severity among LGBTQ+ youth in Australia**
- (ii) **Analyse demographic predictors and mental health outcomes associated with patterns of alcohol use**
- (iii) **Identify support seeking engagement and preferences among those with identified elevated alcohol use (EAU) or probable alcohol use disorder (AUD).**



Writing Themselves in 4



- Data were drawn from the Writing Themselves in 4 (**WTI4**) project (Hill et al., 2021)
- **Writing Themselves In** is Australia's largest national survey of the health and well-being of LGBTQ+ people aged 14 to 21 years.
- WTI4 involved a large national online survey, promoted through social media advertising and LGBTQ+ community organisations and networks.
- In total, 6,418 participants filled in the WTI4 survey.

Key measures



Alcohol and other drug consumption behaviours (frequency, quantity, heavy episodic drinking)



Demographic characteristics (age, gender, sexual orientation, area of residence)



Alcohol Use Disorder Identification Test (AUDIT) scores



Experiences and preferences for support seeking (substance use support + general support) + mental health experiences

Analysis

- Alcohol Use Disorder Identification Test (AUDIT-C) cut-off scores were used to determine EAU (≥ 3) and AUD (≥ 6). Associations between EAU/AUD and demographics, mental health, and support seeking engagement were tested using multivariate logistic regression models, adjusted for age, sexuality, gender, education, employment, rurality, and any past/current experience of homelessness.

Sample characteristics

Table 2 Age of participants

Age (n = 6,418)	n	%
14	559	8.7
15	815	12.7
16	1,099	17.1
17	1,297	20.2
18	784	12.2
19	644	10.0
20	640	10.0
21	580	9.0

Mean age = 17 years

Table 4 Gender of participants, by category

Gender (n = 6,253)	n	%
Cisgender woman	3,162	50.6
Cisgender man	1,394	22.3
Trans woman	75	1.2
Trans man	406	6.5
Non-binary	1,216	19.5

Half of sample cisgender women

Table 5 Sexuality of participants, by category

Sexuality (n = 6,407)	n	%
Lesbian	771	12.0
Gay	1,063	16.6
Bisexual	2,164	33.8
Pansexual	717	11.2
Queer	540	8.4
Asexual	295	4.6
Something else	857	13.4

**Relatively even distribution of sexual orientations; highest
representation = bisexual**

Alcohol use characteristics



Frequency of heavy episodic alcohol use ("binge drinking"; n, %)

Never	3,804 (59.3)
Less than monthly	1674 (26.1)
Monthly	681 (10.6)
Weekly	237 (3.7)
Daily or almost daily	19 (0.3)

AUDIT elevated alcohol use (scores ≥ 3)

Yes	2,505 (39.3)
No	3,862 (60.7)

AUDIT probable alcohol use disorder (scores ≥ 6)

Yes	882 (13.9)
No	5,485 (86.2)



Demographic correlates of EAU and AUD

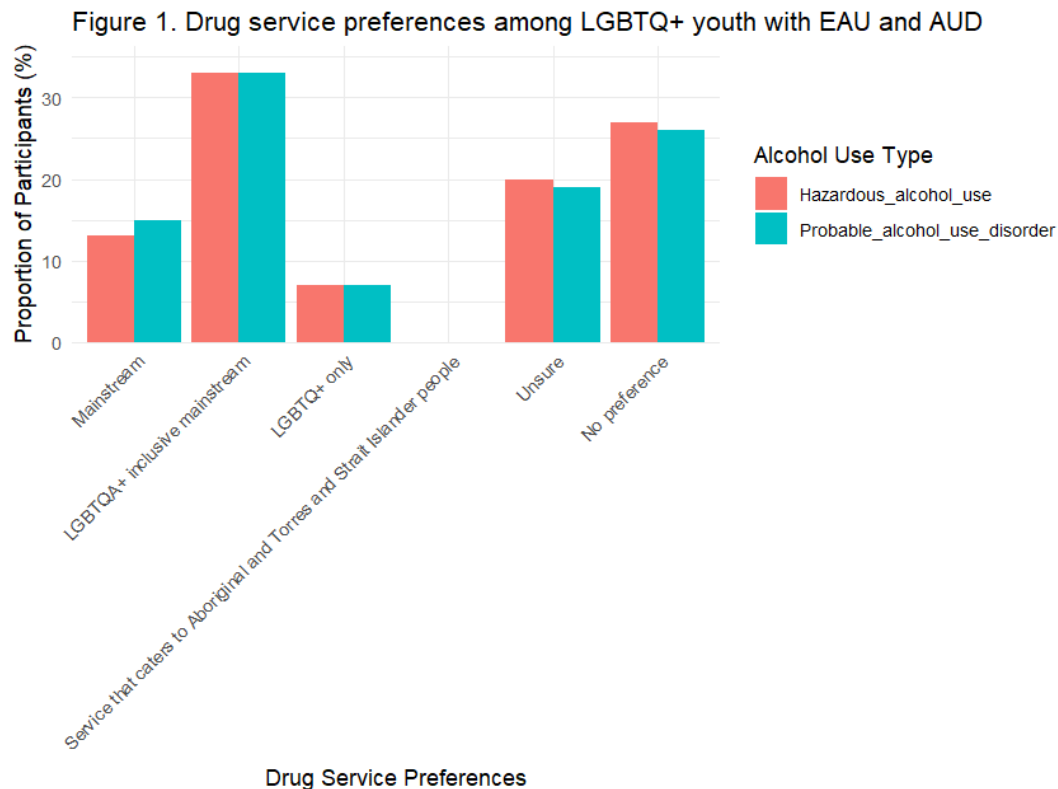
- Increased odds of EAU and AUD were observed among LGBTQ+ youth who were:
 - Aged over 18 years
 - Gay / queer
 - Recently employed
 - Had experienced homelessness
 - Were a current regular smoker, and/or
 - Reported recent self-harm/suicide attempt/s.

Support access and preferences

- Youth with EAU reported higher odds of ever accessing telephone-based support services relative to peers who did not report EAU.
- Participants with probable AUD reported lower odds of ever accessing any support services, particularly those in-person, and higher odds of never accessing any professional support, compared with youth without AUD.

Support access and preferences

- Youth with EAU and AUD expressed a preference for LGBTQ+ inclusive mainstream drug support services.



Conclusions



- EAU and AUD are prevalent among Australian LGBTQ+ youth.
- There is a priority to engage LGBTQ+ youth with probable AUD in LGBTQ+ inclusive support services.
- Upskilling telephone-based support services to address substance use concerns in an LGBTQ+ affirmative, age-appropriate manner represents a pragmatic public health response.

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Thank you

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