



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

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The Research Team

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- 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
Gender	
Male	30
Female	30
Age	
18	12
19	17
20	12
21	19
Work status	
Student	35
Employed	16
Unemployed	9
SES	
Low	21
Medium	12
High	27
Drinking status	
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).

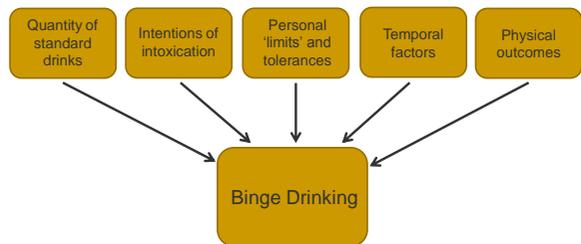
(Binge drinking) could be defined in all different extremes (Female, 20, high-risk drinker).

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

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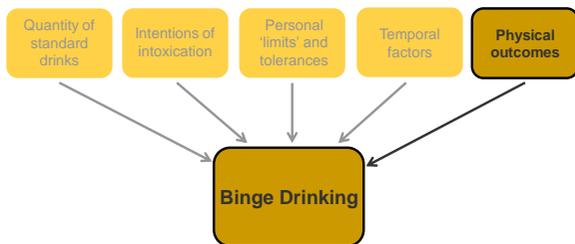
Defining 'Binge Drinking'



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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).

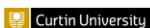
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Conclusions

- 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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