

## > Alcohol Trends in Western Australia: Australian School Students Alcohol and Drug Survey 2011

### Alcohol Use

#### Rate of use declining over the past two decades, but risky drinking at higher levels

Students were asked if they had consumed alcohol and how recent their use was (Figure 1).

Rates of alcohol use peaked in 1999 and have been decreasing since then. This difference between 1999 and 2011 is statistically significant across past week (36.1% vs. 17.5%), past month (50.7% vs. 29.7%), past year (74.3% vs. 53.3%) and ever used (90.1% vs. 76.1%).

From 2008 to 2011 the proportion of students who ever used alcohol declined by 8.0%, use in the past year by 10.6%, use in the past month by 10.5% and past week by 6.1%.

#### More students are not drinking

In 2011, almost 1 in 4 (23.9%) school students had never consumed alcohol. This is a significant increase from 1 in 10 students in 1993 (10.3%) and 1 in 6 students in 2008 (15.9%).

#### How are the data collected?

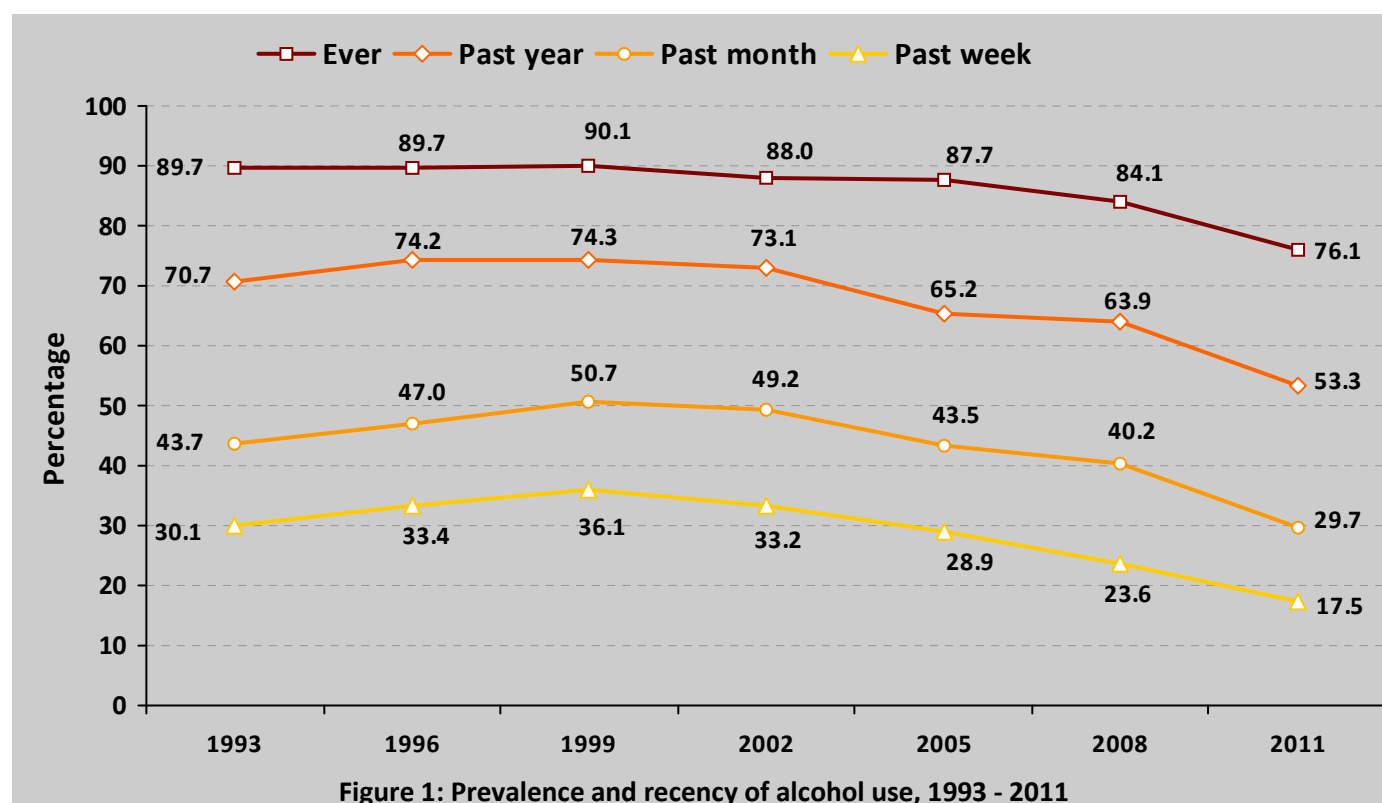
Every three years, school students in Western Australia are surveyed to find out about their drug use in the Australian School Students Alcohol and Drug Survey.

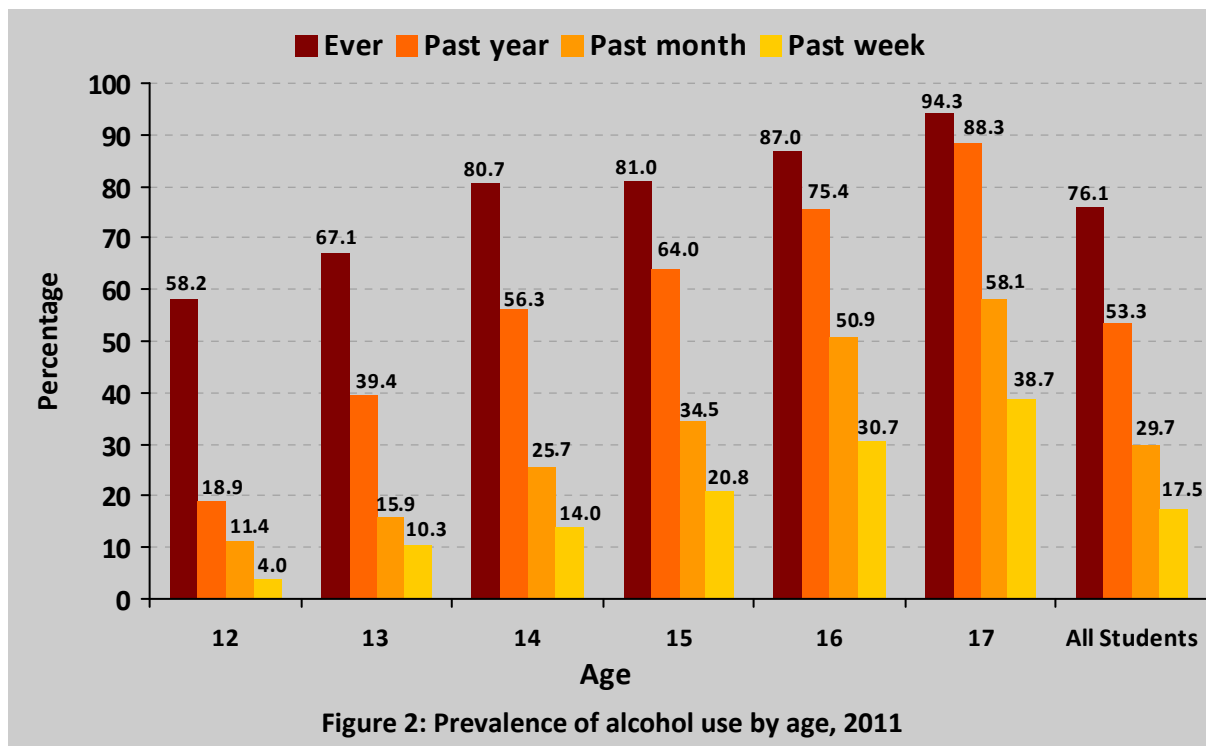
They are asked about alcohol, tobacco, other illicit and licit drug use, how much they use, how they use and their attitudes to alcohol and other drug use.

This survey has been collected since 1984, with additional drug related questions added since 1996.

The most recent survey included 3,771 young people aged from 12 to 17 years from randomly selected government, Catholic and independent schools across the State.

More information on these surveys is available at: [www.dao.wa.gov.au](http://www.dao.wa.gov.au)





### Alcohol use is higher for males and for older students

Of those students who drank in the last week, males drank more standard drinks (7.2) compared to females (5.7). For all male students, 23.7% were non-drinkers, 54.8% drank in the last year, 30.8% drank last month and 17.3% drank last week. For all female students, 24.1% were non-drinkers, 51.7% drank in the last year, 28.5% drank last month and 17.8% drank last week.

More students use alcohol as they grow older (41.8% of 12 year-olds were non-drinkers vs. 5.7% of 17 year-olds). Figure 2 shows that this increase occurs across all frequencies of use (past year, past month and past week).

### Alcohol-Related Harms

#### New drinking guidelines introduced

In March 2009, the National Health and Medical Research Council released new guidelines about alcohol consumption and health risks. The updated guidelines simplified the definitions of risk, suggested lower consumption levels and no longer differentiated between genders.

The complete guidelines can be accessed through the following link:  
<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/ds10>

For adults, drinking at risk of single occasion harm (e.g. injury) is defined as having more than four standard drinks on any one day.

For children and young people under 18 years of age the safest option is not drinking. This is particularly so for those under 15 years of age.

#### Defining risky drinking for students

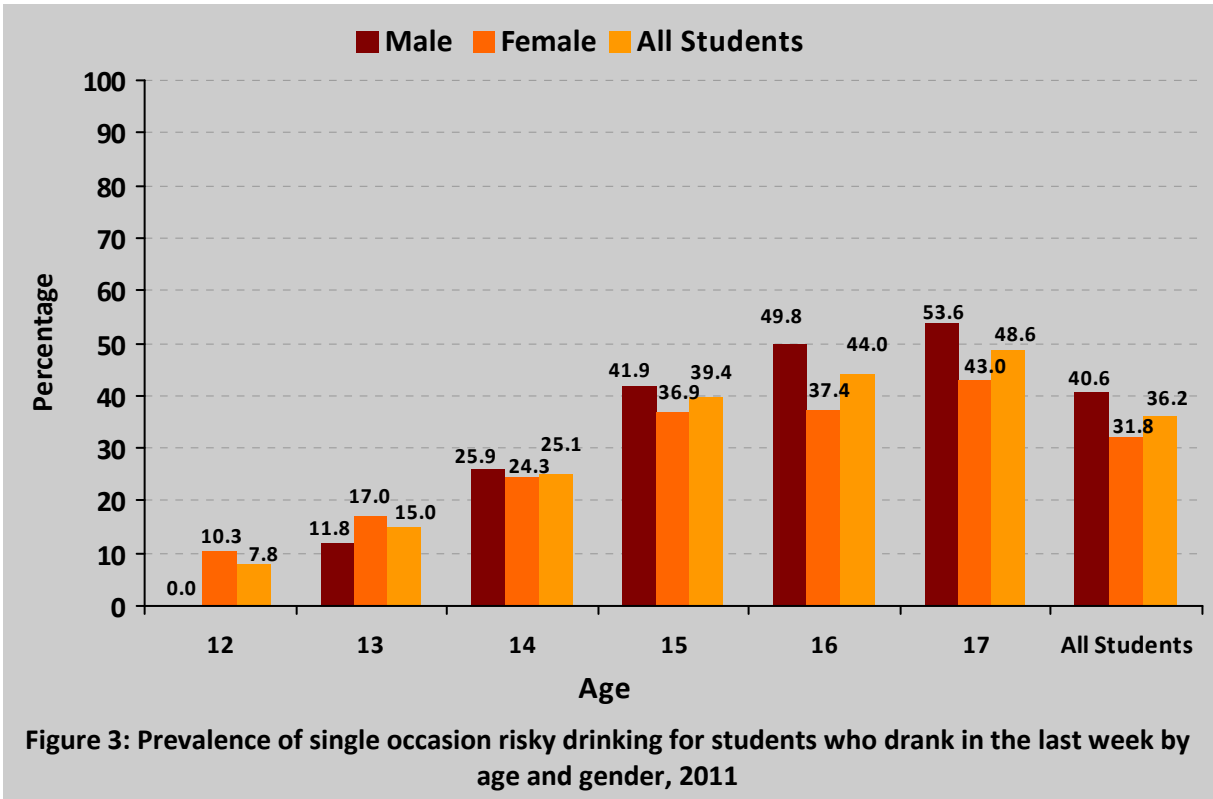
Single occasion is the most common type of risky drinking for young people, as most students do not drink regularly. Only those who had used alcohol in the last week were asked about quantity consumed. Therefore, risky drinking for other recency periods such as last month, year or ever can not be calculated.

Note, single occasion risk in the following analysis is defined using adult guidelines, though the guidelines for young people state that not drinking is the safest option.

#### Risky drinking in 2011

Of those students who drank in the last week (17.5%), more than one-third (36.2%) drank at risky levels for single occasion alcohol-related harm (Figure 3).

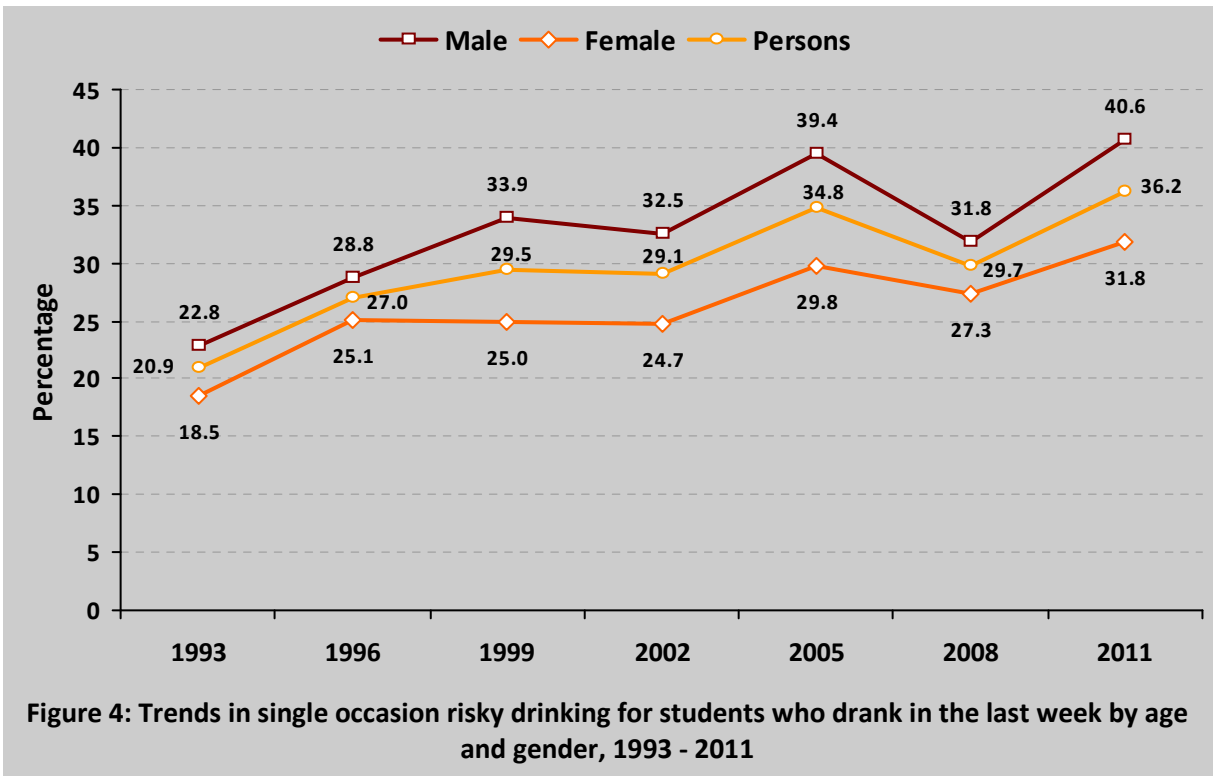
Just over two-fifths of males (40.6%) and almost one-third of females (31.8%) drank at risky levels for single occasion alcohol-related harm.



**Upward trend in risky drinking**

As Figure 4 shows, there has been an increase in the proportion of students drinking at risky levels for single occasion harm. The increase from 1993 (20.9%) to 2011 (36.2%) is statistically significant.

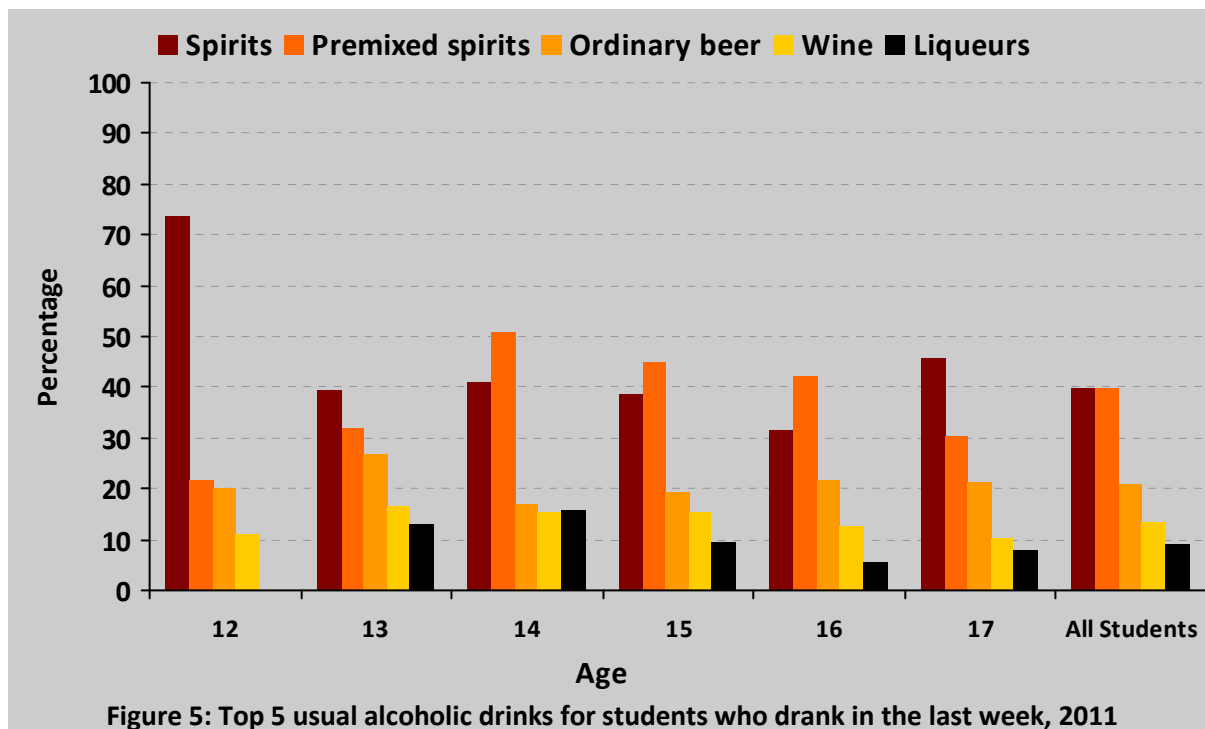
In 2011, the proportion of students drinking at risky levels for single occasion harm increased compared to 2008, however analysis showed this was not statistically significant.



## Context of Alcohol Use

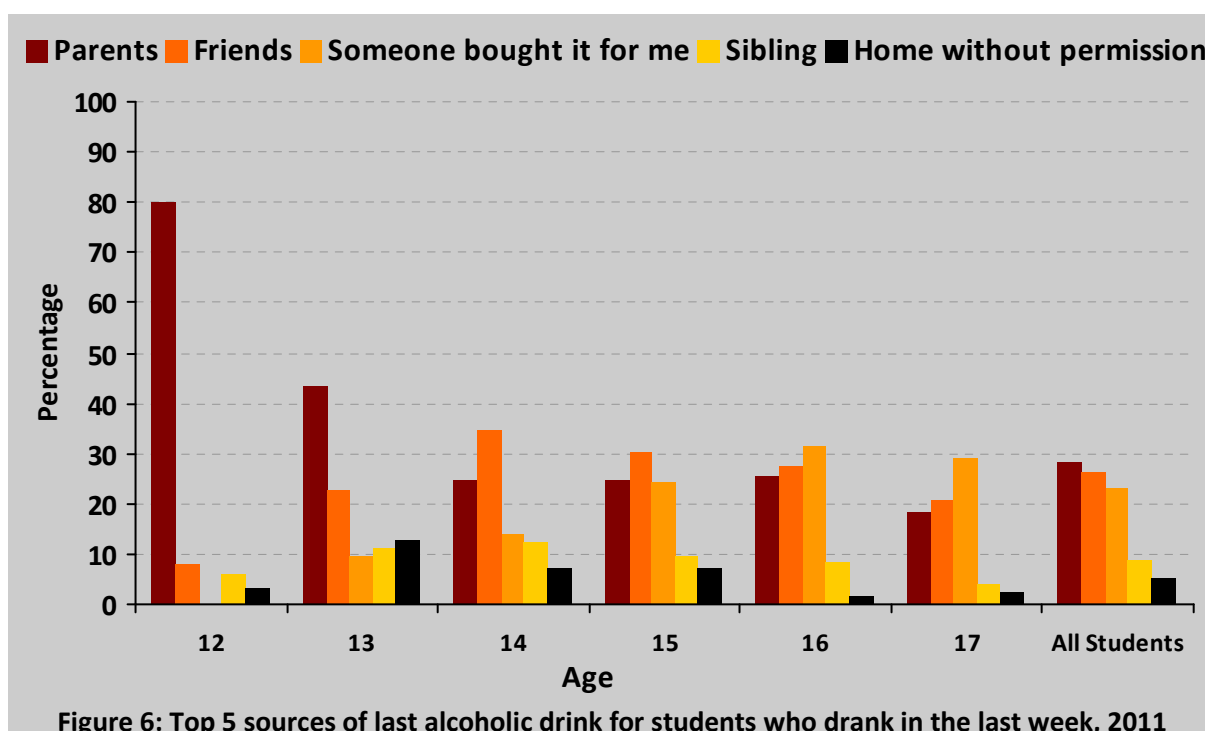
### Spirits and premixed are preferred

Students were asked what drink they usually have (but could select more than one). Figure 5 shows the top five responses. Most students prefer spirits (39.9%) and premixed spirits (39.6%). This is followed by beer (20.8%), wine (13.5%) and liqueurs (9.0%).



### Parents and friends are the most likely sources

As Figure 6 shows, the source of a student’s last alcoholic drink was most commonly their parents (28.2%; 2008 was 40.7%), followed by their friends (26.4%; 2008 was 20.9%), then someone else who bought it for them (23.1%; 2008 was 15.0%). The top two places of consumption of last drink for those students who drank in the last week were parties (33.2%) or their own home (31.0%).



For data on this page, students could select more than one response. Totals may exceed 100%.

## Attitudes towards Alcohol Use

### Most older students expect a positive drinking experience

Almost four-fifths of 16 to 17 year-old students (78.8%) and just under half of 12 to 15 year-old students (47.6%) expect a positive experience after consuming alcohol (Figure 7).

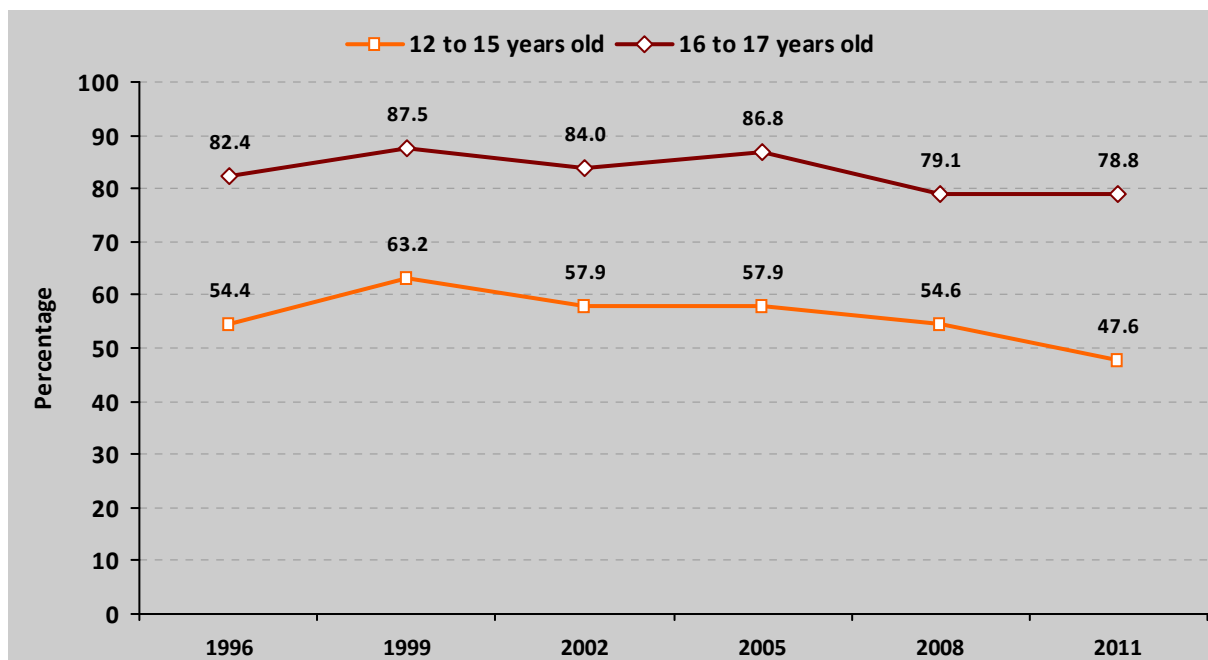


Figure 7: Proportion of students with positive expectations regarding alcohol consumption, 2011

### Attitudes towards drinking varies by age group

Differences in attitudes appear across the age ranges. For example, 65.3% of 16 to 17 year-olds agree that getting drunk is OK sometimes so long as you don't lose control, compared to 40.3% of 12 to 15 year-olds (Figure 8).

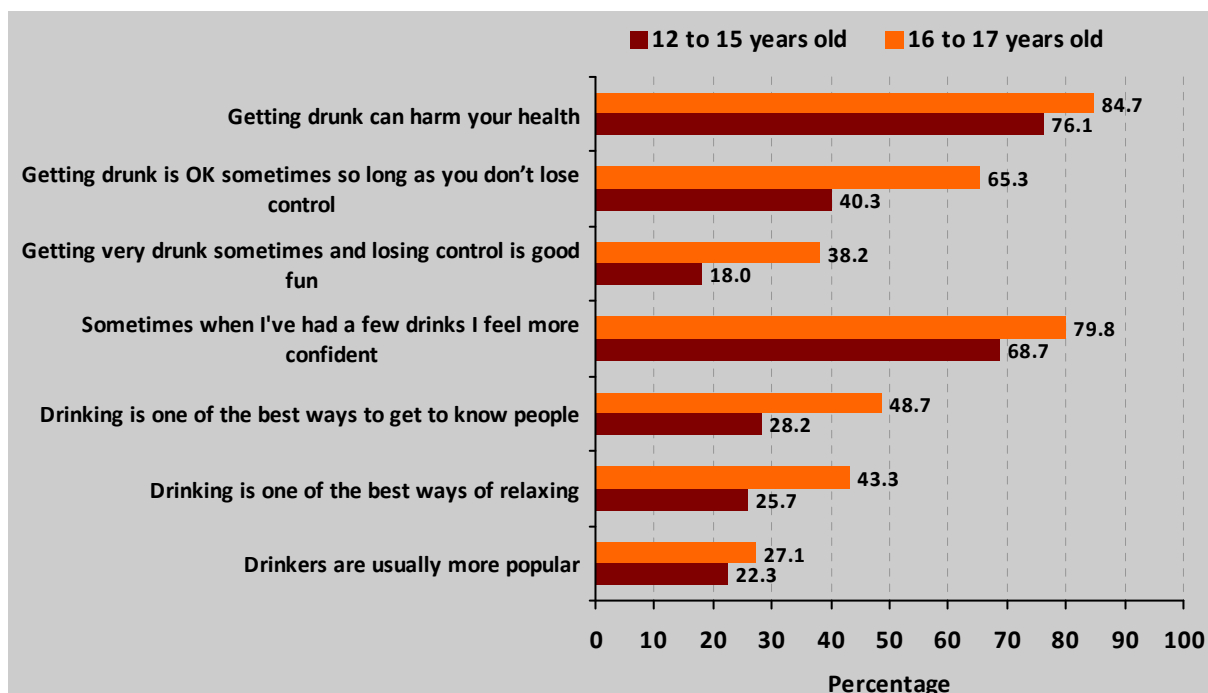
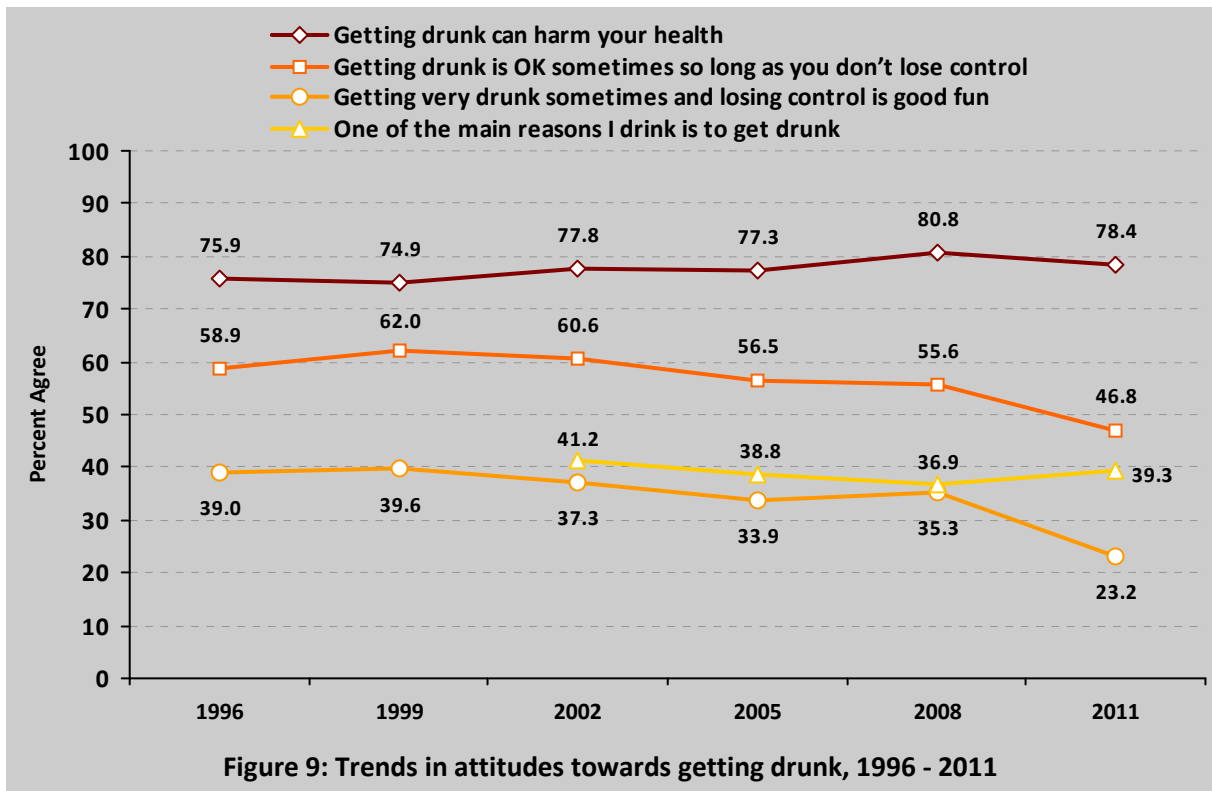


Figure 8: Attitudes towards alcohol consumption by age group, 2011



### Mixed attitudes towards drinking

The proportion of students who agree that getting drunk can harm your health has remained relatively stable (Figure 9). However, from 2008 to 2011, there has been a sharp decline in agreement with the statements, 'getting drunk but staying in control is OK' (8.8%) and 'getting drunk and losing control is good fun' (12.1%). Although there was an increase in agreement with the statement 'I feel more confident after a few drinks' (7.2%), agreement with most other statements has decreased (Figure 10).

