



**UNSW**  
SYDNEY

**NDARC**  
National Drug &  
Alcohol Research Centre

The Difference is Research

# Australian Parental Supply of Alcohol Longitudinal Study

**Why Parental Supply of Alcohol?**

This study was born out of a lack of Australian data examining the role that parents play in the development of adolescent alcohol use behaviours, especially regarding parental supply of alcohol. Parents are the most common source of alcohol for young people. A popular belief among parents is that this supply may potentially reduce the risk of alcohol misuse. However, it is also possible that by permitting supervised drinking at a young age, parents may unwittingly set in motion a developmental process by which children more rapidly progress to unsupervised drinking and harmful patterns of consumption. Parents can play a pivotal role in the prevention of alcohol misuse; **it is important that we understand the true impact of parental supply.**

## Who are we?

The Australian Parental Supply of Alcohol Longitudinal Study (APSALS) is one of the longest running studies of youth alcohol behaviours in the world.

In 2010-2011, we recruited 1,927 Grade 7 students from public, independent and Catholic schools across NSW, TAS, and WA. Each year, the participants (and their parents up until Grade 12) complete a survey about who supplies them with alcohol, their alcohol use, other drug use, and mental health.

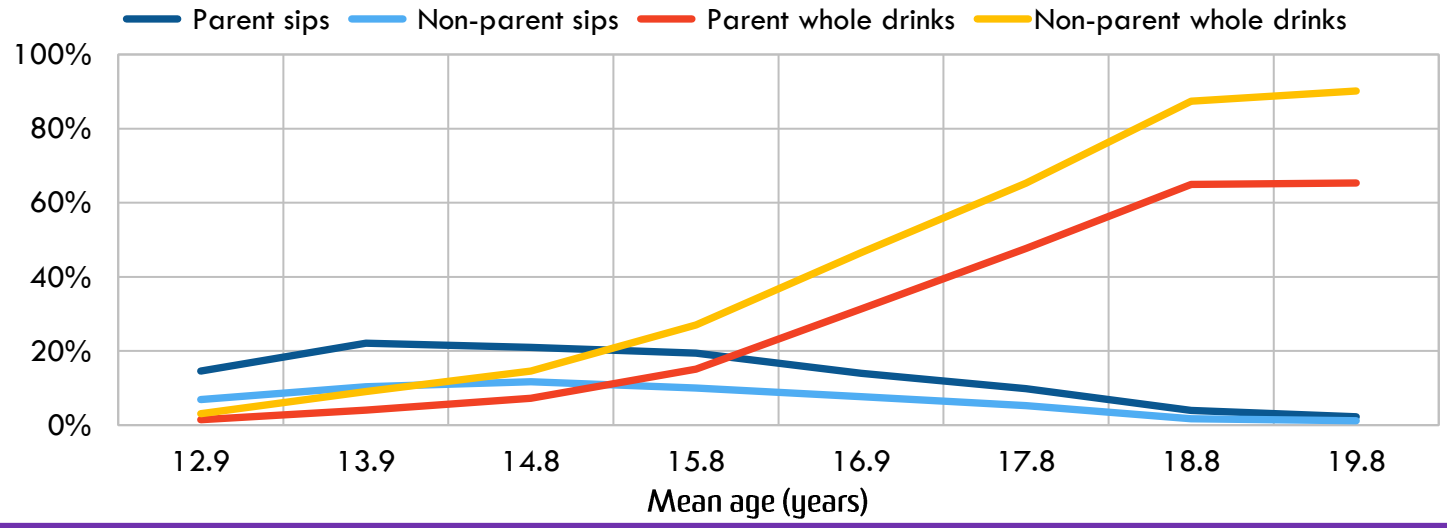
In 2019-2020, we are celebrating the  
**10<sup>th</sup> year**  
of the APSALS cohort!

Our participants are now in early adulthood, we have a wealth of data from across the adolescent period, which puts us in a unique position to understand the factors which influence the way that they use alcohol and how their experiences with alcohol during adolescence influence them as young adults.

## Funding

The APSALS cohort has been supported by the Australian Research Council, Australian Rotary Health, Foundation for Alcohol Research & Education, the National Health & Medical Research Centre, and the National Drug & Alcohol Research Centre, which is supported by the Australian Government Department of Health under the Drug & Alcohol Program.

## Supply of sips and full serves of alcohol



## Parental supply of alcohol

We found that parents providing alcohol to children is associated with alcohol-related harms. Compared with adolescents who reported no supply of alcohol, parental supply of alcohol increased the risk of adolescents subsequently binge drinking, experiencing alcohol-related harm, and experiencing symptoms of alcohol use disorder. Parental supply also increased the risk of getting supply from other sources, which was in turn associated with an even greater increase in risk of alcohol-related harms. *Mattick et al., 2018. Lancet Public Health, 3(2).*

## Parents supplying sips of alcohol

Following on from the above study, we examined parental supply in more detail, looking at supply of sips and full serves of alcohol separately. Most parental supply in early adolescence was in the form of sips, with supply of full serves becoming more common in later adolescence. We found that parental supply of sips increased the risk of binge drinking and experiencing alcohol-related harms, but not of experiencing symptoms of alcohol use disorder. We observed greater increases in risk as the quantity of alcohol supplied increased.

**There is no evidence to support the view that parental supply of alcohol protects adolescents from adverse drinking outcomes.**

## Parental supply & patterns of adolescent alcohol consumption

Parental supply of alcohol between the ages of 12 and 15 years was associated with greater overall consumption in early adolescence, however, alcohol consumption continued to increase in later adolescence, regardless of whether parental supply occurred. That is, parental supply appears to have less impact on drinking in later adolescence. However, there was also no evidence of parental supply having a protective effect at any stage during adolescence.

*Clare et al., 2019. Drug Alcohol Depend, 204:107529.*

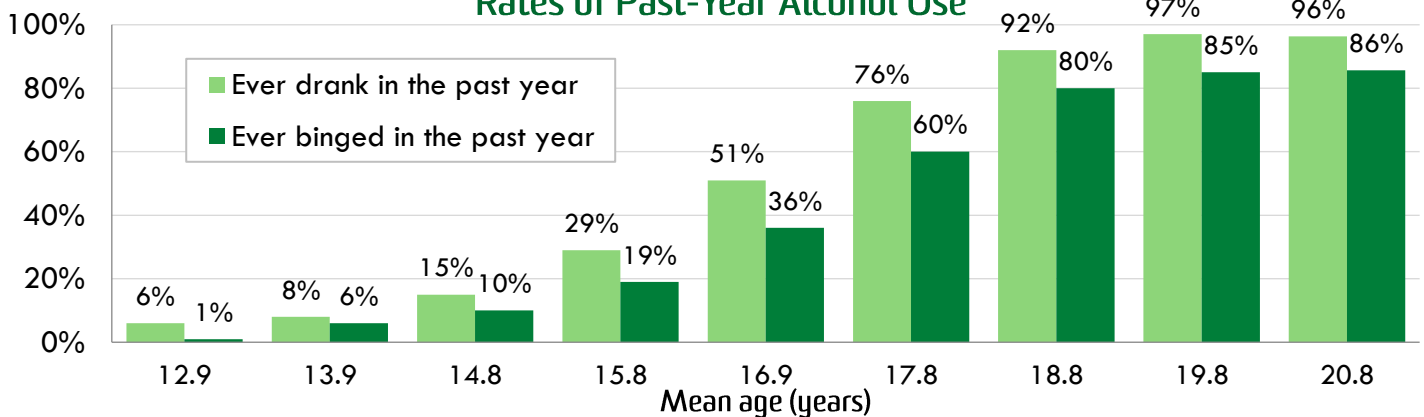


## Adolescent Alcohol Use: Are Sipping & Drinking Distinct?

Compared to adolescents who drank full serves of alcohol in grade 7 or 8 at school, those who had only had sips of alcohol were more likely to have parents with stricter alcohol-specific rules, more consistent parenting practices, and to have fewer substance-using friends and friends who disapproved of substance use. 'Sipping' and 'drinking' alcohol appear to be quite different behaviours occurring in different environments. Grouping 'sippers' and 'drinkers' together in research may have significant effects on the results of epidemiological studies, potentially hiding the true outcomes for drinkers.

*Wadolowski et al., 2015. Alcohol Clin Exp Res, 39(9).*

## Rates of Past-Year Alcohol Use



## Where can I find more information?

If you would like more information about our study, please visit our webpage via [bit.ly/apsals](http://bit.ly/apsals) or scan the QR code on the top right corner of this page. If you would like to read any of these papers in full, please let us know and we'd be more than happy to provide you with a copy. We are also keen to talk about collaboration and/or research ideas or doing a presentation on APSALS data for your organization. You can contact us on the details below.

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