

This section provides an overview of the research context, design and findings

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Background and objectives

The Australian Government, as part of a National Binge Drinking Strategy, announced the funding of a \$20 million harm minimisation and behavioural change campaign aimed at confronting 15–25 year-olds with the “costs and consequences of binge drinking”. The overall goal of the campaign is to increase the likelihood that 15–25 year-olds who choose to drink alcohol do so at a low risk level for short-term harm. As a secondary audience, the campaign will target the parents of 13–17 year-olds, primarily utilising focused public relations activities, and also a brochure.

1.2 Research design

An online survey was conducted in November 2008, prior to the campaign launch, and again in April 2009, subsequent to the first burst of media activity. The fieldwork for the baseline wave ran from 13 to 23 of November, during which time 4,363 interviews were conducted: 807 with 15–17 year-olds, 2,231 with 18–25 year-olds and 1,325 with parents of 13–17 year-olds. The fieldwork for the April 2009 evaluation wave ran from 27 March to 13 April, during which time 4,200 interviews were conducted: 1,023 with 15–17 year-olds, 2,112 with 18–25 year-olds and 1,065 with parents of 13–17 year-olds. Two further evaluation waves are planned for October/November 2009 and March/April 2010.

1.3 Impact of campaign on behaviours

In the following summary tables, green shading indicates significant improvement and red shading indicates significant deterioration in the indicator across survey waves. Where the improvement or detriment relates to a change in a specific proportion, the baseline and evaluation proportions are reported. Where the improvement or detriment relates to a significant overall shift along a scale, the terms 'shift down' or 'shift up' indicate the direction of the change. A dash ('-') signifies no change from one wave to the next and 'NA' signifies the indicator is not relevant to that audience.

The key behavioural changes from November 2008 to April 2009 are summarised in Table 1, below.

Table 1. Summary of behavioural changes

Behaviour categories	15–17 years	18–21 years	22–25 years	Parents
Recent drinking behaviour				
• proportion consuming RTDs on last occasion	-	✓ 53% to 48%	-	NA
• number of standard drinks consumed on last occasion	✓ Shift down	-	-	NA
• risk level of last occasion among those who have drunk in last three months	-	-	✓ Shift down	NA
• risk level of highest drinking occasion in last three months among those who have drunk in last three months	✗ Shift up	-	-	-
Obtaining alcohol				
• sourced through friend or acquaintance	✓ 56% to 39%	-	-	NA
Controlled drinking strategies				
• deliberately alternating between alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks	-	-	✗ current 51% to 47%	NA
• asking someone who has had too much alcohol to stop drinking	✗ current 48% to 40%	-	✗ current 36% to 30% ✗ intended 52% to 46%	NA
• switching to drinking more low-alcoholic drinks	✗ current 23% to 16%	-	-	NA
• make sure you don't get drunk when you go out	-	✓ intended 63% to 72%	-	NA
• refuse an alcoholic drink you are offered	-	✓ intended 61% to 68%	-	NA

Behaviour categories	15–17 years	18–21 years	22–25 years	Parents
• only drink low-alcohol drinks or non-alcohol drinks (on a night out)	-	✓ intended 42% to 48%	-	NA
• stop drinking altogether	-	✓ intended 25% to 35%	✓ intended 27% to 31%	NA
• make a point of eating while or before consuming alcohol	-	-	✗ intended 83% to 78%	NA
Negative drinking strategies				
• drinking to get drunk	-	✓ intended 49% to 42%	✓ current 46% to 40% ✓ intended 41% to 35%	NA
Frequency of negative experiences				
• seeing violence by someone who was drunk and aggressive	✓ Shift down	-	-	NA
• doing something after drinking too much that you regretted or later wished you hadn't done	-	-	✓ Shift down	NA
• seriously hurting or injuring yourself after drinking too much	-	✓ Shift down	-	NA
Discussions about alcohol				
• incidence of discussions	✗ 70% to 63%	-	-	✗ 69% to 64%
• discussions prompted by advertising	-	-	-	✓ 19% to 25%

The results in this table show that there were some pleasing improvements in behaviour and intentions between November 2008 and April 2009 on a number of indicators:

- last occasion drinking;
- supply of alcohol by friends and acquaintances;
- intended use of certain controlled drinking strategies;
- current and intended drinking to get drunk;
- reduced frequency of certain negative alcohol-related experiences; and
- parents' reporting of discussions prompted by advertising.

However, none of these improvements were found in more than two of the three age categories for those measures which applied only to 15–25 year-olds, or to more than two of the four categories, for those measures which applied to 15–25 year-olds and to parents.

Further, there was also some deterioration in behaviour and intentions between November 2008 and April 2009 on three indicators:

- risk level of the highest drinking occasion in the last three months;
- current and intended use of some controlled drinking strategies; and
- the incidence of discussions about alcohol.

As with the improvements, these deteriorations were not found across more than two of the age categories. For the incidence of discussions, in particular, it does seem plausible that a time-of-year effect may be responsible for the deterioration, given that November is a time that many students are preparing for end-of-year celebrations, whereas April is firmly within the school year.

1.4 Impact of campaign on knowledge

The key changes in knowledge from November 2008 to April 2009 are summarised in Table 2, below.

Table 2. Summary of knowledge changes

Knowledge categories	15–17 years	18–21 years	22–25 years	Parents
• alcohol as primary cause of hospitalisations compared with other categories of drugs	-	✓ 57% to 62%	✓ 52% to 60%	NA
• ranking of alcohol as cause of hospitalisations	-	✓ Shift up	✓ Shift up	NA
• estimated incidence of peer drunkenness	✓ 55% to 51%	✓ 67% to 64%	✓ 66% to 64%	-

The results in this table show that there were some pleasing improvements in knowledge between November 2008 and April 2009, and no deteriorations. These improvements were more widespread, being observed in either two or three of the three age categories for 15–25 year-olds. Given the close link between the first two of these improvements and the content of the campaign creative material, it seems likely that these two improvements are due to the campaign. It is less clear how the campaign might have affected the estimated incidence of peer drunkenness, though it is worth noting that the estimates have not decreased greatly.

1.5 Impact of campaign on attitudes

The key attitudinal changes from November 2008 to April 2009 are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3. Summary of attitudinal changes

Attitude categories	15–17 years	18–21 years	22–25 years	Parents
Acceptability of getting drunk				
• among one's closest friends	-	✓ Shift down	-	NA
Acknowledgement of consequences of drinking too much				
• you are more vulnerable to being physically hurt by others when you are drunk	-	-	✓ Shift up	NA
• you are more likely to have unsafe sex if you've drunk too much	-	✓ 48% to 55% agree	✓ Shift up	NA
• drinking too much when you are out gets you into trouble or danger	-	-	✓ Shift up	NA
Perceived susceptibility to consequences of drinking too much				
• likelihood of getting into a serious argument	✓ Shift up	-	-	NA
• likelihood of becoming more violent and aggressive	✓ Shift up	-	-	NA
• likelihood of accidental pregnancy	✓ Shift up	-	-	NA
• likelihood of being photographed in an embarrassing situation	-	✗ Shift down	-	NA
• doing things that make them feel embarrassed or humiliated	-	-	✗ Shift down	NA
Parental attitudes				
• permissiveness towards their 13–17 year-old child drinking at their age	NA	NA	NA	✓ Shift down

The results in this table show that there were some pleasing improvements in attitudes between November 2008 and April 2009, though all of them were observed in only one or two of the relevant age categories.

It is somewhat surprising to observe a decrease in perceived susceptibility in the likelihood of being photographed in an embarrassing situation, even if only among 18–21 year-olds, given that this consequence featured in the campaign materials. There is some possibility that this

consequence is felt to be more likely in November, during end-of-year celebrations, a hypothesis that will be tested in the remaining two waves of the evaluation research.

1.6 Campaign awareness and reactions

Awareness of advertising about young people and the risks when drinking alcohol:

The key changes in unprompted advertising awareness from November 2008 to April 2009 are summarised in Table 4.

Table 4. Summary of changes in awareness of advertising about young people and alcohol

Campaign categories	15–17 years	18–21 years	22–25 years	Parents
• Awareness of advertising	✓ 26% to 41%	✓ 33% to 50%	✓ 31% to 44%	-
• Advertising message of negative effects of drinking	✓ 39% to 59%	✓ 27% to 51%	✓ 27% to 50%	✓ 18% to 29%
• Advertising message of association of drinking with violence and crime	✓ 5% to 21%	✓ 7% to 20%	✓ 7% to 26%	✓ 14% to 23%

In this evaluation survey, unprompted awareness of advertising about young people and the risks when drinking alcohol has increased among all three age categories of 15–25 year-olds, and there has been an across-the-board increase in the proportion of 15–25 year-olds who saw advertising on television, in newspapers and magazines. Recall of the negative effects of drinking and the association of drinking with violence and crime as advertising messages are up across all three age categories of 15–25 year-olds, and also among the secondary target audience of parents of 13–17 year-olds.

Campaign reach and diagnostics: Net campaign reach was high, at between 84% and 86% of the three age categories of 15–25 year-olds.

The reach of the campaign television advertising was generally high among all age categories of the primary target audience, with 78% of 15–17 year-olds and 18–21 year-olds, 76% of 22–25 year-olds. For the 'Pedestrian accident/Party bushes' TVC, designed to appeal particularly to 15–17 year-olds, reach varied from 64% of 22–25 year-olds to 68% of 15–17 year-olds. For the 'Coffee table/Pub fight' TVC, designed to appeal particularly to 18–25 year-olds, reach was slightly lower for all age groups, varying from 62% of 22–25 year-olds to 65% of 18–21 year-olds.

Participants aged 15-25 years generally agreed that the television advertising was attention-grabbing, believable, informative and confronting, with levels of agreement ranging from 85% to 96% for those attributes. Perceived relevance was rated more moderately by 15–25 year-

olds for both executions, ranging from 45% to 64%, with ratings the highest among 18–21 year-olds. The television advertisements were seen as more personally relevant as the risk level of one's consumption on the last drinking occasion increased, with between 38% and 45% of those who had never had an alcoholic drink, and between 60% and 66% of those who drank at high risk levels on their last drinking occasion, agreeing that each was personally relevant.

The net reach of radio advertising varied from 16% to 19% across age categories of the primary target audience, with reach inversely related to age among 15–25 year-olds. The net reach of print advertising varied from 42% to 47% among 15–25 year-olds. Print executions were most commonly recalled in poster and magazine formats. The online banner advertisement had greater reach among 15–17 year-olds and 18–21 year-olds (35%) and lower reach among 22–25 year-olds (26%).

While a secondary target audience, the results among parents of 13–17 year-olds are also positive. Their net campaign reach at 80% is only slightly lower than for the primary target audience, with 7% recalling the information brochure designed specifically for that audience. Results on the applicable diagnostics for the television ad were higher among parents than 15–25 year-olds, with between 92% and 98% agreement. Perceived relevance was not asked of parents.

Reported impact: Participants among the primary target audience were highly likely to agree with several impact statements about the campaign, with at least three quarters of 15–25 year-olds agreeing that the advertisements made them think about certain possibilities:

- the negative things that can happen if I drink too much;
- the choices I make about drinking;
- the harm to others that could result from drinking too much;
- the chances of me being hurt if I drink too much;
- the acceptability of drinking too much; and
- how drinking too much can ruin a good night out.

For each of these statements, agreement decreased with age among 15–25 year-olds.

The campaign had some impact on 15–25 year-olds' consideration of their current drinking patterns, with the majority of those who recalled seeing any of the campaign advertisements agreeing that they made them think about how much they are drinking and just under half agreeing that the campaign advertisements made them think about how often they are drinking

too much. The proportion of 15–25 year-olds who said that they had reduced their drinking in response to the advertisements varied from 27% to 31%.

The proportion of 15–25 year-olds prompted by the campaign to talk about various negative consequences of drinking ranged from 31% to 56% who were prompted to talk to friends, and from 17% to 52% who were prompted to talk to parents (with 15–17 year-olds more than twice as likely as 18–25 year-olds to do so).

In terms of the secondary target audience of parents of 13–17 year-olds, they reported a greater level of agreement than 15–25 year-olds with all but one of the analogous impact statements asked of both target audiences. The exception was whether they had reduced their own consumption in response to the campaign, and even on this measure, 19% of parents reported the campaign had an effect on them. Finally, parents reported that the campaign had prompted them to undertake a range of protective strategies related to their children's drinking ranging from 'keeping an eye on them and knowing who they go out with and where they go' (83%) and 'setting a good example and demonstrating responsible drinking' (83%) to 'preventing them from going to places where there will be alcohol' (50%).

1.7 Conclusions

The results provide preliminary evidence that the campaign has had a positive, though modest, impact on the primary and secondary target audiences. Data from the next two waves of the evaluation will help to determine the extent to which the campaign is likely to have contributed to these improvements and also the extent to which these improvements can be sustained and improved upon with further campaign activity. As time of year is likely to have some impact on results, particularly with regard to drinking behaviours, changes from one year to the same time of the year twelve months later will provide more robust evidence of the residual effect of the first wave of communication activity. Comparing April 2009 to April 2010 will also show the cumulative effect of two waves of communication activity, and the incremental effect of the second wave of communication activity.