# Examining trends in alcohol consumption during pregnancy in Australia 2001-2016

## Researchers

1. Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education
2. Oliver Stanesby
3. Megan Cook, Centre for Alcohol Policy Research
4. Sarah Callinan, Centre for Alcohol Policy Research

## Summary

The 2009 National Health and Medical Research Council’s (NHMRC) Australian Guidelines to Reduce Health Risks from Drinking Alcohol recommends for women who are pregnant, for those who are planning a pregnancy and for those who are breastfeeding, not drinking alcohol is the safest option.

Drinking alcohol during pregnancy is linked to Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). FASD is difficult to predict, with varying degrees of severity particular to each person. Some may have more physical disabilities and others greater cognitive impacts. Alcohol consumption during pregnancy is also associated with other conditions such as low birth weight, neuropsychological disorders and pre-term births.

Using the cross-sectional survey data of pregnant women from six waves of the Australian National Drug Strategy Household Survey (NDSHS), this study estimated and investigated trends in female alcohol consumption during pregnancy and before knowledge of pregnancy by age and education level groups from 2001- 2016.

## Key findings

1. The estimated proportion of pregnant women who consumed alcohol while pregnant decreased between 2001 and 2016.
2. There was a rapid decline in drinking while pregnant before being aware of the pregnancy between 2010 and 2016. However, the percentage of women who consumed while pregnant after knowledge of their pregnancy appeared to plateau after 2010.
3. Older women were significantly more likely than younger women to report drinking while pregnant but equally likely to reduce their consumption when they became pregnant as their younger counterparts.
4. Women with a high level of education were more likely than women with less education to drink while pregnant, but those with less education were more likely to maintain or increase their consumption when they became pregnant.

[view the report](https://fare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Examining-trends-in-alcohol-consumption-during-pregnancy-in-Australia_2001-2016-FINAL.pdf)