



Curtin University

A photograph of a man with a beard, shirtless, sitting in a swimming pool. He is holding a blue and white water bottle to his mouth and drinking. The water in the pool is rippling, and the background shows a sunset or sunrise over a landscape with trees and hills.

**YOUTH WATER SAFETY PROGRAM
ROYAL LIFE SAVING SOCIETY WA
2022 EVALUATION REPORT**

COLLABORATION FOR EVIDENCE, RESEARCH & IMPACT IN PUBLIC HEALTH

YOUTH WATER SAFETY PROGRAM: ASSESSING RISKS AROUND WATER

WHAT WE DID

PURPOSE

To explore:

- what young people like to do in and around waterways
- how young people think about risk and safety
- the role of friends in influencing practices in and around waterways



6
PEER LED
FOCUS GROUPS

FACE TO FACE AND ONLINE



**WITH 18 - 24
YEAR OLDS
IN PERTH**



9



14

WHAT WE FOUND

ASSESSING RISK



DOING WATER-BASED ACTIVITIES: MAKING MEANING OF RISK

Findings suggest:

- Personal meaning of water safety
- Interactions between risk and personal experience/confidence.
- Risk is complex, dynamic & based on situated rationalities

If I'd never done cliff jumping, I'd think that's pretty risky. But now that I have done it, I kind of know like, what to do before hand and what to check... the conditions, check depth, make sure it's a safe spot. - FG6, M



DRINKING & SWIMMING: STILL RISKY BUSINESS

Findings highlighted:

- importance of "knowing your limits"
- increased likelihood of adverse events when consuming alcohol around waterways
- tensions between personal responsibility, skills and capabilities and social norms and cues

I feel like if you're drinking around water, just kind of again, observing your friends and making sure that no one's getting too drunk. And if they are... have a chat or be away from the water for a bit - FG5, F



RISK: A GENDERED PERSPECTIVE

Findings suggest that:

- males were more likely to enjoy activities that were 'dangerous', 'scary' & 'stressful' and identify as water competent.
- Females were more likely to name activities as 'reckless', but also 'typical', 'common' & 'fun'

It is something my brother would definitely do, all the time. That is definitely right up his alley of hobbies. This is all my brother - FG5, F



LIFECOURSE & WATER RISK: AGE MATTERS

Findings highlighted that:

- Younger people were seen as risk-takers
- Older peers were influential and confident, particularly males who either looked out for younger mates OR 'lead them astray'

the two of the older guys, they kind of like, kept an eye on everyone. - FG2, F

PEER INFLUENCE



FUN WITH FRIENDS: PEER PRESSURE & PERSONAL AUTONOMY

Findings highlighted

- Respect for decisions vs peer pressure to participate
- Influence of friends increases when alcohol is involved
- Potential for negative social consequences of not participating

He doesn't make me do anything I don't want to do [but] I always trust that if he says let's go do this like to some extent it's safe - FG1, F



LOOKING OUT FOR MATES: THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS

Findings suggest:

- Significant influence of reciprocity, group size, trust, credibility & influential individuals
- clear dynamics of friendship and social networks that influence norms and practices

If I'm the most sober person in the group then I feel like I have a responsibility to look after everyone. But if there's someone else who has taken that responsibility, I'll go off and be an idiot. - FG2, F



FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS



**FOCUS MESSAGING BEYOND
RISK CONSEQUENCES**



**UNDERSTAND ROLE OF
RISK-AVERSE PEERS**



**USE PERCEIVED SERIOUSNESS TO
DETER ALCOHOL USE**



**PEER-FOCUSED CUES TO ACTION &
SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL SUPPORT**



**STRATEGIES TO CAPITALISE ON
FRIENDSHIP BONDS & SOCIAL NORMS**

Contact

Collaboration for Evidence, Research & Impact in Public Health

Curtin University
PO Box U1987
Bentley Western Australia 6845
Tel: +61 8 9266 7988
www.wader-n.org
www.ceriph.org.au

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