

BINGE drinking

the new bend trend

Police on Brisbane's southside are leading the way in an all-out effort to learn what causes binge drinking by young women and to curb this potentially dangerous new trend.

The Queensland Police Service Metropolitan South Regional office began an exploratory project earlier this year to gauge and understand binge drinking by young women and the subsequent consequences of their often reckless behaviour.

"Police had noted a trend of increasing involvement of young women in offence statistics, both as victims of sexual assault and as perpetrators of crime," said Acting Project Officer, Nadia Aporo.

"The common factor in many of these instances was significant consumption of alcohol."

A questionnaire survey was designed to further investigate the issue.

Questions were incorporated which queried the frequency and quantity of alcohol consumed, the types of alcohol being consumed and where alcohol was being sourced.

"We also sought feedback on why these young women were drinking at the levels they indicated and what they thought were the consequences of drinking alcohol," said Ms Aporo.

Two types of questionnaire surveys were conducted. A hardcopy survey for females was run through 17 high schools in the Metropolitan South Police Region. The participating schools were varied in type including state high schools and private schools (both co-educational and female only).

An online survey was also hosted through the Queensland Police Service internet website which was advertised through a number of youth orientated websites.

This included the Department of Communities "Generate" site, who at the time was piloting versions of their website on YouTube and MySpace.

Preliminary analysis of the approximate 960 responses is currently being performed but the results already indicate some concerning trends.

With over 80% of the female respondents under 20 years of age, some of the initial findings have distinguished only 12.7% claimed to have never tasted or drunk alcohol.

Of those who tried alcohol almost one third were drinking more than four drinks in one setting which is considered binge or risky drinking.

Spirits and liquours accounted for more than 40% of the alcohol being consumed while over 30% were premixed drinks.



Researchers were surprised to discover that more than one third of respondents sourced their alcohol from parents and family members and 84% of the group mainly consumed alcohol at home or at a friend's house.

Further analysis of the data will be carried out for the final report.

"One of the main preliminary recommendations from the Binge Drinking project will be the establishment of a working party with some of the key QPS units,

other government departments and the universities and schools that have been involved in the project," said Ms Aporo.

The project recommendations will also be incorporated into police and community projects to target geographical hotspots and certain age groups.

It is envisaged that the project will be extended to carry out a similar study of young males and international students.