

Profiling non-drinkers

Background

In recent national surveys, around 1 in 5 (20%) New Zealand adults report that they did not consume any alcohol within the last year (Ministry of Health, 2014). People choose not to drink alcohol for a variety of reasons. Some may stop for a limited time, while others avoid alcohol long-term. This fact sheet looks at the demographic profile of non-drinkers, the length of time they had not been drinking alcohol, and their reasons for not drinking.

Methodology

The 2013 Attitudes and Behaviour towards Alcohol Survey (ABAS 2013) monitors changes in attitudes and behaviours concerning alcohol. Respondents who had not been drinking alcohol were asked how long they have not been drinking, and their reasons for not drinking (multiple responses were possible).

Those who self-identified as non-drinkers or had not consumed alcohol during the previous 12 months were classed as "non-drinkers". Responses by all non-drinkers aged 15 years or over (n= 1,110) were compared by gender, ethnicity, age and annual household income. Statistically significant differences ($p < .05$) between groups are reported.

Profile of non-drinkers

Overall, 28.5% of respondents to the ABAS 2013 were currently non-drinkers. Table 1 shows the proportion of non-drinkers in each demographic group.

Those more likely to be non-drinkers (refer Table 1) were:

- females compared with males
- people of Pacific and Asian ethnicities, compared with those of Māori or European/Other ethnicities.
- people aged 15-to 17-years and over 64-years, compared with those in all other age groups
- people with household incomes under \$50,000 compared with all those who had higher incomes, and people with household incomes between \$50,000 and \$100,000 compared with those whose income was over \$100,000.

Length of time not consuming alcohol

All non-drinkers were asked how long they had not been consuming alcohol. As seen in Figure 1, nearly one-half (47%, 44-50%) said they had always been non-drinkers. Over 1 in 3 (38%, 36-41%) had stopped drinking more than two years prior. The remaining 15% had stopped drinking within the last two years.

Table 1: Proportion among each demographic group who were non-drinkers, by age, gender and ethnicity (n=4,001)

		Weighted % defined as non-drinkers
Age group	15-17 years	51.7%
	18-24 years	24.6%
	25-44 years	26.6%
	45-64 years	24.3%
	65 years +	33.4%
Gender	Male	25.8%
	Female	31.0%
Ethnicity	Māori	26.2%
	Pacific	46.2%
	Asian	54.0%
	European /Other	23.4%
Total		28.5%

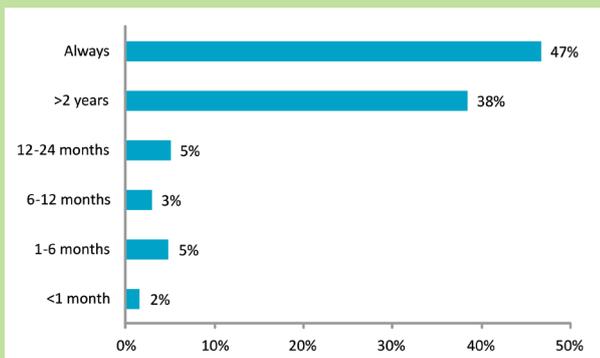


Figure 1: Length of time that non-drinkers have not been consuming alcohol (n=1,110)

Reasons for not consuming alcohol

Non-drinkers were asked about their reasons for not drinking alcohol. They could give multiple responses, which were coded to a list of themes. Table 2 presents the 10 most common responses to this question, with the weighted proportions of non-drinkers who nominated each reason. The demographic differences for the five most common responses are then listed.

Table 2: Reasons for not drinking among current non-drinkers (n=1,110)

Reason for not drinking	Weighted %
Health-related reasons	20.2%
Not interested/not part of my life	19.5%
Don't like the taste/way it makes me feel	13.3%
Religious	11.6%
No reasons provided	10.1%
Family reasons or commitments	8.1%
Have seen the negative effects	7.5%
Social reasons	7.3%
Bad experiences in the past	3.9%
Pregnancy	3.4%

Health-related reasons, nominated by 1 in 5 non-drinkers (20%, 18-23%) were the most commonly reported reasons for not drinking alcohol. Non-drinkers more likely to cite health-related reasons included:

- people aged 65-years and over (29%) compared with those in all younger aged groups
- people aged 25-to 64-years (21%) compared with those aged 15-to 17-years (6%) and those aged 18-to 24-years (9%).

The second-most commonly cited reason, by 1 in 5 non-drinkers (20%, 17-22%), was not being interested in alcohol, or not having alcohol as part of their life. Non-drinkers more likely to cite disinterest in alcohol included:

- people aged 18-to 24-years (32%) compared with those aged 25-to 44-years (17%), 45-to 64-years (20%) and 65-years or more (18%).

Around 1 in 8 non-drinkers (13%, 11-16%) reported that they did not like the way alcohol tasted or made them feel. Non-drinkers more likely to cite disliking alcohol included:

- females (17%) compared with males (9%).

Around 1 in 8 non-drinkers (12%, 10-14%) cited religion as a reason for not drinking. Non-drinkers more likely to cite religion included:

- people aged 25-to 44-years (14%), 45-to 64-years (13%) and 65-years and over (10%), compared with those aged 15-to 17-years (3%)
- people of Pacific (22%) or Asian (20%) ethnicities compared with those of Māori (11%) or New Zealand European/Other (10%) ethnicities.

One in ten non-drinkers (10%, 8-12%) provided no particular reason for not drinking. Those more likely to give no reason for not drinking included:

- people aged 15-to 17-years (22%) compared with those in all other age groups.

Key points

- Just over 1 in 4 respondents (28.5%) had not consumed alcohol during the previous 12 months. The majority had either never been drinkers or had stopped more than two years prior.
- There were higher proportions of non-drinkers in the youngest and oldest age groups, in Asian and Pacific ethnic groups, and among those with lower household incomes. These findings are consistent with other national surveys (Ministry of Health, 2014).
- The most commonly cited reason for not drinking was health, followed by being disinterested or not enjoying alcohol. Religious and family concerns were also frequently mentioned. Some non-drinkers were concerned about the wider social effects of alcohol, or had been put off by seeing alcohol-related harm.

About the Attitudes and Behaviour Towards Alcohol Survey

- The ABAS is an annual telephone survey about alcohol. The survey focuses on behaviour related to the previous month and last drinking occasion, and a range of attitudes/opinions towards alcohol. The ABAS 2013 consisted of a sample of 4,001 New Zealanders aged 15-years-old and over. The survey was conducted between November 2013 and February 2014.
- The main sample, with a response rate of 22%, included 662 Māori, 245 Pacific peoples, 314 Asian people and 2,780 people of European or other ethnicities (prioritised ethnicity).
- The data have been adjusted (weighted) to ensure they are representative of the New Zealand population.
- For this analysis, proportions and 95% confidence intervals were produced. Odds ratios were undertaken to compare responses between groups. The significance level used for statistical analyses was set to $\alpha=0.05$.
- Comparison groups for these analyses were as follows:
 - Gender (male compared with female).
 - Ethnicity (European/Other and Māori compared with Pacific and Asian).
 - Age (comparisons between 15 to 17, 18 to 24, 25 to 44, 45 to 64, 65+).
 - Household income (less than \$50,000 compared with \$50-100,000, more than \$100,000).
- A full description of the 2013 ABAS survey methodology and further ABAS publications can be found online at <http://www.hpa.org.nz/research-library/research-publications>

References

Ministry of Health. (2014). *New Zealand Health Survey – Annual update of key findings 2013/2014: Adult data tables – Health status, health behaviours and risk factors*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.

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