

Parental monitoring and substance use among Pacific youth

Background

Parents have a significant influence on the societal norms, values and behaviour learned by their children. Permissive parental rule setting and monitoring has been shown to relate to a greater likelihood of children engaging in health-compromising behaviours such as smoking tobacco and drinking alcohol (Kington & O'Sullivan, 2001; Waa et al., 2011). Tobacco smoking and alcohol consumption are of particular concern for Pacific youth; although smoking rates have been declining over time, they are still twice as likely to be regular smokers as their non-Pacific, non-Māori peers (Action on Smoking and Health, 2013), and more likely to report drinking five or more alcoholic drinks in one session (Ameratunga et al., 2011). To deter Pacific youth from taking up smoking or engaging in excessive alcohol consumption, and therefore reduce health inequalities arising from such substance use, it is important to understand the relationships with protective factors such as parental monitoring.

The Health Promotion Agency's (HPA's) Youth Insights Survey (YIS) is a key source of New Zealand data on adolescent substance use. The YIS monitors Year 10 students' behaviours, attitudes and knowledge on health-related topics, including tobacco smoking, alcohol consumption, and protective factors such as parental monitoring.

Methodology

Five items from the 2012 YIS relating to parental monitoring were examined for this analysis: "my parents or caregivers generally know what I spend my pocket money on", "my parents or caregivers often have no idea of where I am, when I am away from my home", "my parents or caregivers know about my school life (eg, my teachers, my grades)", "my parents or caregivers would be upset if I was caught smoking cigarettes/tobacco" and "if I break any important rules that my parents or caregivers have set I always get into trouble".

Respondents were asked if they agreed or disagreed with each statement, but could also answer that they didn't know. The statements did not have sufficient internal consistency to be grouped into a combined scale, therefore each was examined separately. Agreement with each statement was compared against smoking status¹ and risky drinking status. Risky drinking was defined as consuming five or more alcoholic drinks in one session. To reduce the risk of injury from alcohol consumption, HPA's advice is no more than five standard drinks in a single occasion for men and no more than four in a single occasion for women (Health Promotion Agency, 2014). Drinking five or more alcoholic drinks in one session is therefore a high-risk behaviour for Year 10 students. Analysis was restricted to those students who reported a Pacific ethnicity (n = 400). Ethnicity was coded in accordance with ethnicity data protocols (Ministry of Health, 2004) and multiple ethnicities were allowed.

Parental monitoring and smoking tobacco

Thirteen percent (9-18%) of Pacific Year 10 students reported they were current smokers, and males and females were equally likely to be a current smoker. One-half (51%, 45-57%) of respondents had never smoked, while approximately one-third (35%, 30-40%) no longer smoked or smoked less frequently than once a month. Smoking status showed an association with four of the five parental monitoring items for Pacific youth. Figure 1 (overleaf) shows the four items by smoking status. Specifically:

- never smokers (73%) were more likely than ex/experimental smokers (61%) and current smokers (29%) to agree that their parents generally know what they spend their pocket money on; and ex/experimental smokers were more likely to agree with this statement than current smokers

¹ Current smokers (smoke at least once a month), ex smokers (no longer smoke) and experimental smokers (smoke less often than monthly), and never smokers.

- never smokers (80%) and ex/experimental smokers (73%) were more likely than current smokers (50%) to disagree that their parents often have no idea of where they are when they are away from home
- never smokers (79%) were more likely than current smokers (62%) to agree that their parents know about their school life
- never smokers (90%) were more likely than current smokers (76%) to agree that their parents would be upset if they were caught smoking.

Regardless of smoking status, respondents were equally likely to agree that they would always get into trouble if they broke important rules set by their parents.

Parental monitoring and risky drinking

Twenty-two percent (18-27%) of Pacific Year 10 students reported engaging in risky drinking in the past month, and males and females were equally likely to have done so. Approximately two-thirds (64%, 59-69%) had never engaged in risky drinking, while 14% (10-17%) had done so but not in the past month. As with smoking, risky drinking showed an association with four of the five parental monitoring items for Pacific youth. Figure 2 shows the four items by risky drinking status.

Specifically:

- those who had never engaged in risky drinking (68%) were more likely than past-month risky drinkers (45%) to agree that their parents generally know what they spend their pocket money on
- those who had never engaged in risky drinking (79%) were more likely than past-month risky drinkers (59%) to disagree that their parents often have no idea of where they are when they are away from home
- those who had never engaged in risky drinking (90%), or had done so but not in the past month (90%), were more likely than past-month risky drinkers (75%) to agree that their parents would be upset if they were caught smoking
- those who had never engaged in risky drinking (86%) were more likely than past-month risky drinkers (72%) to agree that they would always get into trouble if they broke important rules set by their parents.

Regardless of risky drinking status, respondents were equally likely to agree that their parents know about their school life.

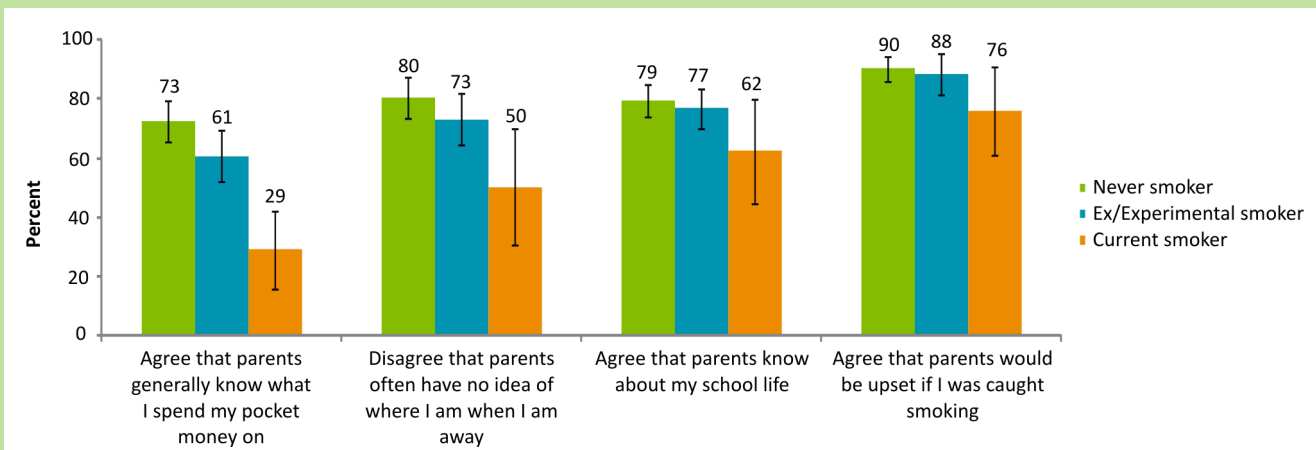


Figure 1. Parental monitoring by smoking status among Pacific Year 10 students

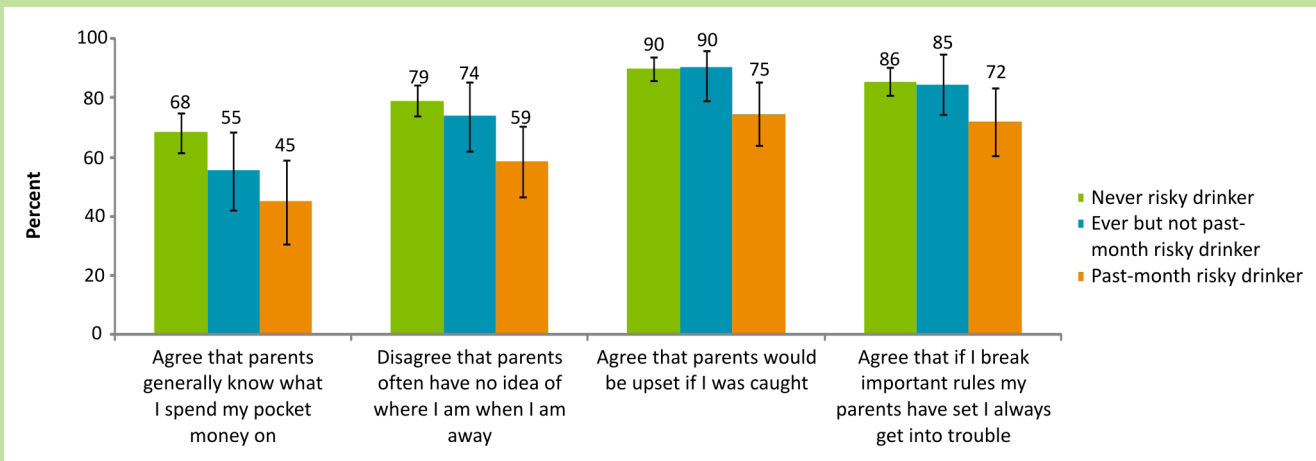


Figure 2. Parental monitoring by risky drinking status among Pacific Year 10 students

Key points

- One in eight (13%) Pacific Year 10 students were current smokers, while nearly one-quarter (22%) had engaged in risky drinking in the past month.
- Monitoring of expenditure and whereabouts by parents, as well as parental anti-smoking expectations, were associated with both smoking and risky drinking behaviour among Pacific youth. Those who had never smoked nor ever engaged in risky drinking were more likely to have parents who monitored their expenditure, monitored their whereabouts when they were not at home, and would be upset if they were caught smoking, than their smoking and risky drinking peers.
- Parental concern about education and parental rule enforcement showed different patterns for smoking compared with risky drinking behaviour. Parental concern about education was a predictor for smoking status (never smokers were more likely than current smokers to have parents who knew about their school life), but not for risky drinking. On the other hand, parental rule enforcement was a predictor for risky drinking (those who had never engaged in risky drinking were more likely than past-month risky drinkers to get into trouble for breaking parental rules), but not for smoking.

References

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Citation

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About the Youth Insights Survey

- The YIS forms part of the New Zealand Youth Tobacco Monitor (NZYTM), a collaborative effort by HPA and Action on Smoking and Health (ASH).
 - The YIS is a nationwide paper-based survey conducted in schools every two years, first carried out in its current form in 2006 and dating back to 1995 in different formats.
 - The YIS collects data on smoking-related knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour, as well as data on students' interests, lifestyles, activities, and media use, and other health-related topics.
 - The 2012 YIS was conducted with a sample of 3,143 Year 10 students (predominantly 14 to 15-year-olds). The school-level response rate was 77%, the student-level response rate 82%, and the overall response rate was 65%.
- The sample included 1,589 NZ European, 704 Māori, 295 Pacific, 340 Asian and 199 people of 'Other' ethnicity (prioritised ethnicity). When multiple ethnicity responses were allowed, there were 400 students of a Pacific ethnicity.
- The data have been adjusted (weighted) to ensure they are representative of the population of New Zealand Year 10 school students.
 - 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 $\alpha=.05$.
 - A full description of the 2012 YIS methodology and further YIS publications can be found at <http://www.hpa.org.nz/research-library/research-publications>.

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