

Alcohol advertising, promotion and sponsorship

Position statement

To minimise alcohol-related harm in Aotearoa New Zealand, Te Hīringa Hauora supports using a staged approach to phase out alcohol advertising and promotion; replacing alcohol sponsorship of events with a government programme funded by an increased alcohol levy or alternative funding sources; and replacing self-regulation by the alcohol industry with an independent or government-led process to monitor alcohol advertising, promotion and sponsorship.

Alcohol causes harm to people, whānau and communities and drives health and social inequities, as well as significant costs in the health, welfare and justice sectors.

Despite this, alcohol is increasingly affordable, easy to access, widely promoted and highly visible to young people and whānau. Progress to minimise alcohol-related harms is limited by a regulatory framework that could be more effective. Te Hīringa Hauora supports a review of the regulatory approach to alcohol to better measure up to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the WHO SAFER Initiative, with a focus on reducing disproportionate harm to Māori.

Action is needed because:

- Alcohol is a leading risk factor for global disease burden¹.
- Alcohol increases the risk of numerous diseases and injury and no level of alcohol improves health. Yet due to how it is marketed, alcohol is viewed as an ordinary desirable product¹.
- People who are exposed to alcohol marketing are more likely to start drinking at a younger age and participate in hazardous drinking behaviours². The World Health Organization (WHO) includes enacting and enforcing bans on exposure to alcohol advertising as one of the five 'best buys' for reducing alcohol-related harm³.

- Alcohol sponsorship is a major source of alcohol marketing exposure for children in Aotearoa New Zealand. Tamariki Māori and Pasifika children are exposed to alcohol marketing at a rate of 5.4 and 3 times higher than Pākehā children respectively⁴. Alcohol sponsorship in sporting environments contributes to a culture of alcohol consumption and is linked with hazardous drinking^{5,6,7}.
- Alcohol advertising is a risk factor for people with a history of alcohol dependence due to the disproportionate alcohol-related harm they experience and their increased susceptibility to alcohol marketing⁸. Exposure to alcohol products in supermarkets is a risk to children and people with alcohol dependencies⁹.
- Engagement with digital alcohol marketing is associated with increased alcohol consumption and more hazardous drinking behaviours, including binge drinking¹⁰. The use of digital media as a platform for marketing alcohol, which is difficult to regulate, has rapidly increased¹¹.
- Aotearoa New Zealand has a voluntary self-regulatory system run by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) to receive complaints about alcohol advertisements (see next page). Standards for alcohol advertising are set out in the Advertising and Promotion of Alcohol Code (the Code). Voluntary self-regulation of alcohol advertising has been criticised, because:
 - participation is voluntary
 - self-regulation is ineffective at reducing harmful exposure of alcohol advertising¹²
 - the process requires widespread knowledge of the complaints process and details of the Code
 - there is a time lag between the appearance of an offending advertisement and its removal where exposure would have already had an adverse impact
 - techniques to increase alcohol's appeal, such as through the use of humour, music, colour, characters, sound effects and brand logos are not covered by the voluntary codes
 - there is a need for stronger action on promotion of alcohol through social media, to remove multiple copies.
- A number of reviews have consistently recommended stronger action on alcohol advertising, promotion and sponsorship, including:
 - Law Commission's report: *Alcohol in our lives: Curbing the Harm* (2010)
 - Ministerial Forum on Alcohol Advertising and Sponsorship: *Recommendations on alcohol advertising and sponsorship* (2014)
 - New Zealand Medical Association's *Reducing Alcohol-related Harm* (2015)
 - *He Ara Oranga – the Government Inquiry into Mental Health and Addiction* (2018)
 - Te Tiriti o Waitangi Healthcare claim Wai 2624 (Wai 2575)
 - Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission report *Mā Te Rongo Ake / Through Listening and Hearing* (2021)
 - Alcohol Healthwatch's *Evidence-based alcohol policies: Building a fairer and healthier future for Aotearoa New Zealand* (2021).
- A 2019/20 survey found that 76% of respondents supported banning the promotion of alcohol from social media that under 18-years-olds use and 62% of respondents supported banning alcohol sponsorship at sporting, community and other events that under 18s attend¹³. 94% of submitters to the Alcohol Reform Bill 2010 wanted greater restrictions on alcohol advertising.

Current legislative framework

- The promotion of alcohol must comply with section 237 of the Sale and Supply of Alcohol Act 2012 (the Act)¹⁴. However, this section of the Act focuses more on promotion and advertising of the sale of alcohol than on exposure caused by any advertisement.
- Exposure to alcohol products in supermarkets is controlled by sections 112, 113 and 114 of the Act by the requirement of single alcohol areas (SAA). However, these provisions are not easily interpreted and many of these SAAs do not reduce exposure. Also, there is much variation with end of aisle displays in SAAs.
- Apart from these provisions, there are no other legislative controls over alcohol advertising or sponsorship.
- Aotearoa New Zealand has a voluntary self-regulatory system run by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) to receive complaints about alcohol advertisements. The ASA is made up of advertisers, agencies and the media. Standards for alcohol advertising are set out in the Advertising and Promotion of Alcohol Code and the Advertising Standards Code 2018 developed by the ASA. Alcohol promotions contained in broadcast programmes are the responsibility of the Broadcasting Standards Authority, which can accept complaints against its codes.

Endnotes

- 1 GBD 2016 Alcohol Collaborators. Alcohol use and burden for 195 countries and territories, 1990–2016: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2016. *The Lancet*. 23 Aug 2018. doi:10.1016/S0140-6736(18)31310-2
- 2 Sargent, J.D, Babor, T.F. (2020). The relationship between exposure to alcohol marketing and underage drinking is causal. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs, Supplement*. (s19):113-124. <https://doi.org/10.15288/jsads.2020.s19.113>
- 3 WHO 2019. *Discussion Paper: Implementation of the WHO Global Strategy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol since its endorsement, and the way forward*. Geneva, Switzerland: WHO.
- 4 Chambers T, Stanley J, Signal L, Pearson AL, Smith M, Barr M et al. Quantifying the nature and extent of children's real-time exposure to alcohol marketing in their everyday lives using wearable cameras: Children's exposure via a range of media in a range of key places. *Alcohol and Alcoholism*. 2018;53(5):626-633. <https://doi.org/10.1093/alcalc/agy053>
- 5 Gee, S., Jackson, S. J. & Sam, M. (2013). *The culture of alcohol consumption and promotion at major sports events in New Zealand*. Wellington: Health Promotion Agency.
- 6 O'Brien, K. S., & Kypri, K. (2008). Alcohol industry sponsorship and hazardous drinking among sportspeople. *Addiction* (Abingdon, England), 103(12), 1961–1966. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1360-0443.2008.02371.x>
- 7 Brown, K. (2016) Association between alcohol sports sponsorship and consumption: a systematic review. *Alcohol and Alcoholism*, 51, (6), pp. 747-755. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/alcalc/agw006>.
- 8 Babor, T. F., Robaina, K., Noel, J. K., & Ritson, E. B. (2017). Vulnerability to alcohol-related problems: a policy brief with implications for the regulation of alcohol marketing. *Addiction* (Abingdon, England), 112 Suppl 1, 94–101. <https://doi.org/10.1111/add.13626>
- 9 New Zealand Law Commission. (2010). *Alcohol in our lives: curbing the harm*. Wellington, New Zealand.
- 10 Noel, J. K., Sammartino, C. J., & Rosenthal, S. R. (2020). Exposure to Digital Alcohol Marketing and Alcohol Use: A Systematic Review. *Journal of studies on alcohol and drugs. Supplement*, 19: 57–67. <https://doi.org/10.15288/jsads.2020.s19.57>
- 11 Carah, N., & Brodmerkel, S. (2021). Alcohol marketing in the era of digital media platforms. *Journal of studies on alcohol and drugs*, 82(1), 18-27.
- 12 Noel, J., Lazzarini, Z., Robaina, K., & Vendrame, A. (2017). Alcohol industry self-regulation: who is it really protecting? *Addiction* (Abingdon, England), 112 Suppl 1, 57–63. <https://doi.org/10.1111/add.13433>
- 13 Aron, A. & Allen, K. (2021). *Public attitudes on policy interventions to reduce alcohol harm: Results from the 2019/20 Alcohol Use in New Zealand Survey (AUiNZ)*. Wellington, New Zealand: Te Hiringa Hauora/Health Promotion Agency.
- 14 Section 237 of the Act outlines restrictions on the promotion of alcohol. This includes offences of: encouraging excessive consumption; offering certain discounts; promoting free alcohol; offering certain enticements if alcohol is purchased; and promoting alcohol in a way that has special appeal to minors.