

# Key Results: Young people aged 15 to 24 years

Attitudes and Behaviour towards Alcohol Survey

2013/14 to 2015/16

June 2017

**ISBN:** 978-0-478-44908-2

**Citation:** Health Promotion Agency (2017) *Key Results: Young People aged 15-24 years. Attitudes and Behaviour towards Alcohol Survey 2013/14 to 2015/16*. Wellington: Health Promotion Agency

Prepared for the Health Promotion Agency by:  
Susan Cook, Dr Holly Trowland, and Dr Alana Oakly.

This document is available at: <http://www.hpa.org.nz/research-library/research-publications>

Any queries regarding this report should be directed to HPA at the following address:

Health Promotion Agency  
PO Box 2142  
Wellington 6140  
New Zealand

June 2017

## Copyright

The copyright owner of this publication is HPA. HPA permits the reproduction of material from this publication without prior notification, provided that fair representation is made of the material and HPA is acknowledged as the source.

# Contents

<b>Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Method .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Results.....</b>	<b>9</b>

## Tables and Figures

### Tables

- Table 1 ABAS sample size numbers for young people aged 15 to 24 years, 2013/14 to 2015/16
- Table 2 Demographic characteristics of ABAS respondents aged 15 to 24 years, 2013/14 to 2015/16
- Table 3 Number of drinks consumed on the last occasion, by age group, 2013/14 to 2015/16

### Figures

- Figure 1 Percentage of drinkers in the last four weeks who reported risky drinking behaviour, young people aged 15 to 17 years and 18 to 24 years, 2013/14 to 2015/16
- Figure 2 Experiences after drinking alcohol in the last four weeks, by age group, 2013/14 to 2015/16
- Figure 3 Percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree with three attitudes statements, by age group, 2013/14 to 2015/16
- Figure 4 Percentage of respondents aged 15 to 17 years and 18 to 24 years who agree or strongly agree with three attitudes statements by reported risky drinking behaviour, 2013/14 to 2015/16

## Executive Summary

The Attitudes and Behaviour towards Alcohol Survey (ABAS) is a national survey of people aged 15 years and over about alcohol consumption patterns, alcohol-related behaviour, consequences of consuming alcohol, and attitudes. Results from the 2013/14, 2014/15, and 2015/16 surveys were combined to allow analysis of population subgroups, such as young people aged 15 to 24 years.

In total there were 12,206 responses from the three surveys, including 702 responses from those aged 15 to 17 years and 1,037 responses from those aged 18 to 24 years.

This report presents descriptive results about the alcohol-related behaviours, attitudes and experiences of New Zealanders aged 15 to 24 years.

### Key findings about young people aged 15 to 24 years

- Overall, 33% of young people aged 15 to 17 years and 63% of young people aged 18 to 24 years reported consuming alcohol in the last four weeks.
- A smaller proportion of Pacific and Asian young people consumed alcohol in the last four weeks compared with European/Other young people. In the 18 to 24 years age group, a greater proportion of males consumed alcohol in the last four weeks, compared with females.
- Around half of young people aged 15 to 24 years who reported consuming alcohol in the last four weeks also reported risky drinking behaviour.<sup>1</sup> This is greater than reported risky drinking behaviour in those aged 25 years and over (23%).
- A greater proportion of Māori young people reported risky drinking behaviour compared with European/Other young people. In the 18 to 24 years age group, a greater proportion of males reported risky drinking behaviour, compared with females.
- Similarly to those aged 25 years and over, young people reported “feeling good, happy or relaxed” and “was able to de-stress, wind down” as the two most common experiences in the last four weeks after drinking alcohol.
- However, 30% of young people aged 15 to 17 years and 39% of young people aged 18 to 24 years reported at least one experience that may be considered harmful. This is greater than those aged 25 years and over (17%).
- A greater proportion of young people agreed with the statements *It's OK to get drunk as long as it's not everyday* and *Drunkenness is acceptable in some situations*, compared with those aged 25 years and over.
- Conversely, a smaller proportion of young people agreed with the statement *Binge drinking is part of kiwi culture*, compared with those aged 25 years and over.

---

<sup>1</sup> In the ABAS, 'risky drinking' is defined as five or more drinks on any one occasion for those aged 15 to 17 years, and seven or more drinks on any one occasion for those aged 18 years and over.

## Introduction

The Attitudes and Behaviour towards Alcohol Survey (ABAS) is a national survey of people aged 15 years and over about alcohol consumption patterns, alcohol-related behaviour, consequences of consuming alcohol, and attitudes. The survey focuses on behaviour in the previous month and on the last drinking occasion and includes questions on a range of attitudes and opinions towards alcohol. Results from the survey are used to inform the planning and development of alcohol activities, policies and programmes that aim to reduce alcohol-related harm in New Zealand.

HPA has a particular focus on reducing alcohol-related harm in young people, and the ABAS provides valuable information about alcohol behaviours and attitudes in this population. Young people aged 15 to 24 years accounted for 14% of New Zealand's population at the 2013 Census.<sup>2</sup> The years up to 24 are critical for human development – they build on experiences of childhood and generate the foundation skills for adulthood.<sup>3</sup>

This publication about young people is the companion document to the key results for adults aged 25+ years.

### **This report**

This report presents descriptive results from the 2013/14, 2014/15, and 2015/16 ABAS for respondents aged 15 to 24 years. Information is provided on young people's drinking behaviour, attitudes to drinking, and experiences as a result of drinking.

The main focus of this report is to describe and compare results for those aged 15 to 17 years, 18 to 24 years, and aged 25 years and over. The drinking behaviours and experiences results are presented for those young people who reported consuming alcohol in the last four weeks. Attitude results are presented for all young respondents. Changes over the survey years have been reported so that it is clear if the average value over the three year period is a suitable estimate or not. All results presented in this report are weighted so that they are representative of the total New Zealand population aged 15 years and over.

---

<sup>2</sup> <http://nzdotstat.stats.govt.nz>

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Youth Affairs. 2002. *Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa*. Wellington: Ministry of Youth Affairs.

## Method

ABAS is a nationally representative survey of all usually resident New Zealanders aged 15 years and over. For each survey, approximately 4,000 people aged 15 years and over were surveyed over four months – November, December, January, and February. In each of the three survey years, a minimum target of young respondents aged 15 to 17 years was set as part of the survey sample composition because this group has been more difficult to reach via landline numbers than some other population groups in previous ABAS surveys.

Households were stratified into telephone directory regions. A random sample of telephone numbers was generated from all number ranges found in the White Pages using a Random Digit Dialling (RDD) approach. The mode of the interview was Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI).

A full description of each year's methods, questionnaires, and further ABAS publications can be found at <http://www.hpa.org.nz/research-library/research-publications>.

### Young people aged 15 to 24 years analysis

In 2016, the 2013/14, 2014/15, 2015/16 ABAS datasets were combined in order to allow reliable analysis of population subgroups within the dataset, such as young people. A full description of the combined datasets methods can be found at <http://www.hpa.org.nz/research-library/research-publications>.

In total there were 12,206 responses across the 2013/14, 2014/15, and 2015/16 surveys. There were 702 responses from people aged 15 to 17 years and 1,037 responses from people aged 18 to 24 years. Respondents provided their age during the survey at two different times. Only those respondents whose stated age in years matched their stated age group category are included here for analysis.<sup>4</sup>

In 2015/16, a number of small changes were made to the questionnaire and interview/CATI processes in order to improve the response rate. This resulted in a greater number of young people aged 15 to 17 years completing the survey. In all other respects, the methodology, design and questionnaire remained essentially the same over the three years, and this means they are suitable for combining into one large dataset.

**Table 1: ABAS sample size numbers for young people aged 15 to 24 years, 2013/14 to 205/16**

Year	Survey sample size	15-17 years sample size	18-24 years sample size
2013/14	4,001	178	313
2014/15	4,005	190	297
2015/16	4,200	334	427
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,206</b>	<b>702</b>	<b>1,037</b>

<sup>4</sup> This resulted in excluding 14 people from the 15 to 17 years analysis, and excluding 20 people from the 18 to 24 years analysis.

The data have been weighted (adjusted) so that the sample reflects the makeup of the New Zealand population at the 2013 Census. Results are presented as weighted estimates with error bars representing 95% confidence intervals.

Logistic regression was used to compare responses between groups with 95% confidence intervals generated using jackknife methods. The significance level used for statistical analysis was set to 5%.

Ethnicity groups are prioritised in the order of: Māori, Pacific, Asian, and European/Other.

For some of the results presented in this report there were small numbers of respondents; for example, Pacific and Asian young people aged 15 to 17 years. Where there are small numbers of respondents, reliability of the result can be an issue. This is easily identified in the graphs from the large confidence intervals. These results should be interpreted with caution.

### **Differences across the three survey years**

Comparisons over the three survey years were conducted for both young people aged 15 to 17 years and the total New Zealand populations. Where there was no significant difference across the survey years, the estimate provided in these results can be interpreted as an average estimate for the time period 2013/14 to 2015/16. Where there were significant differences across the survey years, caution needs to be taken in applying the estimate to the whole period 2013/14 to 2015/16.



## Results

The demographic characteristics of respondents aged 15 to 17 years and 18 to 24 years are outlined in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Demographic characteristics of ABAS respondents aged 15 to 24 years, 2013/14 to 2015/16**

		Young people aged 15 to 17 years		Young people aged 18-24 years	
		Number	Percent (%)	Number	Percent (%)
<b>Total</b>		702	100	1,037	100
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Female</b>	312	44	471	45
	<b>Male</b>	390	56	566	55
<b>Prioritised ethnicity</b>	<b>Māori</b>	147	21	196	19
	<b>Pacific</b>	63	9	146	14
	<b>Asian</b>	111	16	169	16
	<b>Other</b>	381	54	526	51
<b>Urban / rural</b>	<b>Urban</b>	446	64	722	70
	<b>Rural</b>	241	34	293	28

Of those young people aged 15 to 17 years, 30% were aged 15 years, 36% were aged 16 years, and 34% were aged 17 years.

## Alcohol consumption

Overall, 45% of young people aged 15 to 17 years reported consuming alcohol in the last year, and 55% were non-drinkers.<sup>5</sup> Thirty-three percent reported consuming alcohol in the last four weeks; this is a significantly smaller proportion than for those aged 25 years and over (64%).

Seventy-four percent of young people aged 18 to 24 years reported consuming alcohol in the last year, and 26% were non-drinkers. Sixty-three percent reported consuming alcohol in the last four weeks; this is similar to those aged 25 years and over (64%).

There were significant differences between the following groups:

- A greater proportion of males (66%) aged 18 to 24 years reported drinking in the last four weeks, compared with females (60%).
- A smaller proportion of Pacific young people aged 15 to 17 years (8%) and 18 to 24 years (48%), and Asian young people aged 15 to 17 years (9%) and 18 to 24 years (37%), reported drinking alcohol in the past four weeks, compared with European/Other young people aged 15 to 17 years (39%) and 18 to 24 years (71%).

There were no significant differences for past year or past month alcohol consumption for those aged 15 to 17 years or 18 to 24 years across the three survey years.

## Risky drinking behaviour in the last four weeks

In this survey, HPA conservatively defined 'risky drinking' as five or more drinks on any one occasion for those aged 15 to 17 years, and seven or more drinks on any one occasion for adults aged 18 years and over.<sup>6</sup>

Overall, 17% of all young people aged 15 to 17 years, or 51% of those that consumed alcohol in the last four weeks, reported risky drinking behaviour. Thirty-four percent of all young people aged 18 to 24 years, or 54% of those that consumed alcohol in the last four weeks, reported risky drinking behaviour.

There were significant differences between the following groups (see Figure 1):

- A greater proportion of males (61%) aged 18 to 24 years reported risky drinking behaviour in the last four weeks compared with females (45%) aged 18 to 24 years.
- A greater proportion of Māori young people aged 15 to 17 years (77%) and 18 to 24 years (68%) reported risky drinking behaviour in the last four weeks compared with European/Other young people aged 15 to 17 years (42%) and 18 to 24 years (52%).
- A smaller proportion of Asian young people (32%) aged 18 to 24 years reported risky drinking behaviour in the last four weeks compared with European/Other young people aged 18 to 24 years.

---

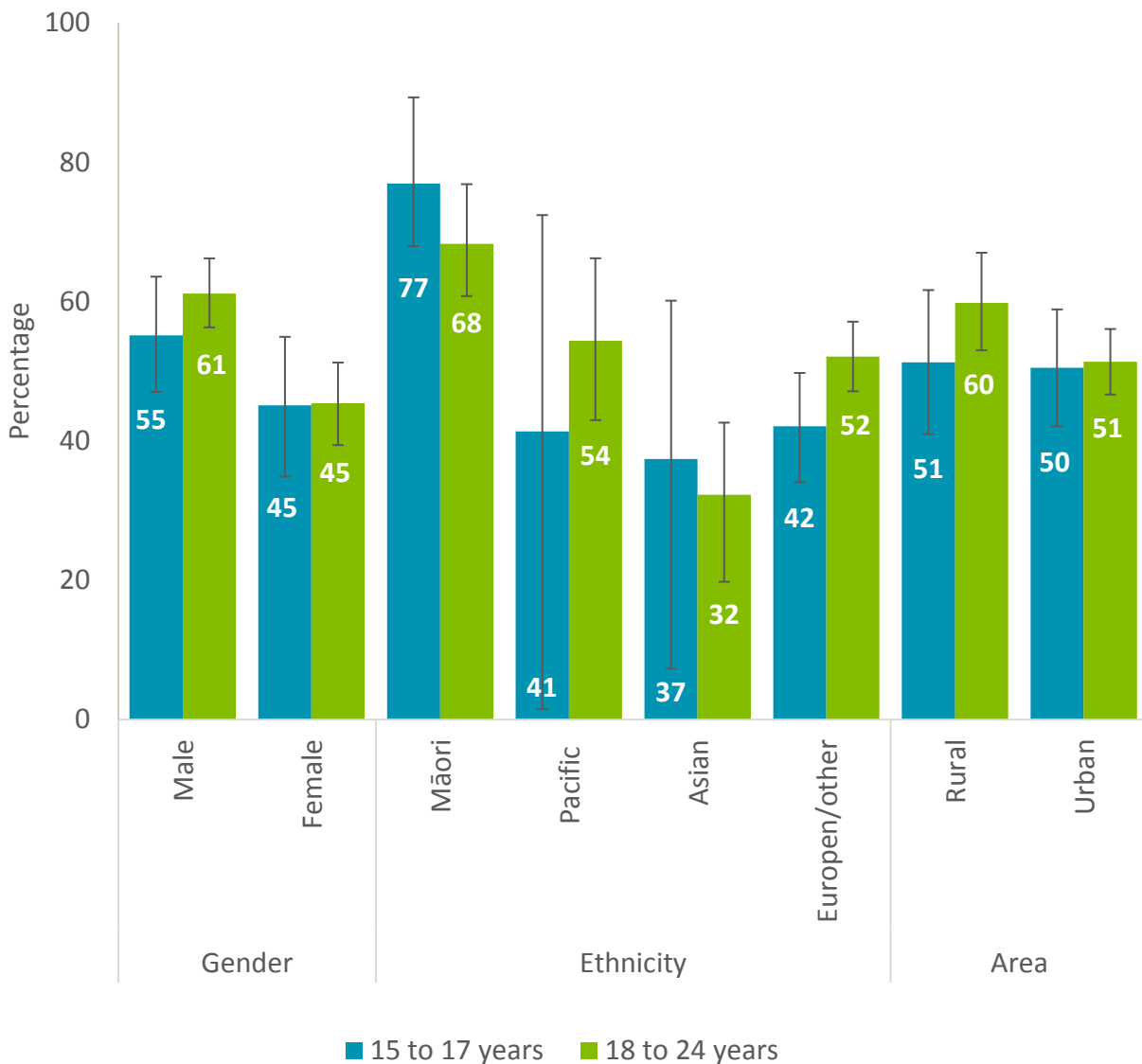
<sup>5</sup> Non-drinkers were defined by self-identification ('I'm a non-drinker'), or if they had not consumed alcohol in the last 12 months.

<sup>6</sup> This definition of risky drinking is higher than HPA's low-risk alcohol drinking advice for an occasion. See <http://www.alcohol.org.nz/help-advice/advice-on-alcohol/low-risk-alcohol-drinking-advice>

- Both young people aged 15 to 17 years and those aged 18 to 24 years reported a significantly greater proportion of risky drinking behaviour in the last four weeks compared with those aged 25 years and over (23%).

There were no significant differences in reported risky drinking behaviour across the three survey years for young people aged 15 to 17 years or aged 18 to 24 years.

**Figure 1: Percentage of drinkers in the last four weeks who reported risky drinking behaviour, young people aged 15 to 17 years and 18 to 24 years, 2013/14 to 2015/16**



Base: Drank alcohol in the last four weeks, n=870  
 Source: ABAS 2013/14 to 2015/16

## Number of drinks consumed on the last occasion

Respondents who had consumed two or more drinks on any one occasion in the last three months were asked about the last occasion they did so. The results in this section relate to this last drinking occasion of two or more drinks.

Overall, 35% of all young people aged 15 to 17 years drank two or more drinks on any one occasion in the last three months, and 63% of young people aged 18 to 24 years did so. Of these, the majority drank five or more drinks on their last drinking occasion in the last three months (see Table 3).

There were significant differences between the following groups:

- A smaller proportion of young people aged 15 to 17 years and 18 to 24 years drank two to four drinks on their last drinking occasion, compared with those aged 25 years and older.
- A greater proportion of young people aged 15 to 17 years and 18 to 24 years drank both five to seven drinks and eight or more drinks compared with those aged 25 years and over.

**Table 3: Number of drinks consumed on the last occasion, by age group, 2013/14 to 2015/16**

		15 to 17 years (95% CI)	18 to 24 years (95% CI)	25+ years (95% CI)
<b>Consumed 2+ drinks on any one drinking occasion in the last three months</b>		35% (31, 38)	63% (60, 66)	54% (53, 55)
<b>Number of drinks at the last drinking occasion*</b>	<b>2 to 4 drinks</b>	39% (32, 45)	35% (32, 39)	66% (65, 68)
	<b>5 to 7 drinks</b>	28% (23, 34)	24% (20, 27)	19% (18, 20)
	<b>8+ drinks</b>	33% (27, 39)	41% (37, 45)	15% (14, 16)

\* For those respondents who had consumed two or more drinks on any one drinking occasion in the last three months

There were no significant differences in number of drinks consumed at the last drinking occasion across the three survey years for young people aged 15 to 17 years or 18 to 24 years.

## Experiences of drinking alcohol in the last four weeks

Those people who reported drinking alcohol in the last four weeks were asked if they had personally experienced any of a range of consequences after drinking alcohol. Similarly to those aged 25 years and over, young people reported “feeling good, happy or relaxed” and “was able to de-stress, wind down” as the two most common experiences after drinking alcohol. However, a greater proportion of young people aged 15 to 17 years and 18 to 24 years reported nearly all other experiences, compared with those aged 25 years and over (see Figure 2).

For this report, HPA has categorised experiences as harmful where they may potentially result in harmful physical, social or emotional outcomes.<sup>7</sup> These were not necessarily reported as harmful by the respondents. Overall, 30% of young people aged 15 to 17 years and 39% of young people aged 18 to 24 years reported at least one experience that may be considered harmful as a consequence of drinking alcohol in the last four weeks (see Figure 2). This is significantly greater than those aged 25 years and over (17%).

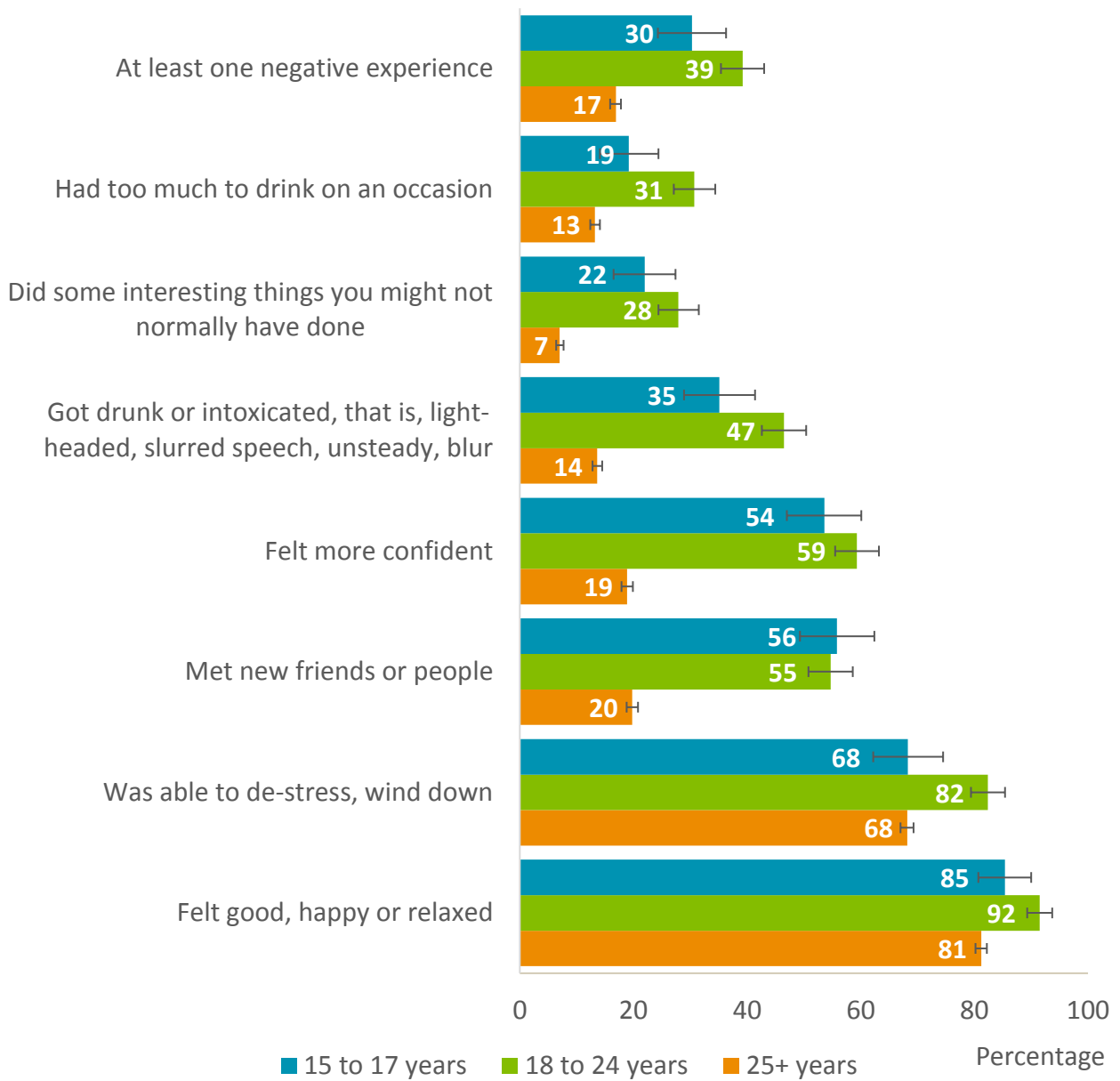
There were significant differences between the following groups:

- A greater proportion of males (43%) aged 18 to 24 years reported at least one negative experience, compared with females (35%).
- A greater proportion of Māori young people (48%) aged 15 to 17 years reported at least one negative experience, compared with European/Other young people (24%).
- A greater proportion of rural young people (39%) aged 15 to 17 years reported at least one negative experience, compared with urban young people (25%).

---

<sup>7</sup> HPA has categorised the following experiences as harmful for the purposes of this report: ‘Spent too much money on alcohol’; ‘Did something embarrassing that you later regretted’; ‘Drove a vehicle while being unsure of how much you were under the influence of alcohol’; ‘Injured yourself accidentally’; ‘Failed to meet family, work or study commitments or responsibilities’; ‘Felt unsafe or put yourself into a position where you felt unsafe or uncomfortable’; ‘Got into a fight’.

**Figure 2: Experiences after drinking alcohol in the last four weeks, by age group, 2013/14 to 2015/16**



Base: Drank alcohol in the last four weeks, n=870  
 Source: ABAS 2013/14 to 2015/16

## Attitudes to drinking alcohol

All respondents were asked for their level of agreement with three statements about drinking in New Zealand.

Responses to the three statements used a five-point scale from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. In this report, 'strongly agree' and 'agree' responses have been combined to an overall 'agree' category.

Overall, 33% of young people aged 15 to 17 years and 43% of young people aged 18 to 24 years agreed that *It's OK to get drunk as long as it's not everyday*. This is a significantly greater proportion than those aged 25 years and over (16%).

Similarly, a significantly greater proportion of young people aged 15 to 17 years (24%) and aged 18 to 24 years (34%) agreed that *Drunkenness is acceptable in some situations*, compared with those aged 25 years and over (13%).

However, a significantly smaller proportion of young people aged 15 to 17 years (24%) and aged 18 to 24 years (42%) agreed with the statement *Binge drinking is part of kiwi culture*<sup>8</sup>, compared with those aged 25 years and over (53%).

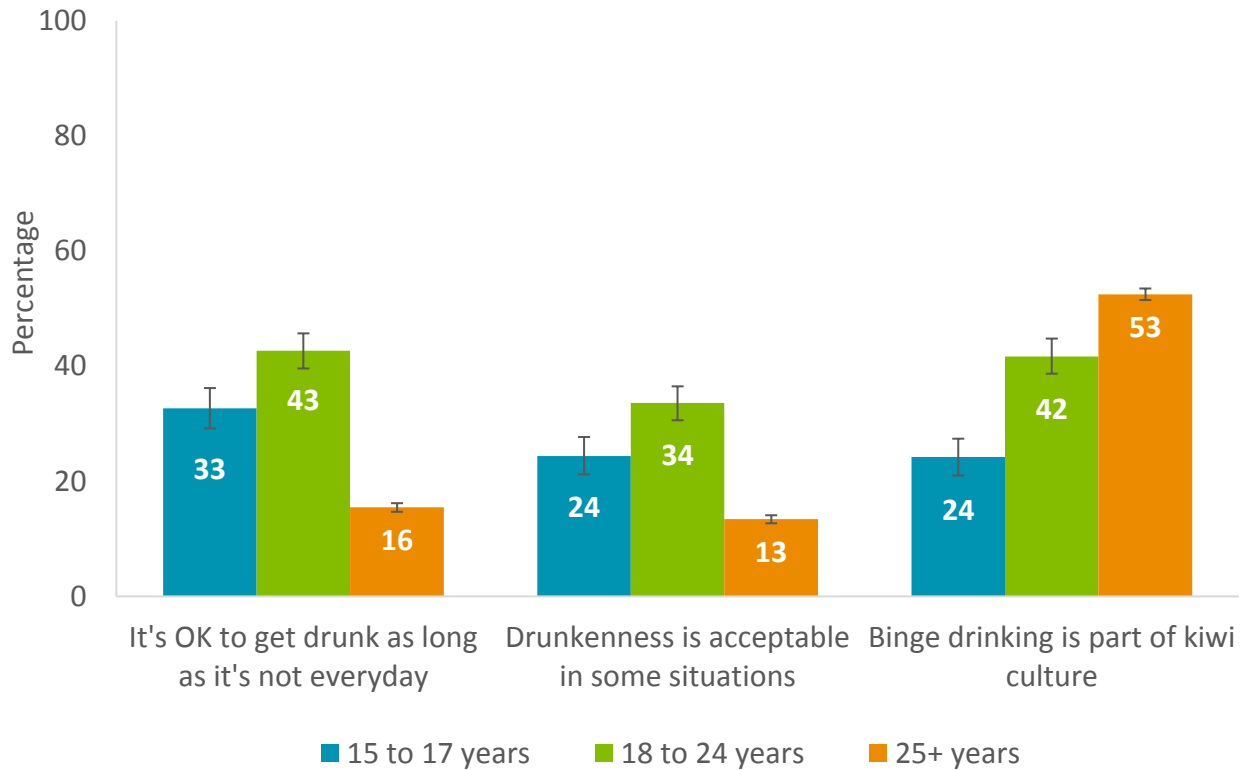
There were significant differences between the following groups:

- A greater proportion of males aged both 15 to 17 years (38%) and 18 to 24 years (46%) agreed with the statement *It's OK to get drunk as long as it's not everyday*, compared with females (27% and 39%, respectively).
- A greater proportion of males aged 18 to 24 years 38% also agreed with the statement *Drunkenness is acceptable in some situations*, compared with females (29%).

---

<sup>8</sup> No definition was provided for 'binge drinking'; respondents defined this for themselves.

**Figure 3: Percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree with three attitudes statements, by age group, 2013/14 to 2015/16**



Base: All respondents, n=12,206  
Source: ABAS 2013/14 to 2015/16

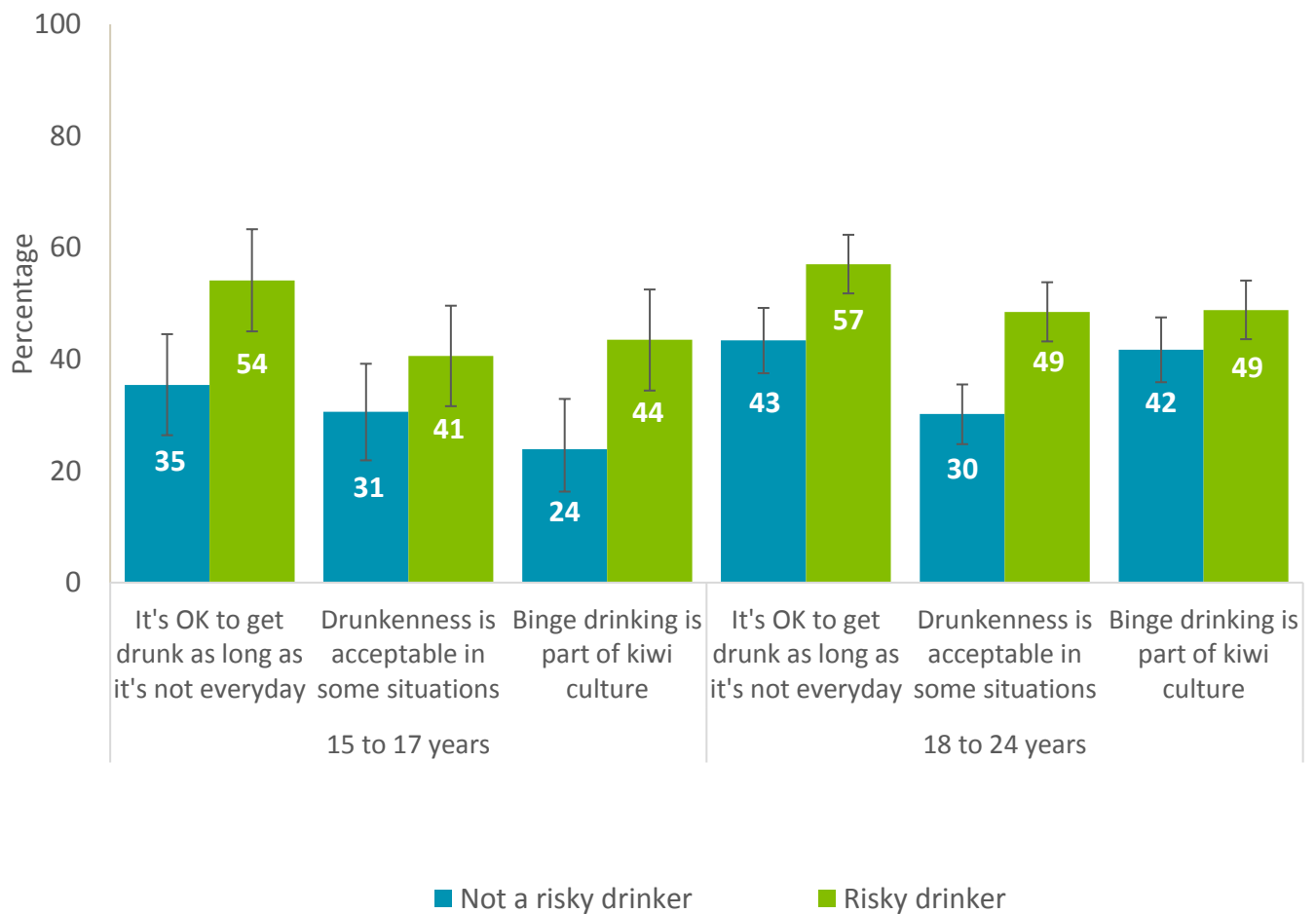


There were some significant differences in attitudes between those who reported risky drinking behaviour in the last four weeks and those who did not (see Figure 4).

- A greater proportion of young people aged 15 to 17 years that reported risky drinking behaviour agreed with the statements *It's OK to get drunk as long as it's not everyday* and *Binge drinking is part of kiwi culture*, compared with those who did not report risky drinking behaviour.
- A greater proportion of young people aged 18 to 24 years that reported risky drinking behaviour agreed with the statements *It's OK to get drunk as long as it's not everyday* and *Drunkness is acceptable in some situations*, compared with those who did not report risky drinking behaviour.

There were no significant differences across the three survey years for any of these statements for young people aged 15 to 17 years or aged 18 to 24 years.

**Figure 4: Percentage of respondents aged 15 to 17 years and 18 to 24 years who agree or strongly agree with three attitudes statements by reported risky drinking behaviour, 2013/14 to 2015/16**



Base: Drank alcohol in the last four weeks, n=870  
 Source: ABAS 2013/14 to 2015/16