

# Insights

## Alcohol consumption among 14 to 15-year-old Year 10 students, 2012-2018

### Key points

- In 2018, the majority of 14 to 15-year-old Year 10 students (69%) did not drink alcohol. However, 6% said they consumed alcohol weekly.
- Asian and Pasifika Year 10 students were less likely to consume alcohol in 2018, compared to Māori and New Zealand European/Other students.
- In 2018, Year 10 students who drank alcohol typically did so at home.
- Fewer Year 10 students reported drinking alcohol in 2018 compared to 2012, and those who did drink did so less frequently.
- Over time there was also a decrease in the number of Year 10 students engaging in heavy episodic drinking (five or more drinks in one session).
- 12% of Year 10 students had engaged in heavy episodic drinking in the past month in 2018.
- Māori Year 10 students were more likely to have engaged in heavy episodic drinking than NZ European/Other, Pasifika and Asian students.

### Background

In 2018/19, more than half (58%) of all 15 to 17-year-olds consumed alcohol in the past year; 6% at hazardous levels (Ministry of Health, 2019).

Young people's drinking is known to have a significant impact on brain development, increase the risk of accidents, injuries, unsafe sexual behaviour, and/or lead to poor school performance and breakdown in relationships (Harding et al., 2016; Te Hiringa Hauora/Health Promotion Agency, 2020).

The Youth Insights Survey (YIS) monitors Year 10 students' behaviours, attitudes, and knowledge on a range of health-related topics, including alcohol consumption.

This Insights paper:

- i) presents patterns of alcohol consumption (including heavy episodic drinking) for Year 10 respondents (14 to 15-year-olds) in the 2018 YIS;
- ii) looks at factors that influence whether or not Year 10 students drink heavily, based on the 2018 YIS; and
- iii) shows changes in alcohol consumption from 2012 to 2018.

## 7 in 10 students abstain from regular drinking



### 2018

The majority of Year 10 students do not regularly drink alcohol (69%).

When asked about their drinking in the past month, 13% drank alcohol once, 11% two or three times, and 6% at least once a week.

A similar proportion of males (29%) and females (31%) drank alcohol at least once in the past month. Fewer Asian (13%) and Pasifika (17%) students drank alcohol in the past month compared to students of Māori (37%) or NZ European/Other (33%) ethnicity.<sup>1</sup>

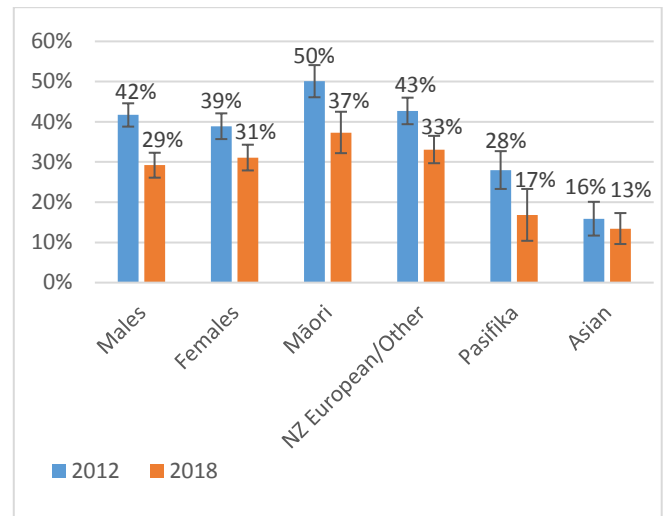
Year 10 students who drink alcohol are most likely to be doing so at home (71%), at a friend's house (39%), or at a social event (eg, parties, socials, concerts) (29%). Fewer students report drinking in a public place (eg, parks, in town) (10%), on school grounds (4%) or at work (1%).

### Change over time

The proportion of Year 10 students who are regularly drinking decreased between 2012 (40%) and 2018 (30%). This pattern was seen across all sub-groups, though the change was not statistically significant for Asian students (Figure 1).

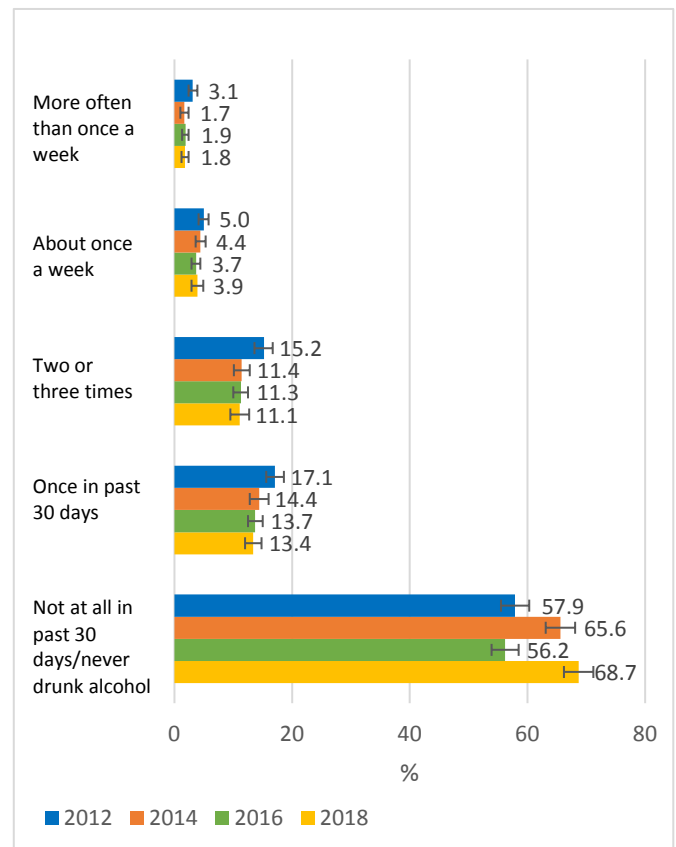
The majority of Year 10 students who drink alcohol do so one to three times per month. Among those Year 10 students who were drinking, the frequency of alcohol consumption decreased between 2012 and 2018 (Figure 2).

Figure 1. Proportion of students drinking in the last month, comparisons over time



Base = All respondents aged 14 to 15-years-old.

Figure 2. Frequency of drinking in past 30 days, 2012 – 2018



Notes:

- Response to question: 'During the past 30 days (one month) how often did you drink alcohol?' Does not control for quantity consumed.
- Base = All respondents aged 14 to 15-years-old.
- Totals may not add to 100% as some respondents did not answer the question. In 2016 especially there was a high (13%) non-response to this frequency of consumption question.
- Significant change for all except 'about once a week'.

<sup>1</sup> Based on prioritised ethnicity.

## Almost 1 in 4 students engage in heavy episodic drinking

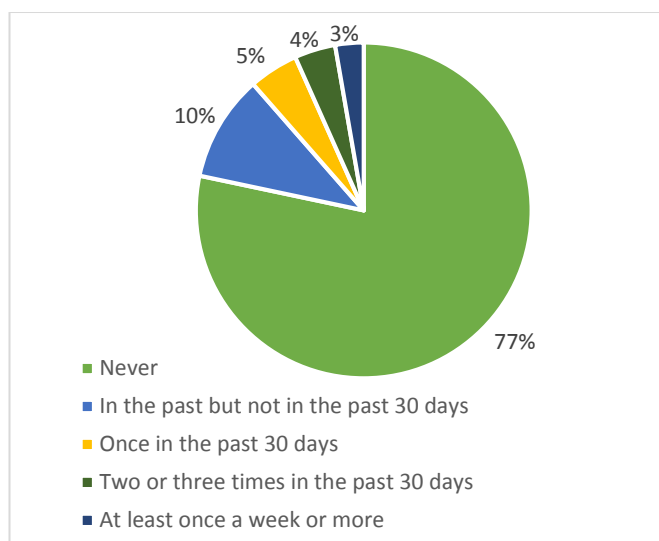


### 2018

Heavy episodic drinking, defined as five or more drinks in one session, is used as a conservative estimate of risk of alcohol-related harm among 14 to 15-year-old Year 10 students.

More than three quarters of Year 10 students (77%) never consume five or more alcoholic drinks in one session (Figure 3). While three percent engage in heavy episodic drinking at least once a week.

Figure 3. Frequency of heavy episodic drinking



Base = All respondents aged 14 to 15-years-old.

Māori Year 10 students (38%) are more likely than NZ European/Other (18%), Pasifika (17%) or Asian students (6%) to have ever engaged in heavy episodic drinking. However, among those who had engaged in heavy episodic drinking in 2018, Māori (55%) and non-Māori students (51%) were equally likely to have done so in the past month. A similar proportion of male (20%) and female students (23%) have ever drunk five or more alcoholic drinks in one session.



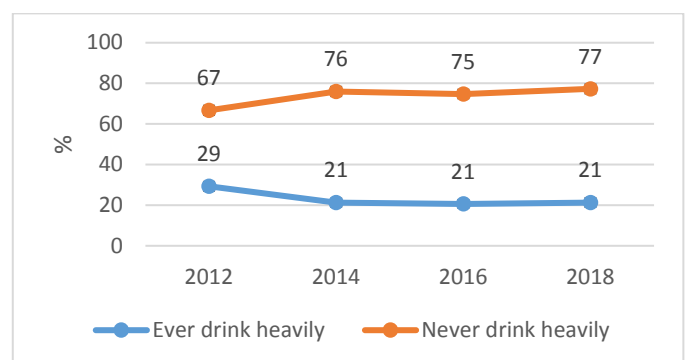
Looking at risk factors for heavy episodic drinking (see Appendix), the three biggest influences mean that engaging in heavy episodic drinking is:

- four times more likely if the Year 10 student has smoked tobacco in the past month
- six times more likely if they have ever used marijuana
- seven times more likely if they have close friends who drink.

## Change over time

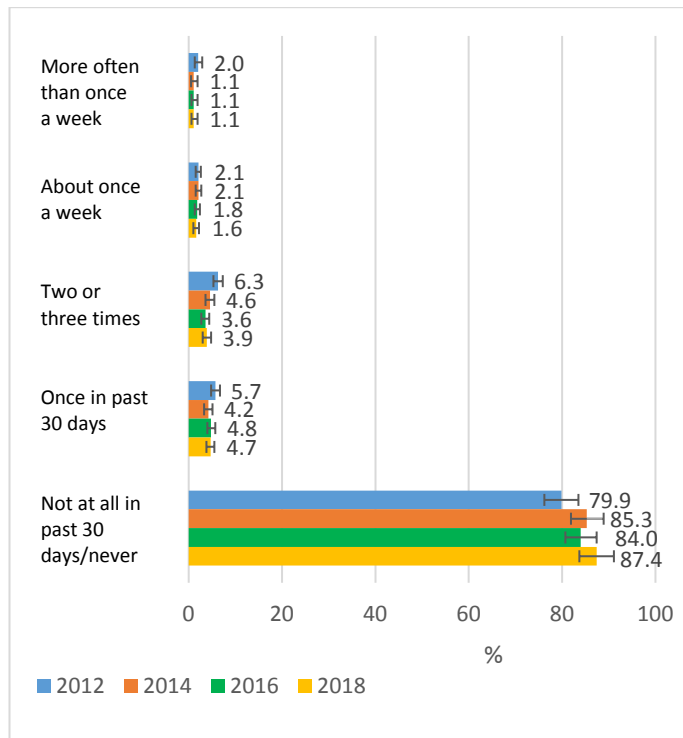
Between 2012 and 2018 there has been a decrease in the number of Year 10 students engaging in heavy episodic drinking (Figure 4) and the frequency with which they do so (Figure 5). This declining pattern is similar for males, females and across Māori, New Zealand European/Other, and Pasifika students (Figure 6).

Figure 4. Prevalence of heavy episodic drinking



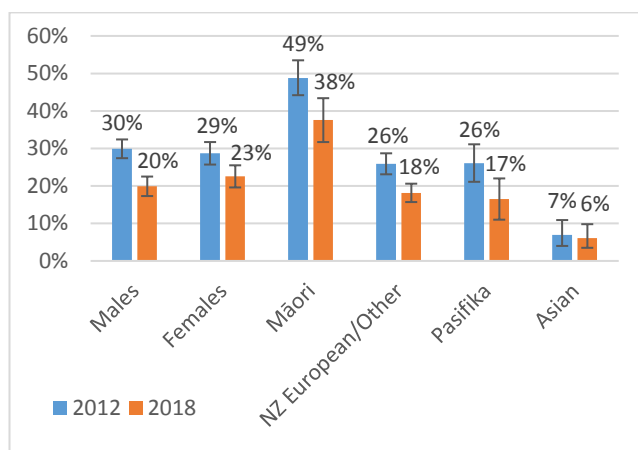
Base = All respondents aged 14 to 15-years-old.

Figure 5. Frequency of heavy episodic drinking in past 30 days, 2012 – 2018



Base = All respondents aged 14 to 15-years-old.  
 Note. Significant change for: not at all in past 30 days/never; two or three times; more often than once per week (for those drinking most days).

Figure 6. Proportion of students having ever engaged in heavy episodic drinking, comparisons over time



Base = All respondents aged 14 to 15-years-old.

## Implications

Findings from the 2018 YIS demonstrate that the majority of Year 10 students aged 14 to 15-years-old do not regularly drink alcohol and have never engaged in heavy episodic drinking. However, 1 in 3 do drink alcohol (30%), with 6% doing so weekly. Also, more than 1 in 10 (12%) engaged in heavy episodic drinking in the past month. These rates are consistent with findings from other New Zealand studies (Campbell et al., 2019).

There are many factors that affect adolescents' alcohol consumption. These include individual factors such as age, gender, attitude, wellbeing, participation in other risky behaviours (eg, smoking, marijuana use); family factors such as living standards, connection to family, parental monitoring; and community factors including deprivation, access to and availability of alcohol, school engagement, interactions among peers and social norms (Te Hiringa Hauora/Health Promotion Agency, 2020). Initiatives that enable parents and whānau, schools and peers to increase protective factors are important for reducing risk.

Consistent with other recent studies (eg, Ball, Edwards, Sim, Cook, & Denny, 2020), these findings show significant reductions in adolescents' drinking from 2012 to 2018. More work is required to understand which specific factors are influencing these reductions. If we understand what contributes to the changes, we can look at how to make more of those factors to encourage young people to continue not to drink or delay drinking for as long as possible.

## References

- Ball, J., Edwards, R., Sim, D., Cook, H., & Denny, S. (2020). What explains the decline in adolescent binge-drinking in New Zealand? *International Journal of Drug Policy*, *84*, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2020.102826>
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## Citation

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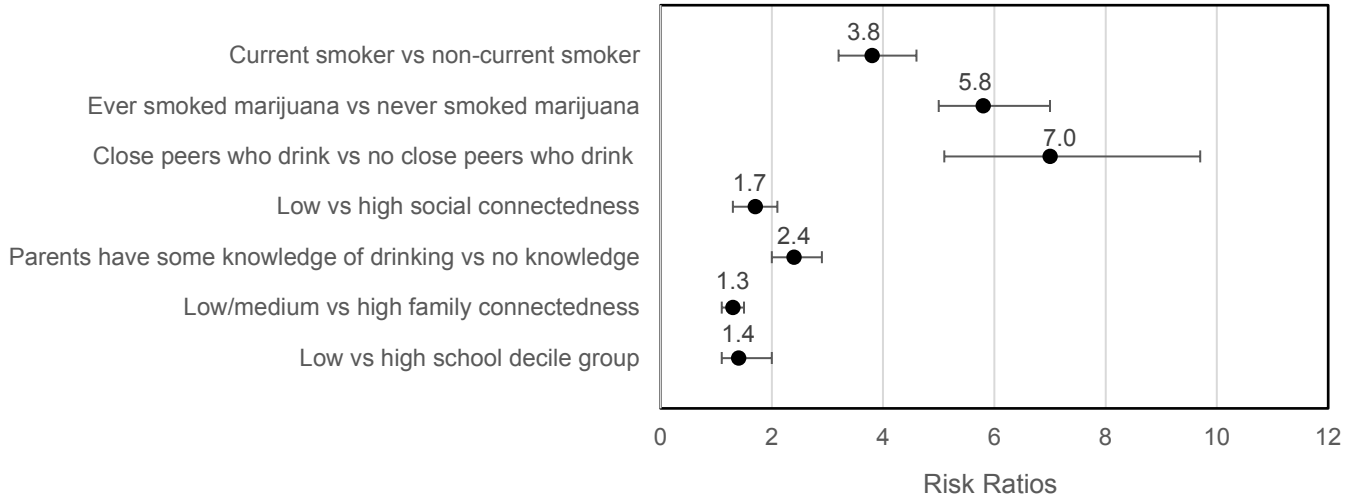
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## Methodology

- 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. Please note, some of the variation of estimated prevalence between survey years could potentially be from changes in the questionnaire. For a full description of the 2018 YIS survey methodology, questionnaire and further publications, please visit [hpa.org.nz/our-work/research/publications](http://hpa.org.nz/our-work/research/publications).
- The 2018 YIS was conducted with a sample of 2,689 Year 10 students (only 14 to 15-year-olds were included for this report). The sample included 1,464 NZ European/Other ethnicity, 624 Māori, 237 Pasifika, and 364 Asian students (defined using prioritised ethnicity).
- To represent the New Zealand Year 10 population, responses were weighted for each survey year according to the gender and ethnicity distribution of Year 10 students in New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 2018).
- Over the 2012 to 2018 period 11,445 14-15-year-old Year 10 students participated in the survey.
- Alcohol consumption was measured using two questions:
  - During the past 30 days (one month) how often did you drink alcohol?
  - During the past 30 days (one month), about how often did you have 5 or more alcohol drinks in one session? (count one drink as one small glass of wine, one can or stubbie, one ready-made alcohol drink (eg, rum and Coke) or one nip of spirits).
- Response options for both questions were as follows: I have never drunk alcohol/I do not drink alcohol now; not at all in the past 30 days; once in the past 30 days; two or three times in the past 30 days; about once a week; several times a week; most days.
- It must be acknowledged that responses are self-reported and thus may be subject to social desirability bias.
- Results presented are proportions. Only significant differences ( $p < .05$ ) between groups are reported.
- 'Don't know' and 'refused' responses were included in the analysis for unadjusted prevalences.
- Generalised linear models were used for estimating adjusted risk ratios. Relative risk ratios were used to compare responses between groups and over time. Interaction effects were examined to determine group differences in proportional rate changes over time.
- Comparison groups for these analyses were as follows:
  - Gender (males/females)
  - Ethnicity
    - Total response (Māori, non-Māori)
    - Prioritised ethnicity, that is, each respondent is allocated to a single ethnic group, in the prioritised order of Māori, Pasifika, Asian, and NZ European/Other.

## Appendix

Figure A1. Risk factors for heavy episodic drinking



Note: Risk ratios adjusted for gender and ethnicity (total response Māori).