Last drinking occasion: Types of alcohol consumed by adults

Background
In 2013/14, four in five (80%) New Zealanders aged 15-years or more reported drinking alcohol within the last year (Ministry of Health, 2014), with the type of alcohol consumed on typical drinking occasions varying with sex, age and ethnicity (Ministry of Health, 2015). Beer drinking is more associated with harmful drinking among males while low-cost ready-to-drink mixes (RTDs) are more associated with harmful drinking among females (Ministry of Justice, 2014).

The Health Promotion Agency’s (HPA’s) Attitudes and Behaviour towards Alcohol Survey (ABAS) monitors New Zealanders’ behaviour and attitudes towards alcohol, including those related to the last drinking occasion. This factsheet presents information on the types of alcohol consumed on the last drinking occasion involving two or more alcohol drinks among adults aged 18-years and older.

Methodology
Respondents to the ABAS 2013 were asked about the last occasion they had two or more alcoholic drinks (referred to from now on as “the last drinking occasion”). Alcohol type consumed and risky alcohol consumption (defined as five to seven and eight or more alcoholic drinks consumed on the last occasion) were examined by gender, ethnicity, age group and household income. Multiple responses were permitted when respondents were asked about the type of alcohol they consumed on their last drinking occasion. The analysis for the number of alcoholic drinks consumed during, and the length of the drinking occasion was restricted to adult respondents (18-years and older) whose last drinking occasion was within three months (n=2,109). Only those group differences that were statistically significant (p < .05) are reported.

Last occasion of two or more alcohol drinks
Of the adult respondents who reported having two or more alcoholic drinks on their last drinking occasion within the last three months (n=2,109), 55% (53-58%) reported doing so within the last week, 28% (26-30%) within one week to one month, and 17% (15-19%) within one month to three months.
The type of alcohol consumed varied by demographics.

- European/Other (55%) and Asian (53%) people were more likely to have drunk wine than Māori (35%) or Pacific (36%) people.
- European/Other people (38%) were less likely to have consumed beer than Māori (47%).
- European/Other (22%) and Asian (22%) people were less likely to have consumed spirits than Māori (32%) and Pacific (39%) peoples.
- European/Other (8%) and Asian (6%) people were less likely to have consumed RTDs on the last drinking occasion than Māori (23%) or Pacific (21%) peoples.

In particular, types of drink consumed differed between age groups and by gender. Overall, males were more likely than females to have drunk beer (66% compared with 16%) and females were more likely than males to have drunk wine (68% compared with 33%).

Figures 2 and 3 present the type of alcohol consumed on the last drinking occasion by sex and age of drinker.

- Adults in the younger age group reported drinking a diverse range of beverage types at the last drinking occasion. Beer, spirits and RTDs were the most commonly consumed drinks 18 to 24-year-old males while spirits, wine and RTDs were the most commonly consumed drinks by 18 to 24-year-old females.
- Between the age groups of 25 to 44 years and 45 to 54-years, beer was the most commonly consumed drink by males and wine by females.
- Among those aged 65-years and over, males were equally likely to have consumed beer or wine while the majority of females had consumed wine on their previous drinking occasion. As age increased, people were more likely to have drunk wine and less likely to have drunk spirits or RTDs.

Figure 2: Type of alcoholic drinks consumed by women on last drinking occasion, by age group (multiple responses possible) (n= 1,101)
• Overall, wine (52%) and beer (40%) were the most commonly consumed drinks on the last drinking occasion.
• The alcohol types consumed on the last occasion varied by age and gender. For all age groups, beer was more likely to be consumed by males. Wine and RTDs were more likely to be consumed by females. Younger adults were more likely to drink RTDs and spirits. In the middle age groups, beer became the most common drink among males and wine among females. As age increased both males and females were more likely to drink wine.

Key points

References


Citation

About the Attitudes and Behaviour Towards Alcohol Survey

- The ABAS is a nationwide telephone survey conducted annually. The survey focuses on behaviour related to the previous month and last drinking occasion, and a range of attitudes/opinions towards alcohol. The 2013 ABAS consisted of a sample of 4,001 New Zealanders aged 15-years 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 used 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 (comparisons between European/Other, Māori, Pacific and Asian).
  - Age (comparisons between 18 to 24, 25 to 44, 45 to 64, 65+ years).
  - Household income (less than $50,000 compared with $50,000 to 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.

About the HPA

HPA is a Crown entity that leads and delivers innovative, high quality and cost-effective programmes and activities that promote health, wellbeing and healthy lifestyles, prevent disease, illness and injury. HPA enables environments that support health and wellbeing and healthy lifestyles, and reduce personal, social and economic harm. HPA also undertakes functions specific to providing advice and research on alcohol issues.

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