

Experiences with alcohol consumption culture and environments

Background

In 2013/14, one in five (20%) New Zealanders aged 15 years or more who drank alcohol in the past year reported a potentially hazardous alcohol consumption pattern (Ministry of Health, 2014).

Individual behaviour can be affected by environmental and peer influences including offers of alcohol, modeling of heavy drinking behaviour and perceived social norms (Borsari & Carey, 2001).

People's perceptions of the acceptability and prevalence of risky drinking patterns may influence their own drinking intentions and behaviour (Rimal & Real, 2005).

Perceptions of drinking environments can also impact on people's wellbeing and sense of personal safety. This fact sheet reports New Zealanders' impressions regarding social behaviour and pressures in drinking environments.

Methodology

The 2013 Attitudes and Behaviour towards Alcohol Survey (ABAS 2013) included questions that assessed respondents' feelings about drinking environments. Responses were collected on a five-point scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'.

Responses to these questions by adult respondents (age 18 years and over, n=3,821) were compared by gender, ethnicity, age and risky drinking behaviour. Statistically significant differences ($p < .05$) between groups are reported.

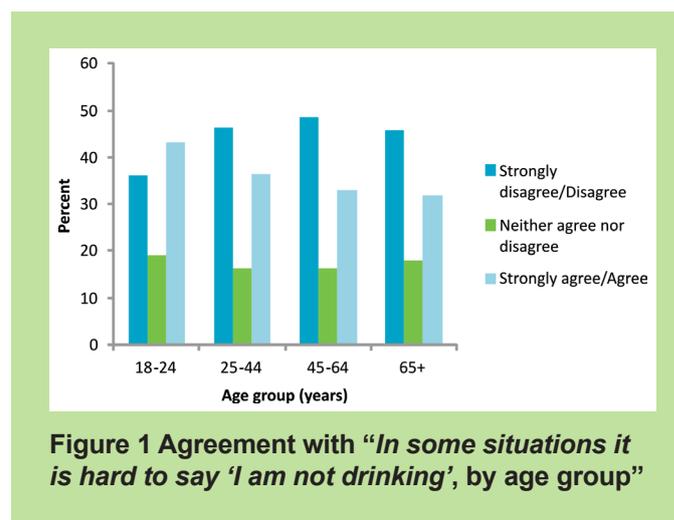
Acceptance of decisions to not drink alcohol

All respondents were asked for their agreement with the statement: "In some situations it is hard to say 'I am not drinking'".

Just over one in three (35%, 34-37%) respondents agreed (18%, 17-19%) or strongly agreed (17%, 16-19%) with this statement. Just under one-half disagreed (13%, 11-14%) or strongly disagreed (33%, 32-35%), while 17% (16-18%) neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.

Those more likely to agree or strongly agree with the statement included:

- Younger adults aged 18 to 24 years (43%) compared with all people in older age groups (Figure 1).
- People who reported some risky drinking (43%) or regular risky drinking (44%) in the previous four weeks, compared with 27% of those who had not drunk this much on any one occasion.



Avoidance of places due to drinking behaviour

Everyone was asked for their agreement with the statement: “There are places I no longer go to because of others’ behaviour when drinking”.

One-half (50%, 48-52%) of respondents agreed (14%, 13-16%) or strongly agreed (36%, 34-37%) with this statement. One in three disagreed (9%, 8-10%) or strongly disagreed (23%, 22-24%), while 13% (12-14%) neither agreed nor disagreed.

Those more likely to agree or strongly agree with the statement included:

- Māori (58%) compared with non-Māori (49%).

There were no significant differences by gender, drinking behaviour or age.

Expectations of sexual references in drinking environments

Everyone aged 18 years or over was asked for their agreement with the statement: “I expect some sexual banter if I stay out late at night”.

Around one-half of the respondents (52%, 51-53%) disagreed with this statement, including 39.5% who strongly disagreed. Nearly one in four (24%, 22-25%) agreed, including 12% who strongly agreed, while 18% neither agreed nor disagreed.

Those more likely to agree or strongly agree with the statement included:

- Those aged 18 to 24 years (27%) and 25 to 44 years (28%) compared with those aged 45 to 64 years (21%) and 65 years and over (19%).

There were no significant differences by gender, ethnicity or drinking behaviour.

Key points

- Just over half of New Zealand adults report that there are places they no longer go due to other people’s drinking behaviour.
- Close to one in three adults find it difficult to say they are not drinking in some situations. Younger people are more likely to feel that it is difficult to say they choose not to drink.
- Personal risky drinking behaviour does not appear to be related to people’s likelihood of avoiding places due to others’ drinking behaviour or of expectations about sexual banter late at night. Recent drinking to a risky level is, however, associated with stronger agreement that it can be difficult to say “I am not drinking”.
- One in four New Zealand adults expect sexual banter when they are out late. The wording of this question does not make it clear whether the banter referred to is welcome or unwelcome, or whether respondents expect that they will be taking part in this banter or having it directed at them.

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 undertaken 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 (European/Other compared with Māori, Pacific, Asian)
 - Age (18 to 24 years compared with 25 to 44, 45 to 64, and 65 or more)
 - Drinking patterns over the last four weeks: consuming seven or more alcoholic drinks on one or two occasions (“some risky drinking”) and more than two occasions (“regular risky drinking”) compared with not drinking this much on any one occasion).
- 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>.

References

- Borsari, B., & Carey, K. B. (2001). Peer influences on college drinking: A review of the research. *Journal of Substance Abuse, 13*, 391-424.
- Ministry of Health. (2014). *New Zealand Health Survey — Annual update of key findings 2013/2014: Adult data tables — Health status, health behaviours and risk factors*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.
- Rimal, R.N., and Real, K. (2005). How behaviors are influenced by perceived norms: A test of the Theory of Normative Social Behavior. *Communication Research, 32*: 389-414.

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