

Attitudes towards alcohol among 15 to 17-year-olds

Background

Perceptions and attitudes towards alcohol have been shown to influence behaviour (Rimal & Real, 2005). Four in nine New Zealanders report the first time they consumed a large amount of alcohol on one drinking occasion was when they were 15 to 17-years-old (Ministry of Health, 2009). Understanding the attitudes this population group has towards alcohol is helpful in developing effective health promotion programmes targeting risky alcohol consumption. The Health Promotion Agency's (HPA's) Attitudes and Behaviour towards Alcohol Survey (ABAS) monitors New Zealanders' behaviour and attitudes towards alcohol, and included a number of questions around attitudes and opinions toward social norms. This fact sheet reports on attitudes towards alcohol among those aged 15-17 years.

Methodology

Participants in the 2013 ABAS were asked about their opinions and attitudes towards drinking culture and drinking behaviour. There were 180 respondents aged 15-17 years in the ABAS. Responses were collected on a five-point scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. Responses were examined by gender, ethnicity, alcohol consumption status and risky alcohol consumption (five or more drinks on one occasion). When looking at the differences by gender and ethnicity, we have controlled for alcohol consumption status (drinker in the last four weeks, drinker in the last year, non-drinker). This means that we take into account whether or not a respondent consumes alcohol to ensure that any differences found by gender or ethnicity are not in fact due to alcohol consumption status.

Only those group differences that were statistically significant ($p < .05$) are reported.

Attitudes towards 'getting drunk' and 'drunkenness'

Respondents were asked for their agreement with the statement, *'It's OK to get drunk as long as it's not everyday'* Over one-third (37%, 30-44%) of respondents either 'agreed' (20%, 15-27%) or 'strongly agreed' (17%, 12-23%) with this statement. One in five (19%, 14-25%) 'neither agreed nor disagreed' and 44% (37-52%) either 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed'.

Respondents who were more likely to 'agree' or 'strongly agree' with the statement were those who consumed alcohol in the last four weeks (52%, 40-63%), compared with those who were non-drinkers or had not consumed alcohol in the last four weeks (28%, 20-37%).

Respondents were also asked for their agreement with the statement, *'Drunkenness is acceptable in some situations'* Around one in four (26%, 20-33%) respondents 'agreed' (15%, 10-21%) or 'strongly agreed' (12%, 8-18%) with the statement¹, while one in five (19%, 14-25%) 'neither agreed nor disagreed'. Fifty-five percent (47-62%) either 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed'.

Those 15 to 17-year-olds who had consumed alcohol in the last four weeks (36%, 25-48%) were more likely than those who were non-drinkers or those who had not consumed alcohol in the last four weeks (20%, 14-29%) to 'agree' or 'strongly agree' with the statement.

¹ The proportion of respondents who 'agreed' (15%) and 'strongly agreed' (12%) does not total to the overall proportion reported for agreement (26%) due to rounding.

Perception of binge drinking culture

Respondents were asked for their agreement with the statement, *'Binge drinking is part of Kiwi culture'* Around one in four (26%, 20-33%) 'agreed' (15%, 10-21%) or 'strongly agreed' (11%, 7-16%) with this statement, and 15% (11-21%) 'neither agreed nor disagreed'. Fifty-nine percent (52-66%) either 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed'.

Respondents who were more likely to 'agree' or 'strongly agree' with the statement were those who consumed alcohol in the last four weeks (35%, 24-47%), compared

with those who were non-drinkers or had not consumed alcohol in the last four weeks (20%, 14-29%).

Perceived ease to say "I am not drinking"

Respondents were asked for their agreement with the statement, *'In some situations it is hard to say "I am not drinking"'* Two in five (39%, 32-46%) reported that they 'agreed' (23%, 17-30%) or 'strongly agreed' (16%, 11-22%) with the statement. Just under one-third (28%, 22-36%) of respondents 'neither agreed nor disagreed' with the statement, while 33% (26-40%) either 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed'.

Key points

- Thirty-seven percent of 15 to 17-year-olds agreed that it's OK to get drunk as long as it's not everyday. The level of agreement differed by alcohol consumption status.
- Twenty-six percent of respondents agreed that 'drunkenness' is acceptable in some situations.
- Twenty-six percent of 15 to 17-year-olds agreed that binge drinking is part of 'Kiwi' culture, with those who consumed alcohol in the last four weeks more likely to agree.
- Thirty-nine percent reported they find it hard in some situations to say they are not drinking.

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 (males, compared with females)
 - Ethnicity (Māori, Pacific and Asian, compared with European/Other ethnicity)
 - Alcohol consumption status (consumed alcohol in the last four weeks, compared to non-drinker or not consumed alcohol in the last four weeks)
 - Risky alcohol consumption (ever consumed five or more drinks on one occasion in the last four weeks, compared to never)
- 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

- Ministry of Health. (2009). *Alcohol use in New Zealand: Key results of the 2007/2008 New Zealand Alcohol and Drug Use Survey*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.
- Rimal, R. N. & Real, K. (2005). How behaviours are influenced by perceived norms: A test of the theory of normative social behaviour. *Communication Research*, 32(3), 389-414.

Citation

- Holland, K. (2014). *Attitudes towards alcohol among 15 to 17-year-olds. [In Fact]*. Wellington: Health Promotion Agency Research and Evaluation Unit.

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The 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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