

Vai Mamali

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The place of alcohol in the lives of Niuean people living in Aotearoa New Zealand

A report prepared by Sector Analysis, Ministry of Health for the Alcohol Advisory Council of New Zealand

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Explanation of Title

Vai mamali means smiling water

Acknowledgements

The research team would like to thank all those people who took part in this study and who shared their stories with us. This report was only possible because of their willingness to take part. We hope that this report will generate more discussion within the Niuean community.

Our thanks to Granby Siakimotu and Kili Jefferson who read the report, corrected mistakes and asked important questions.

Fakaue lahi

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Niuean Border Design

Vaitoa Baker

As a freelance illustrator of mixed ethnic groups, having the opportunity to work on this project that incorporates many designs of the Pacific, I hope I have done justice to each. I also want to give thanks to my partner, Yvette, whose love keeps me going.

Disclaimer

This report was prepared by staff of Sector Analysis, Ministry of Health for the Alcohol Advisory Council of New Zealand. Its purpose is to inform discussion and assist future health promotion strategies. Therefore, the opinions expressed in the report do not necessarily reflect the official views of the Alcohol Advisory Council of New Zealand, Ministry of Health nor the members of the field team.

ALAC's Alcohol and Pacific Islands Research Project Reports

This report is one of a series of seven studies published in 1997

- The place of alcohol in the lives of people from Tokelau, Fiji, Niue, Tonga, Cook Islands and Samoa living in New Zealand: an overview
- Inu Pia: The place of alcohol in the lives of Tokelauan people living in Aotearoa New Zealand
- Na tabili kavoro: The place of alcohol in the lives of Fijian people living in Aotearoa New Zealand
- Vai Mamali: The place of alcohol in the lives of Niuean people living in Aotearoa New Zealand
- Kapau tete to ha fu'u siaine he 'ikai tete ma'u ha talo pe koha 'ufi ko e fu'u siaine pe: The place of alcohol in the lives of Tongan people living in Aotearoa New Zealand
- Kaikava me kare Inuinu: The place of alcohol in the lives of Cook Islands people living in Aotearoa New Zealand

O le a'ano o feiloaiga: The place of alcohol in the lives of Samoan people living in Aotearoa New Zealand

Table of Contents

EXPLANATION OF TITLE	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
NIUEAN BORDER DESIGN	iii
DISCLAIMER	iii
ALAC’S ALCOHOL AND PACIFIC ISLANDS RESEARCH PROJECT REPORTS....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
VAI MAMALI	1
Aims of the study	1
How the research was carried out	1
Why the interview method was chosen	1
Who took part in the study – the participants	2
How the interviews were carried out	2
What the interviews asked	3
How the research information was analysed (made sense of)	3
Background	3
Access to alcohol in Niue during the period 1940 to 1960s	4
Home-brew	6
Migration to Aotearoa New Zealand	7
Early days in Auckland	7
The present-day role of alcohol in the Niuean community	9
Introduction to alcohol	10
Preferred drinks	12
The importance of drinking with people you know	13
Alcohol and gender	13
Unacceptable behaviour	15
The effects of alcohol	16
Reasons for reducing or stopping drinking	17
Alcohol and church functions	18

Is there a Niuean way of drinking?	19
Non-drinkers and alcohol	20
The role of the non-drinker amongst drinkers	21
Summary of main points	22
BIBLIOGRAPHY	23
APPENDIX 1	24
Interview schedule	24
THE RESEARCH TEAM	28

Vai mamali

Aims of the study

The Pacific people's alcohol research project was set up to describe the place of alcohol in the lives of Tokelauan, Fijian, Niuean, Tongan, Cook Islands and Samoan people living in Aotearoa New Zealand. The reason for doing this was to enable the Alcohol Advisory Council of New Zealand (ALAC) to design alcohol health promotion strategies and materials suitable for the different Pacific communities.

Pacific people came from small close-knit communities in the Pacific where everyone knew everyone else, including their genealogy, to a place where they knew few people. As migrants and the children of migrants, it is important to share and pass on the stories of the homeland. But it is equally important to share the stories of migration. The migration stories tell what it was like to be pioneers in a new land, building new communities, learning new ways from new people. For a lot of the early Pacific migrants, being introduced to alcohol was part of that new learning experience.

This chapter looks at the stories of some members of the Niuean community in Auckland and the place of alcohol in their lives.

How the research was carried out

One important objective of the research was to have at least two members from each of the Pacific communities working in the research field team. Each community would then be able to gather its own stories and information.

Three researchers from the Auckland Niuean community, Doreen Arapai, Dahlia Naepi and Vili Nosa interviewed members of the Niuean community. Slaven Naepi helped with some of the men's interviews and transcribed interviews in the Niuean language.

Information about the purpose of the research was given out and people were asked if they wanted to take part. Those who agreed to take part were then asked to read and sign a consent form, which showed that they understood the purpose of the research and were still willing to take part. Some people were interviewed individually and some took part in group interviews. The interviews were taped and transcribed. Written copies of these interviews were returned to the participants for checking and editing.

Why the interview method was chosen

The research method of interviewing individuals and groups of people was chosen because the researchers wanted to gain an in-depth account of Niuean people's

experiences with alcohol. The people interviewed were able to think over their personal experiences and try to give meaning to those experiences.

The information collected does not claim to be representative of the whole Niuean community but only of those persons interviewed. By presenting these stories, hopefully this will be a beginning to more discussion within the Niuean community about the role of alcohol in people's lives.

Direct quotes from the people interviewed are included throughout the report. This is to help the reader view life through those people's eyes. While the researchers have attempted to represent the views of the participants, they take full responsibility for the interpretation placed on the information gathered and welcome discussion from the Niuean community.

Who took part in the study – the participants

The field team's aim was to find people within the community with a wide range of experiences and beliefs about alcohol. People were contacted through health groups, community groups, church groups and sports clubs.

Nineteen women were interviewed whose ages ranged from 22 years to over 70 years.

Thirteen men were interviewed whose ages ranged from 18 years to over 60 years.

More than half the participants were Niue-born but most had lived in Aotearoa New Zealand for more than 10 years.

How the interviews were carried out

Most of the women were interviewed individually in face-to-face interviews. One interview was a telephone interview. As well, two group interviews were held with a group of four women and another group of three women.

There was one group interview with five young men, but only four of these men contributed to the discussion. The rest of the men's interviews were face-to-face individual interviews.

Interviews were conducted in both Niuean and English.

The interviewers found that organising the interviews took a lot longer than they had expected. Interviews that had been arranged were often cancelled at the last minute because the person to be interviewed had unexpected family or cultural obligations.

Some of the participants were surprised when they received written copies of the interviews. They were expecting a report of what had been said in the interview but had not realised that the transcript would show what they actually said.

What the interviews asked

The interviews asked open-ended questions around the themes of:

- social or family events where Niuean people would drink alcohol
- who Niuean people drank with, for example, whether men and women drank together
- what type of drinks Niuean people preferred
- the differences between drinking in Niue and drinking in Aotearoa New Zealand
- whether there was a Niuean style or styles of drinking
- how the people taking part in the interview first started drinking alcohol
- issues that were brought up in the interview by the people being interviewed.

Open-ended questions are those questions which ask people to describe or explain their point of view. Closed questions, on the other hand, usually require simple *yes* or *no* answers. Open-ended questions generally start with words like: *How . . .*, *Can you describe . . .*, *What . . .*, *Where . . .*, *Who . . .*

In both the group and individual interviews the interviewer was guided by the direction taken by those being interviewed.

How the research information was analysed (made sense of)

The transcripts from the interviews were analysed by comparing people's experiences and views to identify the similarities and differences and see if any common themes were emerging. Those people in the research field team who were members of the community offered their experience and wisdom and explained points about the culture and the community. Historical and anthropological accounts of Niue were read to provide background information and set the context for the report.

Background

The island of Niue lies "480 km east of Tonga, 930 km west of Rarotonga and 660 km south west of Samoa". While it is affectionately referred to as "the rock", it is in fact "the largest and highest coral atoll in the world with a land area of 259 rugged and rocky square kilometres" (Nosa 1995:5).

It is thought that the Niuean people are descendants of migrations from Samoa and Tonga about 1200 to 1500 years ago (Kumitau and Hekau 1982; Smith 1902/03; Loeb 1926).

While there does not appear to have been any form of alcoholic drink in Niue before the coming of the traders and sailors, there is some evidence of kava being used for faikava-

atua (making kava for the gods) (Loeb 1926:28). However the research field team do not consider Loeb to be an accurate source on this matter.

The missionaries arrived in Niue in the 1830s and 1840s. They were against alcohol being introduced and were able to exert influence in this area, as can be seen by the following incident which took place in 1877:

The only cargo of liquor ever landed on Niue arrived accidentally. It appears that a slaver came to the island for the purpose of stealing men for the Peruvian mines. Captain Scott, the owner of the boat, happened to be drunk when the time came for making anchorage, and as a result his boat was wrecked off Hio, Tuapa. A goodly amount of liquor was salvaged from the wreck and brought to the shore at Tuapa (Loeb 1926: 42).

Apparently the Niueans then poured all the liquor out into the sea. Loeb refers to a law which was introduced to “shut out the rum trade” because “the Niueans had no intoxicating drink” (Loeb 1926:42).

The Niueans continued to be a migratory people, for example, travelling to Samoa to work on the cotton plantations in the 1860s (Talagi 1982).

Lawes mentioned in the same year [1868] that “the authorities” had stopped another 200 [young men] from going. However, this was the beginning of a huge drain on Niuean young men for labour in Samoa, Queensland, Tahiti, Fiji, Malden island and many other places from which some returned and where some settled and died (Talagi 1982:119).

The labour trade led to other problems at the end of the nineteenth century:

When some of the labourers returned they were influenced by what they had seen in the plantations of Samoa, Tahiti, Hawaii, Fiji and Queensland. It was scarcely to their moral benefit. “About twenty have just returned from Samoa after having graduated with honours in the Apia University of Vice,” comments George Lawes in 1866. “For the first time since Creation Niue soil has been polluted by a drunken man rolling on it” (Tafatu andTukuitoga et al 1982:123).

Those Niueans who had left the island at this time, realised that “no white community lived as virtuous a life as the one the missionaries were trying to impose on the Niuean people” (Tafatu andTukuitoga et al 1982:123). The people on Niue were also able to see this in the way of the life of the traders who lived there. Despite the missionaries’ attempts to stem the flow of alcohol, Niuean people came into contact with it on their travels to other Pacific islands.

Access to alcohol in Niue during the period 1940 to 1960s

In Niue, alcohol was quite restricted both of who is qualified to purchase and how much. For example, young people were only allowed half a dozen bottles or cans at one time. There’s no such thing as you buy for us and I’ll shout next time. Occasionally. People were registered before receiving

alcohol. With this restriction a lot of people made home-brew and drank in secret. (Man)

In my young days at Niue, or teenage days, it was home brew. There was hardly . . . There was no beer in the island then. If it was, I could be wrong, but it was very limited and only a few selected people were allowed to have it. It was probably only about six cans each . . . That's how I remember. If you work in the Government, in whatever Government department, you have access to have a licence. I heard them talking about it. I don't understand how they get . . . what you have to do before you're eligible for it or you have access to buy beer from the Bond. I remember they call it "The Bond Store" . . . Well I remember in '66 when I went back they had . . .bought some . . .there was a family function and we bought some spirits from the Bond, but I think they had a points system and you were only allowed to buy so much according to the points you had, so once you reached a certain number of points that was your lot . . . (Woman)

In Niue it's very strict. You are not to be seen drinking . . . We ended up drinking secretly in the bush somewhere otherwise you might be arrested . . .In my days alcohol is strictly controlled by the government so once an opportunity arises everyone makes the most of it. So there was no real style of drinking because of those reasons. As time progressed things changed. The law became less harsh of people but still there's no real freedom to drink. (Man)

The participants in the study spoke of their experiences with alcohol in Niue during the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. During these times, it was mostly men who drank.

It's never a practice in my days for women to drink. It's not acceptable by our Niuean culture. (Older man)

Drinking would take place after work in the plantation or after sporting events, such as cricket.

Sometimes I started drinking well before the event so that it helps my confidence but this is not always the case. (Older man)

Those older participants who had grown up in Niue spoke of the strict rules governing alcohol during the 1940s to 1960s. The Government operated a points system which meant that people who wanted to purchase alcohol, had to apply for approval. Applications were assessed by a committee. The applicants had to be upstanding members of the community but the most important criterion appeared to be a person's ability to pay for the alcohol. Therefore, an applicant had to have an income and those not in paid employment were turned down. Successful applicants were then sent a letter which told them the number of points they had been given. For example, in the 1960s, 24 points could buy a dozen bottles (quart size at two points for every quart) of beer or later when cans and 'stubbies' came in, 24 points could buy two dozen cans/stubbies (one point per can/stubby). This was a month's supply and could be bought from the Government's liquor outlet, the Bond Store (Siakimotu 1997). This policy explains some

of the participants' statements that it was mostly Government employees who were able to buy alcohol, because the Government was probably the largest employer at that time.

Since access to Palagi (European) alcohol, was restricted in this way people (especially those with no income) resorted to other forms of alcohol such as home-brew and sipili (methylated spirits).

Home-brew

Of course they can make brew-their-own. Funny you should say that because my uncle, he works as well, but he would make his own brew and just leave it in the outskirts of the home. Great big huge bottles in their different stages of fermentation and I would always chance upon them, always looking at them (they were bubbling), but when it's matured, it's time to have a party and the parties are normally done in the weekends. But there are people of course who are restricted as I said because of money. They can have their own brew, but you still need the money to buy the sugar, the yeast . . . (Man)

In Niue, the cheapest form of alcohol was home-brew. One participant talked about a home-brew made from hops, coconut and sugar which was left to ferment for three days and then drunk. He believed that it was easier to get drunk from Niuean home-brew than Palagi beer. Another man who remembered his uncle's home-brew thought that there were few women who would drink home-brew. Drinking sessions were for men only and usually the men were friends or well known to each other.

A woman who had made home-brew in Niue when she was young, considered herself "pretty champion" at making it:

So what was the main ingredient? Coconut was it?

Sugar. It all depends. Some of them have pawpaw too. Some of them have coconut juice and even beetroot. . . I never got to find out [why beetroot was used], but you know what Island people are like. You're a child. You just do what you're told to do. Don't ask questions. So I never asked questions, "Why was it beetroot?" but I remember beetroot was always boiled . . . Well, don't ask me to make it now but I'll tell you what, in my young days I made home-brew all the time, time and time again.

When asked about whether home-brew was just for men, she replied:

Actually originally and traditionally men. They're known to be the drinkers, but there are a few women drink in the islands, not many though. I'm talking about the 50s when I was in Niue. You don't see many women drinking, but they're there . . . Women do drink, but as a rule I think traditionally the men are the ones that you see drink, and you see men drink, get drunk on the road or in their homes or anywhere, but it's very unusual to see a woman drunk and walk on the street or making loud noises. That is degrading sort of life to the women in the islands. You're not supposed to do that . . . Men get drunk and do whatever they want and get away with it.

Migration to Aotearoa New Zealand

The Niuean people are the fourth largest Pacific Islands group living in Aotearoa New Zealand (population 14 424 in 1991 census). There are six times more Niuean people living in Aotearoa New Zealand (most live in Auckland) than there are living in Niue. The population is young with half being under 20 years of age. Only 5 percent are over 60 years of age (Statistics New Zealand 1995).

Early days in Auckland

. . . One of the main things that I noticed with our Niuean men in those days, you never see a Niuean man go to the hotel in jeans or in his working clothes. He baths, shaves, combs his hair nice, wears clean clothes, wears a suit and tie, they never go to a hotel in working clothes in those days . . . They used to drink each other under the table to see who could drink the most and it was mainly beer . . . but later on as time went on . . . mainly gin and whiskey. But that's what I found with them in those days. Also they loved to get together and sing the old songs. Catch up on the old songs or catch up on what happened back home. Talking about how many sacks of kumara they packed, how many boxes of bananas that they packed and sent away. How many bush gardens they cleared and planted and who planted the biggest taro. Also catch up and talking about their old girlfriend. (Older woman)

In 1901 Aotearoa New Zealand assumed responsibility for Niue from Great Britain. In the 1940s, Niue, along with the Cook Islands and Tokelau, was granted New Zealand citizenship which meant open entry to Aotearoa New Zealand (Krishnan, Schoeffel and Warren 1994).

The early Niuean migrants came during the years of the Second World War. These were mainly men who worked hard and saved to bring over their wives and children. Those early years were very lonely because there were so few Niuean people living in Aotearoa New Zealand. Often they were living by themselves in rooms in boarding houses and the

hotels served as meeting places where they could connect up with other Niuean people and talk in their own language. Not many of the men were fluent in English so problems and misunderstandings could arise at work. On Saturdays they would meet and talk with one another and tell each other their problems at work:

. . . boarding houses in those days was a bedsitter, a bedroom with a bed and a gas ring in the corner with the table in the corner and that's where they boiled their kettle or a pot of water for a cup of tea. So these are the things that they found hard to understand coming from a place where you have an open fire and you boil your kettle to make a drink or a cup of tea or you cook your food but staying in the room all by yourself and if you have no one to talk to . . . (Woman)

An older woman spoke of those times. She remembered the men being heavy drinkers. The hotels were mostly within walking distance of one another so the men would walk from one to the other:

They come down from the Strand to the Station Hotel, from the Station to the Waverley, from the Waverley to the Auckland, the Auckland to the Great Northern and from there to the Gleeson and to the Ponsonby Club or go up to the Prince Arthur and the Albion in Hobson Street, Prince Arthur, Albion, Prince Wales and Family Navel Hotel along to the Rising Sun and the Star. And probably end up at the Star and then come home . . . They used to drink each other under the table to see who could drink the most and it was mainly beer.

Since the pubs closed at six o'clock they would buy alcohol and "the ones who have a home or a house, who lived in a house, take their mates to their house and enjoy a drink with them".

. . . I never cease to marvel at those old times how Niuean men could drink to that excess because they were not bought up on drink, on beer. I know some of them in the old days used to make bush beer. But honestly they were bought up on coconuts not on beer. When they come here, oh my goodness. (Woman)

In those days money was hard to come by and if women were not careful, their husbands would drink all their money away.

. . . the wife would have to be very strong to say "Well that's your lot. You drink that and that's it."

As well, the men would bring their friends home expecting to be fed. "And there was nothing you could do" because women did not want to be known as a mean, even though this meant less for the rest of the family.

It wears thin after a while. You can't let it happen too often.

. . . in those days also the Niuean men were very very popular with the girls here in Auckland because they smelt nice and clean and some of them used

to get into a lot of brawls and scuttles because the women folk liked them . . . Yes. They used to get into trouble because the girls used to like them. And because they were clean and they used to have the cream on their head and it was nothing in those days. Niuean men liked smelling nice and they powdered themselves and used perfume but later on I had never heard of the word “poofter” or “queer”. I had never heard of it, because our men folk used to powder themselves up and back in Niue. (Woman)

Life in the late 1950s, from a teenager’s perspective, was exciting. On Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights the Auckland community had dances to go to at the Trades Hall, the Maori Community Centre, the Ghandi and the Orange. One woman spoke about going to these dances. There were few Niueans around at that time so she mixed mostly with young Maori people. They would sneak alcohol into the dances in their bags and then go into the toilets to drink it. Most of the young Pacific people (mainly Samoans and Cook Islanders and a few Niueans) gathered at the Trades Hall dances. On Thursday nights people tended not to drink because of work the next day. Instead “we used to go and get a milkshake before we went down to a dance.”

The present-day role of alcohol in the Niuean community

Niuean people have been migrating to Aotearoa New Zealand since the Second World War and travelling back and forth between the two countries. There are many possibilities of what may have influenced Niuean people’s drinking behaviour. For example, over the past 50 years Niuean people in Auckland have come in contact with a wide range of drinking styles and ways of behaving around alcohol. Therefore the length of time that a person had lived in Auckland may have influenced their view of alcohol and the way they drank. Also a person’s age or life stage may influence their perspective. As people grow older they tend to reduce their drinking levels and their commitment to family and community increases. The participants in this study reinforced that. A person’s responsibilities and commitment to family, church and community may also influence their view of alcohol.

Niuean people mainly drank alcohol to be happy and have a good time while socialising with family and friends. This socialising took place at parties, nightclubs, sports clubs, socials, kareoke, the RSA and special occasions such as birthdays and weddings.

And the RSA, that’s a good place to go to. It’s cheap. They might be old fogies but if you go in there now there’re a lot of young ones in there now because they know you’ll get a good feed there and you’ll get cheap food and you’ll get pool tables. You know, it’s all there.

A non-drinker observed that people behaved differently when they were drinking in that they “opened up a bit more” compared with when they were not drinking. People who did drink said that drinking made them feel more relaxed and at ease. Alcohol helped them to unwind and relieve the stress of work or family. As an older woman said:

When the work during the week is tough and long hours, there’s nothing more relaxing than a glass of wine to help wind down. For me this is healthy and I’m in control.

While alcohol was drunk on special occasions such as birthday parties, some people felt it was bad to have alcohol served at children's parties. It was seen as an excuse for adults to get drunk.

Yes, actually there is a time and place for drinking, you know . . . The party's for the little ones . . . I'm not too keen on having drinkers about because I like the little kiddies' ones just for them alone, not for the adults . . .

Drinking together after sporting events, such as kilikiki (Niuean cricket), netball, softball and rugby, was seen as encouraging team spirit and friendship among players and supporters:

One thing I've noticed about my rugby team is that alcohol is a big part of the game of camaraderie and sportsmanship . . . There's a time to train, a time to play, but afterwards there's always, you know they say that's the best part about playing footie, to drink with your mates. To enjoy good times after a game.

It concerned some of the younger men that some players were drinking before matches and then going on the field and getting injured. The younger men thought that there used to be a rule about not drinking beer the night before a game but here were men drinking on the day of the game.

While a few people spoke of drinking when they were feeling down, most usually drank for happy reasons. Some of the younger men said that there had to be a "purpose" for the drinking. It was not enough to drink for the sake of drinking.

Drinking was essentially a group activity with only one or two people mentioning having a drink on their own.

Alcohol drinking normally took place at the end of the week on Friday and Saturday nights. Participants explained that this left enough time to recover from the effects of having a good time before work started again on Monday.

Introduction to alcohol

Most of the participants discussed how they had been introduced to alcohol. Some had started drinking with school friends while others had been initiated by an older person, such as parents or other relatives.

The younger people interviewed, especially young men, told how young people were under considerable pressure from their friends to take up drinking. They usually started drinking as teenagers because they wanted to be part of the crowd and wanted to belong. Young people (under the legal drinking age) had access to alcohol through liquor stores which did not ask for any ID (identification) or by using false ID when asked. Sometimes an older person, for example an older sibling, would buy their alcohol for them.

One younger man talked about how he started drinking when he was 15 or 16 years old. He and his friends started off with wine coolers then went on to beer. About eight of them would put their money together and buy about three trays of beer which they would

take to a park to drink. They had a secret place in the park and were careful to clean up afterwards:

. . . If we threw cans and stuff all around our spot then you know people would pick up on it, police would pick up on it, you know. We were really like discreet about it.

Ko e haaku a maamaaga ke he kava, to taha e mitaki. Fiafia mitaki e manamanatuaga ka inu e kava. Fuluola mitaki e tau mena ha kita ka taute. Mitaki. Ko e mogo fakapa ne inu ai au he kava, fakaako he falu a tagata au ke inu. Pehe a lautolu mitaki lahi e kava ka ligi ke he kalase (glass) to inu, ai logona e kona. Kelea ka inu mai he lupu he lahi e kese (gas) ne hau ai. Ti pihia haaku a kamataaga ke inu he kava. Fakaako he falu a tagata au ke inu.

Alcohol is a good thing. It relaxes your mind and your body. You feel good and I enjoy drinking. . . The way I was introduced to alcohol was such that I will never forget. I was taught that it's best to pour it into a glass. In this way it reduces the "gas". Whereas drinking from a bottle or a can, you get drunk very quickly. (Older Niue-born man)

Ko e vaha ia ne kamata ai au ke inu he kava, ne ai mitaki lahi e kava ka fio mo e tapaka ha ko laua ko e tau kapitiga a laua. Ka lali fakamalolo au ke inu he kava mo e ula he tapaka, ko e lahi ni ke liu mai ki fafo e kava ne inu he nakai la mahani mitaki au ke inu he kava. Ka kua uafulu ma ua tai e tau tau haaku tali he kamata ke inu he kava mo e ula he tapaka.

When I took alcohol for the first time I suddenly felt important. The combination of alcohol and cigarette made it even better . . . I vomited during this first time but this didn't stop me. I felt I had to toe/tow the line and be like the others who are much older than I am.

Ko e kamataaga haaku ke inu he kava, ai mitaki ha ko e inu fakapa a ia. Kae inu au mo e tagata he mogo fakapa ia. To taha e fulufuluola he kava he mogo ne totolo ai he tino. Ko e mitaki ha ia he logona e au. Ti loto lahi foki au ke liu au ke inu he kava.

I felt different. Some strange feeling flowed through my body. I felt good and started to smile and talk. The taste was not good but as time progressed I got used to it. (Older Niue-born man)

Mitaki, fakaau lahi kua maeke ai e magaaho nei ke fai tama kupu tote ai ha ko e laga mai ni he ha tautolu a fakatutalaaga ha ko e kava. Ko e manatu haaku ke he kava. Ko e kava ko e mena mitaki, ti ko e kava ko e mena kelea. Ko e haaku a inu he kava, nakai mahani au ke pehe nofo ni he kaina ti inu e kava. Kae ha ha i ai ni ke he tau magaaho ka o atu ai ke he tau fakafiafiaaga, ti maeke ai he magaaho ia ke inu ai e tama kalase uaina.

I started drinking alcohol at a party. I started with a glass of wine. I took small sips at first and went from there. Then I had something to eat. After that it's time for a cup of tea. So my first experience with alcohol was slow and more so a trial. (Older Niue-born woman)

I was casually introduced to alcohol (the home brew one) by a family member. It started off with cultural practice for a concert. I was encouraged by my uncle to take a sip and taste, see what I thought of it. Because of the bitter sweet taste I sat and got offered glass after glass. I thought it was fun then I went on and on accepting every glass I got offered. I didn't realise until it was time to go home, I tried to get up, my legs wobbled. That's when I realised - is this what people said and do when you are drunk. It was fun. You're happy and not shy. (Older Niue-born woman)

My first actual drink would have been at home with my dad and he sat me down at the table and he said, "You can have this can of beer" and he opened the beer and poured it in a glass and he sat there and we drank together. Then after that he asked, "How do you feel?" And I said, "I feel fine". I didn't think it was a big deal and I think my Dad because of the way he did it sort of made it look as though drinking wasn't such a big deal. You didn't have to do it. It wasn't such a necessity to drink. (Younger woman)

I was taking little sips at parties of the aunties' drinks . . . like just take their glass up to the table where they'd have the drinks and that and like you'd fill it up . . . somebody would fill it up and then you'd take it back to them and they'd say, "have a sip, have a sip". (Younger woman)

Preferred drinks

Women tended to prefer cocktails, wines and spirits but some also drank beer.

Well I started drinking when I was 18 and I started off on rum and coke. I'm a heavy spirits drinker but more so I've gone into wine recently also for financial reasons. (Woman)

Some of the women regarded beer as a man's drink so to drink beer was to behave in a masculine way.

I mean you don't want to be drinking, you know, spirits straight or anything. I'm very . . . This is my perspective. Women who drink beer are butch. (Woman)

Men preferred beer, spirits and whiskey. Those who had grown up in Niue had usually had some experience with home-brew also.

The importance of drinking with people you know

Here it's different because people go to pubs to socialise. We don't do that. It's hard to socialise with someone you don't know. (Man)

There was general agreement that family and friends were the best people to drink with though some were reluctant to drink with their partners.

If you're drinking with your partner and you always have to, you know, you have to behave in an appropriate way, you know, because that's what's called for. But when you're drinking with your friends you can just be yourself . . . (Woman)

One woman refused to drink with her husband because he became jealous. Also, some of the men were not comfortable about having their wives or girlfriends drink with them when other men were present. These men either did not agree with women drinking at all or believed that men should drink with men and women should drink with women.

People talked a lot about ensuring safety when drinking and the only way of being safe was to drink with people who were well known to them.

I feel safer drinking with family members. I can trust them and friends. (It's) only good to drink with people you know and trust. I feel better drinking at home (in Niue) than in New Zealand. Also I drink with those who have the ability to handle a joke. (Man)

The need to feel safe arose because people were inclined to talk and act more freely when they had been drinking. Sometimes people said things they later regretted, but if they said them in a circle of family and friends, all would be forgiven.

I know it sounds two-faced, but the thing is when you're drinking amongst friends, you know, you can have the occasional outburst. (Woman)

People also revealed more of themselves and their personal life when drinking. Family and friends were more likely to respect those revelations. Friends would "cover your back", that is, they looked after each other. When one was drunk, they made sure that the person remained safe and that they made it home afterwards.

Alcohol and gender

Men drink more and more heavy than women. Women prefer to drink from a glass and one glass sometimes would last for ages whereas men love to gobble a small bottle until it's finished. (Man)

It's a good thing to drink together but sometimes when people get drunk the aggressive behaviour takes over and the whole group gets into a fight. Things like a male might be "eyeing" a woman in the crowd. This alone can provoke a fight. (Man)

Most of the men who had grown up in Niue, while enjoying the company of women, preferred to drink with other men. Some felt that women should drink with women and men should drink with men.

When drinking in a mixed group of men and women it was important to know the people in the group well so that "we know what we can say."

Women drank both with other women and with men. Some women felt that men were louder, drank more than women and were more likely to get into fights.

The males like to see who can drink the most and who can drink, you know, people under the table.

Men tended to be more serious drinkers whereas women liked to talk and dance.

You hear most of them say, "We're not here to talk. We're here to drink and be happy."

In fact it was expected that men would get into trouble when drinking whereas women tended to be careful drinkers because they knew what people would say about them if they misbehaved. An older woman spoke of her first experience of going into a hotel:

I think it's a lot to do with my upbringing, being brought up in the Niuean . . . very protected environment and going to a hotel and drinking and getting drunk is not for women. I tend to think that they are not doing the right thing, you know.

One woman said that when drinking with relatives and family, younger women could not get drunk or let go as they could when with their friends.

When participants were asked how they knew when they had had enough, men tended to say that they drank until the alcohol was finished or till their body started feeling numb. Women spoke of stopping when they felt tired, or their head was spinning, or they could not swallow any more or just felt that they did not want another drink. The women said that even when they decided that they had had enough and stopped drinking, they continued to enjoy themselves and joined in the fun.

Women spoke of using a 'lifesaver' who was responsible for watching over them while they were drinking and making sure that they reached home safely. The lifesaver also reported on their behaviour the next day and reminded the drinkers of all the things they had done the night before. Some of the women spoke about being lifesavers for different family members.

How do you know when you've had enough?

*Yes, for me I know when enough is enough. Cause I can be drinking . . . and then something inside me will say, "Oh you'd better not drink anymore" because I'm starting to feel eeuurrghh [laughter] . . . You know just when I'm starting to slur, my mind kind of like eeuurrghh . . . and it's kind of like, "Oh I'd better stop drinking" and then I'll put it down and just start drinking water until um . . . and I'm interested that when I'm tiddly . . . after you're tiddly if you keep drinking you become drunk. If you stop drinking you become sober. So I'm a person who likes to stay tiddly and there's an art to staying tiddly . . . this is my method. You stop drinking altogether and, um, you dance and you laugh and you have a good time, but as soon as . . . I think, "Well I'm getting sober now" I'll start sipping on a glass again.
(Woman)*

Yes when I reach 12 bottles, that's when I know I am drunk . . . when I get drunk, that's when I stop. (Man)

I felt sleepy and couldn't walk, felt numb all over my body. But one thing, I still can remember where I am and who's there with me. Also I felt burning sensations in my stomach. (Older man)

Unacceptable behaviour

The people questioned hated violence when drinking. It was thought that only people who could not handle alcohol turned to violence.

One man spoke about the alcohol related violence in his family when he was growing up:

It [violence] was not termed that way when I was in Niue. It wasn't classified as an unacceptable manner. You never heard anybody saying that or describing it like that. If it was so described in Niue a long time ago as such, then the abuse of the family and the alcohol would have stopped a while back. But nobody dared because the people who were drinking then were the ones with money, Government servants mainly, and those people who had goods to be sold.

One of his relatives became violent when drunk so that the family would "hide the knives and the axe" and anything else that could be used as a weapon against them. Then they would leave the house for hours until they thought it was safe to return.

Some men drink alcohol so that when they return home it's easy to cause a fight with the wife or partner, then blame it on the alcohol, yet most men know exactly what they're doing.
(Man)

Women did not like people fighting or “foul language”:

. . . someone always seems to like start up a fight for no reason or, mind you, they wait until they get real drunk and they become real brazen and want to take on everybody, and all the dirty washing comes out and away they go.

Encouraging people to keep drinking when they had obviously had enough was also not acceptable. Because the Niuean community was so small, people who abused alcohol or misbehaved in some way would soon be heard about:

There’s less Niueans and probably word gets around if you make a fool of yourself and like if a person makes a fool of himself, next thing you know, half the population finds out what you did and then you feel a real fool.

Freeloaders or bludgers were frowned upon especially by the older participants. Shouting each other drinks was considered part of the drinking culture and people who did not take part were shunned. Sometimes people who were unemployed could not afford drinks but they were paid for by their friends because there was a mutual understanding that when they were able to, they would return the favour.

Both older and younger participants felt it was important to conform with the group. The older participants spoke of showing newcomers how to behave and telling them off or shunning them when they did not do so.

The effects of alcohol

Alcohol was seen as having both positive and negative effects. On the positive side, people became more open, were able to express themselves better both in words and through dancing and singing. Alcohol had become an accepted part of social functions in the same way that food was. Alcohol remained acceptable so long as the people using it acted within social boundaries. There was some discussion on this point as to whether it was the alcohol that caused problems or if it was the people who were at fault. Most people who took part in the interview said that it was people’s lack of control or lack of understanding how alcohol worked that caused the problems. Referring to this, one woman said that alcohol should never be allowed to become “a major part of our lives” and that people needed to be educated about how to control the use of alcohol.

The younger men spoke of some men abusing alcohol and neglecting their families but on the whole felt that Niuean people as a group were mostly able to control their drinking. Several participants referred to the Niuean respect for the law and thought that this was a factor which encouraged Niuean people to control their drinking. Other participants said that Niuean people were drinking more like Palagi, implying that they had learned to control their alcohol.

Most of the problems mentioned were social problems such as violence, spending too much money on alcohol, neglecting families. However, a few people mentioned the effects of alcohol on health. A couple of the men had stopped drinking because of alcohol-related accidents. One woman said that long-term heavy drinking must eventually have some effects on the brain, and a group of younger men had seen the

“talking stomach” and the “talking baby” advertisements on television which had made them more aware of the effects of alcohol on their bodies.

. . . I've lost control of my senses and my, you know, and my good sense and good judgement and ahh . . . you know, you just become pretty much, how would you say, you lose control of yourself . . . Yeah, and you can't, in the sense, the next day, you can't recall you know, any of the actions that you've done and that, and people say, "Ohh last night you were a real dick" or, "You were a real idiot you know. You did this, you did that" and you say, "Oh no". You know I was just too drunk, I was too wasted. (Younger man)

I felt really happy and start showing off. And it's easy to provoke a fight even though I don't want to fight, part of me says, "Go for it, fight". I was aware it's wrong but it's like someone else is telling me to do these things. (Older man)

. . . you can end up feeling violent towards people that you normally don't get violent towards. And the thing is that when you do drink you have got to be conscious of your behaviour and I think that's also another ugly side of it is that you lose consciousness of your behaviour and your attitude and you are liable to say things that you don't really say and mean and you can upset and hurt a lot of people in the process including yourself . . . and people are quite surprised and actually shocked at your behaviour but you can always use alcohol as your defence in saying that once you get drunk you weren't aware of what you were saying or doing and people usually take that as a valid excuse for your behaviour. (Woman)

. . . a lot of my friends who are New Zealand born, of Pacific Islands descent, in the homes we respect our parents, we're humble, we're meek. But have few drinks and you see another side. You're loud, aggressive and I can honestly say that a lot of Pacific Islands women who do drink, change in a really volatile way. (Woman)

Reasons for reducing or stopping drinking

Those who were heavy drinkers when they were single, especially women, often reduced their drinking when they entered a serious relationship and started a family. Women spoke of someone needing to take responsibility for the family and it was usually them. In a small community:

. . . if they find out there's two of you drinking then they'll be talking, and that's something I wouldn't want to happen in my family, because Island people tend to gossip when they find out little things, so that's why it's best, you know, just the husband drinking and not both of you. They'll say, "Oh look, they're both drinking and the kids have got no clothes", you know, and you can't go in the community that way. (Woman)

A couple of the men had stopped drinking because of alcohol-related accidents. A man who stopped after 20 years of drinking said:

My wife and my mother for a long time said to me if you are not going to stop alcohol you are going to lose your family, your children and us.

Women who stopped or reduced drinking tended to support moderate drinking but men who had stopped drinking opposed alcohol.

My belief is alcohol is good provided whoever chooses to drink it understands what it can do to one's life and those around them. For me I would not touch it again but I wouldn't discourage others who feel they want to drink. People who were difficult when they were sober, alcohol makes them worse and to blame alcohol for that is not right. (Woman)

Alcohol and church functions

The church remains a very important part of Niuean people's lives. In the last census (1991), three-quarters of Niuean people belonged to a religious group.

One of the older women talked about how, when Niuean men first arrived in Aotearoa New Zealand, the church was very important but as time went on, the church slipped into the background and the pub came to the foreground. Men who were out drinking on Saturday were too tired to go to church on Sunday. One of the younger women said the same thing could still be seen in the churches today where often young people did not go to church on Sunday because they were recovering from Friday and Saturday night. Other participants thought that even though people went out drinking on Friday and Saturday, they still attended church on Sunday.

Participants spoke of church functions as being alcohol free but some men hid small bottles of alcohol in their jackets. Others would go to the back of the car park for a quiet drink. The participants called this 'boot drinking' because the men would gather around the boot of a car. The women would not drink at a church event.

They were always inside in the hall having a good time, having a dance or fiasia or whatever and just having a good feed and I guess the reason why was because the women would probably have to take their husbands home eh. Have to have a lifesaver somewhere. (Man)

Is there a Niuean way of drinking?

*[At night clubs] where you see a lot of Niueans and it's like they drink a lot but they sort of like to keep to themselves, they keep to themselves but they know not to get carried away . . . when they're drunk, they've got more commonsense . . . or they're scared of getting into trouble but some races just drink and end up fighting and beating each other. Like their own race against each other, but Niueans, it's hard to pinpoint Niueans getting into trouble when they're drinking beer but I don't know what's the reason why.
(Younger man)*

People could not agree as to whether there was a Niuean drinking style or not. Those who supported the idea of a Niuean style, saw it as being one of drinking to be happy, shouting others drinks and drinking large amounts. All of which could be applied to other Pacific Islands groups and to groups of some Palagi and Maori. The important point which the Niuean people would emphasise, was the lack of trouble caused by Niuean people when drinking. Some participants reported signs of trouble but it may be that this was not widespread and just confined to a few, or it may be that what existed was well hidden.

. . . I say to [speaker's partner] "You know dear, that's one thing about the Niueans, you never see them on TV or anything". It's always private. (Woman)

The fact that negative reports about Niuean people in Aotearoa New Zealand did not appear in the newspapers or on the news was emphasised over and over again by participants as proof that Niuean people were a gentle non-violent people when drinking:

I just think they drink you know just to be happy. It's just their way of releasing stress that they had during the week, I guess, maybe at work, maybe family, but I mean, our Niueans are a happy lot. You know, we don't um, well we certainly don't end up in the papers for family violence or anything. They don't go that far. They drink on Friday night but they'd be in church on Sunday *[laughter]*. (Non-drinking man)

Reference was constantly made to other Pacific Islands groups who appeared in the news for violence. Participants saw this as an important point. Some of them were annoyed at the term "Pacific Islands" because of the stereotypical image the words brought to mind. Niuean people were proud to be part of the Pacific but did not want to be lumped in with a negative image that they felt they had no part in.

Another explanation of the Niuean way was that when drinking, Niuean people looked after each other. An example of not looking after each other was when one woman described how members of another Pacific Islands group were encouraging their friends who were already drunk, to "drink up". By comparison, she had never known Niuean people to do this.

It was generally agreed that Niuean people tended to drink only on the weekends not through the week. People had work during the week so the weekends were the only time when they could drink. This implies that a recovery time was needed, which suggests

that the drinking sessions were long since there would be nothing to recover from with moderate drinking.

Some people were heavy drinkers but it was more the amount drunk in one sitting rather than drinking every day. One woman defined being a drinker as:

. . . a person who goes out with the understanding with her friends that they're going to drink and I'm talking not the occasional glass of wine every two hours, I'm talking drink till you drop . . . It's like who can drink the most and still be standing at four o'clock in the morning.

There was some discussion about "drinking like a Palagi" as compared to Niuean or Pacific Islands drinking. Participants had both positive and negative definitions of what this term meant. On the positive side "drinking like a Palagi" referred to drinking moderately, having alcohol with food, such as in a restaurant, and sipping drinks. It implied controlled drinking. On the negative side, the term meant being lomokai (mean) with alcohol, not shouting drinks:

Like they only cater for themselves whereas if you're drinking in a group environment you cater for everyone else.

By comparison, Niuean people were seen as being generous, shouting their friends drinks and drinking large amounts in one sitting:

They drink then laugh then sing. Yes you drink until your beer is finished. You don't leave your beer behind at the pub. You have to drink it until you have finished. (Man)

Non-drinkers and alcohol

There was a lot of discussion among participants about what being a "non-drinker" meant. Some participants saw non-drinkers as being social drinkers, that is, people who would take a drink to be socially acceptable but usually kept that same drink for the whole time. Others defined non-drinkers as people who never touched alcohol.

The non-drinkers interviewed for this report reflected the range of opinion. They included people who had never touched alcohol and people who had given up drinking. Some would have a glass in their hand so as not to look conspicuous at a social event. A woman who saw herself as a teetotaler said:

I wouldn't like to just sit all night and don't have a drink because I don't think it would look nice if you're invited to a function. I don't think it's nice to just sit there all night and refuse a drink.

Another woman pointed out that being a non-drinker could mean that the person was taking something else:

Well I could honestly say about two to three years ago if people said they were a non-drinker I would think it was because they were a Christian . . . Now, um, I suppose it's the environment that I'm still growing up in, when people say they don't drink I ask them, "What do you smoke?", "Do you smoke instead?", "Do you smoke dak?", or "Are you on pills?", or "Are you on acid?", or something you know . . . And usually the answer is, "Yes I don't drink but I just smoke dak".

Different reasons were given for not drinking alcohol, for example:

It was my personal choice basically because I love playing sports and, um, when you do, oh I find that if I did drink it would slow all my ability to run faster or be more motivated um to give me more strength and to be fit mentally and physically. (Woman)

Oh I don't know, it's just a personal choice. Maybe my upbringing. I was brought up in the church . . . Yeah first upbringing, but then you know, I'm now old enough to decide for myself but I've decided not to. (Man)

The role of the non-drinker amongst drinkers

Most of the participants shared similar views on the role of the non-drinker in a drinking group. They were seen as “lifesavers” or “lifeguards”. The non-drinkers sometimes had partners, family or friends who drank which was how they ended up in a “lifesaver” role. In this role they watched over the drinkers, checked that they were safe and stayed out of trouble. After any event, they drove each of the drinkers home. Since they were often the only ones who could remember clearly what had happened the night before, part of their role was to pass this information on to the drinkers the next day.

One woman described how she felt more comfortable not drinking at a Niuean social function among family and friends than in a nightclub where she felt people were watching her because she was not drinking. Another man who did not drink said how he found conversations in drinking groups difficult because he never really knew what to say:

We talk about any nonsensical thing, but the person will enjoy the discussion but I don't think it's enjoyable and I talk just to talk.

Remaining sober while everybody else was becoming drunk meant that the non-drinker could see people behaving in ways that they would not if they were sober. Sometimes this could be very positive in that it enabled the person to dance or sing, and sometimes it encouraged the person to go to extremes. One non-drinker spoke of observing examples of this and wishing he could lose himself enough to be able to get up and dance:

The people that I know of that will not get up on a dance floor with anybody, whether it's your wife, your sister or your mother, they will not get up, but once they're tipsy, they would lose all that fear and they will be up there and dancing. I don't know where they lose it from, but they've just got that “edge”. I mean, I don't dance myself but I'd like to. To just lose myself. They say, “How come you're so stiff, you should just dance”. But I suppose if I was drunk I would just do that, but I enjoy not being drunk, I enjoy being sober . . . but those people that I've seen being drunk before, they can go naked. They just take all their clothes off and there they are. They don't care, they don't know. We ask them afterwards whether they knew they were that way. No, they wouldn't remember a thing.

Summary of main points

1. There cannot be said to be single, unified Niuean perspective on alcohol but rather a range of diverse views. The only common thing is that all the people expressing them are Niuean.
2. There were two different opinions as to what being a non-drinker meant. To some people it meant not drinking alcohol at all and to others it meant having the occasional glass of alcohol at a social event so as not to offend anyone or look out of place.
3. Being a moderate drinker was seen as meaning only drinking on occasions. Therefore a person who drank once a month but drank well over the limit was still seen as a moderate drinker. It was not realised that moderation related to the amount drunk in each session rather than the number of times per month. This was evident in people's assumption that drinking alcohol was something that needed to be recovered from. Hence people should only drink alcohol on Friday nights and Saturdays so they could recover in time for work on Monday.
4. When drinking, people knew they had reached their limit by the physical effects on their bodies. People tended to drink till they felt those effects and then took that to be a warning sign.
5. There was some indication that alcohol awareness advertising has had some success. The role of the "lifesaver", often taken on by non-drinkers was mentioned by women. The younger men referred to the "talking stomach" and the "talking fetus" advertisements of the "What's your body's limits" campaign.
6. The importance of being safe when drinking was stressed by participants, especially women. Drinking with family and friends was seen as a way of ensuring safety since these people would look after the drinker and would not take offence at drunk behaviour.

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Appendix 1

Interview schedule

Drinking Beliefs and Practices:

Do you drink alcohol on special occasions, every week, or not at all?

Can you tell me about some of the times when you have been drinking in the last couple of weeks?

When

How often do you drink?

(How long have you been drinking? What age did you start drinking?)

What times of the week do you put aside for drinking?

Where

Where do you go to drink?

Who

Who do you drink with?

(Are they usually male/female friends?)

(Are they usually people that you know?)

Differences between male/female

Are there any differences between drinking in an all male/female group or in a mixed group?

Do people behave differently within these drinking groups?

Do you talk about different/same things depending on which group you are in?

Buying

Who buys the drinks?

(Is there an arrangement for buying the drinks?)

Do you buy drinks for others?

Before & After

What things do you/people do before having a drink? for eg. sports, movies ...

What do you do afterwards?

(What sort of activities do you take part in that don't include alcohol?)

Drinking Practices

Type of drink

(a) What is your favourite drink?

(a) What kinds of drink do you drink?

(b) What other types of drink do you like?

(b) Which do you drink most of?

How much

How much do you drink?

Are there times when you want to drink as much as you want/can?

(Why?)

Effects

Are there any changes in your behaviour when you've been drinking?

How you feel after 2-3 drinks?

How you feel after you've had quite a lot to drink?

How do you know when you've had enough to drink?

Drinking Behaviour

Normal Behaviour

From your own experience, can you describe what [insert name of Pacific group] people see as normal drinking behaviour?

Can you describe [insert name of Pacific group] people's behaviour when they've had a lot to drink?

Differences

What differences have you noticed between those who drink and those who don't?

(Look for words that describe alcohol and alcohol related practices)

What differences have you noticed between drinking in [insert name of Pacific island] and drinking in New Zealand?

(Why do you think there is or there isn't?)

Is there a [insert name of Pacific group] style of drinking?

Demographics:

Male/Female

Age Group:

under 20

20-29

30-39

40-49

50-59

60+

When did you come to live in Aotearoa New Zealand?

For: "Non-Drinkers"

Do you mix socially or go out with people who drink alcohol?

[If yes ...] How do you fit into that situation?

Who

(Are they friends, family, work mates, etc.)

Are they male/female?

(And are they people you know?)

When

Can you describe any occasions that you go to where alcohol is drunk?

Where

Where would the occasions take place?

Differences between male/female

From your own experience, are there any differences between drinking in all male/female group or in a mixed group?

Do you see people behave differently within these drinking groups?

(Do people behave differently when they drink and when they don't drink?)

Do you/they talk about the same/different things as those who drink? (depending on which group you are in?)

Buying

Who buys/arranges the drinks?

Do you buy drinks for others?

What sort of activities do you take part in that don't include alcohol

As a non-drinker, what made you decide not to drink alcohol?

[If no ...] What social events/activities do you take part in where there is no alcohol?

Are there any occasions that you go to where alcohol is drunk?

Can you describe it?

As a non-drinker, what made you decide not to drink alcohol?

Questions for focus groups

These are the main questions but may need prompt/probe questions.

1. *Can you remember back to the first time you tasted/ tried alcohol? How long ago was that and how did it come about?*
2. *Can you tell us something about the times when you drink alcohol?*

For example, how often do you drink?
Where do you drink? [at home, which pubs? which nightclubs?]
Who do you drink with? [mix of ages, women/men, ethnicity, friends, family, workmates]
3. *When you're drinking with other men, do you behave differently from when you are drinking with women?*

Can you describe/talk about this?
4. *What types of drink do you drink? (which do you drink most of?)*
5. *Who buys the drinks? (What sort of arrangement is there for buying drinks?)*
6. *How much do you drink?*
7. *Are there times when you want to drink as much as you can? What times are they?*
8. *How do you know when you've had enough to drink?*
9. *What differences, if any, have you noticed between drinking in [insert name of Pacific island] and drinking here?*
10. *Do you think there is such a thing as a [insert name of Pacific group] way of drinking?*

If yes, can you explain what that is?
11. *What do you think your community sees as being acceptable drinking behaviour ?*

The Research Team

Doreen Arapai

Doreen is Aotearoa New Zealand-born. She has been a registered nurse for 30 years and is currently completing her masters degree. Doreen has been involved in many qualitative health research projects and has been both a researcher and a participant in numerous Niuean projects.

Lanuola Asiasiga

Lanuola has a background in education and social science research. She is now enjoying working as a health researcher. Lanuola has three children and lives in Porirua.

Ian Hodges

Ian has research training in social anthropology and is an experienced researcher in health. He undertook a PhD in the rituals and customs associated with alcohol consumption amongst New Zealand men. Ian lives in Blockhouse Bay, Auckland.

Dahlia Naepi

Dahlia has been a registered nurse for 22 years and has been working in community health for the last ten years. Dahlia has just completed her Diploma in Diabetes Education (through Deakin University, Australia) and is finishing a Diploma in Health Studies Management through Massey University. This year Dahlia also started a BA in Theology. She continues to be involved in a lot of health projects and voluntary work with the Niuean community. Dahlia is the mother of three teenagers.

Slaven Naepi

Slaven is self-employed as a salesman. He is an active member of the Niuean community especially with young people and sports.

Vili Nosa

Vili is currently enrolled in a PhD at the Auckland School of Medicine. He completed his MA in Sociology and his thesis was about Niuean migration. Vili has experience with both quantitative and qualitative research. He is involved with Niuean youth through church activities, rugby league and Niuean cricket.