

The Way We Drink

The current attitudes & behaviours of New Zealanders (aged 12 plus) towards drinking alcohol

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Introduction & objectives

This report presents the results of a survey of New Zealanders, 12 years of age and more. Commissioned by the Alcohol Advisory Council, it was specifically undertaken in order to identify and segment the **current attitudes (motivators and inhibitors) and behaviours** of New Zealanders towards the consumption of alcohol.

Methodology

This survey was completed between 4 June and 6 September 2003, with **two** specific population groups:

1. A nationally representative sample of n=626 **young people, aged between 12 and 17**. Results based on this total sample of young people are subject to a maximum margin of error of $\pm 5.1\%$ (at the 95% confidence level).
2. A nationally representative sample of n=1,157 **adults aged 18+**. Results based on the total sample of adults are subject to a maximum margin of error of $\pm 4.5\%$ (at the 95% confidence level).

Young people were defined as being between the ages of 12 and 17. This was chosen on the basis that the minimum legal age for purchasing alcohol or being on licensed premises without parental supervision is 18 years. Twelve (12) was selected as the lower end of the range on the basis that earlier work¹ had suggested that the very young were, in some cases, also regularly consuming alcohol.

Respondents were evenly distributed across three key ethnic groups – Māori, Pacific and all “other” ethnic groups (mostly Pakeha European). This deliberate over-sampling of Māori and Pacific people was undertaken in order to ensure a sufficient number of Māori and Pacific people were interviewed to allow for their results to be examined with a reasonable degree of confidence. Results have been weighted back by ethnicity, as well as age and gender, to 2001 Census benchmarks.

The development of the survey questionnaire was informed as a result of a comprehensive search of the literature and an in-depth qualitative research stage of research². The questionnaire and associated methodological approach were also subjected to a thorough piloting or pre-testing phase.

All interviewing was completed by telephone, from BRC’s CATI-enabled call centre³. Telephone interviewing was selected as the most cost-effective approach, based on our experience with

¹ The Alcohol Advisory Council has undertaken annual monitors of young people’s drinking behaviour since 1997, and as part of these monitors has measured the age at which youth “really started drinking”. Additionally, the Code of Practice of the Market Research Society of New Zealand Inc. requires parental permission to be obtained to interview children under 15 years of age. BRC felt that 12 was the youngest age at which parents would agree to their children being interviewed on the subject topic of the survey.

² de Bonnaire, C., The development of a programme to delay starting and encourage moderate drinking. Stage one – Qualitative research, BRC Marketing & Social Research, April 2003.
de Bonnaire, C., Focusing on the adult population – The development of a programme to encourage moderate drinking. Qualitative research, BRC Marketing & Social Research, July 2003.

³ CATI is an acronym for “Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing”. This means the survey questionnaire is in an electronic form, with interviewers reading the questions as they appear on the computer screen and immediately keying in the respondent’s answers.

ALAC's Youth Drinking Monitor that has now been conducted successfully for over five years. Once randomly selected, up to eight attempts were made to contact and interview a given respondent, before they were substituted with another respondent.

The final response rate for young people was 46%, and for adults 30%. Our calculation method is an internationally recognised standard, approved by the American Association of Public Opinion Researchers.

Most of the non-response can be accounted for in terms of respondents who did not qualify for an interview on the basis of not meeting selection criteria (i.e. age, gender and ethnicity sub-groups we were required to represent), as opposed to outright refusal.

Finally, we have examined the results for both young people and adults with similar surveys conducted in New Zealand, and are confident that both the survey is a consistent and accurate reflection of New Zealand's current attitudes and behaviours with respect to alcohol.

Glossary

Particular terms used in this report have the following meaning:

- *Drink or glass* – a self-reported measure, which may or may not correspond with the official definition of a 'standard drink' (10g alcohol).
- *Binge or risky drinking* (with regard to young people, aged between 12 and 17) – where a young person reports they have consumed the equivalent of five (5) or more glasses of alcohol during a single drinking occasion.
- *Current Non-Drinkers* – young people, 12-17, who define themselves as non-drinkers.
- *Supervised Drinkers* – young people, 12-17, who drink only a few times a year, at home, and mainly with their parents/whānau.
- *Social Binge Drinkers* – young people, 12-17, who drink regularly (at least once every two weeks) and binge, mainly with their friends during weekends and holidays, and especially for the social benefits of doing so (comradeship, sense of belonging, confidence, etc.).
- *Uncontrolled Binge Drinkers* – young people, 12-17, who drink more regularly (at least once every week), and binge frequently with the specific intent of getting drunk.
- *Binge or risky drinking* (with regard to adults aged 18+) – where a young person reports they have consumed the equivalent of seven (7) or more glasses of alcohol during a single drinking occasion.
- *Non-Drinking Adults* – adults, 18+ who define themselves as non-drinkers.
- *Consciously Moderating Adults* – adults, 18+ who drink only a few times a year.
- *Constrained Binge Drinkers* – adults, 18+ who drink regularly (at least once every week) and binge, especially for the social benefits of doing so (comradeship, sense of belonging, confidence, etc.). However, they are the most likely to agree that they inhibit their drinking because of concerns with the long-term physical and mental effects of drinking, and family and work commitments.

- *Uninhibited Binge Drinkers* – adults, 18+ who are less concerned with the effects of their drinking and less inhibited than *Constrained Binge Drinkers*. They drink regularly (often every day) and binge, mainly to unwind, and for the “buzz” and enjoyment.

The current New Zealand drinking culture

The current drinking culture is one that is characterised by the following survey findings:

- **New Zealand is a society in which many people are tolerant of drunkenness.**

Not quite half of all people 12+ (46%) agree with the statement, *It's never OK to get drunk* (conversely, 49% of all people 12+ disagree with this statement).

Over two-fifths of all people 12+ (41%) agree with the statement, *It's OK to get drunk as long as it's not every day*.

Almost one-in-ten current drinkers 12+ (9%) admit they, *Drink to get drunk*.

- **As a result, it is a society in which many current drinkers appear to exercise little self-control.**

One-quarter of all current drinkers 12+ (26%) disagree with the statement, *I try not to drink so much I forget what I was doing or what happened*.

Almost one-quarter of all current drinkers 12+ (24%) disagree with the statement, *I limit the amount of alcohol I drink so that I don't wake up with a hangover*.

- **Also a society in which many adults who currently drink don't appear to be concerned about their physical or mental well-being because of their drinking.**

Over one-third of all current drinkers 18+ (38%) disagree with the statement, *I am concerned about the long-term effects of alcohol on my physical well-being*.

Over two-fifths of all current drinkers 18+ (42%) disagree with the statement, *I am concerned about the long-term effects of alcohol on my mental well-being*.

- **And a society in which many parents don't know about their children's drinking with respect to alcohol.**

Although two-thirds of parents (63%) report they set strict rules about (their) children drinking alcohol, 21% admit that they do not. However, only one-half (52%) agree they know when their children drink.

- **However, New Zealand is also a society in which the 'benefits' of alcohol as a 'social lubricant' and 'relaxant' are recognised.**

Over two-fifths of all current drinkers 12+ (42%) agree with the statement, *When I drink alcohol it is easier to meet and get to know people*.

Two-thirds of all current drinkers 12+ (67%) agree with the statement, *Alcohol helps me wind down and relax*.

Comparisons between young people & adults

Against this background, the following table (Table 1) compares the results for some key survey questions between young people and adults.

The overwhelming conclusion is that young people who currently drink are more likely than adults to agree with the statements relating to the **benefits** of drinking alcohol, and more likely than adults to disagree with statements relating to the factors that **inhibit** drinking.

Their state of mind is best summed up in the number that condone drunkenness (59% of all young people, 12-17 agree with the statement, *It's OK to get drunk as long as it's not every day*) and who report, as well as the fact that 25% of young people who currently drink admit they do so "to get drunk".

Table 1: Comparisons between young people & adults

	Young people, 12-17	Adults, 18+	All people, 12+
Relative size			
<i>Population estimate⁴</i>	335,000	2,725,000	3,060,000
General attitudes			
<i>It's never OK to get drunk</i>	36% agree (61% disagree)	47% agree (48% disagree)	46% agree (49% disagree)
<i>It's OK to get drunk as long as it's not everyday</i>	59% agree (38% disagree)	39% agree (59% disagree)	41% agree (57% disagree)
<i>I drink to get drunk (based on current drinkers)</i>	25% agree (71% disagree)	8% agree (90% disagree)	9% agree (88% disagree)
Benefits of drinking (based on current drinkers)			
<i>Alcohol helps me wind down and relax</i>	59% agree (39% disagree)	68% agree (28% disagree)	67% agree (32% disagree)
<i>I enjoy the buzz I get when I drink alcohol</i>	62% agree (34% disagree)	45% agree (49% disagree)	46% agree (48% disagree)
<i>When I drink alcohol it is easier to meet and get to know people</i>	62% agree (35% disagree)	39% agree (54% disagree)	41% agree (53% disagree)
<i>Having a drink with friends & family gives me a sense of belonging</i>	44% agree (53% disagree)	31% agree (65% disagree)	32% agree (64% disagree)
<i>I feel more confident when I drink alcohol</i>	45% agree (53% disagree)	27% agree (68% disagree)	28% agree (67% disagree)
<i>Everything seems happier when I drink alcohol</i>	49% agree (48% disagree)	24% agree (69% disagree)	25% agree (68% disagree)

Continued

⁴ Mid-point estimate based on 2001 Census of Population and Dwellings.

Table 1 (continued): Comparisons between young people & adults

	Young people, 12-17 ⁵	Adults, 18+ ⁵	All people, 12+ ⁵
Inhibitors to drinking (based on current drinkers)			
<i>I limit the amount of alcohol I drink when I have to drive</i>	61% agree (7% disagree)	90% agree (3% disagree)	88% agree (3% disagree)
<i>I limit the amount of alcohol I drink so that it doesn't affect my work</i>	n.a.	72% agree (14% disagree)	n.a.
<i>I limit the amount of alcohol I drink because of responsibilities to my family</i>	n.a.	71% agree (20% disagree)	n.a.
<i>I limit the amount of alcohol I drink so that I don't wake up with a hangover</i>	67% agree (32% disagree)	70% agree (23% disagree)	70% agree (23% disagree)
<i>I limit the amount of alcohol I drink so that I don't do anything I would regret later</i>	80% agree (18% disagree)	68% agree (24% disagree)	69% agree (24% disagree)
<i>I try not to drink so much I forget what I was doing or what happened</i>	67% agree (30% disagree)	61% agree (26% disagree)	62% agree (27% disagree)
<i>I am concerned about the long-term effects of alcohol on my physical well-being</i>	n.a.	52% agree (38% disagree)	n.a.
<i>I limit the amount of alcohol I drink so that it doesn't affect my physical performance</i>	74% agree (24% disagree)	n.a.	n.a.
<i>I can afford as much alcohol as I want</i>	24% agree (74% disagree)	49% agree (48% disagree)	47% agree (49% disagree)
<i>I am concerned about the long-term effects of alcohol on my mental well-being</i>	n.a.	46% agree (42% disagree)	n.a.
<i>I limit the amount of alcohol I drink so that it doesn't affect my mental performance</i>	78% agree (20% disagree)	n.a.	n.a.
<i>I limit the amount of alcohol I drink because of other financial commitments</i>	n.a.	46% agree (45% disagree)	n.a.
<i>I am <u>not</u> concerned about the long-term effects of alcohol on my physical appearance</i>	26% agree (70% disagree)	n.a.	n.a.
<i>I am concerned about the long-term effects of alcohol on my physical appearance</i>	n.a.	39% agree (48% disagree)	n.a.
<i>I worry about getting into a sexual situation that I might later regret if I drink too much</i>	71% agree (27% disagree)	34% agree (48% disagree)	36% agree (47% disagree)
<i>I am concerned about getting caught up in arguments or fights if I drink too much</i>	61% agree (37% disagree)	33% agree (54% disagree)	35% agree (53% disagree)
<i>I limit the amount of alcohol I drink because of religious beliefs or commitments</i>	25% agree (72% disagree)	15% agree (74% disagree)	15% agree (74% disagree)

Continued

⁵ Statements marked "n.a." were not asked of either the Young people or Adult samples, accordingly.

Table 1 (continued): Comparisons between young people & adults

	Young people, 12-17	Adults, 18+	All people, 12+
<u>Drinking behaviour</u>			
<i>Have ever tried alcohol, even a sip?</i>	82%	96%	94%
<i>Current drinker</i>	52%	81%	78%
<i>Drink everyday/almost everyday</i>	3%	16%	15%
<i>Drink 2-3 times a week</i>	10%	26%	25%
<i>Drink once a week</i>	15%	22%	21%
<i>Drink once every 2 weeks</i>	19%	10%	11%
<i>Less frequently</i>	53%	27%	28%
<i>Glasses drunk last drinking occasion (based on current drinkers)</i>			
<i>5 or more⁶</i>	33% (38% males, 27% females)	n.a.	n.a.
<i>7 or more⁷</i>	n.a.	24% (32% males, 17% females)	n.a.

⁶ Based on an agreed "marker" of binge or risky drinking for young people.

⁷ Based on an agreed "marker" of binge or risky drinking for adults.

The segments

Different segmentation solutions were produced for each of young people, 12-17, and adults aged 18+, with both solutions being chosen on the basis that they accounted for most of the variance in the data. That is, they accounted for most of the difference between respondents.

It is a coincidence that four segments were identified for both young people and adults. Based on the unique characteristics of each segment, each segment has been given a descriptive name or label to encapsulate the 'essence' of the segment.

Segments of young people

Figure 1 shows the relative size of each of the four segments comprising **young people**, 12-17. Table 2 shows how the survey-based proportions translate into actual population numbers:

1. *Current Non-drinkers* – 50% of young people, 12-17, current non-drinkers. They tend to be under 13 and/or attend church.
2. *Supervised Drinkers* – 14% of young people, 12-17. They drink only a few times a year, at home, and mainly with their parents/whānau.
3. *Social Binge Drinkers* – 22% of young people, 12-17. They drink regularly (at least once every two weeks) and binge, mainly with their friends during weekends and holidays, and especially for the social benefits (comradeship, sense of belonging, confidence, etc.).
4. *Uncontrolled Binge Drinkers* – 14% of young people, 12-17. They are typically male, drink more regularly than *Social Binge Drinkers* (at least once every week), and binge frequently with the intention of getting drunk.

Figure 1: Relative size of segments of young people

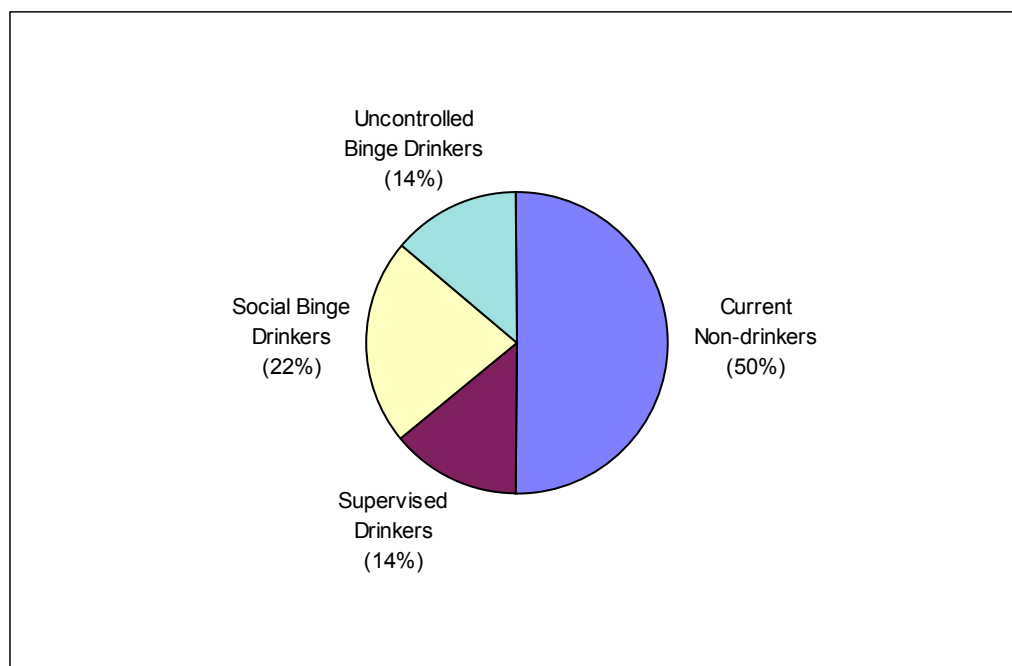


Table 2: Young people – segment size extrapolated to population size*

Segment	Population numbers
Current Non-Drinkers	165,000
Supervised Drinkers	45,000
Social Binge Drinkers	75,000
Uncontrolled Binge Drinkers	50,000
	335,000

* Mid-point estimate based on *2001 Census of Population and Dwellings*.

Segments of adults

As for young people, four segments have been identified for **adults**. Figure 2 shows the relative size of each of the four segments comprising adults, 18+. Table 3 shows how the survey-based proportions translate into actual population numbers:

1. *Non-Drinking Adults* – 19% of adults, 18+. They tend to be older (50+), retired, and/or attend church. Pacific people are more represented in this segment than any other group.
2. *Consciously Moderating Adults* – 29% of adults, 18+. They tend to be older (50+), female, and drink only a few times a year.
3. *Constrained Binge Drinkers* – 23% of adults, 18+. They tend to be younger (under 40), full-time wage and salary earners, and have (young) children in their households. They drink regularly (at least once every week) and binge, especially for the social benefits (comradeship, sense of belonging, confidence, etc.). However, they are the most likely to agree that they inhibit their drinking because of concerns with the long-term physical and mental effects of drinking, and family and work commitments.
4. *Uninhibited Binge Drinkers* – 29% of adults, 18+. They are predominantly Pakeha European, just as likely to be female as they are male, and just as likely to be under 40 as they are to be over 40. They tend to be full-time wage and salary earners, with above average incomes. They also have children in their households, but unlike the *Constrained Binge Drinkers*, they are less concerned with the effects of their drinking. They drink regularly (often every day) and binge, mainly to unwind, and for the “buzz” and enjoyment.

Figure 2: Relative size of adult drinking segments

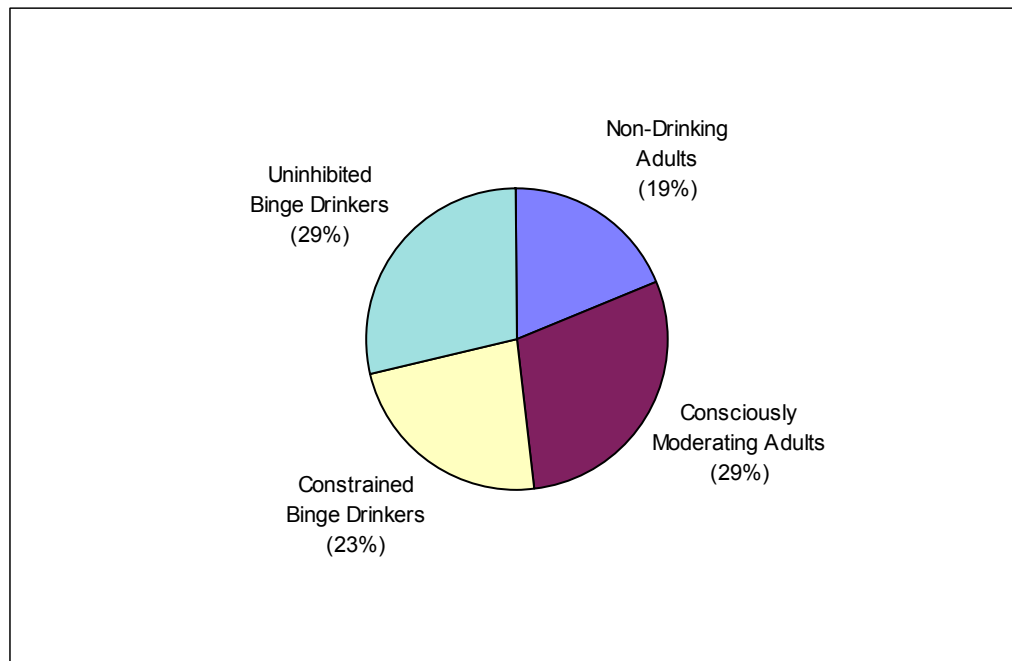


Table 3: Adults – segment size extrapolated to population size*

Segment	Population numbers
Non-Drinking Adults	515,000
Consciously Moderating Adults	790,000
Constrained Binge Drinkers	635,000
Uninhibited Binge Drinkers	785,000
	<u>2,725,000</u>

* Mid-point estimate based on *2001 Census of Population and Dwellings*

Segment characteristics

To illustrate some of the more important characteristics of the young drinking segments, Figure 3 shows the number of drinks consumed on the last drinking occasion by each segment. In comparison, Figure 4 shows the number of drinks consumed by each of the adult drinking segments on their last drinking occasion.

The key differentiating characteristics for young people and adults in turn, are as follows:

Segments of young people

- As noted above, young **Supervised Drinkers** drink infrequently, only a few times a year, with their family/whānau. Most (58%) reported drinking less than two full glasses of alcohol on the last drinking occasion.

Evenly balanced in terms of gender, they tend to be 14+, and at school. They are concerned about the physical and mental effects of drinking too much alcohol, and especially about embarrassing themselves as a result of their drinking (including sexual situations) and having a hangover.

For example, 89% agree with the statement, *I limit the amount of alcohol I drink so that I don't do anything I would regret later.*

- In contrast, young **Social Binge Drinkers** drank more frequently than *Supervised Drinkers*, with almost two-thirds drinking every 2 weeks/month. While most drank up to 4 glasses on the last drinking occasion, 25% consumed 5 or more. As their name suggests, much of their drinking is undertaken socially, with their friends at parties and social events. Some of these events are supervised, others are not. They drink because everyone else is drinking. Supply does not appear to be an issue.

Drunkenness is condoned, as a normal part of drinking, despite agreeing with many of the inhibitor statements in the survey. For example, 82% agree with the statement, *I try not to drink so much I forget what I was doing or what happened.*

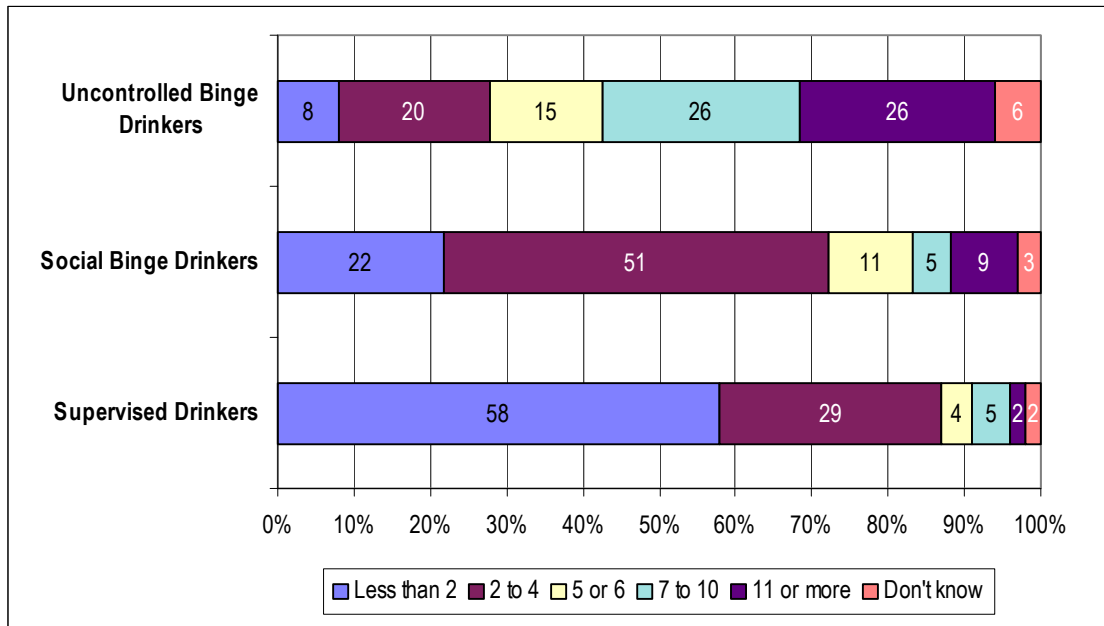
Social Binge Drinkers are evenly balanced in terms of gender, many are 16+, and most at school.

- Two-thirds of young **Uncontrolled Binge Drinkers** (65%) report they drink once every week if not more frequently. Two-thirds (67%) also report drinking five or more glasses on the last drinking occasion (15% 5-6, 26% 7-10, and 26% 11+). Many (61%) report they are drinking more this year than they were in the previous year.

Most are males (64%) and 16+, and Māori are over-represented at 28%. Compared to the other segments, one-third (33%) have either full or part-time employment. Twelve percent (12%) report purchasing alcohol themselves, although many are supplied by their parents (86% report being given alcohol by their parents in the last 6 months, to take to a social event independent of their parents).

At 92%, *Uncontrolled Binge Drinkers* are the most likely to agree with the statement, *It's OK to get drunk as long as it's not every day*, and compared to *Social Binge Drinkers* and *Supervised Drinkers*, they are the least likely to agree with the inhibitor statements. Drinking gives them greater confidence and by their own admission, something to do. They are the most likely to agree with the statement, *I drink to get drunk* (45%).

Figure 3: Number of drinks consumed by young people on the last drinking occasion



Segments of adults

- **Consciously Moderating Adults** report drinking either reasonably frequently (weekly) or infrequently (once a month/ a few times a year). Importantly, when they drink, most (67%) report drinking less than two full glasses of alcohol on the last drinking occasion, with another one-third (28%) reporting drinking only two or three drinks.

Most *Consciously Moderating Drinkers* are female (63%) and over 50 years of age (60%). Many are retired. Because of this demographic profile, they are the least likely segment to have children in the household. Personal incomes tend to be below the national average.

They are the least likely to condone drunkenness, with 73% agreeing with the statement, *It's never Ok to get drunk*. They consciously limit the amount of alcohol they consume, even in the company of friends and family. They are the least likely to identify benefits associated with drinking.

- Most **Constrained Binge Drinkers** report drinking at least weekly (64%), with about one-third drinking 7 or more glasses on the last drinking occasion (16% 7-10, 13% 11+).

Whilst almost one-half (48%) are 40+, this segment has the greatest proportion of 18-24 year olds (22%) and people who identify their occupation as students (12%). It also has the greatest proportion who identify as Māori (18%). This segment also has one of the greatest proportion of drinkers who live in households with children, especially children under 5.

As noted, compared to other segments, *Constrained Binge Drinkers* drink because of the social aspects associated with drinking, although they limit their drinking because of concerns with the long-term effects of their drinking on their physical appearance, health and mental well-being. Work and family commitments also impact on their drinking behaviour. For example, they are most likely to agree with the statement, *I limit the amount of alcohol I drink because of responsibilities to my family* (85%), and they are the least likely to agree with the statement, *I can afford as much alcohol as I want* (37%).

- Over one-half (53%) of **Uninhibited Binge Drinkers** report they drink every day/2-3 times a week. A similar proportion of *Uninhibited Binge Drinkers* (25%) as *Constrained Binge Drinkers* report drinking 7 or more glasses (14% 7-10, 11% 11+).

This segment is evenly balanced in terms of gender, and has as many people under 40 as it has over 40. This, in turn, is reflected in the fact that many live in households with children (44%), while others live alone or as an older couple with no children (38%). Most *Uninhibited Binge Drinkers* are Pakeha European. Largely urban-based, *Uninhibited Binge Drinkers* have the highest personal and household incomes (49% have a household income that is \$70,000+).

In many respects, *Uninhibited Binge Drinkers* are similar to *Constrained Binge Drinkers* in terms of the benefits they associate with drinking, placing particular emphasis on how alcohol helps them to “wind down and relax” and also the “buzz” they get when drinking. However, they appear to be less constrained, rating many of the inhibitor statements the lowest of all segments in terms of agreement. Their major concern is in terms of how their drinking may affect their work commitments.

