

Title: Twelve-month and lifetime prevalences of substance use disorder among Pacific people in Te Rau Hinengaro: The New Zealand Mental Health Survey

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Objective:

To show the 12 month and lifetime prevalences of substance use disorders among Pacific people in Te Rau Hinengaro: The New Zealand Mental Health Survey.

Method:

Te Rau Hinengaro: The New Zealand Mental Health Survey, undertaken in 2003 and 2004, was a nationally representative face-to-face household survey of 12 992 New Zealand adults aged 16 years and over including Maori (n=2457), Pacific people (n=2236), people of mixed Pacific and M ori ethnicity (n=138), and 'Others' (a composite group of predominantly European descent) (n=8161). Ethnicity was measured by self-identified ethnicity using the New Zealand 2001 Census of Population and Dwellings question. A fully structured diagnostic interview, the World Health Organization World Mental Health Survey Initiative version of the Composite International Diagnostic Interview (CIDI 3.0), was used to measure disorders. The overall response rate was 73.3%.

Results:

The past 12 months the prevalence for Pacific people was 4.9%. The prevalence of substance use disorder in any period is higher for Pacific people than for the Other composite ethnic group. The observed prevalence of hazardous drinking in the past 12 months as measured by the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT) was 21.4% for Pacific peoples. Much of this excess burden appears to be due to the youthfulness of the Pacific populations and their relative socioeconomic disadvantage. After adjusting for sociodemographic correlates the prevalence of substance use disorder for Pacific people (3.2%) was the same as that of Others (3.0%) and the prevalence of hazardous drinking for Pacific people (18.1%) was reduced to that for Others (18.6%). Pacific people were less likely to drink than Maori or Others but for those who did drink, the prevalence of hazardous drinking was significantly higher, with or without adjustment for sociodemographic correlates. A similar pattern was seen for the prevalence of alcohol disorder among drinkers. Drug use and the prevalence of drug disorder was less common among Pacific people. The prevalence of drug disorder in Pacific people who used drugs was intermediate between the prevalence for Maori and that for Others and not significantly different from either.

Conclusion:

Pacific people experience moderate levels of substance use disorders in spite of relatively low alcohol use. A challenge will be how services will respond to what is potentially a growing epidemic among for New Zealands young Pacific population.