

AlcoholNZ article

Title

Hazardous and risky drinking – Differences among past-year drinkers

At a glance

- This article was published in print form in HPA's June 2017 *AlcoholNZ* magazine (available on alcohol.org.nz/alcoholnz).
- It provides an analysis of the Ministry of Health's New Zealand Health Survey (NZHS) data to show hazardous and risky drinking patterns of past-year drinkers, including by age group, gender and ethnicity.
- From 2006/07 to 2015/16, hazardous drinking rates for past-year drinkers increased for 25 to 54-year-olds, New Zealand European men, and women, in particular Māori women and New Zealand European women.
- Past-year drinkers aged 18 to 24 years have the highest rate of hazardous drinking and monthly risky drinking.
- Men are more likely to be risky drinkers compared with women.
- Māori drinkers are more likely to be risky drinkers compared with non-Māori drinkers and Māori women compared with non-Māori women. Pacific people who drink are more likely to be risky drinkers compared with non-Pacific drinkers and Pacific men compared with non-Pacific men.
- These results are from the 2015/16 NZHS. More recent results can be found on health.govt.nz.

Citation

Health Promotion Agency. (2017). Hazardous and risky drinking – Differences among past-year drinkers. *AlcoholNZ* (7)1, p21–23.

Hazardous and risky drinking

Differences among past-year drinkers

How much alcohol people consume often changes over time and can also vary by age, gender, ethnicity and other factors. This article focuses on hazardous and risky drinking patterns of past-year drinkers (people who consumed alcohol within the past 12 months). It uses data from the Ministry of Health's New Zealand Health Survey (NZHS). NZHS is a national household survey that regularly provides a range of drinking prevalence information about people aged 15 years and over. The information in this article is sourced from the Ministry of Health's online interactive web tool showing key results from the 2006/07 to 2015/16 surveys.

Drinking prevalence

In New Zealand, the overall prevalence of drinking alcohol (within the previous 12 months) declined from 84% in 2006/07 to 80% in 2015/16. During this same period, drinking prevalence reduced as a whole among:

- 15 to 34-year-olds and 55 to 64-year-olds
- Māori men
- New Zealand European men and women.

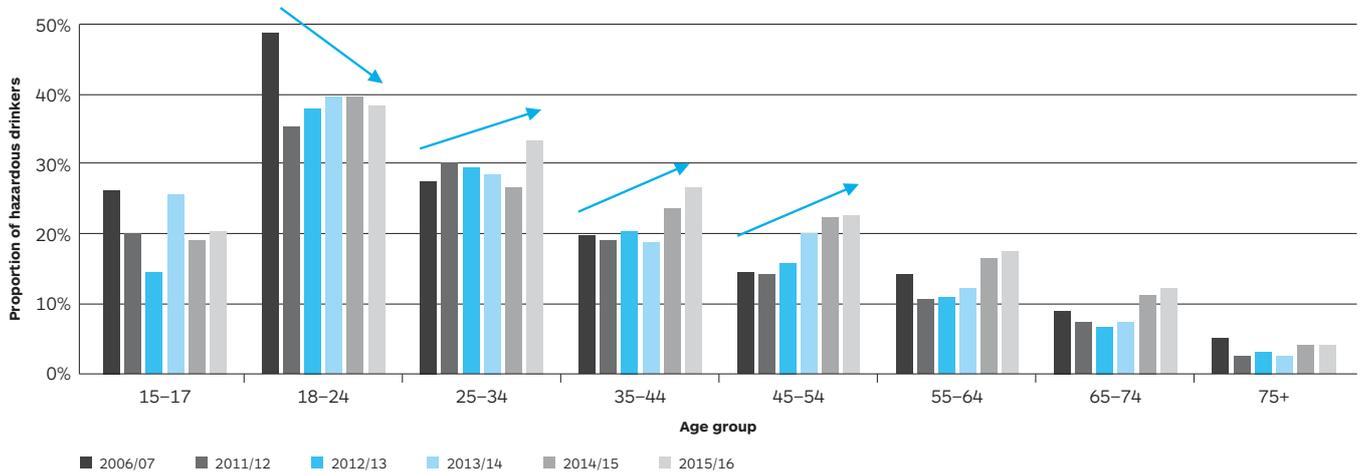
This trend is largest in young people aged 15 to 17 years, where 75% consumed alcohol in 2006/07 compared with 57% in 2015/16.

In 2015/16, men (84%) were more likely to drink alcohol within the past year than women (76%), and people living in the least socio-economically deprived areas (86%) were more likely to drink alcohol in the past year than those living in the most deprived areas (70%). Pacific people and Asian people were less likely to drink alcohol than non-Pacific or non-Asian people.

Hazardous drinking

Hazardous drinking refers to an established pattern of drinking alcohol that carries a risk of harming the drinker's physical or mental health or having harmful social effects on the drinker or others. In the NZHS, hazardous drinking is measured using a 10-item questionnaire, called the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT), which asks about alcohol consumption, signs of alcohol dependence, and experience of adverse consequences after drinking. People who score 8 or more on the AUDIT are defined as hazardous drinkers (Ministry of Health, 2015).

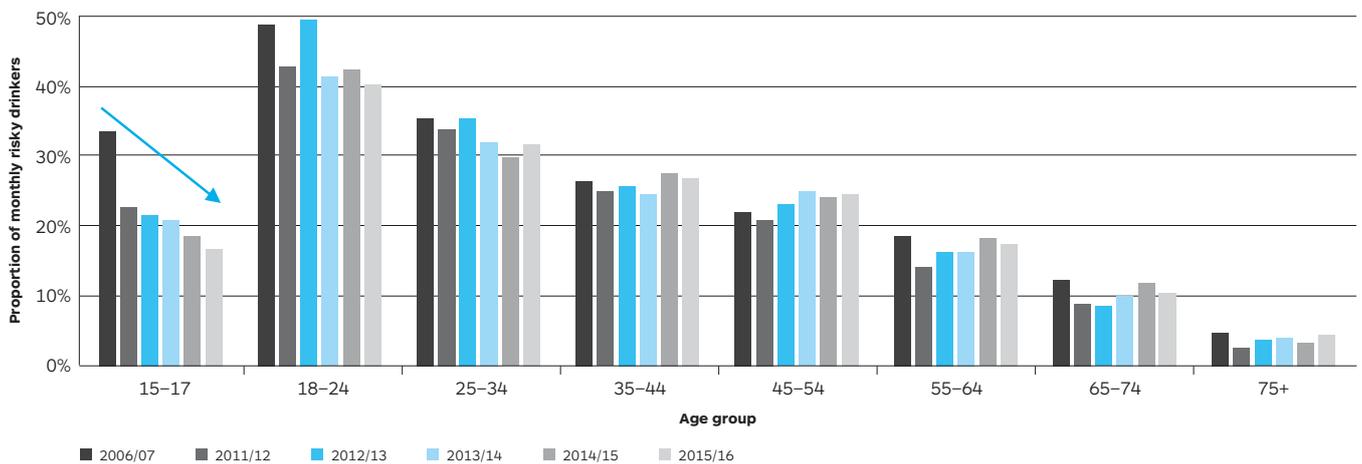
Figure 1: Hazardous drinking rate, by age group over time, for past-year drinkers*



Source: New Zealand Health Survey.

* Statistically significant changes between 2006/07 and 2015/16 are indicated by arrows for each age group.

Figure 2: Monthly risky drinking rate (consuming six or more drinks of alcohol on a single occasion at least monthly), by age group over time, for past-year drinkers*



Source: New Zealand Health Survey.

* Statistically significant changes between 2006/07 and 2015/16 are indicated by arrows for each age group.

Overall, there has been an increase in the rate of hazardous drinking by past-year drinkers (from 22% in 2006/07 to 24% in 2015/16). During this period, hazardous drinking rates for past-year drinkers increased for:

- women, in particular Māori women and New Zealand European women
- 25 to 54-year-olds
- New Zealand European men.

Although the hazardous drinking rates for past-year drinkers aged 18 to 24 years reduced (from 49% to 38%), this age group still had the highest rate of hazardous drinking overall. Figure 1 illustrates changes over time for hazardous drinking by age group.

Risky drinking

Risky drinking refers to drinking a large amount of alcohol on a single drinking occasion. For this article it is defined as consuming six or more drinks of alcohol on a single occasion at least monthly. The information presented is from past-year drinkers and is based on the number of drinks consumed.

Overall, the proportion of monthly risky drinkers (from past-year drinkers) has decreased over time (from 27% in 2006/07 to 24% in 2015/16). During this same period, risky drinking rates improved for men (from 37% in 2006/07 to 32% in 2015/16) and for 15 to 17-year-olds (from 34% in 2006/07 to 17% in 2015/16). Young adults aged 18 to 24 years have the highest rate of monthly risky drinking (40%) out of all age groups. Figure 2 illustrates changes over time for monthly risky drinking by age group.

The 2015/16 survey shows that some groups are more likely to be monthly risky drinkers than others, specifically:

- men compared with women
- Māori compared with non-Māori and Māori women compared with non-Māori women
- Pacific people compared with non-Pacific people and Pacific men compared with non-Pacific men
- people living in the most socio-economically deprived areas compared with the least socio-economically deprived areas.

Some important information for understanding patterns

The NZHS provides information for hazardous drinking and risky drinking for the total population (which includes non-drinkers aged over 15 years) or for past-year drinkers of alcohol. This article provides information related only to past-year drinkers. Comment is provided only on statistically significant changes.

The NZHS has been run annually since 2011/12. In 2015/16 an improvement was made to the way the survey measures the number of drinks of alcohol consumed. This change is important when comparing the information on the amount of alcohol consumed in relation to hazardous and risky drinking in the 2015/16 survey with that in earlier surveys. Surveys prior to 2015/16 measured the amount of alcohol consumed as 'number of drinks'.

In the 2015/16 survey the amount of alcohol consumed was measured both as the 'number of drinks' and as the 'number of standard drinks'. 'Standard drinks' sets a specific size to the drink being consumed. Respondents reported more 'standard drinks' than 'number of drinks', so measures of hazardous and risky drinking were higher when respondents were asked to report consumption of 'standard drinks'.¹ As this article focuses on changes over time and comparing results between surveys, the previous 'number of drinks' measure is used for the analyses in this article.

All data in this report from the NZHS, including estimates from the 2015/16 survey using the improved standard drinks measure, can be found on the Ministry of Health's online interactive web tool <https://minhealthnz.shinyapps.io/nz-health-survey-2015-16-annual-update/>.

References

- Ministry of Health. (2015). *Alcohol use 2012/13: New Zealand Health Survey*. Retrieved from <http://www.health.govt.nz/publication/alcohol-use-2012-13-new-zealand-health-survey>.
- Ministry of Health. (2016). *Annual update of key results 2015/16: New Zealand Health Survey*. Retrieved from <http://www.health.govt.nz/publication/annual-update-key-results-2015-16-new-zealand-health-survey>.

¹ Using the standard drink measure, 26% of past-year drinkers had a hazardous drinking pattern and 45% of 18 to 24-year-olds in 2015/16. The overall monthly risky drinking rate was 27% and this was 36% in men, 17% in 15 to 17-year-olds and 43% in 18 to 24-year-olds.