



Hazardous drinking in 2011/12: Findings from the New Zealand Health Survey

This report presents key findings about alcohol use and hazardous drinking among adults aged 15 years and over, which come from the 2011/12 New Zealand Health Survey.

This report is an addendum to the report of key results from the 2011/12 New Zealand Health Survey, *The Health of New Zealand Adults 2011/12* (Ministry of Health 2012).

For data tables about alcohol use and hazardous drinking, see the Appendix. For details on the New Zealand Health Survey methodology and how to interpret the results, see the original report (Ministry of Health 2012) or the Ministry of Health website (www.health.govt.nz).

Key findings

The rate of hazardous drinking has decreased for men since 2006/07, although men aged 18–34 years still have high rates.

Alcohol is widely consumed in New Zealand. Excessive alcohol use can contribute to health and social harms, including long-term diseases, injuries and accidents. Harmful alcohol use can also affect people in the drinker's wider community.

Hazardous drinking is defined as a score of 8 points or more on the 10-question Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT), which includes questions about alcohol use, alcohol-related problems and abnormal drinking behaviour. Hazardous drinking refers to an established drinking pattern that carries a risk of harming the drinker's physical or mental health, or having harmful social effects on the drinker or others.

Alcohol is widely consumed in New Zealand

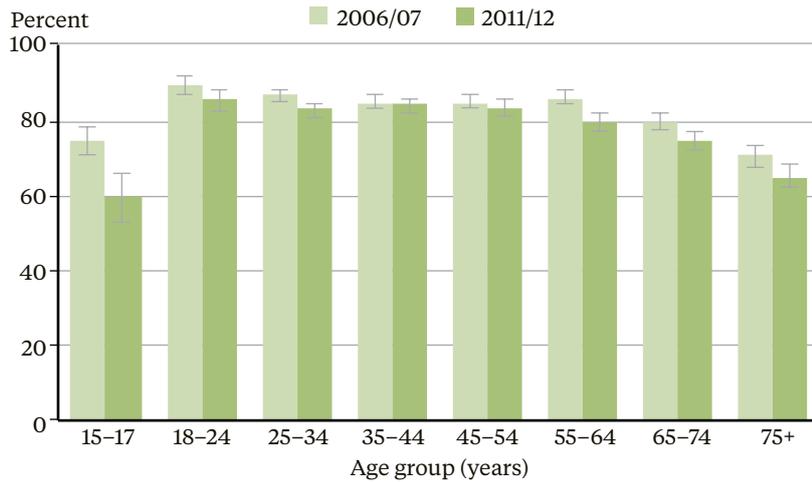
In 2011/12 most adults (80%) in New Zealand had consumed alcohol in the past 12 months. Women were less likely to have consumed alcohol in the past 12 months (74%) than men (85%).

Fewer people are drinking alcohol than in 2006/07

The proportion of adults who had consumed alcohol in the past 12 months dropped from 84% in 2006/07 to 80% in 2011/12. The proportion fell for both men (from 88% to 85%) and women (from 80% to 74%).

Past-year drinking decreased generally across all age groups. The largest drop in past-year drinking was among youth aged 15–17 years, whose rate fell from 75% in 2006/07 to 59% in 2011/12 (Figure 1). Changes were not statistically significant among those aged 35–44 and 45–54 years.

Figure 1: Has consumed alcohol in the past 12 months, by age group, 2006/07 and 2011/12



Source: 2006/07 and 2011/12 New Zealand Health Surveys (15 years and over)

Pacific and Asian adults are less likely to drink alcohol

About three in five Pacific adults (58%) and Asian adults (57%) had consumed alcohol in the past 12 months. This proportion is much lower than the national average (80%).

One in five past-year drinkers has a hazardous drinking pattern

Among people who had consumed alcohol in the past 12 months ('past-year drinkers'), one in five (19%) had hazardous drinking patterns. This is 15% of all adults, or about 532,000 people.

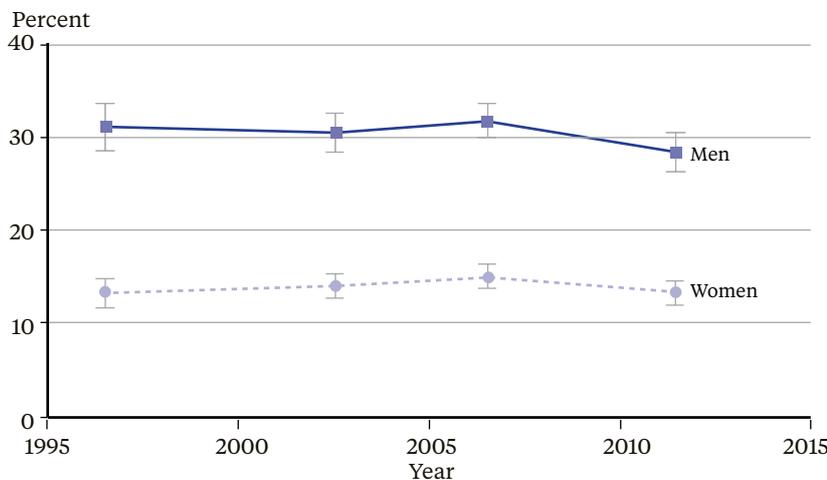
Among past-year drinkers, men were much more likely to have hazardous drinking patterns (26%) than women (12%).

Hazardous drinking levels fell from 2006/07 to 2011/12

Since 2006/07 the level of hazardous drinking among male past-year drinkers has fallen from 30% to 26%. Among female past-year drinkers, the level of hazardous drinking has not changed significantly between 2006/07 (13%) and 2011/12 (12%).

There were similar findings after adjusting for age (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Hazardous drinking, among past-year drinkers, by sex, 1996/97–2011/12



Notes: Rates are age-standardised to the WHO world population.

Source: New Zealand Health Surveys (1996/97, 2002/03, 2006/07, 2011/12) (15 years and over)

Among all adults (not just past-year drinkers), the rate of hazardous drinking fell significantly since 2006/07 for men (from 26% to 22%) and for women (from 11% to 9%).

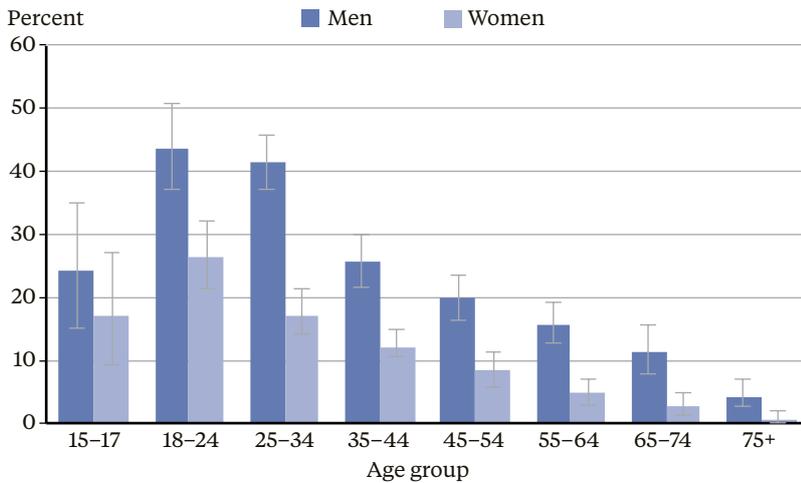
People aged 18–24 years have the highest rates of hazardous drinking

Among past-year drinkers, hazardous drinking was most common in both men and women aged 18–24 years (Figure 3).

Men aged 18–34 years had a particularly high rate of hazardous drinking, at over 40%. Additionally, about 26% of male drinkers aged 35–44 years had a hazardous drinking pattern.

For women, about one in four past-year drinkers aged 18–24 years (26%) had hazardous drinking patterns.

Figure 3: Hazardous drinking, among past-year drinkers, by age group and sex

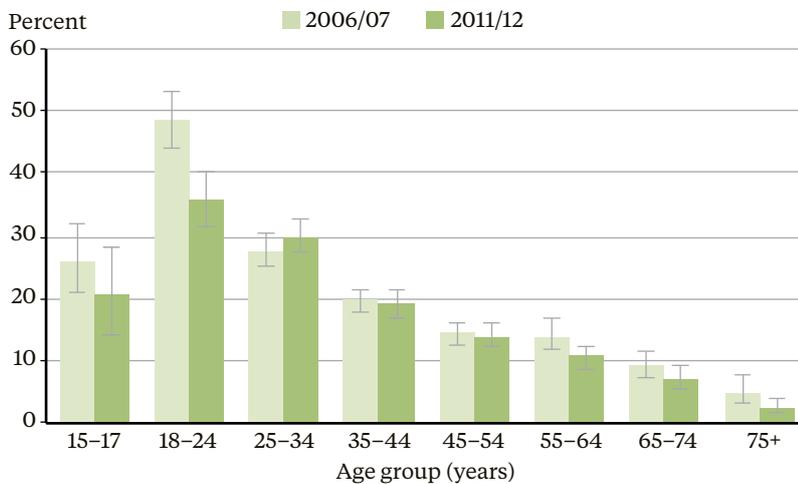


Source: 2011/12 New Zealand Health Survey (15 years and over)

Fewer young people have hazardous drinking patterns than in 2006/07

Since 2006/07 the rate of hazardous drinking among past-year drinkers aged 18–24 years has dropped from 49% to 36% (Figure 4). The rate also dropped significantly among those aged 55–64 and 75+ years.

Figure 4: Hazardous drinking, among past-year drinkers, by age group, 2006/07 and 2011/12



Source: 2006/07 and 2011/12 New Zealand Health Surveys (15 years and over)

Māori and Pacific drinkers are at higher risk of having hazardous drinking patterns

The proportion of Māori adults who had consumed alcohol in the past 12 months (79%) was similar to the national average (80%). Among past-year drinkers, one in three Māori (37%) had hazardous drinking patterns, compared with 19% of all past-year drinkers (Table 1). After adjusting for sex and age differences, Māori drinkers were 1.8 times as likely to have a hazardous drinking pattern as non-Māori drinkers.

While Pacific adults were less likely to drink alcohol than other adults, those who did were more likely to have hazardous drinking patterns than other drinkers. Among past-year drinkers, one in three Pacific adults (35%) had a hazardous drinking pattern, which is about 20% of all Pacific adults. Pacific drinkers were 1.5 times as likely to have hazardous drinking patterns as non-Pacific drinkers, after adjusting for age and sex.

Asian drinkers were much less likely to have hazardous drinking patterns (8%) than other adults.

Table 1: Hazardous drinking, among past-year drinkers and among all adults, by ethnic group and sex

		Among past-year drinkers			Among all adults			Estimated number ¹
		Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	
Percent (%)	Total NZ	19	26	12	15	22	9	532,000
	Māori	37	45	28	29	37	21	128,000
	Pacific	35	43	25	20	31	12	42,000
	Asian	8	11	4	5	8	2	17,000
	European/Other	18	25	10	15	22	8	415,000
Adjusted rate ratios (comparing each ethnic group with people not in that ethnic group) ²	Māori	1.8*	1.6*	2.3*	1.8*	1.6*	2.4*	
	Pacific	1.5*	1.4*	1.6*	1.1	1.2	1.0	
	Asian	0.3*	0.3*	0.3*	0.2*	0.3*	0.2*	

* Significant at the 5% level (for adjusted rate ratios).

Notes: Total response measure of ethnicity. Adults may be counted in more than one ethnic group.

1 Due to total response ethnicity, summed numbers across ethnic groups may add to more than the total. Estimated numbers are based on the rate among all adults.

2 Adjusted rate ratios compare people, men or women in each ethnic group with people, men or women not in that ethnic group. Adjusted rate ratios adjust for age and, for the total column, sex.

Source: 2011/12 New Zealand Health Survey (15 years and over).

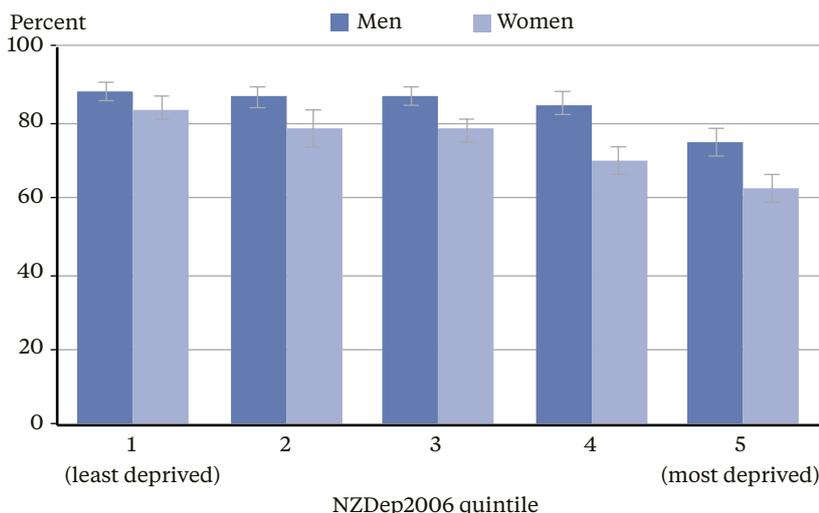
In 2011/12 fewer Māori adults had consumed alcohol in the past 12 months (79%) than in 2006/07 (84%). As a percentage of all Māori adults, hazardous drinking patterns significantly decreased from 2006/07 (33%) to 2011/12 (29%). Among past-year drinkers, this decrease was not significant.

There were no other changes over time by ethnic group.

Adults living in more deprived areas are less likely to drink, but have higher rates of hazardous drinking

People living in the most socioeconomically deprived areas were less likely to have consumed alcohol in the past 12 months (68%) than those in the least deprived areas (86%). Both men and women followed this pattern (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Has consumed alcohol in the past 12 months, by neighbourhood deprivation and sex

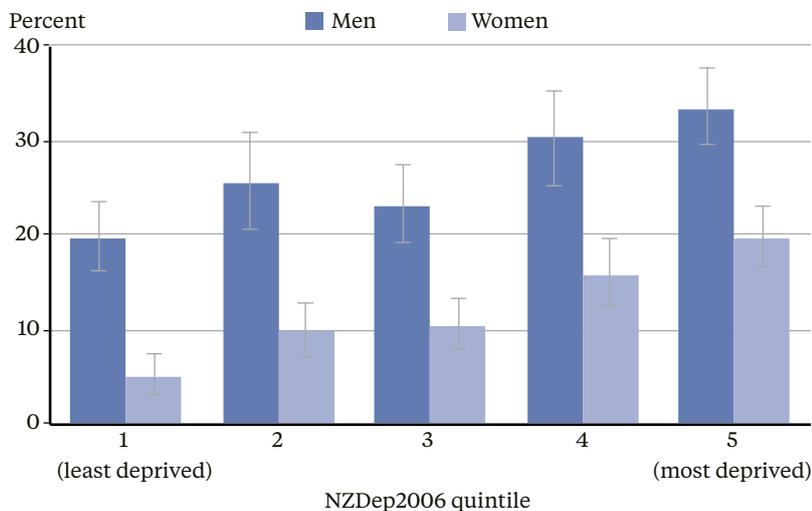


Source: 2011/12 New Zealand Health Survey (15 years and over)

However, people living in the most deprived areas were more likely to have hazardous drinking patterns than those living in the least deprived areas.

Among past-year drinkers, 27% of those living in the most deprived areas had hazardous drinking patterns, compared with 13% of those in the least deprived areas (Figure 6). As a proportion of all adults, about 18% of those living in the most deprived areas and 11% of those in the least deprived areas had hazardous drinking patterns.

Figure 6: Hazardous drinking, among past-year drinkers, by neighbourhood deprivation and sex



Source: 2011/12 New Zealand Health Survey (15 years and over)

Among past-year drinkers, people living in the most deprived areas were 1.7 times as likely to have hazardous drinking patterns as people living in the least deprived areas, after adjusting for age, sex and ethnic group.

Among the total population, the pattern of increasing hazardous drinking with increasing neighbourhood deprivation was statistically significant for women, but not for men, after adjustment.

What is the source of the data?

The source of these data is the 2011/12 New Zealand Health Survey. The survey includes face-to-face interviews from more than 12,000 adults each year. The first results from this survey were released in the report *The Health of New Zealand Adults 2011/12* (Ministry of Health 2012). This addendum contains results about alcohol use specifically. The publication of these results was delayed because some data quality issues had to be checked first.

This output includes slightly different data from the data originally released from the 2011/12 New Zealand Health Survey. In 2011/12 some survey interviews were delayed in one region in the North Island. The reduced sample size in this region was accounted for through the weighting process in *The Health of New Zealand Adults 2011/12* (Ministry of Health 2012).

The alcohol use results presented in this addendum include updated survey interviews from the region where the original interviews were delayed. As a consequence, the sample size is slightly higher (12,596 respondents) than in the original report (12,370 respondents). This updated dataset is considered the official final dataset and is being used for all tabulations from now on. The updated dataset gives very similar results to the original dataset; all differences at the national level observed for other indicators were very small and not significant.

What were the survey questions?

The 2011/12 New Zealand Health Survey asked people aged 15 years and over whether they had had a drink containing alcohol in the past year. People who had consumed alcohol in the past year were then asked the 10-question Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT), developed by the World Health Organization (Babor et al 2001). The AUDIT includes questions about alcohol use, including the volume and frequency of alcohol consumed, alcohol-related problems and abnormal drinking behaviour.

Hazardous drinking refers to an AUDIT score of 8 or more, which represents an established pattern of drinking that carries a high risk of future damage to physical or mental health, but may not yet have had significant adverse effects.

As men and women have been assigned the same cut-off score, this addendum may underestimate hazardous drinking in women, who generally have lower alcohol tolerance than men.

Further information

You can find more information about the New Zealand Health Survey, including survey methodology, on the Ministry of Health website (www.health.govt.nz) or in the main survey report (Ministry of Health 2012).

References

Babor T, Higgins-Biddle J, Saunders J, et al. 2001. *The Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test: Guidelines for use in primary care*. Geneva: World Health Organization.

Ministry of Health. 2012. *The Health of New Zealand Adults 2011/12: Key findings of the New Zealand Health Survey*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.

Appendix: Detailed data tables

The following tables provide detailed data for the key indicators presented in this report.

The tables present the unadjusted prevalence and estimated number of people (by sex, age group, ethnic group and neighbourhood deprivation) and adjusted rate ratios for comparisons (by sex, ethnic group and neighbourhood deprivation). They give 95% confidence intervals for all estimates.

Table 1.1: Consumed alcohol in the past 12 months, among adults aged 15 years and over, 2011/12

Population group	Prevalence (% , 95% CI)						Estimated number
	Total		Men		Women		
Total	79.5	(78.6–80.4)	84.8	(83.5–86.0)	74.5	(72.9–76.0)	2,808,000
15–17 years	59.2	(52.8–65.3)	59.1	(50.3–67.5)	59.2	(50.2–67.8)	114,000
18–24 years	85.3	(82.3–87.9)	88.6	(83.7–92.5)	81.7	(77.9–85.2)	384,000
25–34 years	82.8	(80.4–84.9)	88.2	(84.6–91.2)	77.5	(74.2–80.5)	474,000
35–44 years	83.9	(81.9–85.7)	88.4	(85.2–91.1)	79.8	(77.2–82.2)	501,000
45–54 years	83.1	(81.0–85.1)	88.6	(85.2–91.4)	78.0	(74.6–81.2)	514,000
55–64 years	79.6	(77.0–81.9)	86.0	(82.5–89.0)	73.4	(69.5–77.0)	397,000
65–74 years	74.8	(72.0–77.4)	80.8	(76.4–84.7)	69.1	(65.0–73.0)	252,000
75+ years	65.0	(61.7–68.3)	75.2	(69.8–80.0)	57.5	(52.5–62.5)	173,000
Māori	79.2	(77.1–81.3)	82.1	(79.1–84.9)	76.5	(73.5–79.4)	353,000
Pacific	58.4	(53.5–63.3)	71.9	(64.3–78.7)	47.0	(41.1–53.1)	120,000
Asian	56.7	(52.6–60.8)	70.0	(65.3–74.3)	44.6	(37.9–51.4)	216,000
European/Other	84.3	(83.4–85.2)	88.2	(86.9–89.5)	80.6	(79.1–82.0)	2,342,000
Least deprived areas (q1)	86.2	(84.0–88.1)	88.5	(85.9–90.8)	83.7	(80.4–86.7)	627,000
Most deprived areas (q5)	68.2	(65.7–70.6)	74.8	(71.2–78.1)	62.7	(59.0–66.3)	454,000

Group of interest	Reference group	Adjusted rate ratio (95% CI)	Significant (*)	Adjustment variables
Men	Women	1.14 (1.11–1.17)	*	Age
Māori	Non-Māori	0.98 (0.95–1.01)		Age, sex
Māori men	Non-Māori men	0.96 (0.92–1.00)	*	Age
Māori women	Non-Māori women	1.01 (0.96–1.06)		Age
Pacific	Non-Pacific	0.71 (0.65–0.77)	*	Age, sex
Pacific men	Non-Pacific men	0.84 (0.77–0.92)	*	Age
Pacific women	Non-Pacific women	0.58 (0.51–0.67)	*	Age
Asian	Non-Asian	0.66 (0.62–0.71)	*	Age, sex
Asian men	Non-Asian men	0.79 (0.74–0.85)	*	Age
Asian women	Non-Asian women	0.53 (0.45–0.62)	*	Age
Most deprived areas	Least deprived areas	0.84 (0.80–0.88)	*	Age, sex, ethnic group
Most deprived areas – men	Least deprived areas – men	0.89 (0.85–0.94)	*	Age, ethnic group
Most deprived areas – women	Least deprived areas – women	0.78 (0.72–0.85)	*	Age, ethnic group

Table 1.2: Hazardous drinking, among past-year drinkers aged 15 years and over, 2011/12

Population group	Prevalence among past-year drinkers (%, 95% CI)			Estimated number
	Total	Men	Women	
Total	19.0 (17.8–20.3)	25.8 (23.9–27.8)	11.7 (10.4–13.0)	532,000
15–17 years	20.6 (14.2–28.3)	24.1 (15.1–35.2)	16.9 (9.3–27.2)	23,000
18–24 years	35.8 (31.5–40.2)	43.6 (36.8–50.6)	26.5 (21.3–32.2)	137,000
25–34 years	30.0 (27.3–32.9)	41.4 (36.9–46.0)	17.4 (14.1–21.1)	142,000
35–44 years	19.1 (16.6–21.8)	25.8 (21.6–30.3)	12.3 (10.3–14.6)	95,000
45–54 years	14.1 (12.0–16.4)	19.8 (16.4–23.7)	8.1 (5.7–11.1)	72,000
55–64 years	10.5 (8.6–12.6)	15.7 (12.4–19.5)	4.6 (2.8–6.9)	41,000
65–74 years	7.1 (5.1–9.5)	11.3 (7.8–15.7)	2.5 (1.2–4.7)	18,000
75+ years	2.4 (1.4–3.8)	4.4 (2.5–7.0)	0.4 (0.1–1.6)	4,000
Māori	36.6 (33.6–39.6)	45.3 (40.4–50.3)	27.7 (24.1–31.6)	128,000
Pacific	35.4 (29.6–41.5)	42.9 (33.6–52.7)	25.3 (17.4–34.7)	42,000
Asian	8.2 (5.7–11.2)	10.8 (7.5–15.1)	4.3 (1.8–8.6)	17,000
European/Other	17.8 (16.4–19.3)	25.1 (22.8–27.5)	10.1 (8.8–11.5)	415,000
Least deprived areas (q1)	12.7 (10.3–15.4)	19.7 (16.1–23.8)	5.0 (3.1–7.4)	79,000
Most deprived areas (q5)	26.7 (23.9–29.6)	33.5 (29.7–37.5)	19.8 (16.7–23.2)	120,000

Group of interest	Reference group	Adjusted rate ratio (95% CI)	Significant (*)	Adjustment variables
Men	Women	2.18 (1.93–2.47)	*	Age
Māori	Non-Māori	1.84 (1.66–2.03)	*	Age, sex
Māori men	Non-Māori men	1.65 (1.43–1.90)	*	Age
Māori women	Non-Māori women	2.30 (1.91–2.77)	*	Age
Pacific	Non-Pacific	1.48 (1.21–1.81)	*	Age, sex
Pacific men	Non-Pacific men	1.42 (1.10–1.83)	*	Age
Pacific women	Non-Pacific women	1.63 (1.14–2.35)	*	Age
Asian	Non-Asian	0.30 (0.22–0.42)	*	Age, sex
Asian men	Non-Asian men	0.31 (0.22–0.43)	*	Age
Asian women	Non-Asian women	0.29 (0.14–0.61)	*	Age
Most deprived areas	Least deprived areas	1.69 (1.34–2.13)	*	Age, sex, ethnic group
Most deprived areas – men	Least deprived areas – men	1.41 (1.09–1.82)	*	Age, ethnic group
Most deprived areas – women	Least deprived areas – women	2.63 (1.75–3.94)	*	Age, ethnic group

Table 1.3: Hazardous drinking, among all adults aged 15 years and over, 2011/12

Population group	Prevalence among all adults (% , 95% CI)						Estimated number
	Total		Men		Women		
Total	15.1	(14.1–16.1)	21.8	(20.2–23.5)	8.6	(7.7–9.6)	532,000
15–17 years	12.0	(8.4–16.5)	14.0	(8.9–20.5)	9.9	(5.5–16.2)	23,000
18–24 years	30.4	(26.6–34.3)	38.6	(32.1–45.4)	21.5	(17.3–26.1)	137,000
25–34 years	24.8	(22.3–27.4)	36.5	(32.2–41.0)	13.4	(10.8–16.4)	142,000
35–44 years	16.0	(13.9–18.3)	22.8	(19.1–26.7)	9.8	(8.2–11.7)	95,000
45–54 years	11.7	(10.0–13.6)	17.5	(14.4–21.0)	6.3	(4.5–8.7)	72,000
55–64 years	8.3	(6.8–10.0)	13.5	(10.6–16.8)	3.3	(2.1–5.0)	41,000
65–74 years	5.3	(3.8–7.1)	9.1	(6.3–12.7)	1.7	(0.8–3.3)	18,000
75+ years	1.5	(0.9–2.5)	3.3	(1.9–5.3)	0.3	(0.0–0.9)	4,000
Māori	28.7	(26.3–31.2)	37.0	(32.9–41.2)	21.0	(18.1–24.2)	128,000
Pacific	20.3	(16.7–24.2)	30.6	(23.6–38.3)	11.5	(7.8–16.2)	42,000
Asian	4.6	(3.3–6.3)	7.5	(5.2–10.5)	1.9	(0.8–3.9)	17,000
European/Other	14.9	(13.7–16.2)	22.1	(20.1–24.2)	8.1	(7.1–9.3)	415,000
Least deprived areas (q1)	10.9	(8.9–13.2)	17.4	(14.2–21.0)	4.1	(2.6–6.2)	79,000
Most deprived areas (q5)	18.0	(16.1–20.0)	24.8	(21.9–27.9)	12.3	(10.4–14.4)	120,000

Group of interest	Reference group	Adjusted rate ratio (95% CI)	Significant (*)	Adjustment variables
Men	Women	2.44 (2.16–2.75)	*	Age
Māori	Non-Māori	1.85 (1.66–2.05)	*	Age, sex
Māori men	Non-Māori men	1.62 (1.40–1.87)	*	Age
Māori women	Non-Māori women	2.42 (2.01–2.92)	*	Age
Pacific	Non-Pacific	1.11 (0.90–1.37)		Age, sex
Pacific men	Non-Pacific men	1.17 (0.90–1.54)		Age
Pacific women	Non-Pacific women	0.99 (0.68–1.44)		Age
Asian	Non-Asian	0.23 (0.16–0.31)	*	Age, sex
Asian men	Non-Asian men	0.26 (0.18–0.36)	*	Age
Asian women	Non-Asian women	0.16 (0.08–0.34)	*	Age
Most deprived areas	Least deprived areas	1.49 (1.17–1.89)	*	Age, sex, ethnic group
Most deprived areas – men	Least deprived areas – men	1.27 (0.98–1.65)		Age, ethnic group
Most deprived areas – women	Least deprived areas – women	2.19 (1.44–3.32)	*	Age, ethnic group



New Zealand Health Survey – at a glance

Sample: 12,596 adults aged 15 years and over.

Mode: Face-to-face, computer-assisted interviews.

Timing: Results refer to sample selected in the 12-month period from July 2011 to June 2012.

For more information, the main survey publications and data tables, see the New Zealand Health Survey webpage: www.health.govt.nz/new-zealand-health-survey