



SOCIAL CHANGE AND LIQUOR LAWS

*“The process of **solving the public health problem of underage alcohol use begins with an examination of our own attitudes toward underage drinking** – and our recognition of the seriousness of its consequences for adolescents, their families and society as a whole.”*

*Acting Surgeon General U.S. Department
of Health and Human Services 2007.*

KEY FACT AT A GLANCE

The most compelling evidence of alcohol-related harm in this country is found in our crime and injury statistics.

A CASE FOR CHANGE?

CHAPTER 7

INTRODUCTION

The catalogue of alcohol-related harms described in the preceding chapters range from the extreme and highly visible, such as drink driving fatalities and alcohol-fuelled violence, to the less visible cumulative effects of alcohol on our health.

We have seen that new research about alcohol's toxicity is leading to constant reassessments of what constitutes 'safe drinking' levels and this may well have implications for how we 'future proof' any new regulatory framework for the sale and supply of alcohol.

At present though the most compelling evidence of alcohol-related harm in this

country is found in our crime and injury statistics. And the most compelling conclusion to be drawn from these statistics is that heavy drinking and drinking to get drunk are at the root of many of our alcohol-related problems.

In the final chapter of Part I we look at some of the individual and social factors influencing our drinking culture and ask whether there is now a case for a new approach.

We begin with perhaps the most fundamental question, why is heavy drinking and drinking to get drunk still a significant feature of our drinking culture?

WHY DO WE DRINK THE WAY WE DRINK?

“the pursuit of intoxication [is] a practice which seems universal within human communities¹”

Pre-European Māori and Inuit cultures are two known exceptions to this statement, a fact, which some argue, helps explain the devastating impact alcohol has had on some indigenous populations.²

Here we can only skim the surface of the numerous theories which try to explain human behaviour around alcohol but clearly the factors which influence our

drinking defy simple formulas such as the ratio of liquor outlets per head of population.

As discussed in chapter 3, the beneficial effects we associate with drinking are many and varied, ranging from enjoyment of the flavour of alcoholic beverages and the rituals associated with their consumption, through to a sense of increased wellbeing, sociability and cohesion.

These latter effects relate to the neuro-cognitive changes associated with drinking, ranging from mild to extreme intoxication.

Like many Anglo-Saxon countries with so called 'dry' drinking cultures founded on long histories of moral and religious disapproval, our tendency has been to drink larger amounts in single sessions followed by periods of abstinence.

Arguably, changes in our drinking preferences over the past two decades, and the rapid expansion of the restaurant and café sector might indicate a shift away from this 'dry' drinking culture towards a more Mediterranean-style culture, focused on food and wine. However, this paper shows that for about a quarter of New Zealand drinkers, heavy drinking is still the norm. As a society we also have a reasonably high tolerance of drunkenness, with a 2005 ALAC survey suggesting one-quarter of all people 12 years or over (27 per cent) agree with the statement: "It's OK to get drunk as long as it's not every day".³

For some drinkers 'getting drunk' is the *point* of drinking rather than an incidental by-product.

ALAC's most recent *Drinking Behaviours Report* found that overall 12 per cent of all adult drinkers in 2007-08 reported that, in their opinion, they got drunk on their last drinking occasion. Nine per cent of these people reported that they had planned to get drunk on that occasion.⁴

Among 'binge drinkers'⁵ the percentage of determined drunks was much higher: 37 per cent reported getting drunk on the last occasion they drank and more than one-quarter (29 per cent) said they planned to get drunk on that occasion.⁶

Changes in our drinking preferences and the expansion of the restaurant and café sector might indicate a shift toward a more Mediterranean-style culture, focused on food and wine.



A 2008 ALAC survey of alcohol behaviours and attitudes among a sample of 1,061 patrons attending bars and restaurants on Auckland's North Shore found over 37 per cent of the men and 29 per cent of the women stated they had gone out planning to get intoxicated. This was most marked among those aged under 25.⁷

'Getting drunk' is what the young professional, whose story appears in chapter 3 of this report, missed most when he gave up alcohol for nine months in solidarity with his recovering alcoholic wife.

Former secondary school teacher and sports broadcaster Murray Deaker believes that heavy drinking is deeply ingrained in the New Zealand psyche and that a man's ability to "hold his piss" remains an important marker of Kiwi masculinity. As a recovering alcoholic Murray Deaker says he found little or no understanding of alcohol's potentially devastating effects as a drug: "I am one of the 10 per cent who can't drink alcohol. Alcoholism is a well recognised and diagnosable disease internationally, but in this country, alcoholism is often viewed as a weakness of character."⁸

“...I THINK SOME PEOPLE [GET DRUNK] ON PURPOSE, SO IT'S LIKE AN EXCUSE FOR DOING IT.”

FACTS AT A GLANCE

A recent Auckland study examining drinking in the context of women's changing social position, reported that participants strongly identified our culture with our capacity to drink.

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While the clichéd representation of New Zealand as nation that could be summed up in three words, "rugby, racing and beer" may be less potent for younger generations, some still regard alcohol as central to our national identity.

Young people taking part in a focus group discussion facilitated by the Ministry of Youth Development told the Law Commission they felt that New Zealanders' capacity for heavy drinking was a defining national characteristic: "It's become who we are as a people...[the fact we can out-drink other nationalities] is acknowledged in a praising sort of way... 'Wow you guys can really drink'."⁹

Similarly, a recent Auckland study examining drinking in the context of women's changing social position, reported that participants strongly identified our culture with our capacity to drink.¹⁰

This study also found that "being able to drink a lot" was regarded as a positive skill to possess and that while female participants did not drink as much as males overall, they did engage in heavy drinking sessions: "Their binge drinking and drunkenness was part of having fun with friends and enjoying a night out, and having shared experiences and stories to tell later."¹¹

"IF I HAD THE LIVES OF SOME OF THE PEOPLE THAT SIT IN FRONT OF ME I'D DRINK TOO!"

The idea of conformity and having a shared point of reference with peers is also reflected in the comments of the 22 year-old Otago University student whose account of Orientation Week drinking appears in chapter 3:¹²

"Why do it? Why not? It is very much a culture thing within my group of friends to drink ourselves silly on a weekly basis. It is almost a peer pressure thing I think, if you are not going out and being social you are considered boring and a loser, you have to keep up appearances. I understand that this may sound stupid but I feel this is a reality in Dunedin. Being such a small and confined 'studentville' wherever you go out you always run into people you know, most of whom will also be drinking. This encourages me to drink more."

At the other end of the spectrum for those living on the margins of society and with multiple problems, alcohol can be a cheap and effective anaesthetic as described by Auckland alcohol and drugs counsellor Angela Claridge:¹³

"Alcohol, in my experience it's often used as a soother, an escape, a depressant...to dull down feelings. And let's face it – some people's lives are fairly shoddy. Some people are struggling. Some people are living in poverty. A lot of people are living in poverty. They are living in environments that are really awful and so we need to be not just looking at one section of this...in terms of our policy around control. We need to be looking at the bigger picture. Focusing on one area is not going to change the underlying current of what drives the people we see to drink. If I had the lives of some of the people that sit in front of me, I'd drink too!"

And for our young, grappling with issues of identity, acceptance and relationships, alcohol is often part of both the problem and the solution as this young Victoria University student explains: "I know so many people who have sex they regret cos they were drunk...they all come to complain to me about it...I think some people [get drunk] on purpose, so it's like an excuse for doing it."¹⁴

As these passages illustrate, alcohol is often used as a 'gateway' or 'facilitator' of some other outcome – sex, oblivion, entertainment, human connection, or escape.

"Alcohol,... it's often used as a soother, an escape, a depressant..."



Ross Giblin, *Dominion Post*

WHAT CAN INFLUENCE OUR DRINKING?

While the motivations behind our drinking may be deeply embedded in our culture, and consistent from one generation to the next, drinking patterns clearly *do* change, both across an individual's lifetime and across society as a whole over time.

How we drink tends to change as we get older and our lifestyles, priorities, tastes and incomes change. As the stories of the student drinker and the Wellington lawyer in chapter 3 illustrate, personal circumstances and peer groups can be strongly influential in how we drink.

Alongside these individual factors influencing how we drink, are a raft of external or environmental factors which impact on our drinking. These external factors might include the overall state of the economy, changes in the laws governing the sale of alcohol (such as the lowering of the purchase age), changes

briefly examine just a few of the external factors which may be influencing drinking trends today, beginning with changes to our alcohol laws and the alcohol-driven night-time economy.

The influence of the industry and liquor laws

This paper began with a brief overview of New Zealand's liquor laws, tracing the colourful history of successive generations' attempts to exert control over drinking in our country. While still based on a strict licensing system, the laws governing the sale of liquor today are more liberal than at any time in our modern history. As discussed in chapter 2 of this paper, the 1989 Act has resulted in a more diverse and competitive industry offering consumers a far greater range of entertainment, drinking and dining options than had previously existed. In the space of just a

Alcohol is being sold for as little as a dollar or less per standard drink.

Ya Bom 4 Pack

250ml Cans
7% alc/vol

Energy
Infused
Drink



\$5.99
per 4 pack

The Mill advertisement, The Dominion Post, 19 May 2009

HOW WE DRINK TENDS TO CHANGE AS WE GET OLDER AND OUR LIFESTYLES, PRIORITIES, TASTES AND INCOMES CHANGE.

in the alcohol industry and alcoholic products, and changes in society itself. Any and all of these can influence the demand for alcohol at a population level.

For example, during the Great Depression in the early 1930s alcohol consumption in New Zealand reached an all-time low at less than a third of today's levels.¹⁵ Conversely the impact of the final third of the baby boomer generation hitting their late teens and 20s in the 1970s, coinciding with a rapid expansion of liquor licences, saw alcohol consumption peak in the mid to late 1970s.

In other words, the way we drink and the problems associated with it are a complex product of individual and external influences. In the following discussion we

few decades we have become a nation of wine drinkers.

The introduction of 24 hour licensing and the development of the alcohol-driven night-time economy have also had a significant impact on many of our cities, contributing much to these cities' rates revenues and vibrancy but also, as discussed in chapter 5, leading to significant issues around violent offending and antisocial behaviour.

As well as becoming more available, alcohol has also become more affordable in the past two decades. This has been particularly marked in the highly competitive retail sector and has led to alcoholic beverages being sold for as little as a dollar or less per standard drink.

There is evidence to suggest that the marked difference in price between alcohol purchased at retail and alcohol purchased for consumption on licensed premises is contributing to a trend whereby people drink or 'pre-load' before going out. This in turn is seen to be contributing to the number of intoxicated people arriving at bars and clubs and the levels of antisocial behaviour in some late-night entertainment precincts.

Finally, the lowering of the minimum purchase age from 20 to 18 in 1999 made alcohol more accessible to younger New Zealanders.

These changes in the alcohol market have coincided with changes in the drinking patterns of some sections of

the population. Because drinking is a social activity influenced by a range of factors it is impossible to establish a direct causal link between these changes and the liberalisation of the supply of alcohol. Nonetheless there are some reasonable inferences to be drawn.

Our per capita consumption of pure alcohol has increased nine per cent in the last 10 years.¹⁶

The evidence suggests that the availability of cheap alcohol and the lowering of the minimum purchase age have coincided with both the earlier onset of drinking and heavier consumption levels by minors. A study of 112,000 people surveyed in 2003 found that people in their forties and older reported starting drinking at about 16 years, and those aged under twenty four said they started drinking at about 14 years¹⁷, suggesting that young people are drinking from an earlier age, a trend which may have predated the lowering of the age purchase.

And as discussed in chapter 3, comparisons between national drinking surveys in 1995 and 2004¹⁸ show there have been significant increases in the proportion of 14 to 19 year-olds drinking larger volumes when they drink.¹⁹

By 2000, males in the 16 to 17 year age group were consuming eight drinks on a typical drinking occasion and their female peers were consuming nearly six drinks per occasion.²⁰

There appears to be a link between cheap alcohol products and heavier drinking sessions.²¹ There is also strong evidence to show young people in particular are more price sensitive than other population groups so it is plausible that increases in the amount they drink has been influenced by the availability of cheap alcohol.²² The implications of this are discussed in more detail in Part II of this paper.

There have also been changes in women's drinking patterns. Women's consumption has been increasing over time across all ages, but particularly among young

women. The most marked increases were seen between 1995 and 2000 for females aged 16 to 17, 18 to 19 and 20 to 24 years (with each age group increasing from four to six drinks on a typical drinking occasion).²³ An analysis of data from 1995 and 2000 showed women aged 20 to 39 were drinking larger quantities and women 40 years or over were drinking more often.²⁴

SOCIAL CHANGE

But to understand changes to the way women and young people are drinking we need to look beyond our liquor laws and changes in the alcohol industry.

The law, and how the alcohol industry operates within it, are just two of the external factors influencing how we drink. Neither operates in a vacuum. New Zealand is a very different place in 2009 than it was twenty years ago when the 1989 Act came into force. Many of the changes we have experienced as a society will be impacting not only on how we drink but also on the types of alcohol-related harm we are experiencing.

To understand changes in how we are drinking and the harms arising from drinking, we need to understand changes in society.

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Justin Mcmanus, *The Age*, Melbourne

THE LAW, AND HOW THE ALCOHOL INDUSTRY OPERATES WITHIN IT, ARE JUST TWO OF THE EXTERNAL FACTORS INFLUENCING HOW WE DRINK. NEITHER OPERATES IN A VACUUM.

For example, changes in the way women are drinking need to be understood in the broader context of changes in women's lives. Women's participation in tertiary education and the workforce have increased markedly over the past two decades.²⁵ Even more critically, young women are delaying childbearing, or opting not to have children. Thirty years ago the most common age for a woman to have a child was 20 to 24. Today it is 30 to 34.

Men and women in their 20s and 30s have reached adulthood in very different circumstances from previous generations. This generation has attained higher educational qualifications than previous generations but they are also the first to have incurred large personal debts as a result of the introduction of user-pays education. Prior to the current recession, exponential increases in housing costs resulted in falling rates of home ownership for this cohort and longer economic dependence on parents. Sociologists have coined the phrase 'extended adolescence' to describe this combination of social and economic factors impacting on this cohort.

This generation is also the first for whom parental divorce has become commonplace. Young adults whose parents married in the early 1980s will find a third of these parents will have divorced before their silver wedding anniversary (25 years).²⁶ In the late 70s just 10 per cent of all families in this country with dependent children were one-parent: by 2006 that number had tripled to just under 30 per cent – or 145,032 of 515,841 families.²⁷

Home ownership, marriage and parenthood have traditionally represented key markers with knock-on effects for levels of independence, disposable income and life style. Instead for many young men and women the 20s and 30s are now decades without dependents, or mortgages, allowing greater emphasis on careers and leisure and entertainment.

This segment of the drinking population has been an important target of the new night-time economy, characterised by the

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growth in the number of bars and clubs operating extended trading hours in many of New Zealand's main cities and tourist areas.

Similarly, when considering the impact of changes in the way young people are drinking, we need to be aware of factors beyond the law. To begin with, there are simply more young people in the population now than there were 20 years ago. While our population is ageing overall, right now we are experiencing the impact of a baby-bump resulting from unusually large birth cohorts between the mid 1980s and 1992. Statistics New Zealand's population data shows that in 2008 there were nearly 20,000 more young people in the 18 to 25 cohort than there were in 1991.

There have also been significant increases in the number of newly legalised drinkers since the minimum purchase age was lowered from 20 to 18 in 1999. In 2008, there were 10,000 more 18 year-olds and 9,000 more 19 year-olds eligible to buy alcohol than there were in 1999.

And a greater proportion of these young people are now staying on at secondary school to complete Year 13. This trend towards extended secondary education combined with the lowering of the minimum purchase age to 18 means a higher proportion of students at school are legally able to access alcohol – for their own and their underage peers' consumption.

Problems associated with tertiary student drinking also need to be seen in the context of the exponential growth in the student population in the past two decades. In 1989 when the Sale of Liquor Act was passed, there were 141,315 students enrolled in formal tertiary education in this country. In 2007, enrolments had grown to 484,104, including 39,960 international students.²⁸

Tertiary providers have proliferated in this time with 33 public tertiary institutes competing with private providers and many with multiple campuses around the country. The student populations at

many of the country's major universities have grown significantly. University of Otago's student population, for example, has doubled since 1989, and in 2008 stood at 20,752.²⁹

But perhaps the most far reaching change in the past two decades has been the advent of the internet and the quantum leap in communication technologies. Both have revolutionised the way people – and in particular young people – organise their social lives and communicate.

Along with the huge benefits of these technologies have been some unlooked-for social problems. The phenomenon of the teenage party which ends in a street riot, or worse, owes as much to texting and social networking sites as it does to binge drinking. Parental supervision is often a poor match for this technology.

Arguably too the internet and functions such as photo texting have helped promote binge drinking as a form of entertainment and social acceptance within segments of the young population. Social networking sites are used to share extreme drinking exploits. This has helped make visible to parents and the media drinking behaviours that in previous generations would have remained within the immediate peer group.

At the same time alcohol marketing has become increasingly sophisticated in response to new technology and the emergence of global markets and brands. In New Zealand this period has been characterised by privatisation of broadcast

media and removal of government regulation of alcohol advertising.³⁰

Modern marketing campaigns frequently utilise the full ambit of communication platforms to reach specific consumer segments. As a consequence many alcohol brand and promotional campaigns may remain invisible to all but the target market. The most successful often involve wrap-around media utilising a combination of traditional broadcast and outdoor media alongside social networking sites and mobile phone technology.

Recent examples include a New Zealand campaign for vodka which replicated many of the features of on-line gaming communities, setting up a dedicated website and recruiting consumers as 'secret agents' who would be sent on various 'missions'. The campaign was credited with a 29 per cent growth in the brand's average sales per month year on year and according to a report published in the *National Business Review* "pushed it to the top of the adored brand list among 18 to 24 year-olds in both the vodka full strength market and the total RTD market."³¹

A recent beer campaign used Facebook and iPhone technology to notify consumers of bars offering free beers, and allowed them to download free beer vouchers and tickets to events. The promotional material for the campaign explained the rationale behind using new media in this way:³²

By connecting with consumers through mediums that are an integral part of their social networking and around social events that inspire them,

FACTS AT A GLANCE

In the late 70s just 10 per cent of all families in this country with dependent children were one-parent: by 2006 that number had tripled to just under 30 per cent – or 145,032 of 515,841 families.²⁷

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Beck's has shifted the marketing paradigm from talking at consumers to inviting them into the brand...

Venues competing for the youth market are also using popular social networking sites such as Facebook and Bebo to advertise promotions including student mid-week specials.

While none of these marketing tools can be said to 'cause' the harmful use of alcohol, the highly creative and all-pervasive use of popular culture to build connections between personal identity and brands is a powerful new environmental factor seeking to influence individual choice around alcohol use.

THE TEENAGE PARTY WHICH ENDS IN A STREET RIOT OWES AS MUCH TO TEXTING AND SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES AS IT DOES TO BINGE DRINKING.

A CASE FOR CHANGE?

History suggests that each time we review our liquor laws we also conduct a sort of social and moral stocktake, asking ourselves questions about the contribution that changing values and parenting styles and levels of social dysfunction are making to our problems with alcohol.

And it is clear the levels of alcohol-related harm we have set out in this paper are not simply a product of more liberal liquor laws. As this chapter has discussed they are likely to be the product of a host of demographic, social, cultural and environmental changes. Problems associated with youth drinking cannot be explained simply by the lowering of the minimum purchase age or the development of cheap RTDs. Factors as simple as the growth in the youth population and as complex as how our schools and families are functioning may form part of the answer.

The levels of crime and injury we are experiencing have many complex and interrelated causes. Alcohol is just one contributory factor. However, unlike many of the other contributory factors, alcohol is

a modifiable risk factor. Indeed the harmful use of alcohol emerges as a leading modifiable risk contributor to the burden of disease and injury in this country.³³

In the two decades since our liquor laws were liberalised, evidence about the nature and level of risk associated with alcohol has increased significantly, leading to constant revisions of what constitutes safe drinking. The World Health Organisation's International Agency for Research on Cancer recently classified alcoholic beverages as "carcinogenic to humans" in the same hazard category as agents such as asbestos, formaldehyde and tobacco.³⁴

Applying the latest evidence-based Australian Guidelines designed to reduce health risks from drinking, the Law Commission has been told that nearly half of drinkers in this country aged 12 to 24 usually drink enough on a typical drinking occasion to at least double their risk of injury in the six hours after drinking.³⁵ And that one in three drinkers drink on average more than two standard drinks a day and so face a greater than 1:100 risk of dying of an alcohol-related disease or injury – including a quarter of drinkers aged 35 to 64.³⁶

FACTS AT A GLANCE

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One in three drinkers drink on average more than two standard drinks a day and so face a greater than 1:100 risk of dying of an alcohol-related disease or injury.

But arguably of greatest significance is the new evidence about the increased risks associated with young people's drinking. New Zealand research has found that early exposure to alcohol is associated with a range of poor adult outcomes including substance dependence, criminal convictions, herpes infection and failure to achieve educational qualifications.³⁷ Heavy drinking among teenagers and young adults is associated with poorer brain functioning, particularly in terms of attention and visuospatial skills,³⁸ and alcohol has detrimental effects on adolescents' liver, hormones, bone density and brain structure.³⁹

The stark submission from some of our District and Youth court judges gives added weight to this research and highlights the extent to which binge drinking and alcohol abuse disorders in our youth population are contributing to poor educational outcomes and setting a section of our young up for a lifetime of offending.

In the United States where the legal drinking age is 21, alcohol abuse has emerged as a serious health issue among the young leading to the issuing of the US Surgeon General's *Call to Action to*

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NEW ZEALANDERS NEED TO DECIDE WHERE THE BALANCE SHOULD LIE BETWEEN THE BENEFITS WE DERIVE FROM ALCOHOL AND THE HARMS BEING EXPERIENCED BY INDIVIDUALS AND SOCIETY AT LARGE.

FACT AT A GLANCE

Heavy drinking among teenagers and young adults is associated with poorer brain functioning, particularly in terms of attention and visuospatial skills,³⁸ and alcohol has detrimental effects on adolescents' liver, hormones, bone density and brain structure.³⁹

Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking.

In a foreword to this 2007 publication, the Acting Surgeon General Kenneth P Moritsugu wrote: ⁴⁰

Because environmental factors play such a significant role (in adolescent alcohol use) responsibility for the prevention and reduction of underage drinking extends beyond the parents of adolescents, their schools and communities. It is the collective responsibility of the Nation as a whole and of each of us individually.

The process of solving the public health problem of underage alcohol use begins with an examination of our own attitudes toward underage drinking – and our recognition of the seriousness of its consequences for adolescents, their families and society as a whole. Adolescent alcohol use is not an acceptable rite of passage but a serious threat to adolescent development and

health, as the statistics related to adolescent impairment, injury and death attest.

The terms of reference for this review require the Law Commission “to consider and formulate for the consideration of Government and Parliament a revised policy framework covering the principles that should regulate the sale, supply and consumption of liquor in New Zealand *having regard to present and future social conditions and needs*”.⁴¹

The extent to which the harmful use of alcohol is preventing our young people and sections of the Māori and Pacific Island population from realising their potential as productive and healthy citizens of this country is a matter of concern to all New Zealanders. Nor can we insulate ourselves from the impacts of other people's harmful drinking: we share the same accident and emergency departments, the same police force,

the same roads, the same footpaths. And we all share the bill for alcohol-related harm through our taxes and rates.

While the law cannot change human nature, it can alter the environment in which individuals make choices about how they use alcohol, and in doing so make that environment more, or less, supportive of moderation.

In Part II of this issues paper we look at how the current law is operating and what additional legal measures are available to combat alcohol-related harm. It concludes with the Law Commission's preliminary view of these measures and a package of reforms which may prove effective in helping reduce harm. It also includes questions for debate.

In the end the New Zealand public needs to decide where the balance should lie between the benefits we derive from alcohol and the harm being experienced by individuals and society at large.

SUMMARY CHAPTER 7 A CASE FOR CHANGE?

Heavy drinking and drinking to get drunk remain strong features of our drinking culture.

How that culture manifests in the drinking habits of different generations is influenced by a combination of social and economic factors operating in conjunction with the regulatory environment in which liquor is sold and supplied.

Since the liberalisation of our liquor laws under the 1989 Act, alcohol has become more affordable and more widely available.

There is evidence to suggest young people are drinking from an earlier age and drinking larger quantities when they drink.

Social change, including rates of participation in education and the workforce, home ownership and child bearing all influence our leisure patterns and drinking habits.

Increases in the number of young people in our population and increases in the student population may be influencing consumption patterns and levels of alcohol-related harm in this cohort.

The last decade has also seen a revolution in communications technologies. These technologies have facilitated new ways of social interaction and created unprecedented access to consumers for marketers and advertisers – including the liquor industry.

These changes have occurred against a backdrop of growing evidence about the risks associated with alcohol and in particular the risks to young people.

New Zealand research has found that early exposure to alcohol is associated with a range of poor adult outcomes including substance dependence, criminal convictions, herpes infection and failure to achieve educational qualifications.

The young, Māori and Pacific people are disproportionately affected by alcohol-related harm.

While alcohol is only a contributory factor to many of the harms experienced by individuals and the community, the harmful use of alcohol emerges as a leading modifiable risk contributor to the burden of disease and injury in this country.

CHAPTER 7 ENDNOTES

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- 41** Emphasis added.