

# SOURCES OF ALCOHOL AND HARM

## among secondary school students

### SUMMARY

- **The two key sources of alcohol for students were parents and friends**
- **Where students got their alcohol from was related to their risk of experiencing alcohol harm**
- **Students who purchased their own alcohol, obtained it from friends, and/or from siblings were more likely to have high-risk drinking patterns**
- **Students who got alcohol from their parents were less likely to have high-risk drinking patterns when compared to students who got alcohol from other sources**
- **Almost half of the students who were surveyed reported getting alcohol from two or more sources**

### THE YOUTH2000 SURVEYS

The Youth19 Rangatahi Smart Survey (Youth19) is the fourth health and wellbeing survey in the Youth2000 series, following surveys in 2001, 2007 and 2012. Details about surveys and the research methods behind this factsheet are available elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

### BACKGROUND

The harms from drinking alcohol for young people can be both short and long term and irreversible (e.g. negative impacts on brain development<sup>2</sup>). For a number of reasons, young people are at a higher risk of harm from alcohol use than older age groups.<sup>3</sup>

Harms to young people from using alcohol include injury and accidents, unprotected and unwanted sex, assault, and having performance at school or work affected.<sup>4</sup> The more alcohol harms they experience, the less likely they are to finish high school.<sup>5</sup> Young people also have a heightened vulnerability to addiction – almost 50% of cases of alcohol abuse and dependence in Aotearoa New Zealand are developed by the age of 20 years.<sup>6</sup>

**The Ministry of Health recommends that children and young people under 18 years do not drink any alcohol. Those under 15 years of age are at the greatest risk of harm from drinking alcohol and not drinking in this age group is especially important. If 15 to 17 year olds do drink alcohol, they should be supervised, drink infrequently and at levels below and never exceeding the adult daily limits.<sup>7</sup>**

Commercial and informal access to alcohol and perceived ease of access to alcohol play a key role in drinking and drinking-related problems among young people.<sup>8,9</sup> In Aotearoa New Zealand, the legal minimum age to purchase alcohol is 18 years. Parents and guardians can supply alcohol to their minor, only if done so in a responsible manner. It is an offence for others to supply alcohol to a minor unless they believe on reasonable grounds that they have the express consent of the parent or guardian and alcohol is supplied in a responsible manner.

Following law changes in Aotearoa New Zealand in 2013, there was evidence that some early reductions in social supply followed.<sup>9</sup> One study found a reduction in supply to friends under 18 years but no change in parental alcohol supply. Whilst the prevalence of supply from friends was found to decline, the usual quantities supplied remained high (from 13 drinks in 2013 to 11 drinks in 2015).<sup>9</sup>

This factsheet details the overall findings in relation to sources of alcohol supply and associations with harm among the total secondary school student population in 2019. Details of alcohol sources and harm by population group (e.g. ethnicity, Rainbow youth) are reported in other factsheets in this series.

## SOURCES OF ALCOHOL

Students who had consumed alcohol were asked about key sources of alcohol and could choose as many sources as were relevant. The findings presented here are restricted to students aged under 18 years.

In 2019, parents were the most common source of alcohol, with 62% of drinkers reporting that their parents gave them alcohol. Other key sources of alcohol were from friends (39%) and getting someone to buy it (21%). Despite sales of alcohol to those under 18 being illegal, 8% reported they bought alcohol themselves.

Around half (53%) of ever drinkers reported getting alcohol from only one source. Half of these students reported that their sole source of alcohol was their parents. A quarter (25%) reported two sources, 15% reported three sources, and the remaining 7% reported four or more sources of alcohol. Of those reporting multiple sources, parents were typically one of the sources.

### BUYING ALCOHOL



Buy own alcohol  
2019: 8%



Getting someone else to buy  
2019: 21%



Take from home without permission  
2019: 13%



Steal it from somewhere else  
2019: 2%

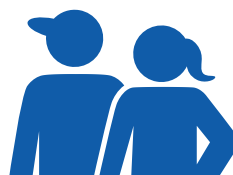
### GIVEN ALCOHOL



Parents  
2019: 63%



Friends  
2019: 39%



Brother/sister  
2019: 14%



Another adult  
2019: 13%

N.B. Students could choose however many responses were valid so total percentages don't equal 100%.

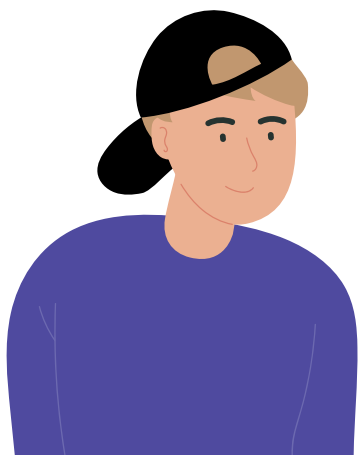
## ALCOHOL SOURCES AND DRINKING PATTERNS

Students that took part in the 2019 survey were allocated a risk of alcohol harm category, based on the links between drinking patterns and average harm scores found in the 2012 survey. This process is documented elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

Where students got their alcohol was related to their drinking pattern and risk of experiencing alcohol harm.

**Buying or taking:** Students who reported buying alcohol themselves or taking or stealing it from somewhere else (not home) were much more likely to have drinking patterns that posed a high risk or very high risk of harm. Because of the low number of under 18's reporting these sources, the odds ratio estimates and extremely wide confidence intervals are not presented. Getting someone else to buy alcohol for them also posed a high risk of harm (odds of high risk drinking 11.71, odds of very high risk drinking 23.80).

**Friends and siblings:** Peer supply (from friends or siblings) was associated with a greater likelihood of reporting a high risk drinking pattern. Students who reported this source of alcohol were more than three times as likely to report a high risk drinking pattern, and more than seven times as likely to report a very high risk drinking pattern when compared to those who only obtained alcohol from their parents.

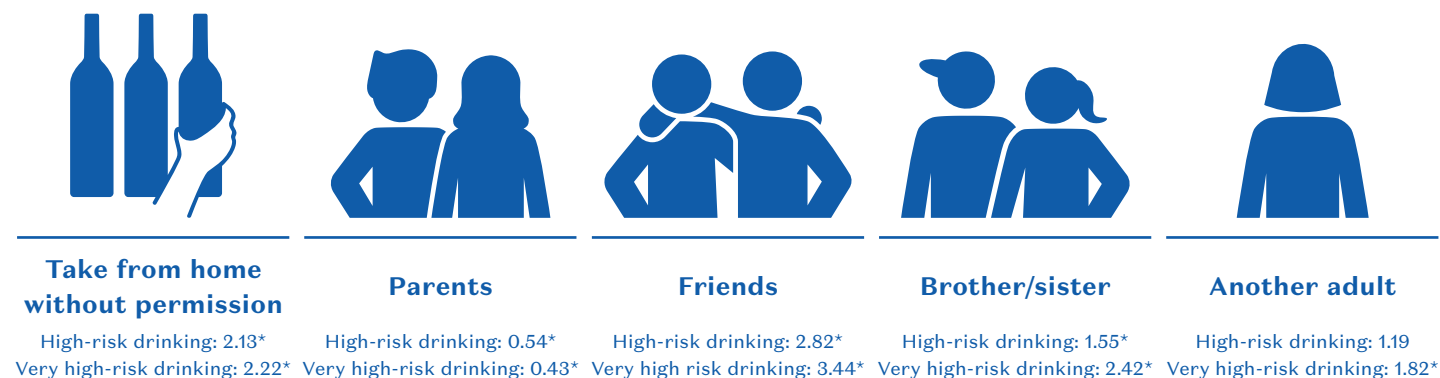


What do you think are the biggest problems for young people today?

“The ease of getting drugs and alcohol.”

– Auckland, 14 year old male, European, NZDep 6

**Parents:** Students who got alcohol from their parents were less likely to report a high risk or very high risk drinking pattern when compared to those who got alcohol from other sources. However, among students with a high risk drinking pattern, 60% reported getting alcohol from their parents and one-quarter reported that their parents were their sole source of alcohol. The infographic below shows the odds of reporting a high risk and very high risk drinking pattern by source of alcohol, compared to not getting alcohol from that source. The analysis is restricted to students aged under 18 years and is adjusted for age, gender, and level of deprivation (using the NZ Index of Deprivation).



\* Statistically significant.

## IMPLICATIONS

Almost half of young people who drink source alcohol from two or more sources. How young people use alcohol and whether they are likely to experience problems from drinking is complex and influenced by many developmental and social factors. This must be taken into account and interventions that exclusively focus on one source of alcohol are unlikely to successfully prevent harm.<sup>8</sup>

Students who source alcohol from their parents are less likely to have risky drinking patterns, possibly linked to the drinking setting (e.g. at family events) and a range of family-level protective factors (e.g. parental monitoring, communication, etc.). Over half of students who had high-risk drinking patterns reported getting alcohol from their parents, indicating the need to understand the risks associated with different contexts of parental supply.

Implementation of evidence-based alcohol policies, such as increasing alcohol prices, restricting availability and advertising, as well as raising the legal purchase age for alcohol, can further assist to reduce harm and provide supportive environments in which young people can thrive.<sup>10</sup>

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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