

Alcohol use by West Coast young people

A survey of young people's and adults' views

Infographic and plain language summary



Canterbury
District Health Board
Te Poari Hauora o Waitaha

Prepared for
Community & Public Health West Coast
by the Information Team, Community &
Public Health.
August 2017

Community and Public Health

West Coast Office
3 Tarapuhi Street
Greymouth
New Zealand
PO Box 443
Greymouth 7840
New Zealand
Phone: +64 3 768 1160
Fax: +64 3 768 1169

The information contained in this document may be derived from a number of sources. Although the CDHB has taken reasonable steps to ensure that the information is accurate, it accepts no liability or responsibility for any acts or omissions, done or omitted in reliance in whole or in part, on the information. Further, the contents of the document should be considered in relation to the time of its publication, as new evidence may have become available since publication. The Canterbury District Health Board accepts no responsibility for the manner in which this information is subsequently used.

© Canterbury District Health Board, 2017.

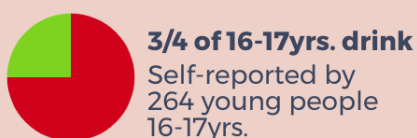


Alcohol use by West Coast young people

A survey of young people's views

August 2017

Young people's interactions with alcohol

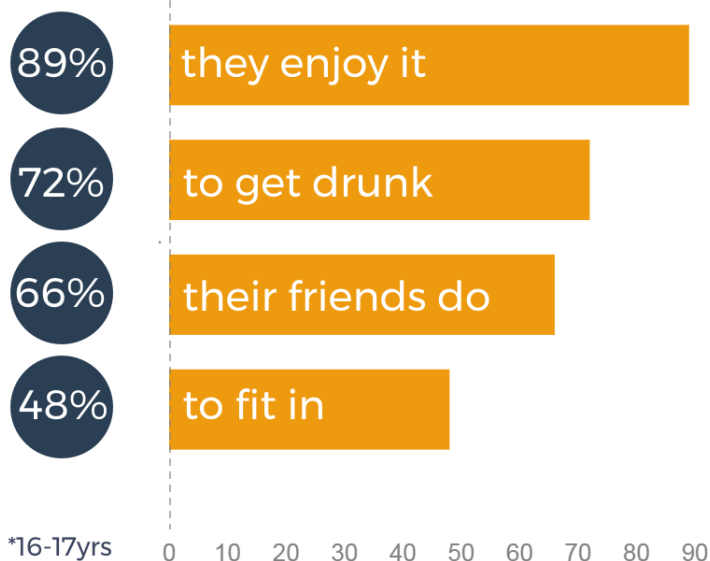


Community & Public Health West Coast

a division of
Canterbury District Health Board

Why do West Coast young people drink alcohol?

Young people* said they drink alcohol because ...



+ Local context



Economic situation



Unemployment



Deprivation

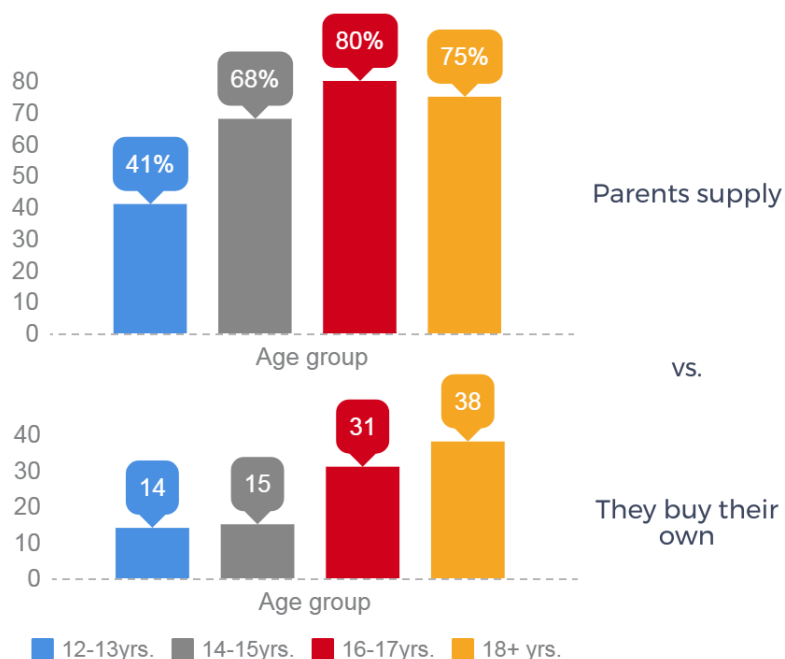


Geographical isolation + population outflow

= Vulnerabilities | Increased sensitivity to alcohol harm

Where do West Coast young people get their alcohol from?

Parents/caregivers supply vs purchasing own alcohol, by age group.



Plain language summary

The purpose of this report is to summarise the findings from the West Coast student alcohol survey and the West Coast adult alcohol survey, both completed March-May 2017. The surveys aimed to collect information on West Coast young people's drinking patterns, including understanding their attitudes, concerns, behaviours, safety, sources of supply, and any other alcohol-related issues that are important to young people, aged 18 years and under. All West Coast High Schools and area schools took part. In total, 920 year 9-13 students (aged between 12 and 18 years) participated in the student alcohol survey and 66 adults completed the adult alcohol survey. This report provides information that may assist health promoters, schools, and partner agencies with reducing alcohol-related harm in their communities (especially for more vulnerable groups).

The survey findings suggest that West Coast young people are probably not too different from young people elsewhere in New Zealand in terms of their experiences with alcohol, including why they drink and where they get alcohol from. However, the survey findings suggest some alcohol-related issues that have the potential for more serious harm. The local context of the West Coast presents some challenges, including significant economic and employment changes in the region over the last twenty years, relatively high levels of deprivation, population outflow, and geographical isolation. While these influences are not unique to the region, they are, arguably, clustered in such a way as to intensify the vulnerabilities within West Coast communities.

Young people on the West Coast reported that they mostly obtain their alcohol from their parents or other family members (with or without permission). This is called 'social supply'. Social supply means that the supply of alcohol comes from within young people's social circles, rather than directly from retail outlets. Many young people who answered the survey described the general willingness of parents to supply alcohol to underage young people, and that the supply sometimes involved 'at cost' or 'for profit' transactions by older family members (mostly parents but sometimes older siblings). Alcohol supply was generally described as fairly unrestricted. Young people indicated that over time, they tended to develop friendships and associations with other older people who can supply them with alcohol (e.g. friends and friends-of-friends aged over 18 years) and that parental supply then becomes less important.

Adults' and young people's views varied a great deal regarding the level of drinking that people think is 'OK', and some young people pointed out that this doesn't just apply to their own drinking behaviours (i.e. some adults' drinking behaviours might not be regarded as acceptable either). That said, of those young people who said they sometimes drink alcohol, more than one-in-three considered, *by their own standards*, that they sometimes drank too much. Views also differed on the reasons why West Coast young people drink alcohol. Mostly, the adults who were surveyed supposed that young people drink 'because their friends do' and 'to fit in' but the students who were surveyed indicated that young people generally drink alcohol because 'they enjoy it' and 'to get drunk'.

The survey findings highlight an opportunity to break the cycle of harmful alcohol use at young ages. Protecting young people on the West Coast from alcohol-related harm requires a *whole of population* approach. Community and student-led approaches using positively framed messages may be developed to address overall alcohol consumption, along with school alcohol policies, and other localised activities that focus on restricting social supply. Approaches to harm-reduction should consider the different views and values of West Coast young people *and* adults.