

Alcohol misuse by 16-24 year olds is a health issue (a cause for concern) in New Zealand because of the harms related to young people drinking. It is well known that alcohol is linked to crime, violence and health harms, and this is even worse because young people are drinking before their bodies are fully grown. Alcohol costs the taxpayer over \$1 Billion per year in New Zealand through costs to health and other services (crime, vandalism, days off work sick with a hangover). Evidence is from ALAC, 2012.

Three major determinants of health that contribute to alcohol misuse in youth in New Zealand are economic, political and cultural.

The economic determinant [...]

The political determinant [...]

The cultural determinant is a significant influence on young people's alcohol misuse in New Zealand. Ever since the days of the "Six O'clock Swill", NZ has been known as having a binge drinking culture, even amongst adults. Many adults (and young people) believe that it is OK to drink to get drunk and over 25% of adults do so once a week (ALAC, 2012). Culture refers to attitudes, values and beliefs held by people/groups in society and these statistics show that many New Zealanders have an unhealthy attitude towards alcohol. Because many people in NZ believe it is OK to drink to get drunk, young people are influenced to follow in their footsteps and begin to drink too excess, thinking it is a normal part of being a New Zealander.

1

Alcohol misuse by 16-24 year olds has many implications for well-being at personal, interpersonal and societal levels.

Personally, alcohol is associated with a large number of short-term and long-term effects for well-being, some of these being positive but most being negative [...]

Interpersonally, alcohol misuse by 16-24 year olds can cause problems in relationships and can interfere with a person's performance at school or in the workplace. It is well known that alcohol is linked with violence in New Zealand (The Police, 2013). Although this is at the extreme end, alcohol is also commonly linked with fights and arguments between friends and family members. Our school survey showed that 65% of year 13 students said they have had an argument or falling out with friends after drinking too much and doing or saying something that they now regret. The other thing is that alcohol misuse can affect a young person's performance at work or school. They may be too hung-over to go to school or work, which will cause conflict with teachers, family and employers. If drinking becomes a common pattern, this might lead a young person to start missing a lot of work or school, and may fail at assessments or lose their job because of this.

2

At the community/societal level [...]

I recommend two strategies to address alcohol misuse by 16-24 year olds in New Zealand.

The first strategy is to educate teenagers in school about the harms of alcohol use. This will involve health education lessons for all year levels at school, not just up to year 10. It is important for teenagers to be fully educated about the harms of alcohol use and how they can keep safe in social situations involving alcohol. The lessons can include information about why alcohol is harmful and develop skills in decision-making. It is also important to address the issue of peer pressure. Activities such as role plays can be used to help students practice saying “no”. This strategy links to the cultural determinant because it might help to change young people’s attitudes towards drinking alcohol. It leads to equitable health outcomes because it allows young people the opportunity to explore alcohol-related issues at school and hopefully then be able to make better choices.

3

The second strategy is to [...]

Note that full references were provided by the student at the end of the piece of work.