

Aucklanders more at risk of alcohol-related harms

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Press Release on behalf of Auckland's Alcohol Executive Planning Group

A 'Snapshot' of alcohol-related harm in Auckland reveals that Aucklanders are more likely than other New Zealanders to drink heavily, have alcohol-related crashes and be hospitalised with alcohol-related problems.

The Snapshot has been released by a group of agencies who have developed a plan to guide and co-ordinate efforts to reduce alcohol-related harm in Auckland. The group includes New Zealand Police, the Auckland Regional Public Health Service, Hapai Te Hauora (Maori Public Health), the Health Promotion Agency, Community Alcohol and Drug Service, Auckland Council and Alcohol Healthwatch.

The Snapshot represents a summary of three of the indicators the group have identified to monitor progress on the plan.

It shows that the rate of alcohol-related crashes for Auckland drivers is 28 percent above the national rate; that 8 percent of adult Auckland drinkers consume more than eight drinks in a typical session (compared to a national average of 6.5 percent); and that alcohol-attributable hospitalisations in Auckland are 11 percent higher than the national rate.

Group co-ordinator Rebecca Williams of Alcohol Healthwatch says that the Snapshot is deeply concerning and reinforces the need for affirmative action on alcohol-related harm. "We wanted to share the findings with Aucklanders so that they were more aware of the issues, and could all be part of creating a safer healthier city."

While the issue is complex, Williams says that young people in Auckland are the heaviest drinkers in the country. "We have larger numbers of late-trading liquor outlets (per 100,000 population 15 years+) than there are nationally, and until the end of last year these were allowed to operate 24/7. Liquor outlets have also been allowed to concentrate in parts of the city and this influences things like opening hours, exposure to alcohol advertising and pricing – all linked to harm outcomes and increased vulnerability of some population groups".

She says that with the deliberations on Auckland's Local Alcohol Policy currently underway it is important that the information in the Snapshot was in the mix. The Local Alcohol Policy provisions in the Sale and Supply of Alcohol Act 2012 do provide some tools to reduce the availability and accessibility of alcohol and as such present a golden opportunity to reduce alcohol-related harm in Auckland.

Ends...

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