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21 November 2024

Rodney Parsons

By email: fyi-request-29004-24b5978f@requests.fyi.org.nz
Ref: H2024055078

Tēnā koe Rodney

Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) to the Ministry of Health – Manatū Hauora (the Ministry) on 31 October 2024 for information about alcohol and suicide prevention. Please find a response to each part of your request below.

*Please provide figures on how many suicides alcohol was implicated in, each year for as far back as possible.
Break the data into subgroups that are readily available- age groups, gender, ethnicity and geography (e.g. rural vs urban).*

On 13 November 2024, you were advised that these parts of your request have been transferred to Health New Zealand – Te Whatu Ora in accordance with section 14(b)(i) of the Act. You can expect a response from Health New Zealand in due course (hnzoia@tewhatauora.govt.nz).

*Please provide the ministry's position on the role of alcohol in suicide- for instance is it considered a helpful suicide prevention aide, or is it considered to contribute to suicide.
Describe the role and key evidence ministry has relied on for its position.*

It is important to note while the Act allows New Zealanders to ask for information from government agencies, there is no requirement for agencies to provide or prove an opinion. The Act does not support requests where an opinion, comment, argument, or hypothetical statement is put to the Ministry for response, couched as a request for information. Therefore, this part of your request is refused under section 18(g)(i) of the Act.

There are a number of resources publicly available about alcohol and suicide prevention in New Zealand which you may find helpful that can be found at the following links:

- Evidence synthesis of the research on Suicide Prevention and Postvention; Aotearoa New Zealand: www.health.govt.nz/publications/evidence-synthesis-of-the-research-on-suicide-prevention-and-postvention-aotearoa-new-zealand-and#mig.
- Costs of alcohol harms in New Zealand: Updating the evidence with recent research: www.health.govt.nz/publications/costs-of-alcohol-harms-in-new-zealand-updating-the-evidence-with-recent-research.
- Empowering community control over alcohol availability as a suicide and self-harm prevention measure: Policy opportunity in Aotearoa: [www.thelancet.com/journals/lanwpc/article/PIIS2666-6065\(22\)00246-2/fulltext](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanwpc/article/PIIS2666-6065(22)00246-2/fulltext).

- Sex-specific analysis of acute alcohol use in suicides and reporting of alcohol as a contributor to suicide deaths in New Zealand 2007-2020: a cross-sectional study of coronial data: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/39418606/>.

Please note some of the key points from these resources about the link between alcohol and suicide in New Zealand are well established internationally:

- 26.5% of suicide deaths in New Zealand of those aged 15 or over between July 2007 – December 2020 involved acute alcohol use.
- Suicide was more likely to involve acute alcohol use among Māori and Pasifika females. Māori females had a 35% greater risk of their suicide involving acute alcohol use compared to European females; Pasifika females had a 75% increased risk.

If you wish to discuss any aspect of your request with us, including this decision, please feel free to contact the OIA Services Team on: oiagr@health.govt.nz.

Under section 28(3) of the Act, you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review any decisions made under this request. The Ombudsman may be contacted by email at: info@ombudsman.parliament.nz or by calling 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response, with your personal details removed, may be published on the Manatū Hauora website at: www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases/responses-official-information-act-requests.

Nāku noa, nā



Kiri Richards
Associate Deputy Director-General
Clinical, Community and Mental Health | Te Pou Whakakaha