

Analysis of drug use by recipients of social welfare benefits

This document presents analyses of past-year drug use (other than alcohol, tobacco and BZP party pills) for recreational purposes among people aged 16-64 years who receive social welfare benefits, from the 2007/08 New Zealand Alcohol and Drug Use Survey. The Ministry recommends that the reader note the cautions outlined on the final page.

Table 1: Prevalence rates (and 95% confidence intervals) of using any drug for recreational purposes (excluding alcohol, tobacco and BZP party pills) in the past 12 months

Gender		Age Groups (Yrs.)				All
		16 – 30	31 – 45	46 – 65		
Male	Beneficiaries (UB/DPPB/SB/IB) (n = 279)	54.6 (34.2 – 74.9) (n = 60)	34.6 (19.1 – 50.0) (n = 88)	22.3 (13.8 – 32.8) (n = 131)	33.5 (26.1 – 40.9) (n = 279)	
	Non-Beneficiaries (All non-UB/DPPB/SB/IB) (n = 2129)	33.1 (28.5 – 37.6) (n = 697)	16.8 (13.6 – 20.1) (n = 714)	8.7 (6.5 – 11.0) (n = 718)	19.2 (17.4 – 21.0) (n = 2129)	
	Total (n = 2408)	34.4 (30.0 – 38.7) (n = 757)	18.0 (14.8 – 21.3) (n = 802)	10.1 (7.8 – 12.4) (n = 849)	20.3 (18.5 – 22.1) (n = 2408)	
	Beneficiaries (UB/DPPB/SB/IB) (n = 740)	37.6 (28.4 – 46.8) (n = 229)	24.9 (18.2 – 31.6) (n = 295)	10.5 (6.0 – 16.8) (n = 216)	24.5 (20.0 – 28.9) (n = 740)	
	Non-Beneficiaries (All non-UB/DPPB/SB/IB) (n = 3608)	26.0 (21.9 – 30.2) (n = 988)	8.0 (6.2 – 9.8) (n = 1385)	3.5 (2.3 – 4.6) (n = 1235)	11.8 (10.4 – 13.3) (n = 3608)	
Female	Total (n = 4348)	27.4 (23.6 – 31.1) (n = 1217)	10.0 (8.2 – 11.7) (n = 1680)	4.1 (3.0 – 5.2) (n = 1451)	13.2 (11.8 – 14.5) (n = 4348)	
	Beneficiaries (UB/DPPB/SB/IB) (n = 1019)	43.3 (34.1 – 52.5) (n = 289)	28.1 (20.8 – 35.5) (n = 383)	16.5 (11.3 – 21.7) (n = 347)	28.1 (24.0 – 32.1) (n = 1019)	
	Non-Beneficiaries (All non-UB/DPPB/SB/IB) (n = 5737)	29.6 (26.5 – 32.6) (n = 1685)	12.2 (10.5 – 14.0) (n = 2099)	6.0 (4.8 – 7.2) (n = 1953)	15.4 (14.3 – 16.6) (n = 5737)	
	Total (n = 6756)	30.8 (27.9 – 33.7) (n = 1974)	13.7 (11.9 – 15.5) (n = 2482)	7.0 (5.8 – 8.3) (n = 2300)	16.6 (15.4 – 17.7) (n = 6756)	
	All					

Source: 2007/08 New Zealand Alcohol and Drug Use Survey

Interpretation

Table 1 shows that, based on findings from the 2007/08 New Zealand Alcohol and Drug Use Survey, recipients of the unemployment, domestic purposes, sickness or invalid's (UB/DPB/SB/IB) benefit (beneficiaries) are, within each age-group, significantly more likely to self-report using any drug (other than alcohol, tobacco and BZP party pills) for recreational purposes in the past 12 months than non-beneficiaries. This finding also applies when beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries populations are separated by gender. That is, male beneficiaries are significantly more likely than male non-beneficiaries, and female beneficiaries are significantly more likely than female non-beneficiaries, to self-report using any drug in the past 12 months.

Further statistical analysis confirmed that the above findings remained the same when comparing differences within gender across the three age groups (16-30, 31-45 and 46-65). For example, females aged 16-30 are significantly more likely than females aged 31-45 to self-report using any drug in the past 12 months. Furthermore, differences within age-groups between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries are also significant. For example, male beneficiaries aged 16-30 are significantly more likely to self-report using any drug in the past 12 months than male non-beneficiaries aged 16-30. (Both examples refer to the differences being significant at a 5 percent level (ie, $p < 0.05$).)

Table 2: Age standardised prevalence rates (and 95% confidence intervals) of using any drug for recreational purposes (excluding alcohol, tobacco and BZP party pills) in the past 12 months

Gender		All
Male	Beneficiaries (UB/DPB/SB/IB) (n = 279)	38.4 (30.1 – 46.8)
	Non-Beneficiaries (All non-UB/DPB/SB/IB) (n = 2129)	22.2 (20.1 – 24.4)
	Total (n = 2408)	23.4 (21.3 – 25.5)
Female	Beneficiaries (UB/DPB/SB/IB) (n = 740)	28.5 (23.2 – 33.8)
	Non-Beneficiaries (All non-UB/DPB/SB/IB) (n = 3608)	14.6 (12.7 – 16.4)
	Total (n = 4348)	16.1 (14.3 – 17.8)
All	Beneficiaries (UB/DPB/SB/IB) (n = 1019)	32.2 (27.6 – 36.8)
	Non-Beneficiaries (All non-UB/DPB/SB/IB) (n = 5737)	18.3 (16.9 – 19.7)
	Total (n = 6756)	19.6 (18.2 – 21.0)

Source: 2007/08 New Zealand Alcohol and Drug Use Survey

Interpretation

Table 2 presents a similar analysis to that shown in Table 1, except with the ages of the populations standardised. Standardising for age involves controlling for differences that are caused by the two population groups having different age profiles. For example, given that the 2007/08 New Zealand Alcohol and Drug Use Survey found that younger people are generally more likely self-report having used any drug (other than alcohol, tobacco and BZP party pills) for recreational purposes in the past 12 months than older age groups, the differences in drug use between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries could be partially explained if beneficiaries happened to be a much younger population group than non-beneficiaries. In essence, age standardisation gives each population group the same age profile.

With age-standardisation applied, the differences in drug use between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries remain statistically significant, as are the differences for male beneficiaries and male non-beneficiaries and for female beneficiaries and female non-beneficiaries.

Cautions

The 2007/08 New Zealand Alcohol and Drug Use Survey was a sample survey at one point in time, and can be used to examine associations between drug use and sociodemographic characteristics. However, associations do not necessarily imply causality. For example, the survey found that drug use was a more prevalent behaviour amongst beneficiaries. But this association does not mean the behaviour has been **caused** by being a beneficiary, or vice-versa. In addition, the findings shown in this document do not indicate the frequency of drug use or give any indication of the impact of that drug use.

Similar to the process of adjusting for age, different population groups can be adjusted for other demographic differences (such as for ethnicity and socioeconomic status). However, the Ministry has not undertaken further adjustments for such factors for drug use by beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries due to the time the further statistical analysis that those tasks would require. Therefore, the Ministry cannot rule out the possibility that the higher prevalence of drug use amongst beneficiaries is further explained by these factors.

For example, the survey found that men and women living in more socioeconomically deprived neighbourhoods (NZDep2006 quintile 5) were significantly more likely to have used any drug for recreational purposes in the past year than people living in less socioeconomically deprived neighbourhoods (quintile 1). Therefore, it is possible that some of the difference in drug use between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries is explained by beneficiaries being more likely to be living in socioeconomically deprived neighbourhoods. This is also the case for other factors that correlate with higher drug use.

Finally, it must be remembered that the findings presented in this document show the prevalence of using any drug for recreational purposes (excluding alcohol, tobacco and BZP party pills) in the past 12 months, drawn from a sample weighted toward representing New Zealanders living in private dwellings. That is, the sample did not include people residing in "institutions" such as prisons and hospitals.

Further results on drug use in New Zealand from the 2007/08 New Zealand Alcohol and Drug Use Survey can be found in the report "Drug Use in New Zealand: Key results of the 2007/08 New Zealand Alcohol and Drug Use Survey" (Ministry of Health 2010).

Reference: Ministry of Health. 2010. Drug Use in New Zealand: Key results of the 2007/08 New Zealand Alcohol and Drug Use Survey. Wellington: Ministry of Health. Available from: <http://www.moh.govt.nz/moh.nsf/indexmh/drug-use-in-nz-key-results-of-the-0708-nzadus?Open>.

