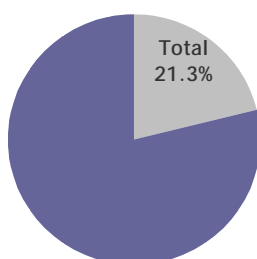


TONGA

Alcohol consumption

Data from the Statistics Office show that in 1994 the total per capita consumption of absolute alcohol (for people aged 15 years and over) was approximately 1.3 litres. This included 1.0 litre of beer and 0.3 litres of spirits. Overall, in 1994 beer was the source of approximately 77% of the total absolute alcohol consumed in Tonga and about half of this beer was imported.¹

Youth drinking (lifetime alcohol use)



The Health Behaviour and Lifestyle of Pacific Youth survey in Tonga had a representative sample of 2880 students (950 boys and 1146 girls; age group 10 to 20 years) from across Tonga. Among 13-year-olds, 67% of boys and 90% of girls had never consumed alcohol whereas among 15-year-olds, 53% of boys and 82% of girls had never consumed alcohol.²

In order to gain an indication of health and lifestyle issues among out-of-school youth a convenience sample of 1008 young people from across Tonga were also surveyed in the Health Behaviour and Lifestyle of Pacific Youth survey. 55.5% of the out-of-school youth surveyed had used alcohol at least once in the past. 69.6% of boys and 28.3% of girls reported use of alcohol at least weekly.³

A recent study undertaken on behalf of the Pacific Action for Health Project of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, working in conjunction with the Tonga Family Health Association, found that alcohol consumption among Tongan youth was widespread. The most common ages to start drinking were 16 and 17. Alcohol is most often consumed on weekends, especially on Friday nights. The usual places for alcohol consumption are night clubs, 'huts' and secret locations. Binge drinking seems to be the norm. Spirits ('hot stuff') such as Bounty Rum were the most popular beverage while local and imported beer were less common than spirits. Most drinkers reported drinking mainly on Fridays, and sometimes Saturdays as well, or opportunistically if one of their peers had obtained some alcohol.³

Youth drinking (drunkenness)

The Health Behaviour and Lifestyle of Pacific Youth survey which had a representative sample of 2880 students from across Tonga found that approximately 13% of students reported that they had been drunk at least once in the past and a little over 5% reported that they had been drunk two or more times.²

Traditional alcoholic beverages

In Tonga, *hopi* is often a person's first introduction to alcohol. Compared to Palangi (European) alcohol, *hopi* is cheap and easy to obtain or make. Younger men speak of being given *hopi* in Tonga from an early age, 10 years old upwards. *Hopi* is given as a reward for running errands for older boys, for example, going to the shops for cigarettes or climbing a coconut tree for drinks.⁴

Morbidity, health and social problems from alcohol use

In 1986 there were 230 injuries serious enough to require admission to hospital in Nukualofa (the capital of Tonga). Of these, 68 were natural accidents, 59 were assaults and 54 were motor vehicle accidents. Of the assaults, 19 of the people were drunk and of the motor vehicle accidents, 18 had a known alcohol intake.⁵

In 2001 there were 114 hospital admissions attributable to alcohol – 18 were for noncommunicable diseases and 96 for other diseases. Alcohol was responsible for 1.98% of all noncommunicable diseases hospital admissions and 1.3% of total admissions.³ In 1989, 75% of hospital admissions were alcohol-related.⁶

In 1994, 18% of reported criminal offences were alcohol-related.⁶

Economic and social costs

In 2001 the treatment costs for hospital admissions of all diseases attributable to alcohol amounted to TOP 115 732 (Tongan pa'anga).³

Country background information

Total population 2003	104 000	Life expectancy at birth (2002)	Male	70.0
Adult (15+)	65 520		Female	71.4
% under 15	37	Probability of dying under age 5 per 1000 (2002)	Male	23
Population distribution 2001 (%)			Female	15
Urban	33	Gross National Income per capita 2002	US\$	1410
Rural	67			

Sources: Population and Statistics Division of the United Nations Secretariat, World Bank World Development Indicators database, The World Health Report 2004

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