



ALCOHOL DRUG ASSOCIATION NEW ZEALAND

P O Box 13-496, Christchurch

New Zealand

Telephone 03 379 8626 / 379 8526

Email ada@adanz.org.nz

www.adanz.org.nz

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NEWS RELEASE

Big rise in calls to Drug and Alcohol Helpline

The 35% increase in calls to the national Drug and Alcohol Helpline during the past year shows that alcohol and drugs increasingly affect our community, according to Cate Kearney, manager of the Alcohol and Drug Association of New Zealand (ADA) which runs the Helpline.

“At the same time, there has been a noticeable increase in drug-related calls, which almost doubled over the past year,” she said.

“We believe that the lowering of the drinking age has definitely contributed to this rise in concerns about the effects of addiction, with even more youth-related violence and drink-driving offences.”

The ADA was also concerned about the rise in drug-related calls, particularly relating to cannabis, ‘P’ or methamphetamine and the new legal party drugs, herbal highs.

Alcohol and Drug Helpline statistics for the past year show:

- Of the 17,034 calls to the Helpline, alcohol-related calls made up 47.6%. However, over the past four years there has been a noticeable increase in drug-related calls, particularly in the last year, when they nearly doubled from 21.1% to 38.1% of calls,
- Over the past three years there has also been a marked increase in calls about other drugs – particularly with the emergence of ‘P’ or methamphetamine. In 2001, the Helpline did not receive any calls about ‘P’, but last year, 7.7% of all calls were ‘P’- related.
- Calls about cannabis have almost doubled in the past three years to 10%.
- Women continue to make the most calls to the Helpline, but many of those were concerned friends or relations. Males continue to outnumber females as having problematic substance abuse.
- New Zealand Europeans/Kiwis comprised 54.8% of callers, 11.8 said they were of Maori descent and only 0.4% of callers identified are from Pacific Peoples.

ADA provides a 10am – 10pm confidential Helpline, seven days a week, to assist people with concerns about their alcohol or other drug use. Callers are offered information, a listening ear and referral to treatment agencies services.

“Alcohol and other drugs permeate society,” Ms Kearney said. “The impact from their misuse is too often present in our lives, with tragic consequences. A healthy community is one in which people are engaged and informed, and ADA will continue to work towards influencing and changing people’s attitudes and addictive behaviours to make our communities stronger and healthier.”

In addition to the national Helpline, ADA provides people working in the alcohol, drug and allied sectors with up-to-date information, regular networking opportunities, and a credible and informed voice.

A not-for-profit organisation, the ADA is funded by the Alcohol Advisory Council, the Ministry of Health, the Canterbury District Health Board and other South Island health boards and The Community Trust.