

SMASHED

Changing the culture of underage drinking

New Zealand 2021

IMPACT AND OUTCOMES

SMASHED is a Theatre-in-Education programme committed to changing the culture of underage drinking in New Zealand. SMASHED uses powerful live theatre and interactive workshops to engage students in learning about peer pressure, relationships and the dangers of consuming alcohol. Young audiences follow the three young characters and witness how they become involved with alcohol and how it affects their lives. Interactive workshops enable rangatahi to explore the facts about underage drinking and develop strategies for resisting peer influence and making positive choices.

SMASHED was launched in the UK in 2004, and now spans across 19 countries. Adapted for New Zealand audiences, Life Education Trust launched SMASHED in 2019. Since then over 43,000 rangatahi across the country have participated.

WHY ALCOHOL EDUCATION IS CRITICAL IN NEW ZEALAND

- While the legal purchase age is 18, we know drinking alcohol is common amongst young secondary school students: 48.8% of those aged 15 years or under 'currently drink' and 21.4% report they have participated in binge drinking in the last four weeks. (Youth 2000 Series, Auckland University)
- Peer pressure and tactics to respond are important. When asking how they access alcohol: 43.5% of 14 year olds say friends supplied them with alcohol. (Youth 2000 Series, Auckland University)
- Alcohol-related harm in New Zealand has been recently estimated to cost \$5.3 billion per year. This equates to a cost of \$14.5 million every day. (2016/17 NZ Health Survey, Ministry of Health)

OUR REACH

In 2021

13,224



&

In 2019 and 2020

31,000

students took part



SMASHED SURVEY SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

This summary highlights the key findings from the 2021 SMASHED surveys conducted with students both before and after the programme, and with Teachers after the programme. Surveys were conducted during the tour period of April to August 2021 (school visits were impacted by lockdowns and COVID-19 restrictions).

SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

Of the 13,224 students that took part in the programme in 2021;

- 5,231 students completed the pre survey
- 2,108 students completed the post survey
- 65 teachers or school leaders completed the post teacher survey
- SMASHED was performed at 62 schools, all of which were invited to participate in the surveys

Students involved were aged 12 – 15 years old, with 96% falling into the 13 - 14 year old age group. Surveys were conducted online.

PERCEIVED VALUE OF SMASHED

After seeing SMASHED

83 PERCENT

of students agreed that it was a 'good way to learn about the dangers of underage drinking.'



98 PERCENT

of teachers agreed that it is important that programmes like this exist in schools.

- 84% of teachers thought their students understood more about the dangers of underage drinking than they did before taking part in SMASHED.
- 86% of teachers thought the performance and workshop explored issues around underage drinking which are relevant to this age group.
- 78% of teachers felt more confident to talk with young people about the dangers of underage drinking after participating in SMASHED.

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE DANGERS OF UNDERAGE DRINKING

After participating in SMASHED 52% of students reported they knew 'lots' about the dangers of underage drinking, an increase of 17% on pre-participation figures.

AWARENESS OF THE IMPACTS OF CONSUMING ALCOHOL

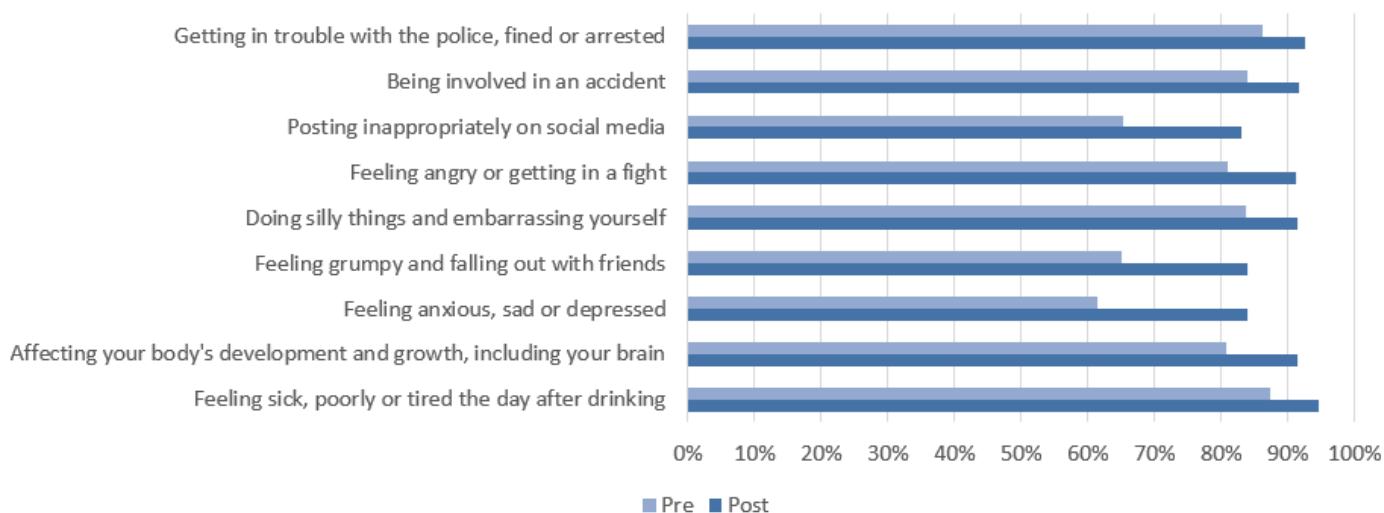
Before taking part in SMASHED, a high proportion of students had awareness of the potential physical impacts of drinking alcohol (such as feeling poorly the next day and the impacts on brain and body development), and of the potential to get in trouble, do something silly or get in an accident.

The most significant shift between pre and post knowledge was awareness of the mental and emotional impacts; e.g. 'feeling sad, anxious or depressed' (22% increase in awareness), 'feeling grumpy and falling out with friends' (19% increase in awareness).

Many research reports show deteriorating mental health and emotional wellbeing statistics of young people in New Zealand, with rates of depression and anxiety on the rise. To see the large shift in awareness of the impacts that alcohol can have on emotional wellbeing is very encouraging.

We also saw a considerable shift in awareness about 'posting inappropriately on social media' (18% increase in awareness).

IDENTIFIED POTENTIAL IMPACT CONNECTED WITH DRINKING ALCOHOL UNDERAGE



KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE LEGAL AGES FOR PURCHASING ALCOHOL

After participating in SMASHED 92% of students were aware of the legal age for purchasing alcohol in New Zealand, compared to 86% prior to taking part.

WHERE TO GET SUPPORT

After participating in SMASHED, 74% of students knew where they could go to get help if they experienced problems with alcohol, an increase in 31% on pre-participation figures.

This increased knowledge of where to seek help is very positive, given the high rate of depression in young people.

PEER PRESSURE

After participating in SMASHED, 93% of students reported they understood what peer pressure is, an increase of 5% on pre-participation figures.

Students showed understanding of strategies to stand up to peer pressure if offered alcohol. The most common themes recorded were to:

- Say no
- Walk away
- Change the subject



Response examples:

- "Stand your ground, ask for support from a trusted adult, friend or peer."
- "You can stop and think. Tell someone you know and trust."
- "I would just say no - if they don't accept my answer and try to pressure me then they aren't the type of friends I want to have."
- "Do what you want to do and not what they want you to do."
- "Stand up for what you believe. If you think that you shouldn't be drinking, then don't."
- "Act responsibly and evaluate the consequences. Walk away, say no and work your way around the situation."
- "Say no, distance yourself from them and if they keep egging you on, tell them why you won't drink alcohol and why it's bad for young people."



DECISION MAKING

Prior to taking part in SMASHED, 77% of students felt equipped to make the right choices about drinking alcohol. After taking part, this rose to 84%, an increase of 7%.

KEY LEARNINGS: STUDENTS

When asked what the most important learnings from SMASHED were, the common themes were:

- Don't drink underage
- The negative affects of drinking
- The effects of peer pressure



Response examples:

- "That drinking is bad for you mentally and physically."
- "Drinking alcohol when underage can seriously damage you."
- "Where to get help if someone needs it."
- "That not only does alcohol affect you, but it also affects the people around you."
- "That these sorts of things can happen to others and you, and that there are ways to stop it."
- "Always think of the consequences."
- "Peer pressure is a huge factor and surrounding yourself with the right people is very important."



TEACHERS' FEEDBACK

- 95% of teachers would like this programme to visit their school again next year
- 95% felt the team of actors were professional and competent
- 95% felt SMASHED was well produced and presented
- 86% thought the performance and workshop explored issues around underage drinking which were relevant to the students' age group
- 78% of teachers felt more confident in talking to young people about the dangers of underage drinking after participation

Teachers reported that students gained new learnings about (response examples):

- "That they have agency to make good choices."
- "Highlighting how they can get involved and how things can escalate quickly with alcohol use."
- "I think they learnt to consider other possibilities when they are offered alcohol, and to understand that they might not be the only one not keen to drink. To be brave and stand up for themselves."
- "The physical and emotional dangers of drinking underage."
- "Ways in which they can say no or get out of an awkward situation."
- "I think that they may have picked up on how influential their friend groups are."
- "They have been able to pick-up real-life skills through the scenarios which will give them more confidence in making responsible decisions."



CONCLUSIONS

Overall, SMASHED survey results show students increased understanding about the programme's key learning objectives:

- Alcohol awareness
- The potential risks of underage drinking including the physical and mental health issues, anti-social behaviour, accidents and injury and impacts on relationships
- Able to recognise causes of underage drinking for example peer pressure and social influence and identify strategies to resist these pressures
- Raised awareness about personal responsibility in making positive choices around alcohol and keeping safe
- Understanding where to go for help

Teachers shared that their confidence teaching this topic was increased after participating in SMASHED. The large majority of teachers would like their students to participate in SMASHED again next year.

Teachers reported that through the Theatre-in-Education style of teaching, the young SMASHED acting team were able to create scenes that felt relevant to students, reinforcing existing knowledge from a different perspective.

SMASHED increased students' knowledge in all aspects surveyed. To add to this knowledge and the value of the programme, teachers are encouraged to continue exploring key learning points after taking part. To support integration into the school classroom, lesson plans and teaching resources are provided to schools.

The large majority of students were engaged with the programme and agreed that it was a 'good way to learn about the dangers of underage drinking.'



PROUDLY SUPPORTED BY:

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