

INFORMATION  
ANALYSIS  
DIRECTORATE



# Adult Drinking Patterns in Northern Ireland 2013



Department of  
**Health, Social Services  
and Public Safety**

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## Executive Summary

The main findings of the report are as follows:

- Almost three-quarters of respondents (73%) drank alcohol (similar to previous years).
- A larger proportion of males (76%) than females (70%) drank alcohol.
- Younger adults (18-29 years) were more likely to drink than older adults (60-75 years) – 82% compared with 58%.
- The most common alcoholic drinks consumed by males were beer (70%), wine (35%) and spirits (27%), while it was wine (64%), spirits (30%) and beer (19%) for females.
- Two-thirds of respondents (65%) who drank alcohol in the week prior to the survey had consumed it at home, while one-fifth drank either in the pub (20%) or in restaurants (17%).
- Almost one-third of male respondents (29%) and two-fifths of female respondents (42%) did not exceed the recommended daily drinking levels during the week prior to the survey.
- The proportion of male drinkers (13%) that exceeded the recommended daily limits on three or more days in the previous week was more than double that of female drinkers (6%).
- Almost one-third of those respondents (31%) who drank in the week before the survey had engaged in at least one binge drinking session with males (35%) more likely to do so than females (27%).
- CAGE question analysis (based on a set of clinical interview questions) indicated that 11% of those who drank in the week prior to the survey were likely to have a problem with alcohol.
- Almost three-fifths of males (57%) and two-thirds of females (69%) who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey considered themselves to be light drinkers.
- Two-thirds of respondents (68%) had heard of minimum unit pricing of alcohol prior to the survey.
- Three-fifths of respondents (60%) were in favour of minimum unit pricing.
- Of all respondents that drank alcohol, 4% stated that they would drink a lot less if a minimum unit price was set at 40p, which compared with 17% at 70p per unit.
- For problem drinkers, 6% would drink a lot less if a minimum unit price was set at 40p, while 25% would drink a lot less if a minimum unit price was set at 70p.

## Introduction

This report presents the main findings of the Adult Drinking Patterns Survey 2013. Public Health Information and Research Branch within the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) commissioned Central Survey Unit (CSU) of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) to conduct this survey to inform policy on alcohol in Northern Ireland. The survey is based on responses to a questionnaire from a sample of 1,987 respondents aged between 18 and 75 years old. It aims to provide an up-to-date picture of adult drinking patterns across Northern Ireland including the amount of alcohol consumed in the week prior to the survey, where and when people drink, what they drink and who they drink with. It also looks at how drinking behaviour varies among different socio-economic groups, gender and age. Attitudes to drinking and views on minimum unit pricing of alcohol are also included in the survey for the first time.

The 2013 survey is the latest in a series of Adult Drinking Pattern Surveys having been previously conducted in 1999, 2005, 2008 and 2011 and includes analyses of trends over the period.

## Alcohol Consumption

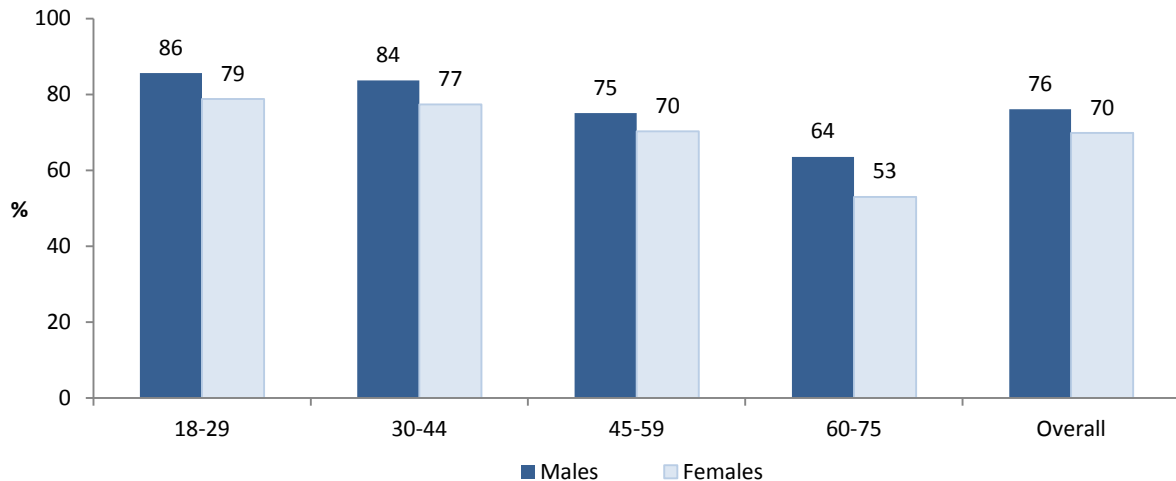
*Almost three-quarters of respondents drank alcohol*

Overall 73% of adults in Northern Ireland drank alcohol, similar to proportions in previous years. Over three-quarters of males (76%) and two-thirds of females (70%) drank alcohol. These proportions are similar to those reported for males (75%) and females (67%) in 1999.



Younger people are more likely to drink than older people (Figure 1). Over four-fifths of 18-29 year olds (82%) drank compared with 58% of 60-75 year olds.

**Figure 1: Drinking prevalence by age and sex**

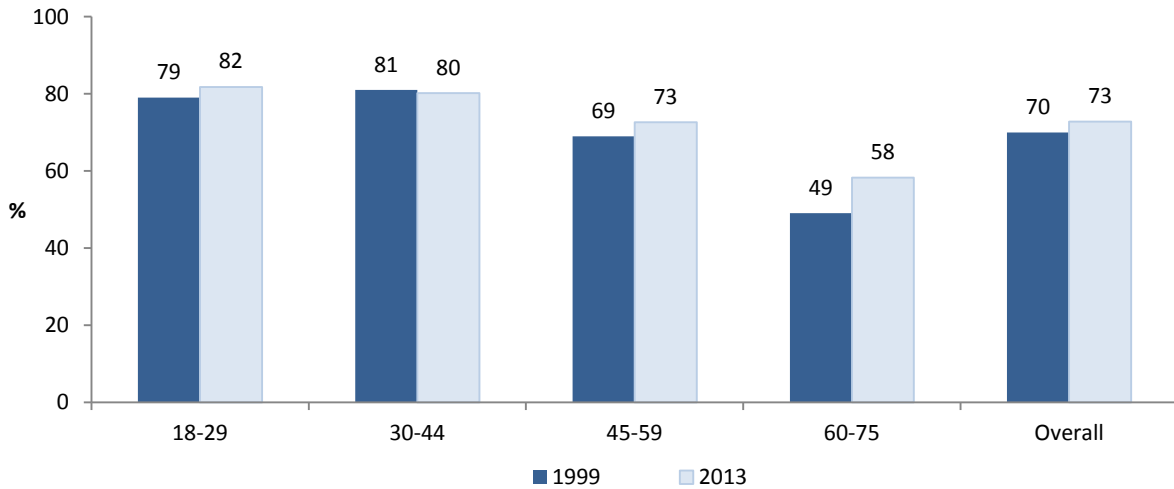


Around two-thirds of respondents (65%) with annual household incomes of under £10,400 drank alcohol compared with four-fifths (83%) for respondents with household incomes of £52,000 and above. Higher proportions of male and female respondents in higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations (NS-SEC) drank alcohol (84% and 81% respectively) than in routine and manual occupations (74% and 66%). Similarly, more than four-fifths of those with A-Levels and above (82%) drank which compared with 55% of adults with no qualifications.

The proportion of adults who drank was similar across all Health and Social Care Trusts (HSCTs), varying between 71% and 74%.

Between 1999 and 2013, the most noticeable increase in alcohol consumption occurred among respondents in the 60-75 age group (from 49% to 58%) (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Comparison of Drinking Prevalence by Age - 1999 & 2013**

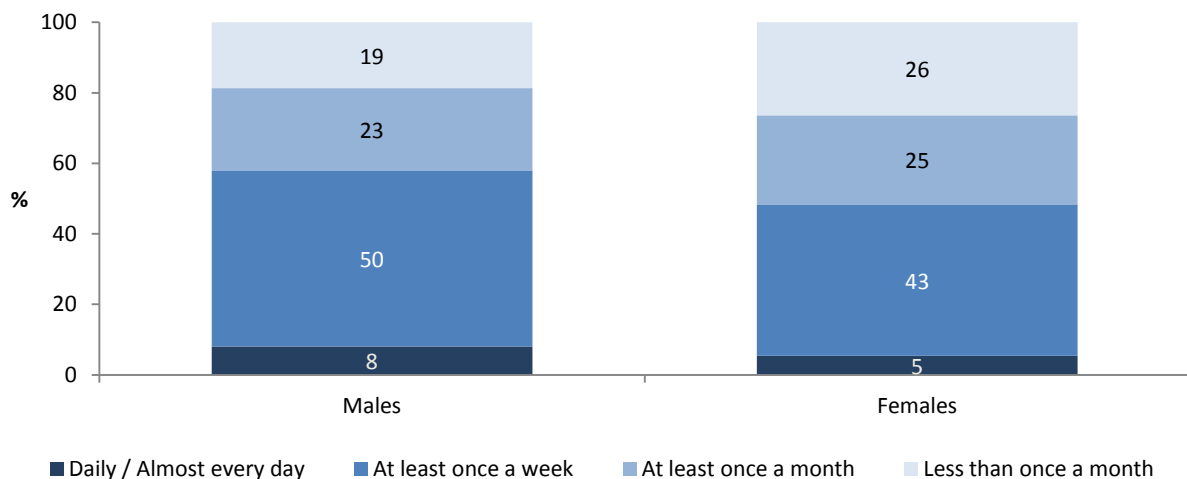


## Frequency of drinking

Over half of respondents (53%) who drank did so at least once a week. This proportion is similar to those who drank in 2011 and 2005. A further 24% drank at least once a month, while 23% drank at least once a year.

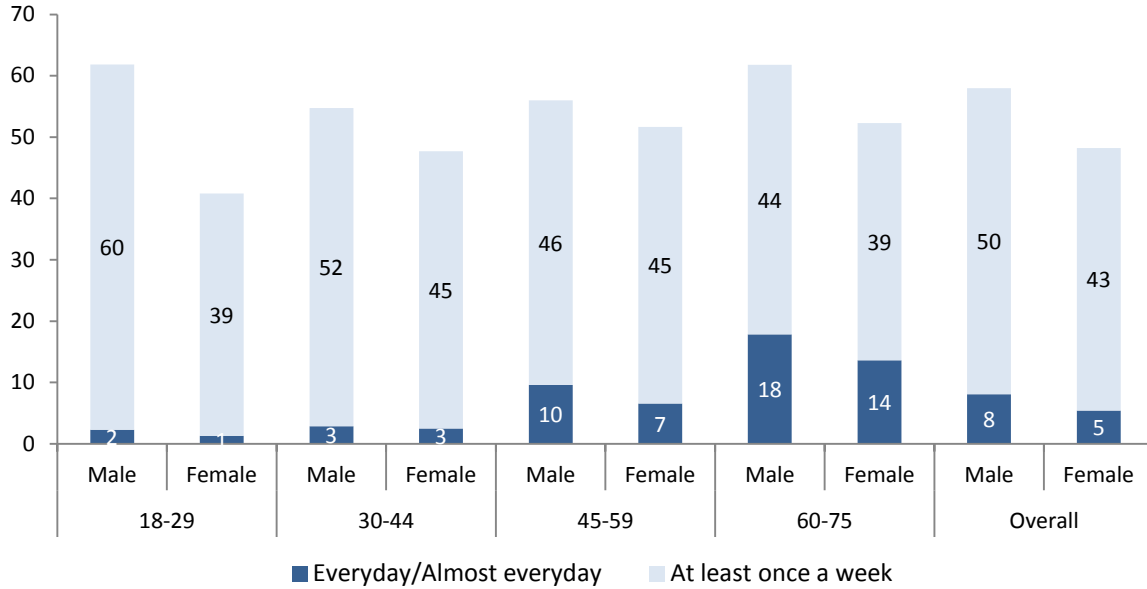
Males drank more frequently than females. Half of males (50%) drank at least once a week with a further 8% drinking daily/almost every day. This compared with 43% of female respondents that reported drinking at least once a week and 5% drinking daily or almost every day.

**Figure 3: Frequency of drinking by sex**



Daily drinking was more common among older respondents for both sexes (Figure 4) with 18% of males and 14% of woman aged 60-75 years old drinking almost every day. This compared with 2% of males and 1% of females aged 18-29 years old.

**Figure 4: Drinking pattern by age and sex**

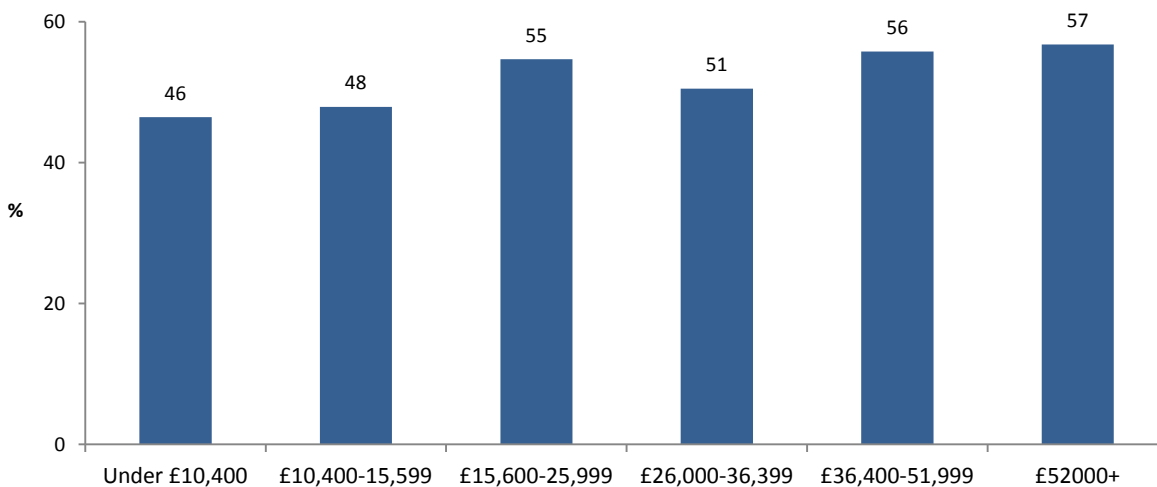


Three-fifths of male respondents (62%) aged 18-29 years old drank at least once a week (Figure 4). Similarly three-fifths of male respondents aged 60-75 years old (62%) drank at least once a week although this group was most likely to drink on an almost daily basis (18%). Males from intermediate occupations that drank (13%) were more likely to drink almost every day than males in higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations (7%) and routine and manual occupations (6%).

Those living in the Belfast Trust (59%) were most likely to drink at least once a week while those living in the Southern Trust (47%) were least likely.

The frequency of drinking increased with gross household income (Figure 5). Less than half of respondents from households with lower incomes (i.e. under £10,400 per annum) drank at least once a week (46%) which compared with 57% of respondents from households earning £52,000 and above per annum.

**Figure 5: Drinking at least once a week by household income**



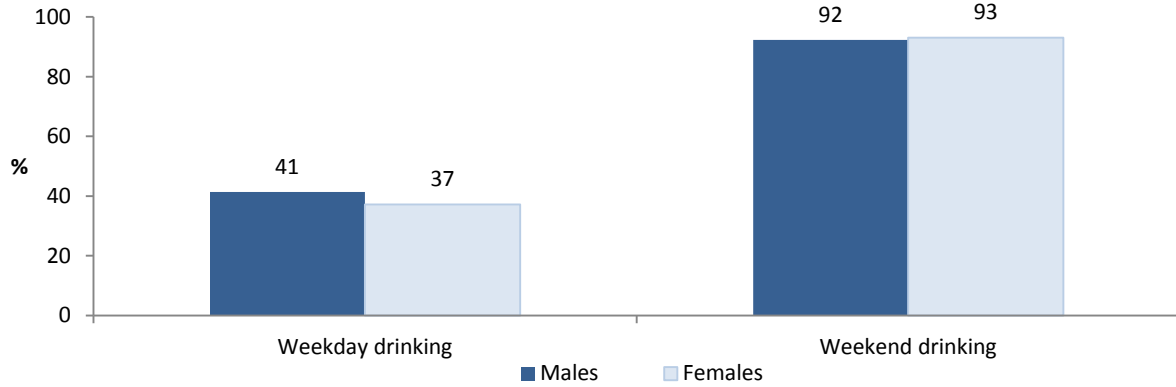
A higher proportion of respondents that held no formal qualifications (12%) drank either every day or almost every day than those with O-Levels or equivalent qualifications (7%) and A-levels and higher qualifications (5%).

## Drinking Behaviour

Two-thirds of respondents (65%) who said that they drank alcohol did so in the week prior to the survey (69% of males and 60% of females).

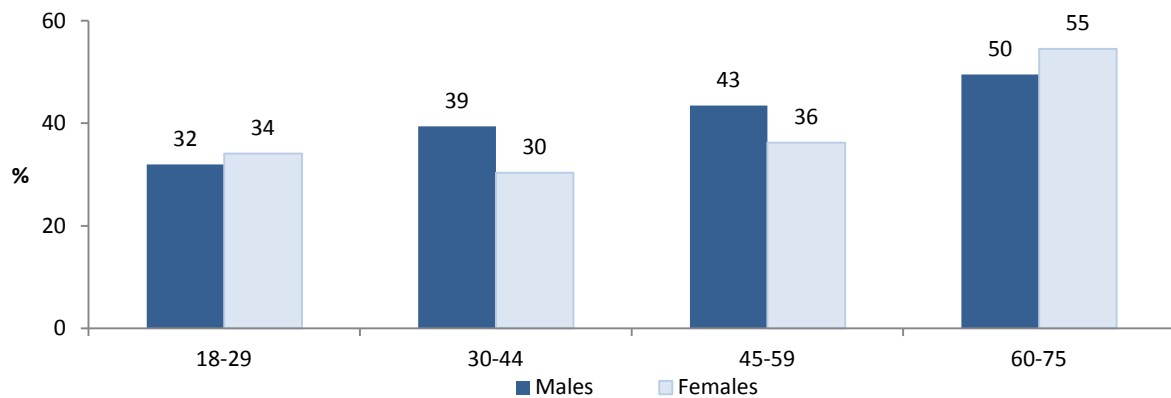
Most respondents who drank (93%) did so at the weekend (Friday to Sunday). Less than half that proportion (39%) drank during the week. This was true for both males and females (Figure 6).

**Figure 6: Weekday / Weekend Drinking by Sex**



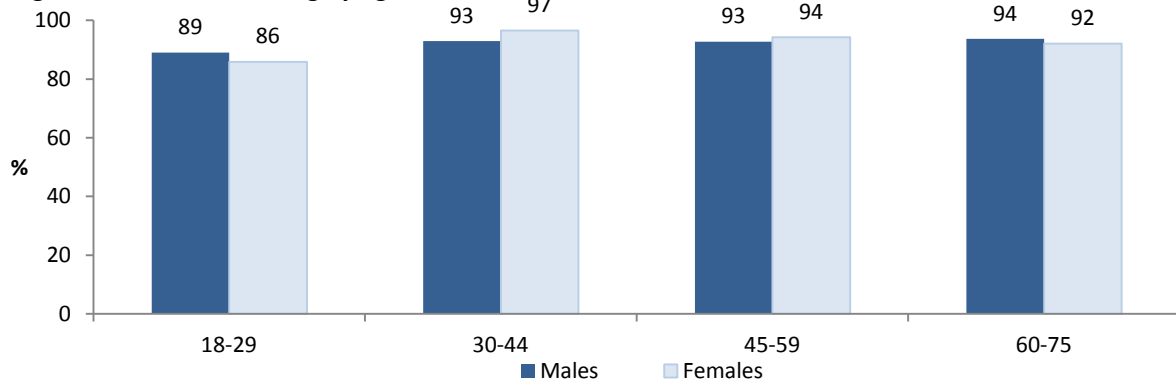
Drinking during the week increased with age. A third of male drinkers aged 18-29 years old drank during the week (32%) compared with half of 60-75 year old males (50%). A similar pattern occurred for females (Figure 7).

**Figure 7: Weekday drinking by age and sex**



For both male (89%) and female drinkers (86%), those in the 18-29 age group were the least likely to drink at the weekend. The highest proportion of weekend drinkers occurred among females aged 30-44 (97%) (Figure 8).

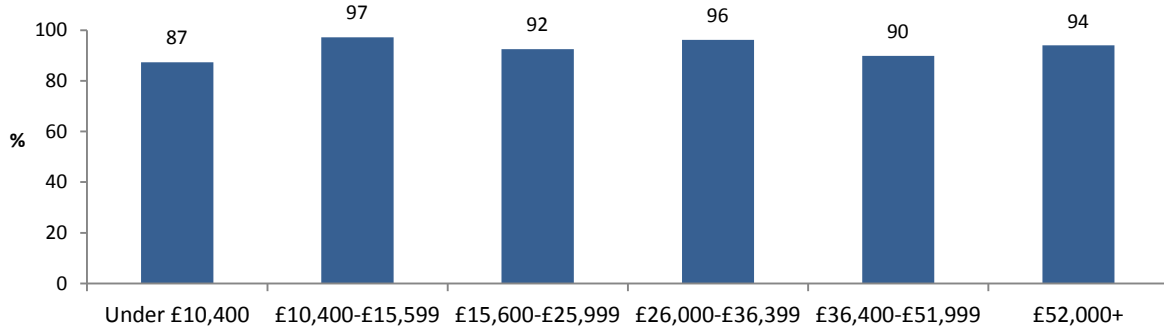
**Figure 8: Weekend Drinking by Age and Sex**





There was little difference in weekend and weekday drinking patterns by educational attainment or socioeconomic status. Weekend drinking amongst drinkers from lower income households (under £10,400 pa) was lower (87%) than for those from households with higher income levels (i.e. £52,000 or more per annum) (94%) (Figure 9).

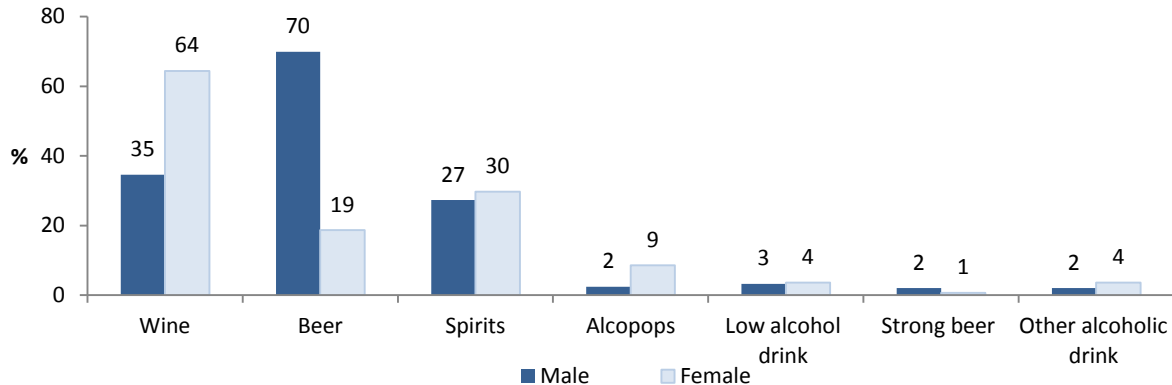
**Figure 9: Weekend drinking by household income**



## Type of drink consumed

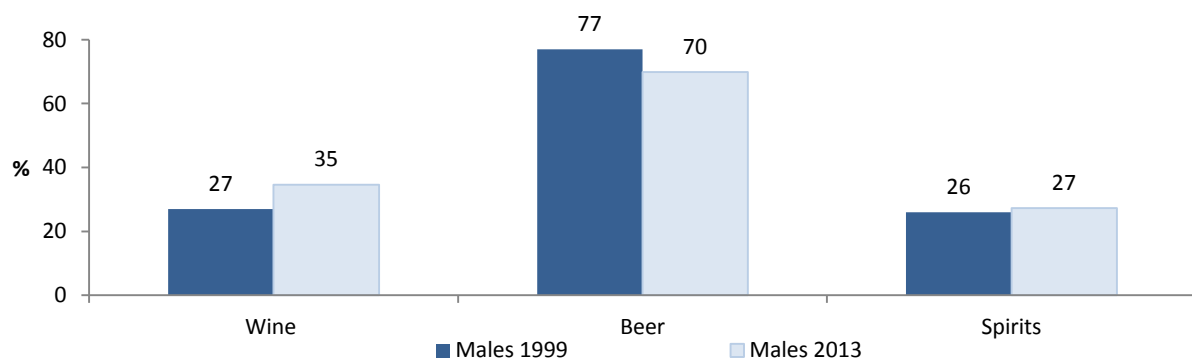
Beer was the most popular drink of males surveyed (70%) while wine was the most popular for females (64%). Less than one in three male and female drinkers drank spirits (27% and 30% respectively). Only a small proportion of respondents drank mixed drinks/Alcopops (5%) and strong beers (1%) (Figure 10).

**Figure 10: Type of alcoholic drink consumed in last week by sex**



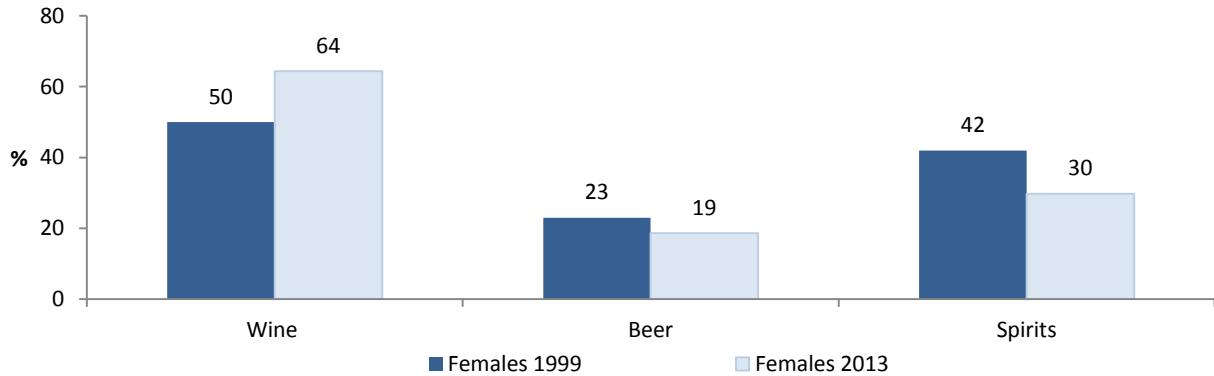
Since 1999 drinking preferences have changed, whilst beer has remained the most popular drink for males, the proportion of male respondents that drank beer fell from 77% to 70% (Figure 11). A similar proportion of male drinkers drank spirits in both years (26% in 1999 and 27% in 2013). The proportion of males that drank wine increased from 27% in 1999 to 35% in 2013.

**Figure 11: Type of alcoholic drink consumed in last week compared: Males 1999/2013**



For female drinkers, wine remained the most popular alcoholic drink. In 2013, two-thirds of female drinkers drank wine (64%) which represented an increase from 50% in 1999. The proportion of females that drank beer fell from 23% in 1999 to 19% in 2013. This was also true for spirits which fell from 42% in 1999 to 30% in 2013 (Figure 12).

**Figure 12: Type of alcoholic drink consumed in last week compared: Females 1999/2013**



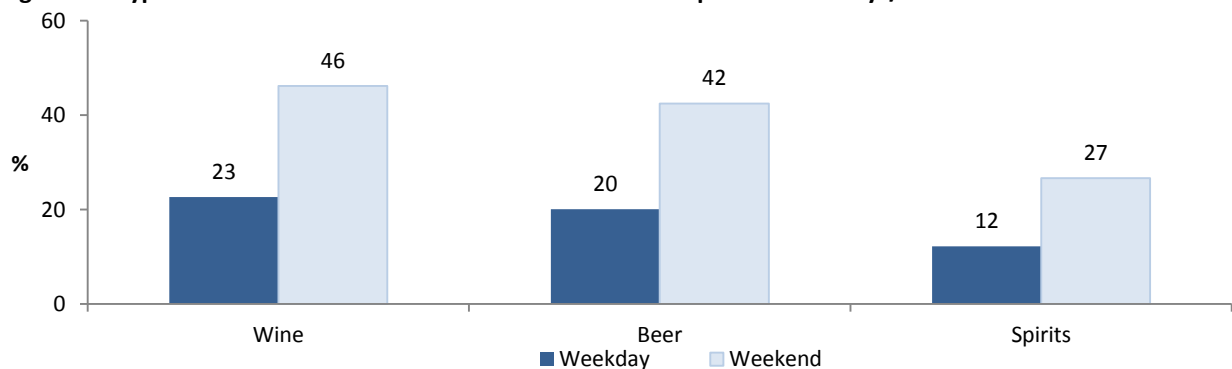
The likelihood of male respondents drinking wine increased with age (from 13% for 18-29 year olds to 47% of 60-75 year olds) whereas the reverse was true for beer (81% for 18-29 year olds compared with 52% for 60-75 year olds). Around a third of males aged 18-29 years old (32%) and 60-75 years old (34%) drank spirits.

The proportion of female respondents that drank wine also increased with age from 38% of 18-29 year olds to 72% of 60-75 year olds. The proportion that drank beer fell from a third (33%) of 18-29 year olds to 8% of female drinkers aged 60-75. Spirits were more popular among young female drinkers (i.e. aged 18-29 years old) (42%) than young males (32%). A much higher proportion of young female respondents drank mixed drinks/alcopops (26%) than young males (10%).

Beer (53%) and spirits (34%) were most popular among respondents in routine and manual occupations whereas wine was the most popular drink for those in higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations (67%). As gross household income increased, the popularity of wine also increased from 23% for respondents living in households with an annual income of below £10,400 to 75% for those in with a household income of £52,000 or more per annum. The proportion of respondents that drank beer was broadly similar irrespective of gross household income (ranging between 43% and 48%). The proportion of respondents that drank spirits generally declined as household income rose (39% for those with household income under £10,400 per annum; 22% for those with household income of £52,000 or more per annum).

Wine was the most popular drink both during the week (23%) and at weekends (46%). During the week, 20% of drinkers drank beer, which rose to 42% at the weekend. A quarter of respondents (27%) drank spirits at the weekend (Figure 13).

**Figure 13: Type of Alcoholic Drink Consumed in Last Week Compared: Weekdays/Weekends**

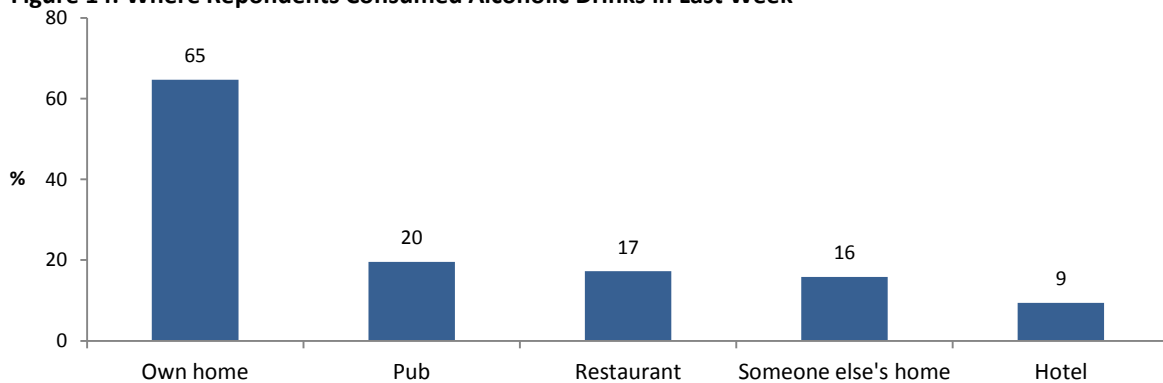


Almost a third of males (31%) drank beer during the week which increased to almost two-thirds (65%) at the weekend. The proportion of females that drank wine increased from over a quarter (27%) during the week to 62% at the weekend.

## Where people drink

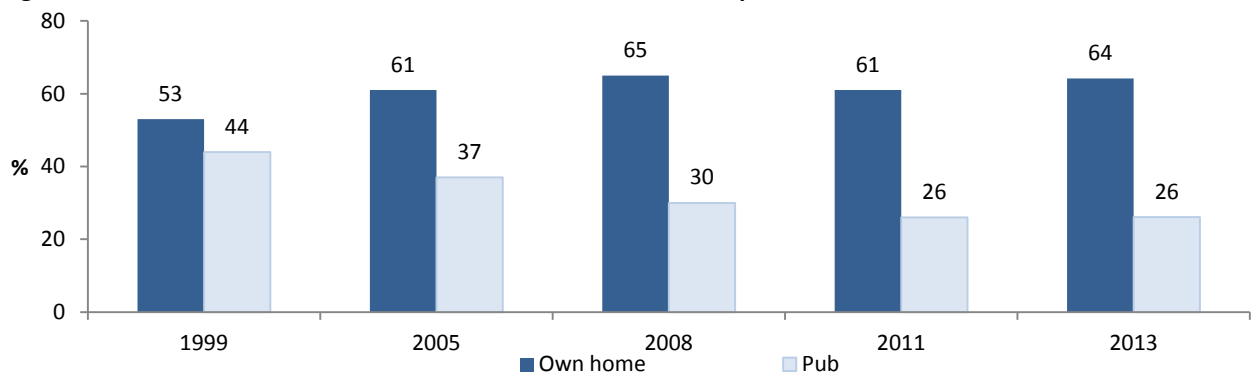
Around two-thirds of respondents that drank did so in their own home (65%) while around a fifth drank in the pub (20%), the restaurant (17%) or someone else’s home (16%) (Figure 14). Similar proportions of males (64%) and females (65%) drank in their own homes. Drinking in pubs was twice as popular for males (26%) as it was for females (12%).

**Figure 14: Where Repondents Consumed Alcoholic Drinks in Last Week**

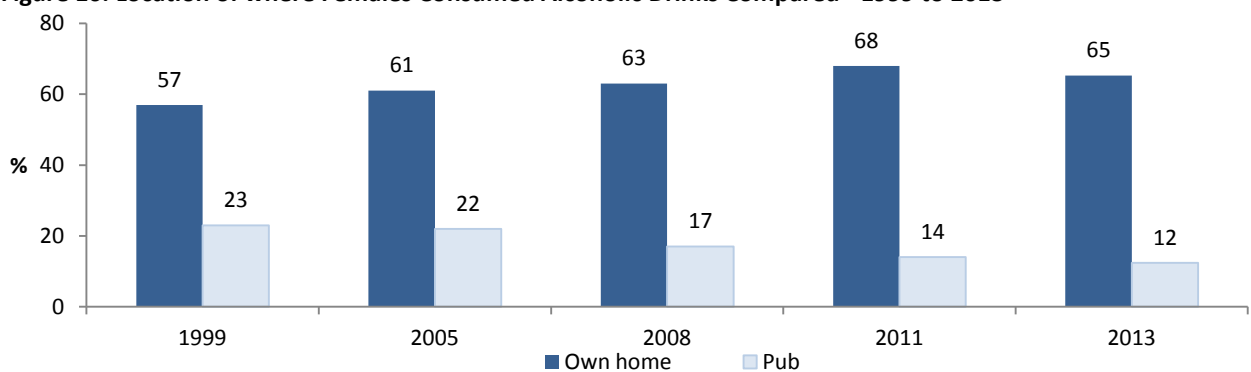


The proportion of males drinking in pubs over the last decade and a half fell by around two-fifths to 26% in 2013. Conversely there was an increase of around a fifth over the same period for those drinking at home (Figure 15). This trend was more pronounced for females, which in relation to pubs decreased from 23% in 1999 to 12% in 2013 (Figure 16).

**Figure 15: Location of where males consumed alcoholic drinks compared: 1999 - 2013**



**Figure 16: Location of where Females Consumed Alcoholic Drinks Compared - 1999 to 2013**



Respondents from households with higher income levels (£52,000 or more per annum) were twice as likely to drink in restaurants (26%) than their counterparts from households with lower income levels (under £10,400 per annum) (13%). The proportion drinking in hotels (19%) from higher income households was three times that for lower income households (6%). Around a fifth of respondents drank in pubs irrespective of their household income while drinking at home increased as household income increased (53% for respondents from households with income of under £10,400 per annum compared with 65% of those from households with income of £52,000 or more per annum).

Drinking in restaurants and hotels was more common for higher managerial, professional and administrative occupations (NS-SEC) (25% and 13% respectively) than routine and manual occupations (12% and 6%). Conversely drinking in pubs was less likely for higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations (16%) than for routine and manual occupations (23%). A lower proportion of drinkers in routine and manual occupations (61%) drank at home compared with those in intermediate and higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations (68% and 67% respectively).

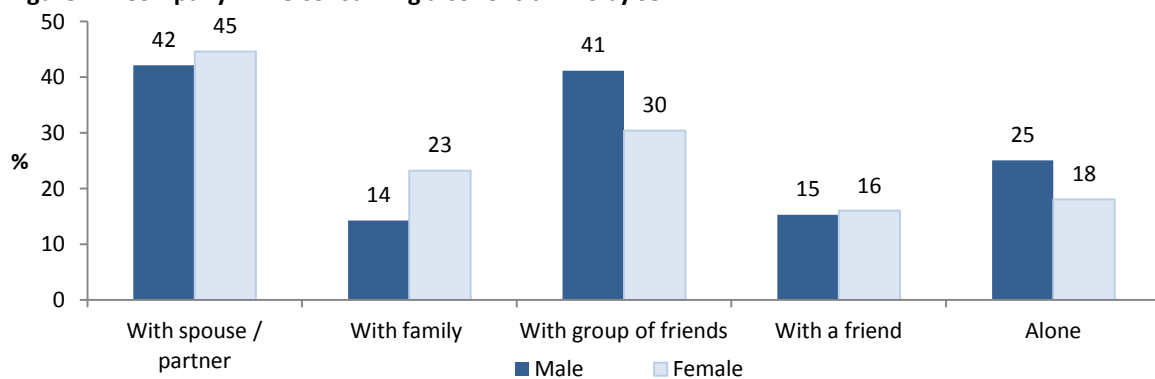
## With whom people drink

When asked with whom respondents drank, drinking with one's partner was most popular (43%), followed by drinking with a group of friends (36%) and drinking alone (22%).

*Solitary drinking increased from 17% in 1999 to 22% in 2013*

Around two-fifths of both males (42%) and females (45%) drank with their partner. Similar proportions of males (15%) and females (16%) drank with a friend; however males (41%) were more likely to drink with a group of friends than females (30%). Conversely females (23%) were more likely than males (14%) to drink with family (Figure 17). Less than a quarter of respondents in both higher managerial, administrative and professional (23%) and routine and manual occupations (22%) drank on their own compared with 16% in intermediate occupations.

**Figure 17: Company while consuming alcoholic drinks by sex**

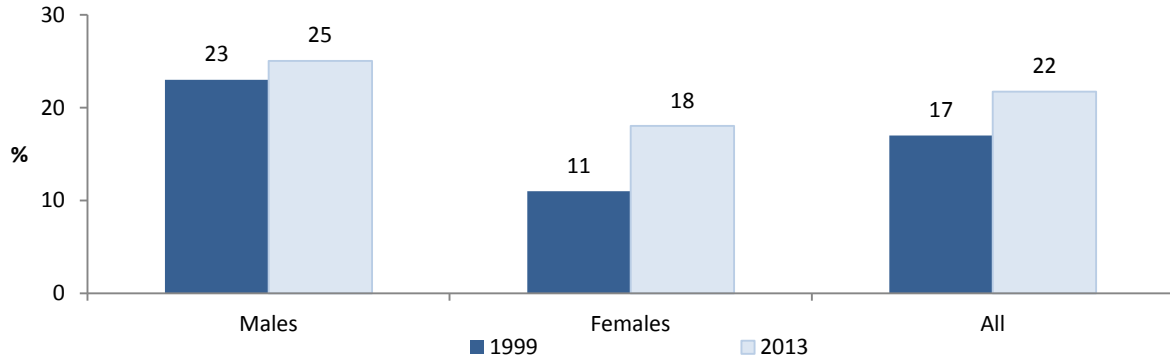


As household income fell, the likelihood of drinking on one's own increased (from 17% of respondents from households with income of £52,000 or more per annum to 30% for those from households with income under £10,400 per annum). The reverse is true for drinking in the company of a friend which decreased from 26% of respondents from households with income under £10,400 per annum to 9% of those from households with income of £52,000 or more per annum. The proportion that drank with their partner increased as household income increased from 18% for households with the lowest income to 62% for those with the highest income.

Over half of drinkers in higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations (51%) drank with their partners, which compared with a third of drinkers in routine and manual occupations (34%). Drinking with a group of friends was less likely for those in higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations (35%) than those in routine and manual occupations (42%).

The proportion of respondents that drank on their own increased from 17% in 1999 to 22% in 2013. Most of this rise was due to an increase in the proportion of females drinking on their own (from 11% in 1999 to 18% in 2013) (Figure 18). Around a quarter of male respondents drank on their own both in 1999 (23%) and 2013 (25%).

**Figure 18: Solitary drinking compared: 1999 / 2013**



## Drinking levels

Those that drank during the week prior to the survey were asked to complete a seven day recall diary. This allowed consumption of both daily and weekly units to be estimated for respondents by applying the alcohol content set out for the drinks listed in table A5 in Appendix 1. Over four-fifths of those who drank in the last week (83%) stated this was representative of their normal drinking.

### Daily drinking limits

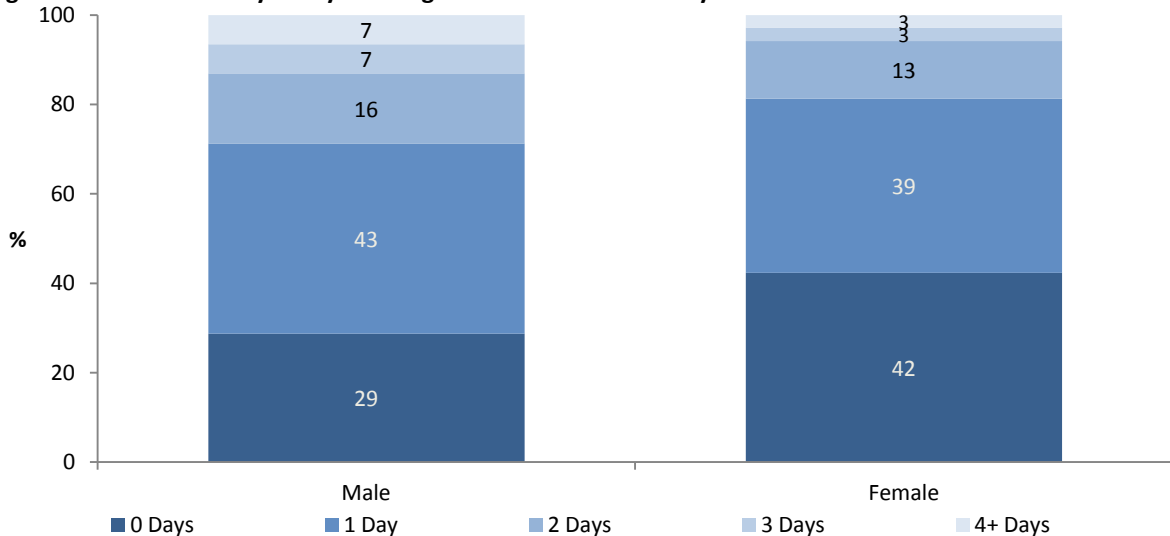
The current recommended daily drinking limits state that males should not regularly exceed 3 to 4 units of alcohol a day and females should not regularly exceed 2 to 3 units of alcohol a day otherwise this will lead to an increase in drink related health risks (Appendix 1).

*Two out of three respondents that drink exceeded the recommended daily limit at least once in the last week*

Less than a third of males (29%) who drank in the past week did not exceed the recommended daily levels at any time. Around two-fifths did so on one occasion with 13% of males exceeding the limits on three or more occasions. Two-fifths of females (42%) who had drank during the previous week had not exceeded the recommended levels with 6% exceeding levels on three or more occasions.

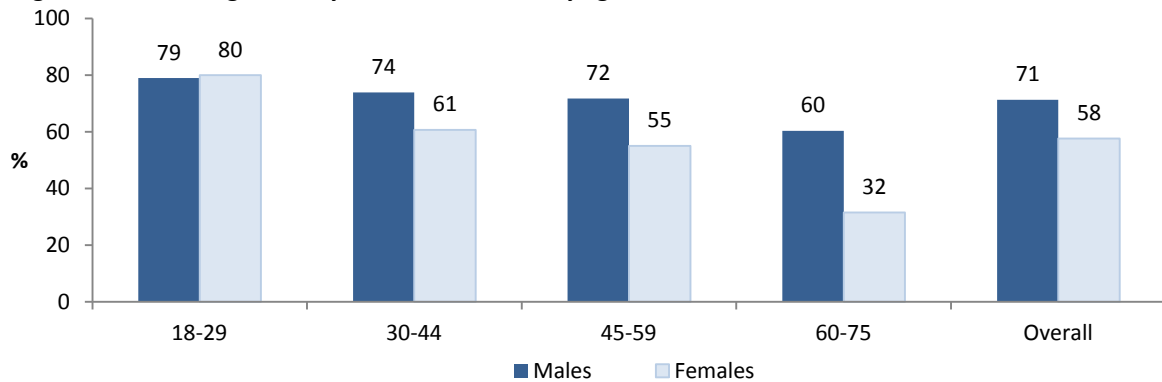


**Figure 19: Number of days daily drinking levels were exceeded by sex**



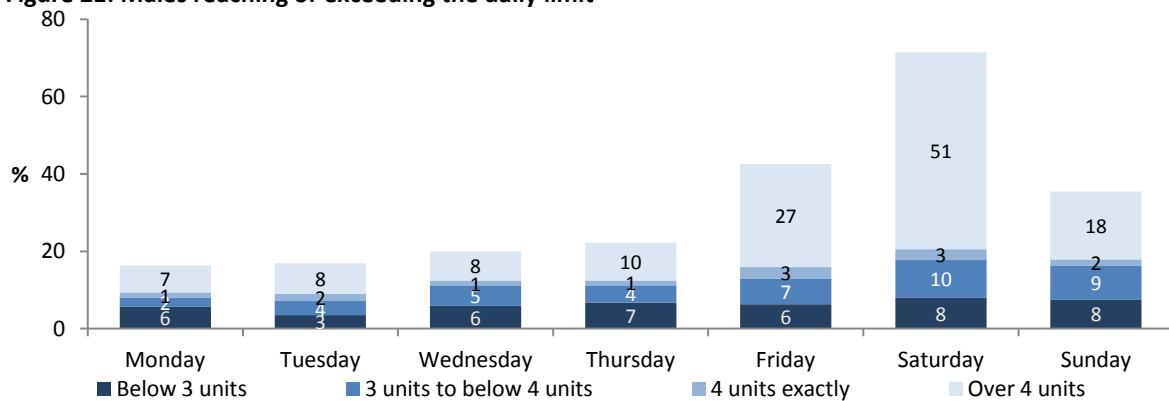
For both male and female drinkers the likelihood of exceeding the recommended daily limits decreased with age (Figure 20). For young males aged 18-29 years old, 79% exceeded the daily levels which compared with 60% of older males (aged 60-75 years old). Four-fifths of young females aged 18-29 exceeded the recommended levels compared with one-third of older females. Older males (60%) were almost twice as likely as females (32%) to exceed the daily limit on at least one occasion.

**Figure 20: Exceeding the daily limit at least once by age and sex**

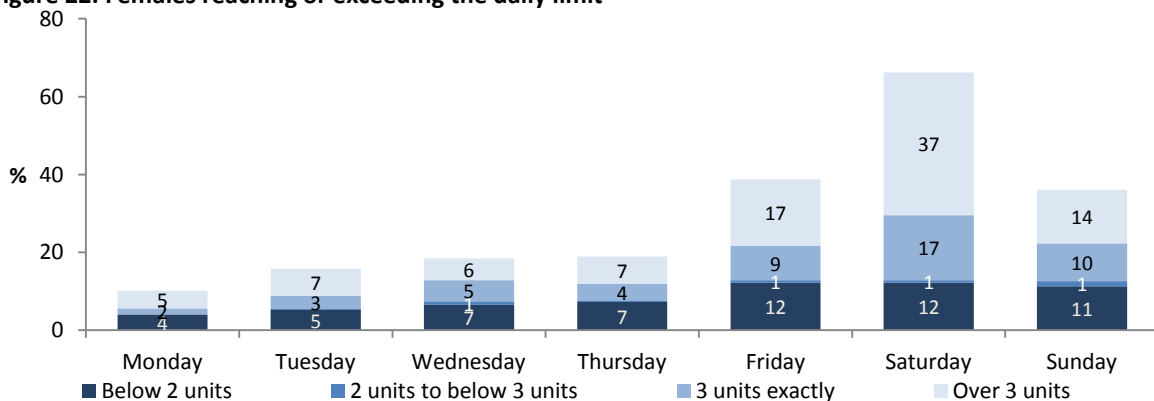


The proportion of males and females that drank more than the recommended daily levels increased throughout the week reaching a peak on Saturday (Figures 21 and 22). On Saturdays over half of males (51%) exceeded the daily levels, compared with 7% on Mondays. Over a third of female respondents (37%) exceeded the daily limit on Saturdays compared with 5% on Mondays. Females were more likely to drink the exact number of daily recommended units (i.e. 3 units) than males (i.e. 4 units exactly).

**Figure 21: Males reaching or exceeding the daily limit**



**Figure 22: Females reaching or exceeding the daily limit**



Those respondents living in the Western HSCT (74%) were most likely to exceed the daily recommended limit at least once while those in the Southern Trust were least likely to do so (53%).

### Weekly drinking levels

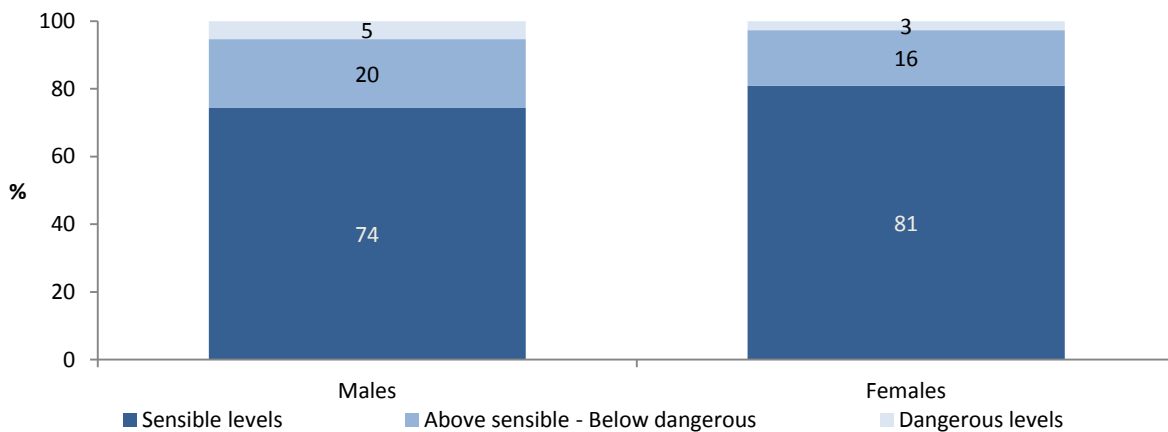
Although there are no official recommended weekly drinking limits, levels of alcohol consumption can be banded together on a weekly basis to allow broad categorisation of the risk levels of drinking habits. On a weekly basis, males drinking 21 units or less are considered to be within sensible limits, those drinking between 22 and 50 units are considered to be above sensible but below dangerous levels and those drinking 51 units and above are drinking at dangerous levels. The sensible limit for females is 14 units per week, the above sensible and below dangerous level is between 15 and 35 units and dangerous levels are 36 units and above (Table 1 and Appendix 1).

**Table 1: Recommended weekly drinking levels:**

Limits	Males – units per week	Female – units per week
Sensible	21 or less	14 or less
Above sensible – below dangerous	between 22 to 50	between 15 to 35
Dangerous levels	51+	36+

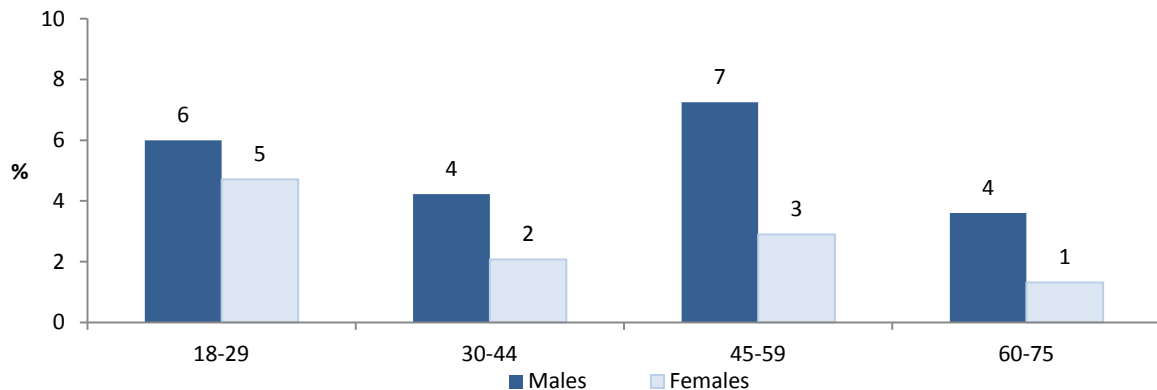
Three-quarters of males (74%) and four-fifths of females (81%) drank within sensible levels (Figure 23). A higher proportion of male respondents (5%) than female respondents (3%) drank at dangerous levels throughout the week.

**Figure 23: Weekly guidelines for sensible drinking by sex**



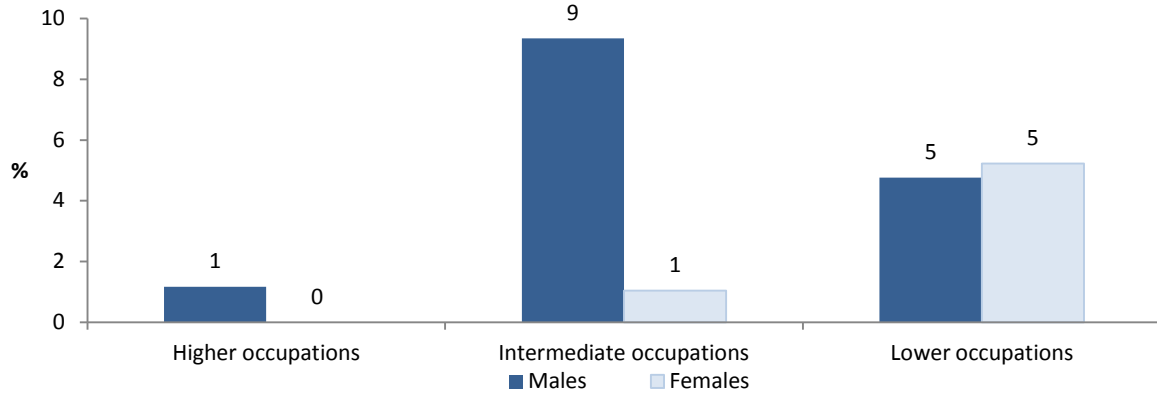
The highest proportion of females that drank at dangerous levels occurred among 18-29 year olds (5%) whereas for males it occurred among 45-59 year olds (7%) (Figure 24).

**Figure 24: Weekly drinking at dangerous levels by age and sex**



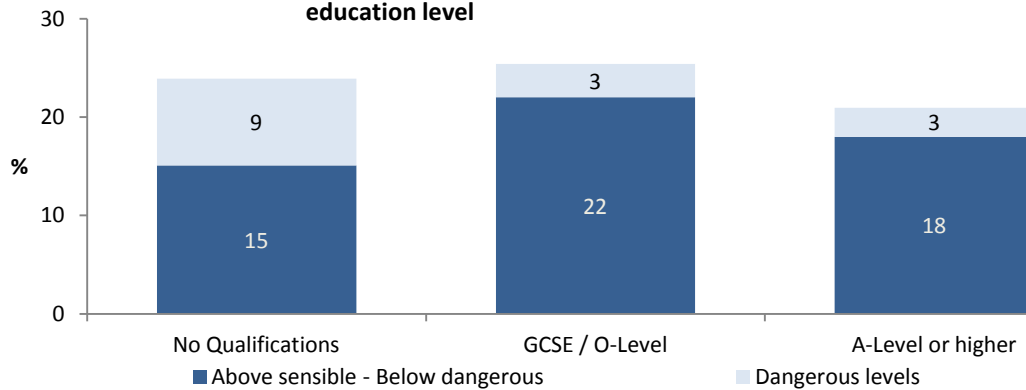
The highest proportion of respondents drinking at dangerous levels occurred among males in intermediate occupations (9%) compared with just 1% of males in higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations (Figure 25).

**Figure 25: Weekly drinking at dangerous levels by NS-SEC and sex**



Around a quarter of respondents with GCSE / O-Levels (25%) and those with no qualifications (24%) drank above sensible levels compared with a fifth of those with A-Levels or higher (21%), although respondents without qualifications were the most likely to drink at dangerous levels (Figure 26).

**Figure 26: Weekly drinking at dangerous and above sensible levels by education level**



Respondents who lived in the Southern HSCT (88%) were the most likely to have drunk within sensible weekly limits, while those in the Belfast and South-Eastern HSCTs (74%) were the least likely.



## Binge drinking

Many studies indicate that drinking a large amount of alcohol over a short period of time can be significantly worse for health than more frequent drinking of smaller quantities.

For the purposes of this report “binge drinking” is defined as consuming 10 or more units of alcohol in one session for males and 7 or more units of alcohol for females, which differs slightly from the definition set out by the NHS.<sup>1</sup>

Almost a third of respondents (31%) had stated that they had engaged in at least one binge drinking session in the week prior to the survey. This was true for over a third of males (35%) and more than a quarter of females (27%). The level of binge drinking was similar to that reported in 2011 (30%) and in 2008 (32%).

*Almost one-third of that drank had at least one binge drinking session in the last week*

<sup>1</sup> The definition of binge drinking used by the NHS is drinking more than double the lower risk guidelines for alcohol in one session. Therefore, for men binge drinking is drinking more than 8 units of alcohol and for women, it’s drinking more than 6 units of alcohol. Table 17 in Appendix 1 provides figures for binge drinking which have been calculated to this definition to allow comparison with other UK countries.

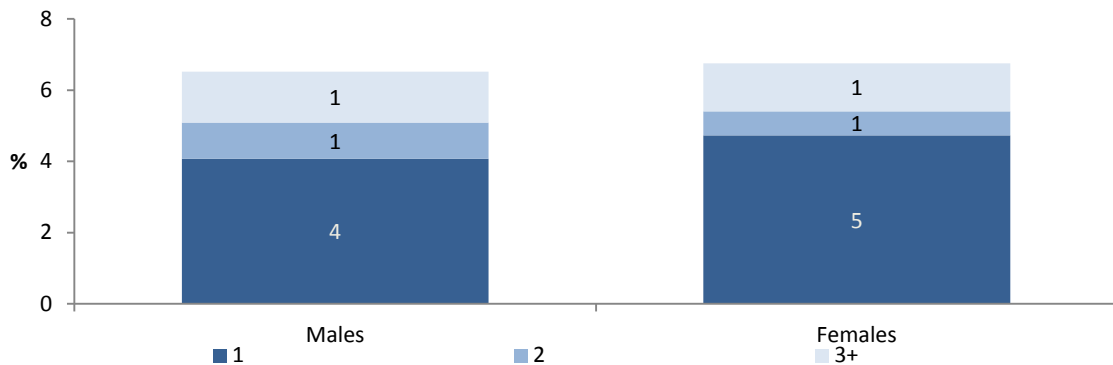


Younger adults (i.e. 18-29 year olds) (50%) were more likely to binge drink than older adults (i.e. 60-75 year olds) (11%). Respondents living in the Western HSCT (38%) were most likely to binge drink while those in the Southern HSCT (23%) were least likely.

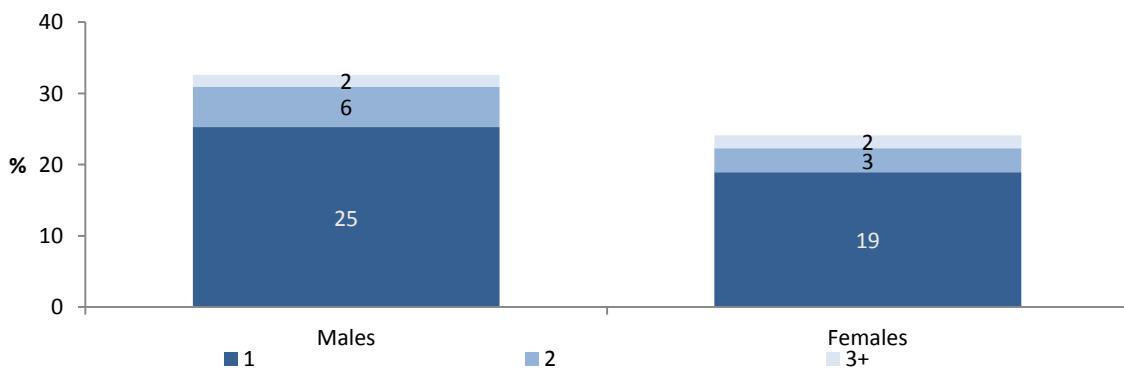
As the definition of binge drinking is based on sessions, it is possible that individuals exceeded the binge drinking levels in one day but across a number of sessions and would therefore not be classified as binge drinkers. If the definition was applied on a daily basis (i.e. considering the number of units consumed daily irrespective of the number of sessions) binge drinking levels would increase to 35%.

Weekday binge drinking occurred for 7% of both males and females (Figure 27), with 1% binge drinking on 3 or more occasions for both males and females.

**Figure 27: Number of binge drinking sessions on weekdays by sex**

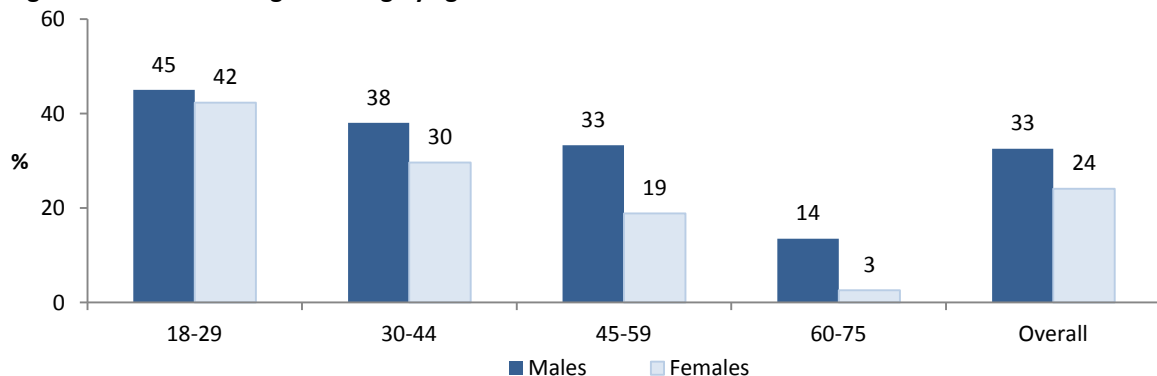


**Figure 28: Number of binge drinking sessions on weekend days by sex**



One-third of males (33%) and a quarter of females (24%) who completed the drinking diary had one or more binge drinking sessions at the weekend (Figure 28). However as with weekdays, only a small proportion of male (2%) and female respondents (2%) had 3 or more binge drinking sessions at the weekend.

**Figure 29: Weekend binge drinking by age and sex**



The proportion of male and female respondents that binge drink at the weekend declined as age increased (Figure 29). Just under half of 18-29 year old males (45%) had at least one binge drinking session at the weekend compared with 14% of 60-75 year old males. Two-fifths of 18-29 year old females (42%) had at least one binge drinking session at the weekend however this was true for only 3% of 60-75 year old females.

Respondents in routine and manual occupations (39%) were more likely to binge drink at the weekends than other socioeconomic groups.

## Problem drinking

The survey included CAGE questions - four clinical interview questions which been used internationally as an assessment instrument for identifying problems with alcohol. The questions focus on:

- Cutting down
- Annoyance by criticism
- Guilty feeling
- Eye opener (drinking first thing in the morning)

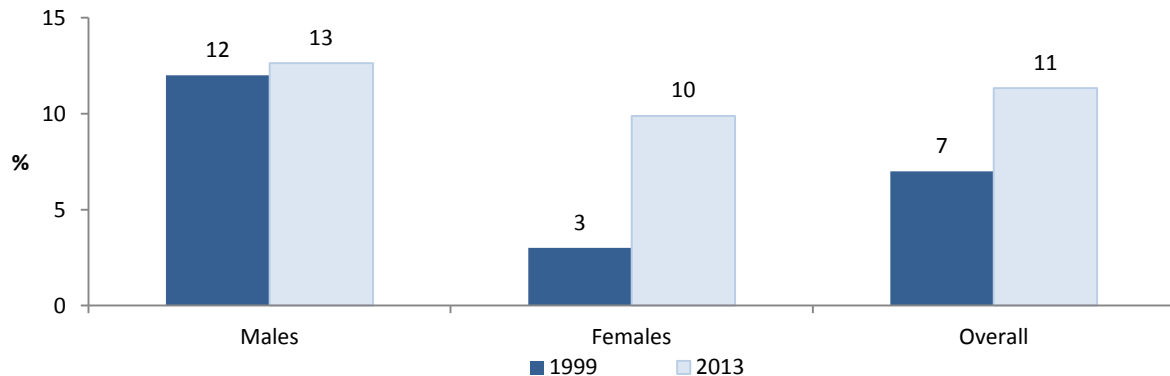


It is accepted that a positive answer to two or more CAGE questions would indicate a problem with alcohol.

*The proportion of female problem drinkers increased from 3% in 1999 to 10% in 2013*

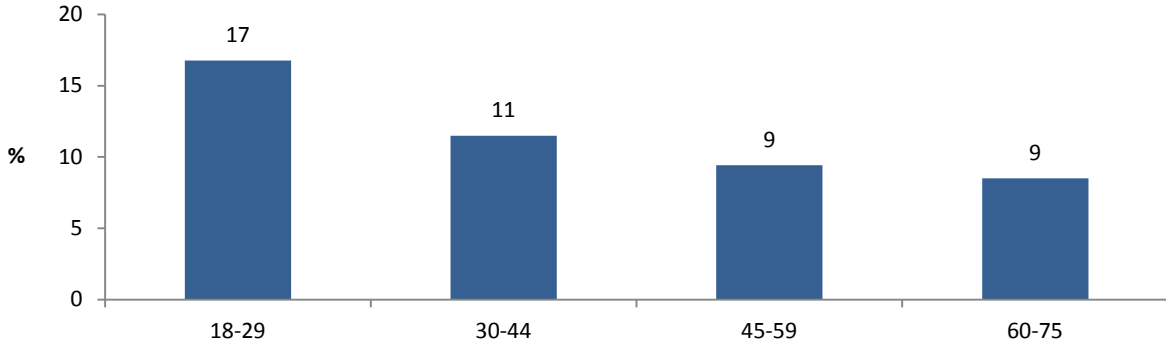
Overall, 11% of respondents who drank were classed as problem drinkers (Figure 30) which compared with 9% in 2011 and 10% in both 2008 and 2005. A higher proportion of male (13%) than female respondents (10%) had a drinking problem. While the proportion of males was broadly similar to that in 1999 (12%), the proportion of female respondents that had a drinking problem had increased considerably over the same period from 3% to 10%.

**Figure 30: Problem drinking by sex compared 1999 & 2013**



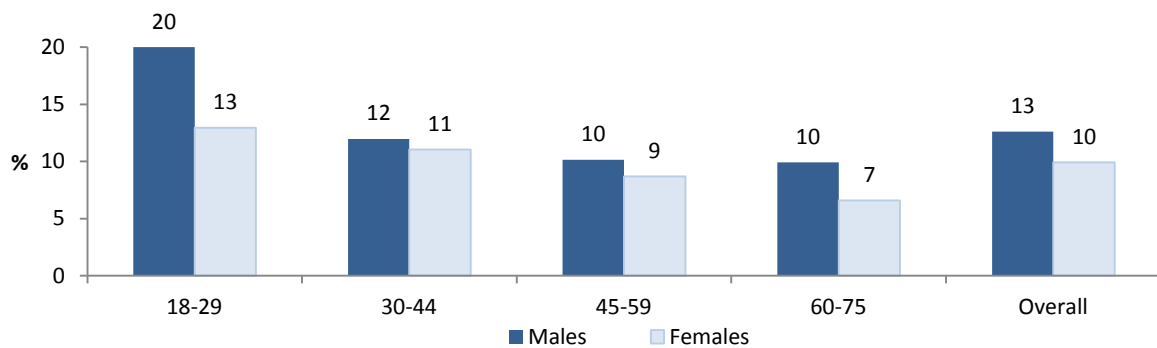
The proportion of younger respondents aged 18-29 years old that had problems with drinking (17%) was almost twice that among older respondents aged 45 years and over (9%) (Figure 31).

**Figure 31: Problem drinking by age**



Overall, a fifth of young males (those aged 18-29) had a drinking problem compared with 10% of males aged 45 years and over (Figure 32). The proportion of young females with a drinking problem (13%) was almost twice that for females aged 60-75 (7%).

**Figure 32: Problem drinking by age and sex**

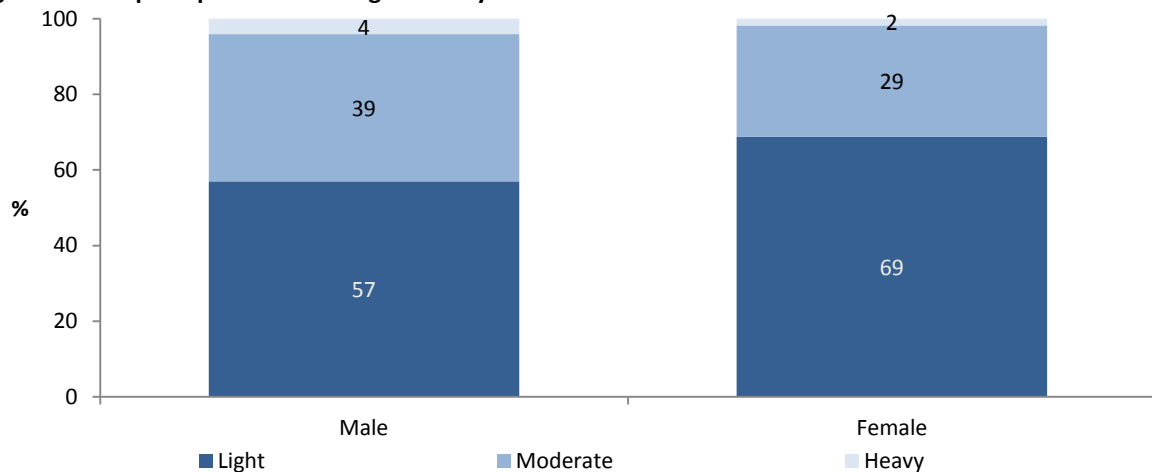


In relation to Health and Social Care Trust, the highest proportion of problem drinkers resided in the Belfast Trust area (16%) while the lowest lived in the Southern Trust area (8%).

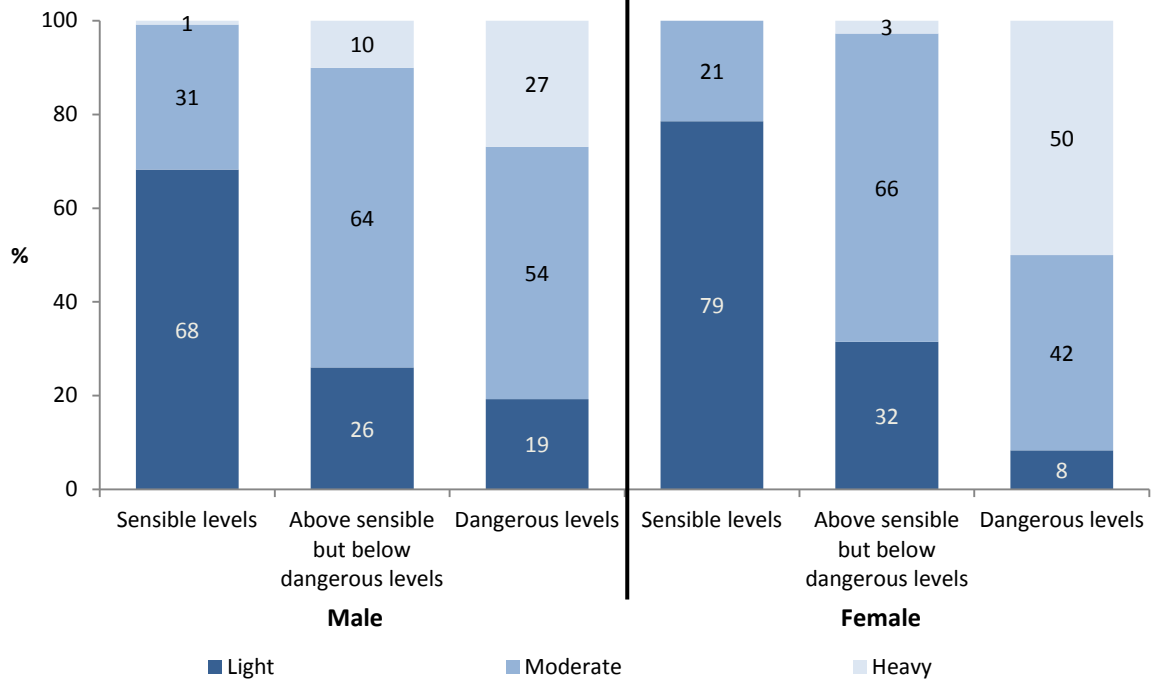
## Self-perception of drinking habits

All of those who answered the CAGE questions were asked to describe themselves as either a heavy, moderate or light drinker. Overall only 4% of males and 2% of females (Figure 33) described themselves as heavy drinkers while 57% of males and 69% of females described themselves as light drinkers.

**Figure 33: Self perception of drinking habits by sex**

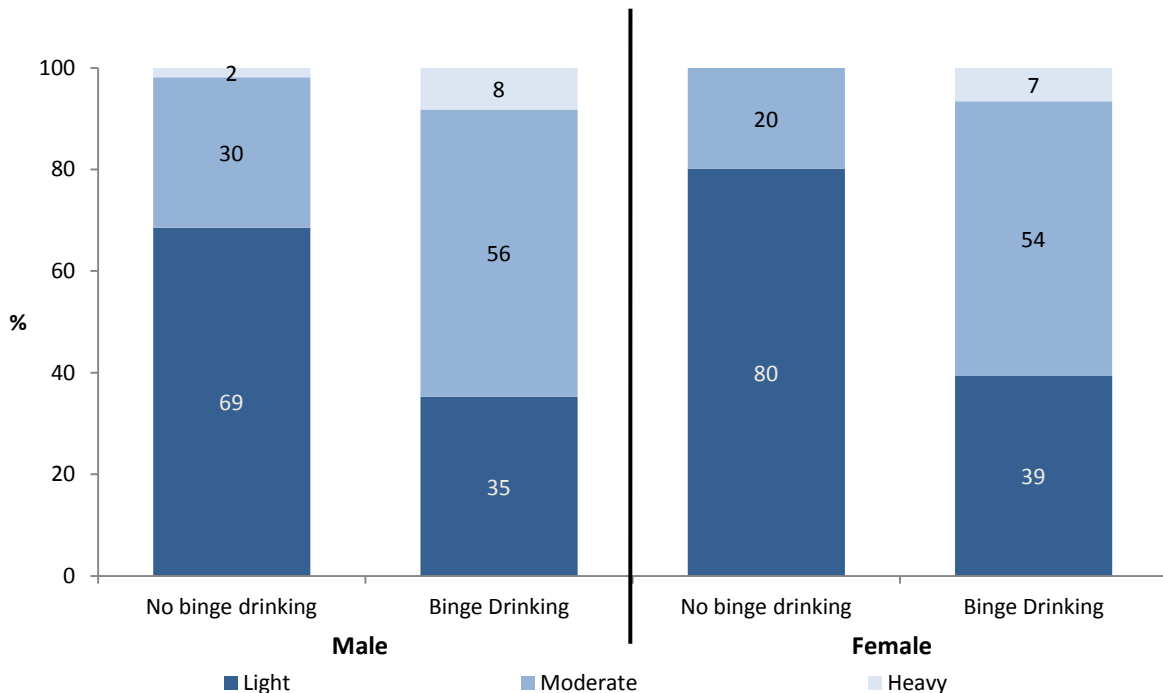


**Figure 34: Self-perception of drinking habits by drinking levels and sex**



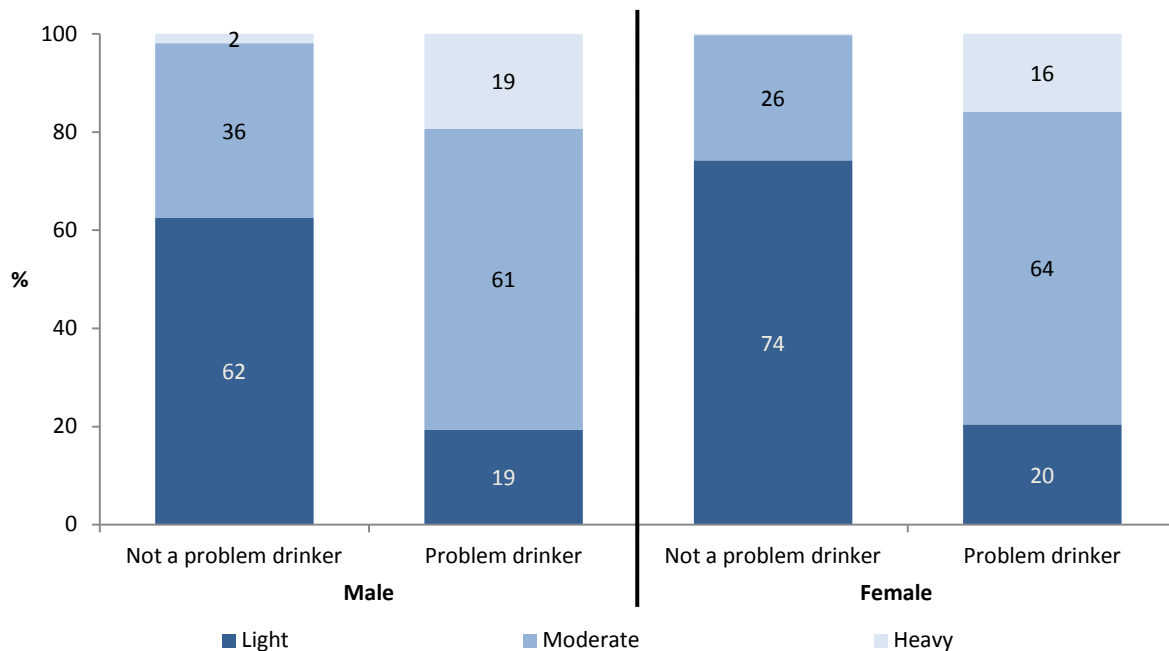
Two-thirds of males that drank within the weekly sensible levels (68%) accurately described themselves as 'light drinkers' (Figure 34). More than half of those males who drank at dangerous levels described themselves as 'moderate' drinkers (54%) and a further fifth said that they were 'light' drinkers (19%). Four-fifths of females (79%) that drank at weekly sensible levels correctly thought that they were 'light' drinkers. Although there was a more accurate self-perception of their drinking habits among female heavy drinkers than for males, half (50%) still believed that they were 'moderate' or 'light' drinkers.

**Figure 35: Self-perception of drinking habits by binge drinking and sex**



Two-fifths of females (39%) and one-third of males (35%) who had binge drinking sessions described themselves as 'light' drinkers (Figure 35).

**Figure 36: Self perception of drinking habits by problem drinking and sex**



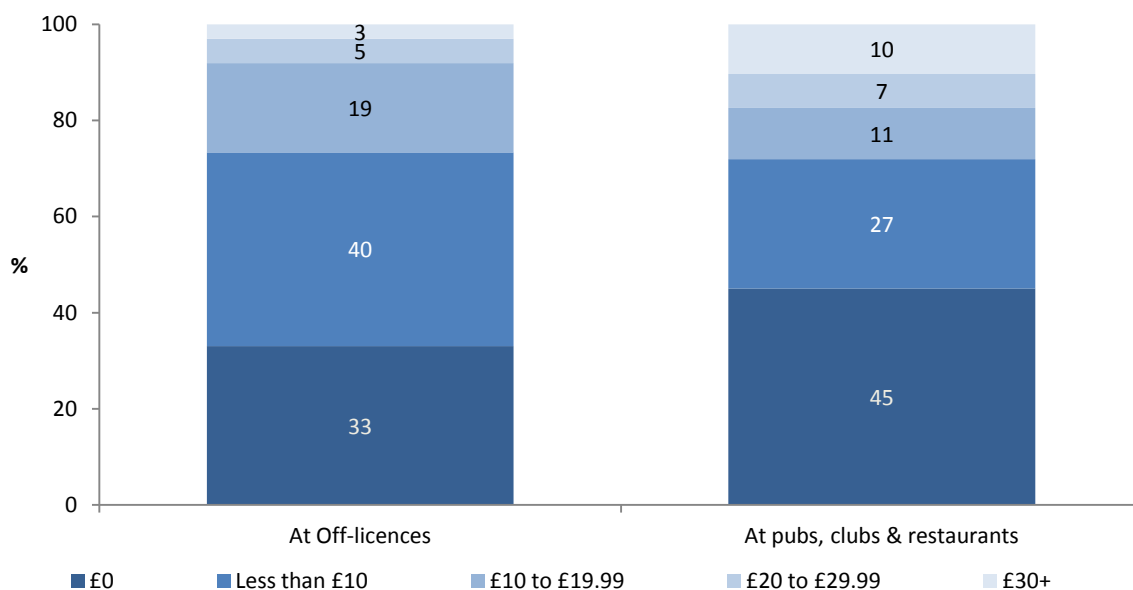
Almost a fifth of males (19%) and females (16%) who through their responses to the CAGE questionnaire had indicated that they had a drinking problem described themselves as heavy drinkers (Figure 36), however a further fifth of males and females stated that they were 'light drinkers'.

*A fifth of problem drinkers perceived themselves as 'light drinkers'*

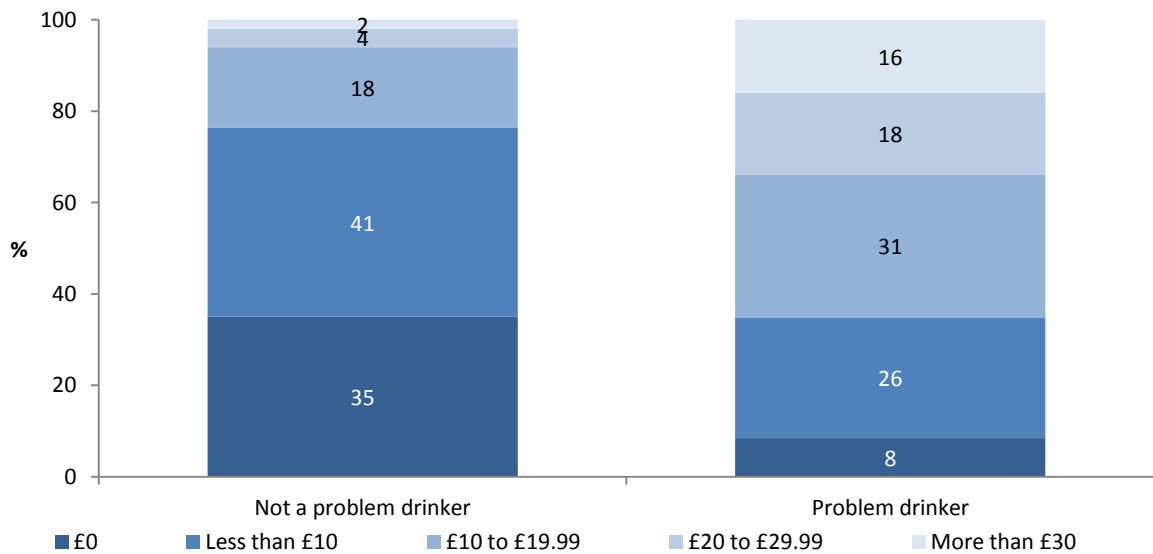
## Amount spent on alcohol

Three-quarters of respondents who drank (73%) spent less than £10 a week on alcohol at an off-licence (Figure 37). A similar proportion (72%) spent less than £10 a week on alcohol at pubs and restaurants.

**Figure 37: Average weekly spend on alcohol by all drinkers**

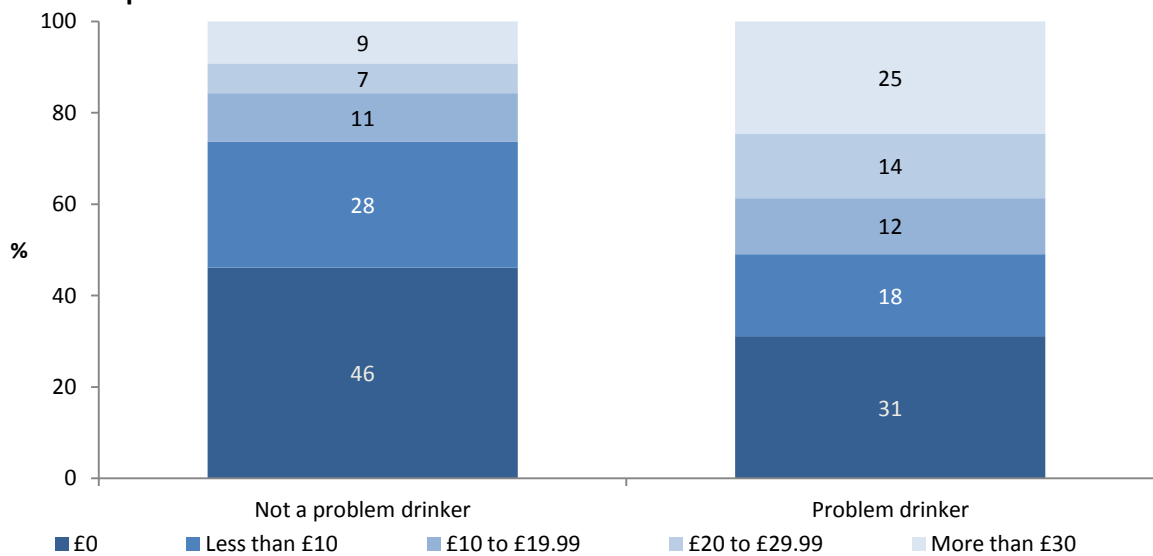


**Figure 38: Average weekly spend on alcohol at off-licences compared: Non-problem / problem drinkers**



A fifth of respondents (16%) that had been identified with a drinking problem (from CAGE questionnaire) spent £30 or more per week at the off-licence. This compared with 2% of those respondents that did not have a drinking problem (Figure 38). A higher proportion of respondents with a drinking problem (25%) spent £30 or more per week at a pub or restaurant than those respondents without a drinking problem (9%) (Figure 39).

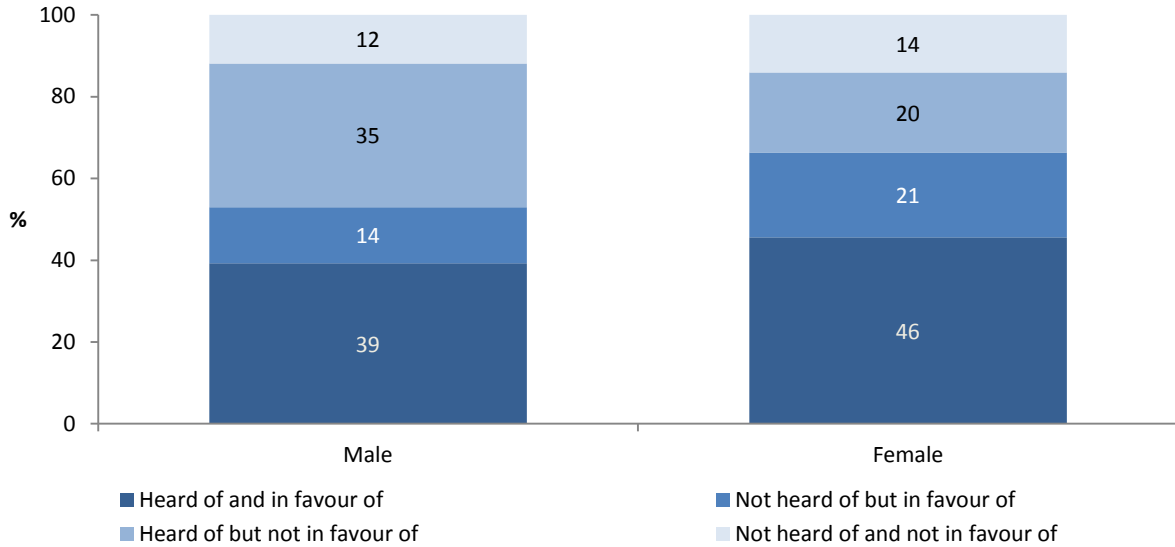
**Figure 39: Average weekly spend on alcohol at pubs, clubs and restaurants compared by non-problem and problem drinkers**



## Minimum Unit Pricing

Minimum unit pricing of alcohol, by setting a floor price for a unit of alcohol is designed to impact most on harmful drinkers, i.e. those that regularly drink more than sensible drinking guidelines. The more alcohol a drink contains, the stronger it is and therefore the more expensive it will be. Respondents were asked about their knowledge of and views on minimum pricing and how, if introduced it might affect their drinking patterns.

**Figure 40: Heard of minimum unit pricing / Agree with minimum unit pricing by sex**

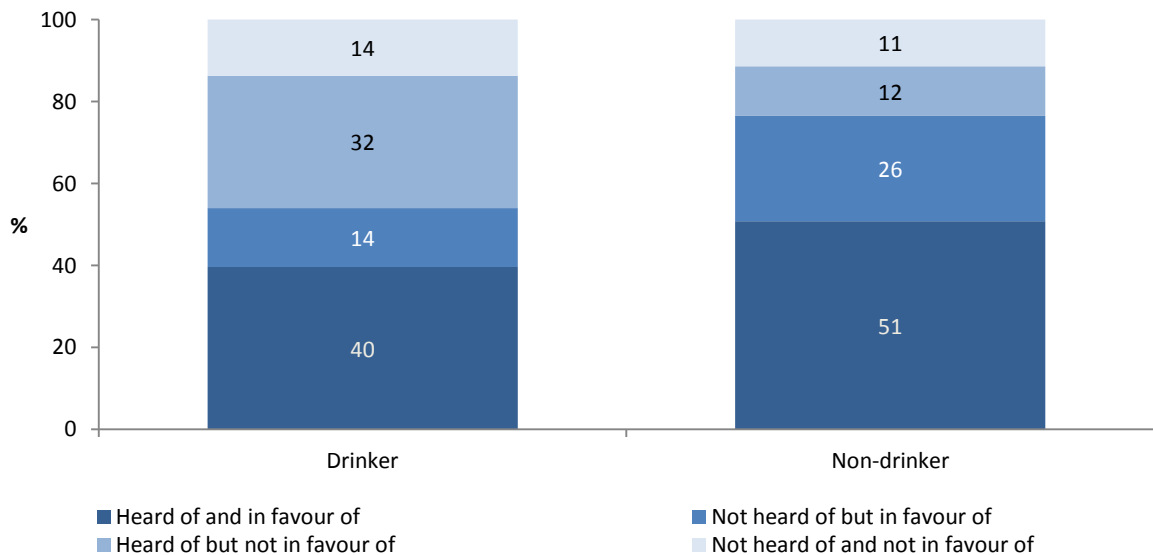


Two-thirds of respondents (68%) had heard of minimum unit pricing prior to the survey. Those living in the South-Eastern HSCT (76%) were most likely to have heard of it while those in the Western HSCT were least likely (61%).

*Three-fifths of respondents were in favour of minimum unit pricing*

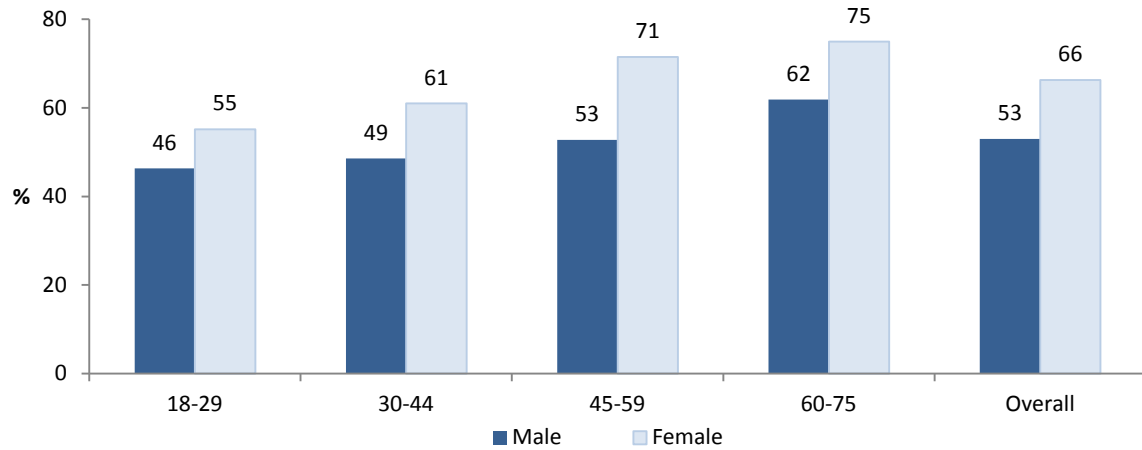
When asked whether they would agree with minimum pricing, three-fifths of respondents were in favour. A higher proportion of females (66%) than males (53%) agreed with minimum pricing (Figure 40). Respondents living in the South-Eastern HSCT (67%) were most likely to be in favour of introducing minimum pricing while respondents in the Belfast HSCT were least likely (52%).

**Figure 41: Heard of minimum unit pricing / Agree with minimum unit pricing by drinking status**



A higher proportion of respondents that drank (71%) than those that did not (61%) had heard of minimum pricing (Figure 41). Over three-quarters of non-drinkers (77%) were in favour of the introduction of minimum pricing compared with just over half of those that drank alcohol (54%).

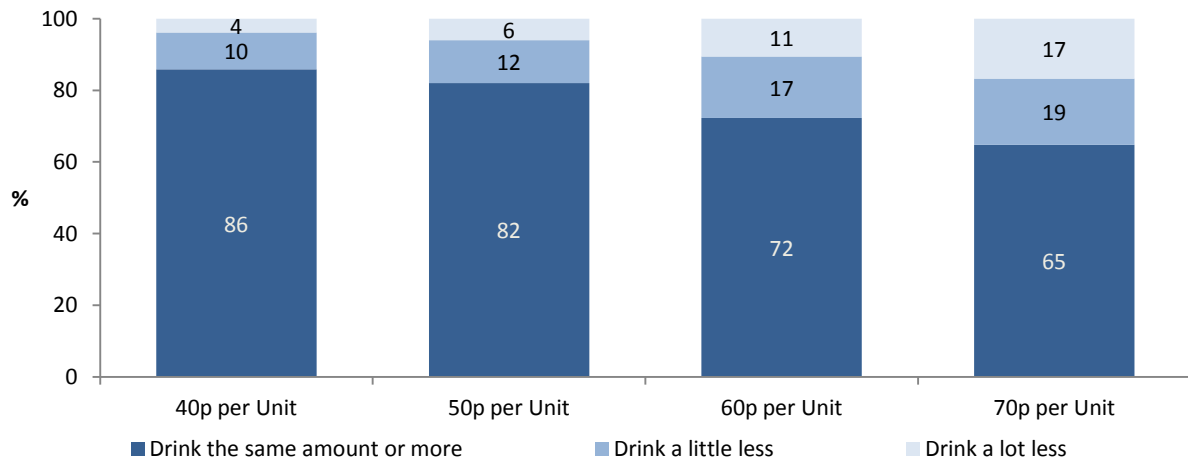
**Figure 42: In favour of minimum unit pricing by age and sex**



The proportion of respondents that were in favour of a minimum pricing policy increased with age for both males and females (Figure 42). Young male respondents (aged 18-29) had the lowest proportion in favour (46%) while older female respondents (aged 60-75 years old) had the highest proportion supporting the policy (75%).

There was some variation in relation to support for minimum unit pricing with regards to employment status and occupation. Those not in paid employment (63%) were more likely to be in favour compared with those in paid employment (58%). Those in routine and manual occupations (56%) were less likely to be in favour than those in higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations (62%) and intermediate occupations (63%).

**Figure 43: Effect of minimum unit price on drinkers**



Respondents that drank were asked to estimate the likely effect upon their alcohol consumption, if a range of different minimum price levels (ranging from 40p to 70p per unit<sup>2</sup>) were introduced (Figure 43).

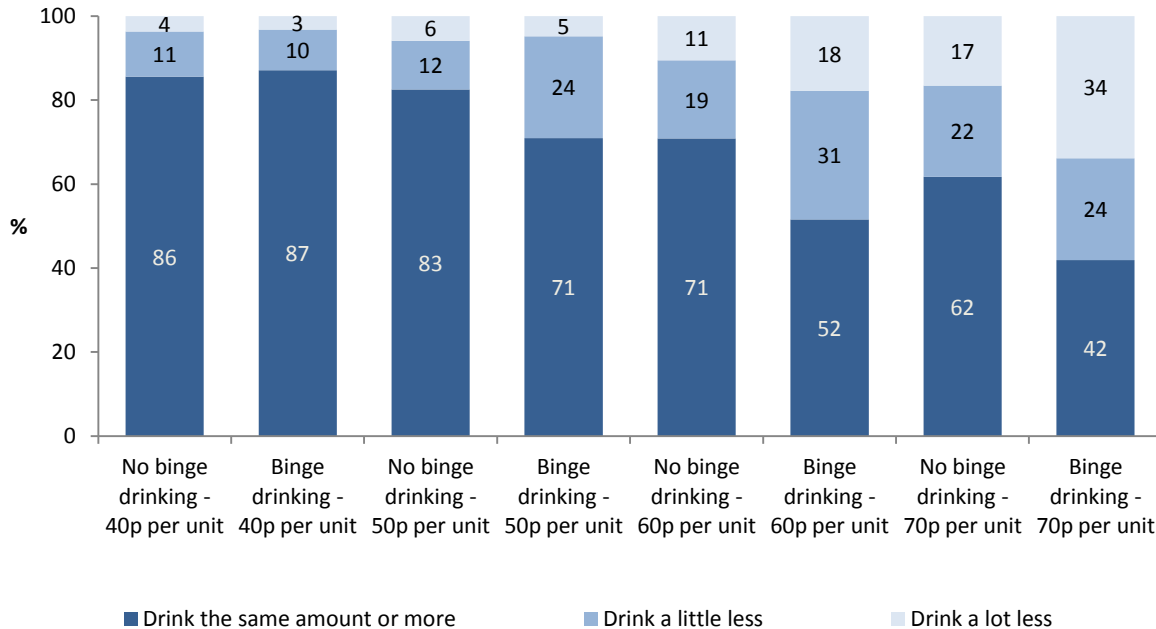
Overall 14% of drinkers would drink less (both a lot less and a little less) if a 40p minimum price were set. As the proposed minimum price increased so did the proportion of respondents that indicated that they would drink less to some degree up to more than a third (35%) if a 70p per unit minimum charge were introduced. However, even with a 70p minimum price per unit, almost two-thirds of respondents (65%) thought that their drinking patterns would remain unchanged.

<sup>2</sup> To put the different minimum price levels into context, if a 40p minimum price for a unit of alcohol was introduced, this would mean a minimum price of 80p for a bottle of lager, £3.60 for a bottle of wine and £12 for a bottle of spirits. In comparison, a 70p minimum price would mean a bottle of lager would cost, at the very least, £1.40, while a bottle of wine would cost £6.30 and a bottle of spirits would cost £21.



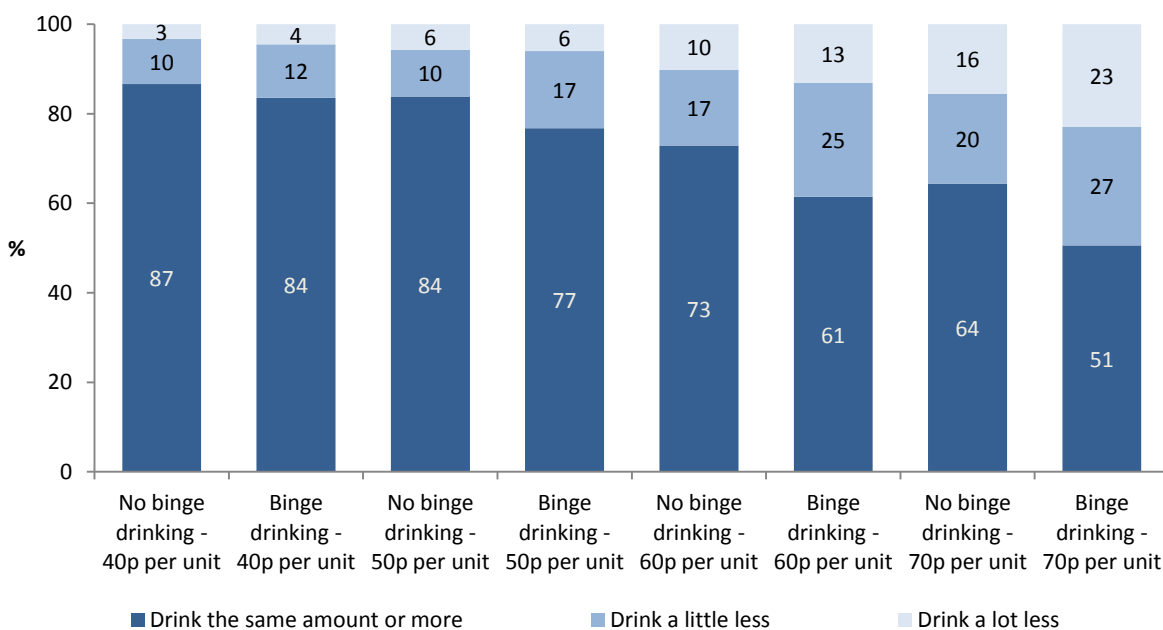
At 50p a unit and above respondents who had at least one binge drinking session on weekdays were more likely to reduce their alcohol intake than those respondents who did not (Figure 44). At 50p a unit, 17% of non-binge drinkers and 29% of binge drinkers would decrease their alcohol consumption. This would be more pronounced if a 70p minimum price per unit with 38% of non-binge drinkers and 58% of binge drinkers stating that they would reduce their intake to some extent.

**Figure 44: Effect of various minimum unit prices on those who did not binge drink on weekdays compared with those who did binge drink on weekdays**



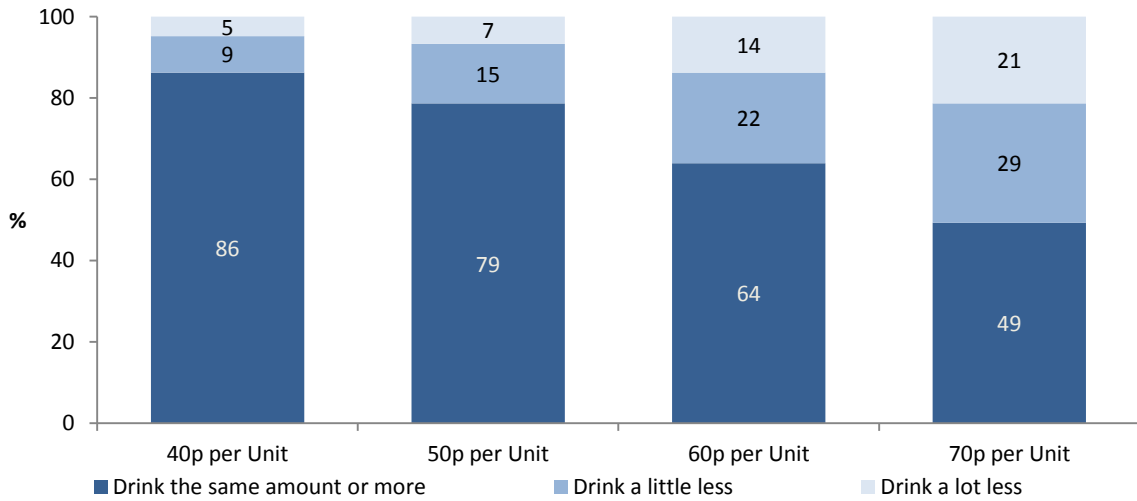
A similar trend was found in relation to weekend drinking (Figure 45). At 50p a unit, 84% of respondents who did not binge drink would drink the same amount compared with 77% of those who did. At 70p a unit, 64% of those who did not binge drink would not change their drinking habits compared with 51% of those who did.

**Figure 45: Effect of various minimum unit prices on those who did not binge drink on weekend days compared with those who did binge drink on weekend days**



In comparison to all drinkers, the potential effects of minimum unit pricing on drinking behaviours for respondents that drank above the sensible weekly limits (risky and dangerous levels) was more pronounced as price increased (Figure 46). At 60p per unit, over a third drinking at risky or dangerous levels (36%) stated they would drink less compared with over half (51%) if the minimum price were to be set at 70p per unit.

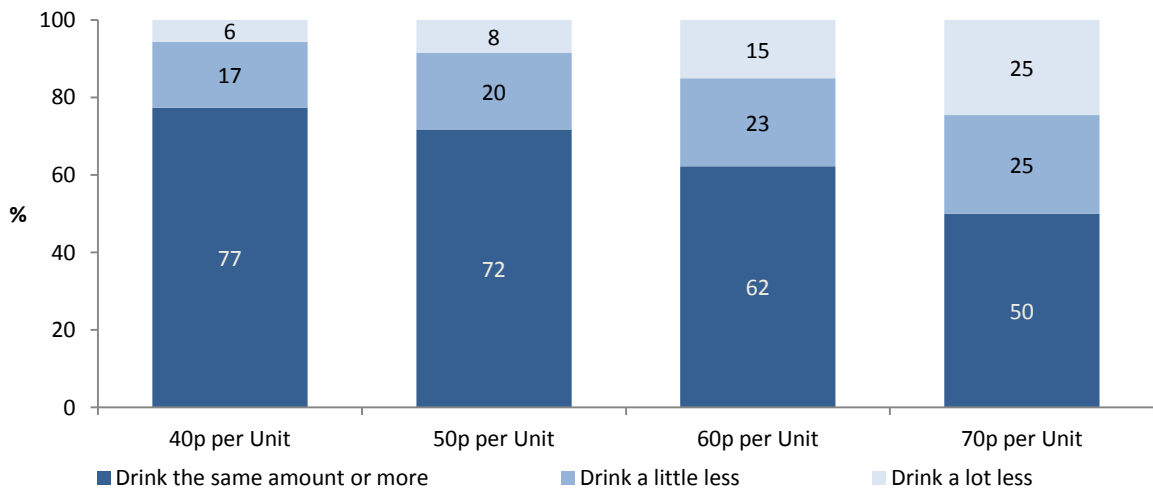
**Figure 46: Effect of minimum price on those who consumed risky or dangerous levels of alcohol in the last week**



Almost a quarter of problem drinkers (identified by the CAGE analysis) (23%) stated that they would drink either a little or a lot less if the minimum unit price was set at 40p. At 70p per unit, similar to those drinking above the sensible weekly levels, half of respondents stated they would reduce their drinking (Figure 47).

*Half of all problem drinkers stated they would drink less if the minimum unit price was set at 70p*

**Figure 47: Effect of minimum unit price on problem drinkers (CAGE)**

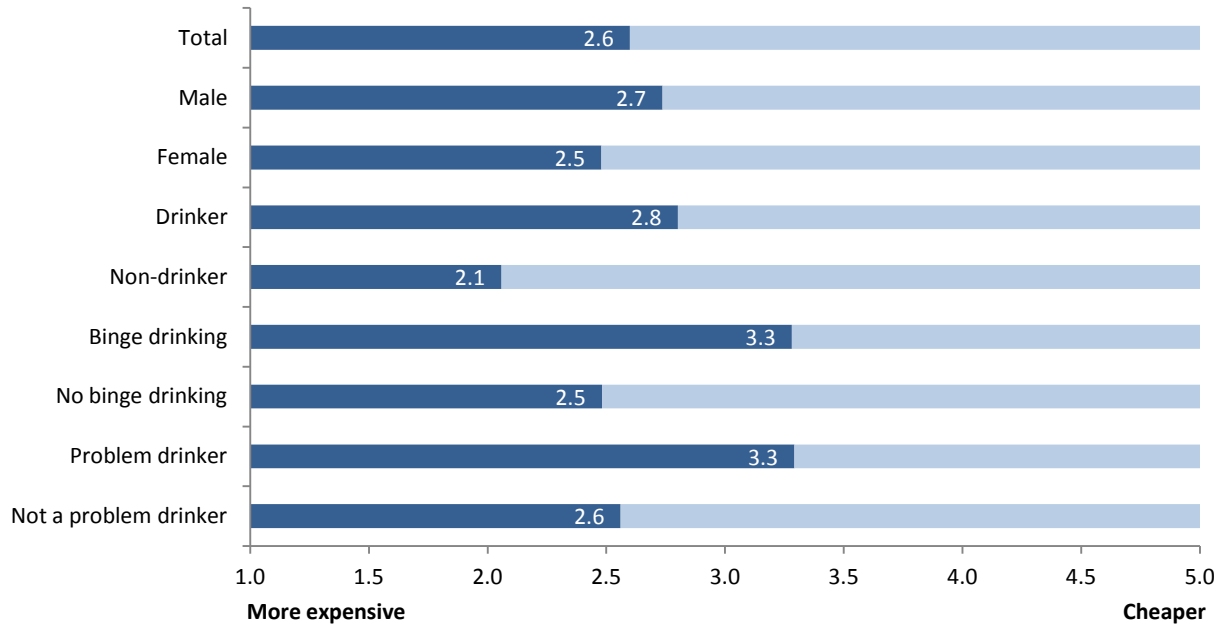


At 40p a unit, 4% of those in higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations, 5% of those in intermediate occupations and 7% in routine and manual occupations would drink a lot less. If a minimum unit price of 70p a unit were set, this would be true for 14% of both higher and intermediate occupations and 19% of routine and manual occupations.

## Attitudes to drinking

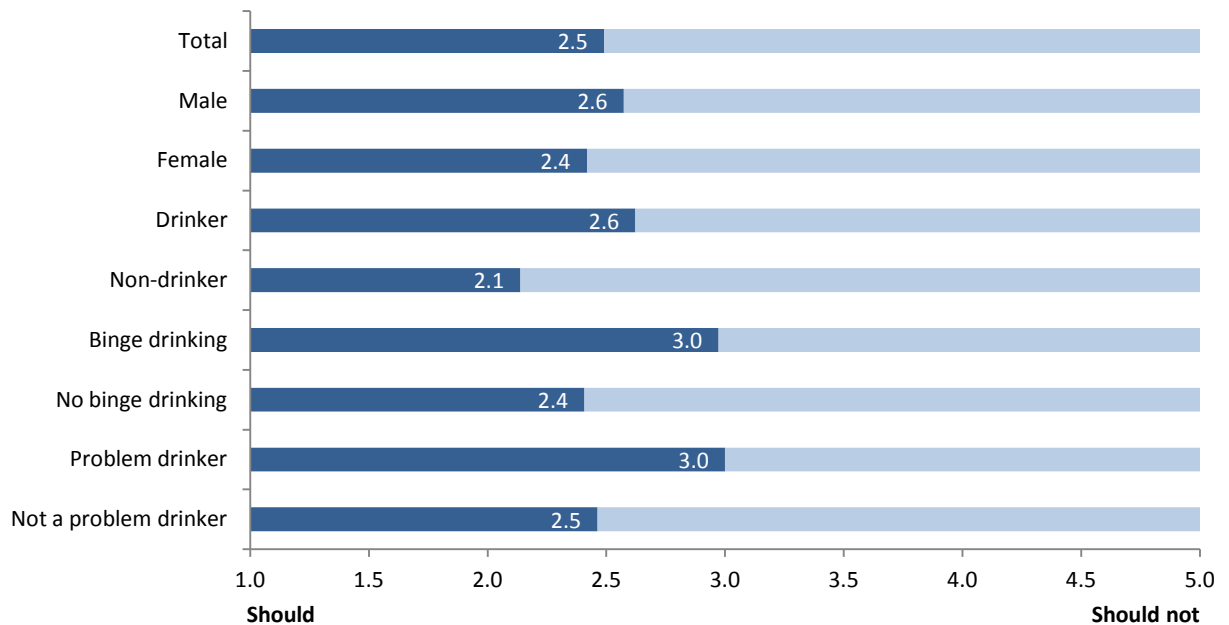
Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement or non-agreement with a number of statements to gauge their attitudes to drinking. Respondents were asked to read each statement and rate it on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 representing the more positive statement and 5 representing a less positive statement. The charts below set out the average response levels to each statement.

**Figure 48: Alcoholic drinks should be more expensive / cheaper**



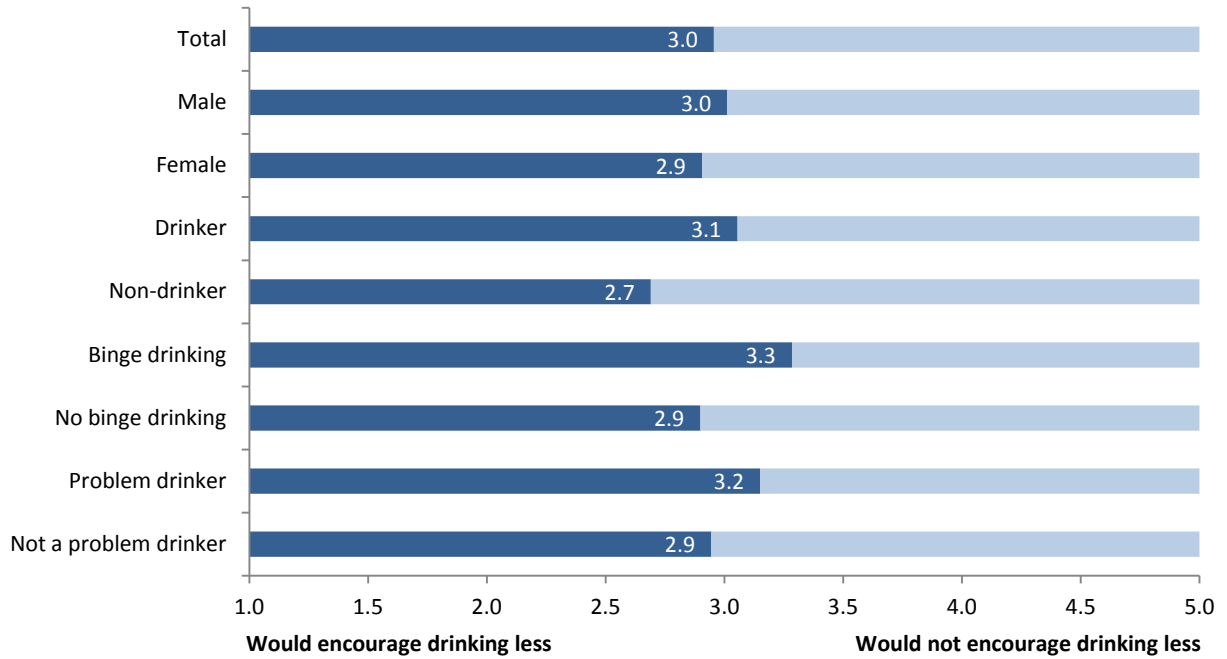
Respondents who drank alcohol (2.8) were more likely than non-drinkers (2.1) to think that alcoholic drink should be cheaper (Figure 48). This was also true when comparing binge drinkers (3.3) with non-binge drinkers (2.5) and problem drinkers (3.3) with non-problem drinkers (2.6).

**Figure 49: Price should / should not take into account how much alcohol they contain**



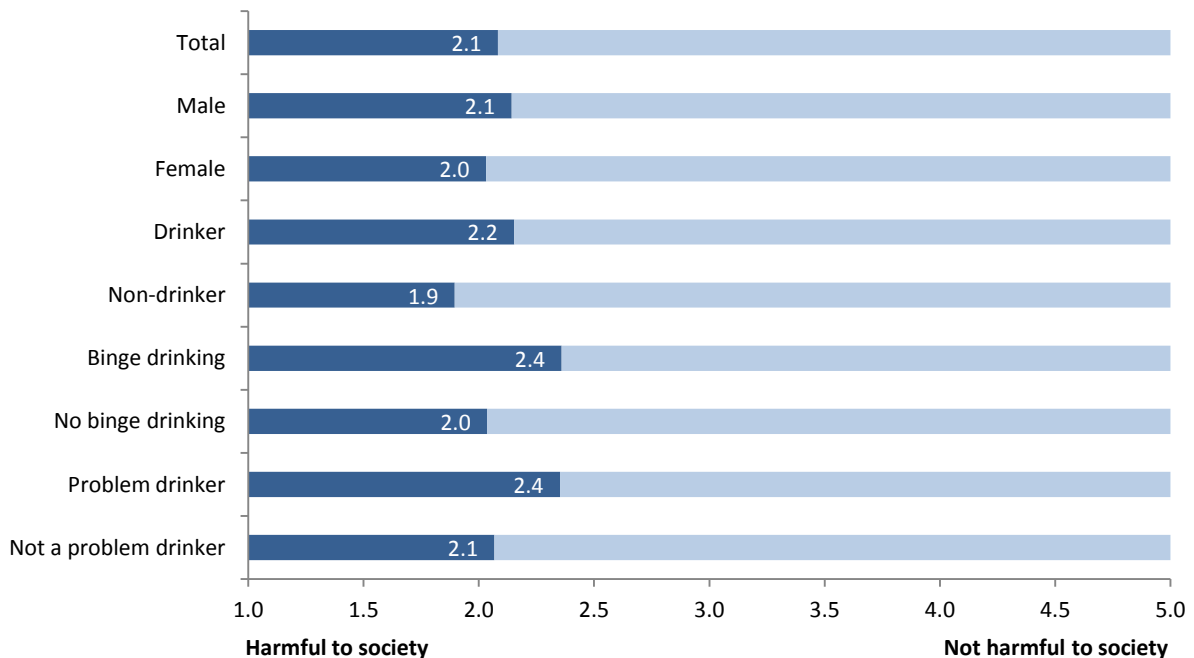
Problem drinkers (3.0) were more likely to be of the opinion that the price of alcoholic drinks should not take into account the amount of alcohol that they contain than non-problem drinkers (2.5). Respondents who drank (2.6) were more likely than non-drinkers (2.1) to be of the same opinion (Figure 49).

**Figure 50: Putting up the price of alcohol would/would not encourage people to drink less**



Those respondents who drank (3.1) were more likely than respondents who did not drink (2.7) to think that an increase in the price of alcohol would not encourage people to drink less (Figure 50). Binge drinkers (3.3) were more likely than non-binge drinkers (2.9) to agree that it would not encourage people to drink less. A similar opinion was found when comparing problem drinkers (3.2) with non-problem drinkers (2.9).

**Figure 51: Availability of cheap alcohol is harmful / not harmful to society**



Drinkers (2.2) were more likely to disagree than non-drinkers (1.9) that alcohol was harmful to society (Figure 51). This trend was echoed when comparing binge drinkers (2.4) with non-binge drinkers (2.0) and problem drinkers (2.4) with non-problem drinkers (2.1).

## Dependent Children

One-third of those surveyed (34%) had dependent children. These respondents were more likely to drink (80%) than those without dependants (69%). However, there was a tendency for respondents with children to drink less frequently. Around half of respondents with children (49%) drank at least once a week (including daily / almost every day) compared with 55% of those that had no children.

In the week prior to the survey, the proportion of respondents that drank above daily limits was similar for those with (65%) and those without dependants (64%).

Similar proportions of respondents with children (79%) and those without children (77%) drank within sensible weekly limits. However, a higher proportion of those without dependent children (6%) than those with (1%) drank at dangerous levels.

Respondents with dependent children (34%) were more likely to binge drink than those without (30%).

Based on CAGE questions, 13% of respondents without children and almost one in ten with children (9%) were classed as problem drinkers.

Overall, 2% of all respondents to the survey were problem drinkers with dependent children, while 6% of respondents to the survey were binge drinkers with dependent children.

## APPENDIX

The Central Survey Unit (CSU) of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) was commissioned by the Public Health Information and Research Branch within the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for Northern Ireland (DHSSPSNI) to carry out a study on the drinking patterns of adults in Northern Ireland.

The Adult Drinking Pattern Survey is a household based survey carried out on all those aged 18-75 in households across Northern Ireland to inform policy on alcohol drinking patterns in Northern Ireland. Its main aim is to provide an up-to-date picture of, an insight into and understanding of adult drinking patterns in Northern Ireland.

The survey was first carried out in 1999 on behalf of the Health Promotion Agency (HPA), and in 2005, 2008 and 2011 for the Public Health Information and Research Branch within the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for Northern Ireland (DHSSPSNI).

### Methodology and Fieldwork

#### Sample and Response

The survey was based on a representative sample of adults aged between 18 and 75 years old (inclusive), living in private households in Northern Ireland. A random probability sample of 2,500 private households was selected from the Land and Property Services' list of properties. Within households, all adults aged 18 to 75 were eligible for interview. The fieldwork period was from Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> October to Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> November 2013. During this time 1,987 computer assisted face to face interviews were achieved. This resulted from 1,260 households out of a possible 1,933 eligible addresses giving a response rate of 65% (see Table A1).

Table A1: Adult Drinking Patterns Survey Response Rate

	Count	Percent	Valid Percent (from eligible sample)
<b>Issued addresses</b>			
All Addresses	2500	100%	
<b>Eligibility</b>			
Ineligible addresses	567	23%	
Eligible addresses	1933	77%	
<b>Outcomes</b>			
Refusal	484		25%
Non Contact	189		10%
Achieved (addresses) <sup>1 2</sup>	1260		65%

<sup>1</sup> Achieved (addresses) includes partial interviews.

<sup>2</sup> 1987 individual interviews were achieved.

## Sample Profile

Table A2 below gives the frequency and percentage of all respondents broken down by the demographic variables used throughout this report.

*Table A2: Demographics of all respondents*

	Count	Percent
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	932	47
Female	1055	53
<b>Age Group</b>		
18-29	346	17
30-44	561	28
45-59	584	29
60-75	496	25
<b>HSC Trust</b>		
Belfast	359	18
Northern	547	28
South Eastern	379	19
Southern	404	20
Western	298	15
<b>National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC)</b>		
Higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations	614	31
Intermediate occupations	418	21
Routine and manual occupations	783	39
Not Classified <sup>1</sup>	172	9
<b>Household Income</b>		
Less than £10,400	240	12
£10,400 - £15,599	303	15
£15,600 - £25,999	382	19
£26,000 - £36,399	249	13
£36,400 - £51,999	340	17
Over £52,000	224	11
Refusal/Don't know	246	12
Missing	3	-
<b>Education Status</b>		
A-Level/Higher education	988	50
O-Level/GCSE	493	25
No qualifications	496	25
Missing	10	-

<sup>1</sup> Includes those in retirement, the long term sick or disabled, those looking after the family home, people that have never worked and students.

Despite efforts used to maximise response, there is a possibility of non-response bias in any survey. Non-response bias arises if the characteristics of non-respondents differ significantly from those of respondents in such a way that they are reflected in the responses given in the survey. The extent of non-response bias can only be examined by comparing characteristics of the achieved sample with the distribution of the same characteristics in the population.

To assess how accurately the achieved sample reflects the population aged 18-75 in Northern Ireland, the sample has been compared with characteristics of this age group in the 2012 mid-year estimates of the population in Northern Ireland.

Table A3: Comparison of gender with mid-year estimates for those aged 18-75

	2012 Mid-Year Population Estimates <sup>1</sup>	Sampled Respondents
<b>Male</b>	49	47
<b>Female</b>	51	53

As in previous surveys, the proportions of males and females in the sample are broadly representative of the population.

Table A4: Comparison of age groups with mid-year estimates

	2012 Mid-Year Population Estimates <sup>1</sup>	Sampled Respondents
<b>18-29</b>	23	17
<b>30-44</b>	29	28
<b>45-59</b>	28	29
<b>60-75</b>	20	25

While the profile of age groups in the sample broadly mirrored those in the 2012 mid-year estimates of the population, as in previous surveys those aged 18-29 years were underrepresented in the sample.

<sup>1</sup><http://www.nisra.gov.uk/demography/default.asp17.htm>



## ***Questionnaire***

The content and structure of the questionnaire was largely similar to that used in 2011:

Age, sex, Marital Status, Dependent Children

Tenure, Household income

Educational qualifications, Employment Status

Ever drank alcohol

Drinking sessions over the week prior to interview

For each session – what was drunk, how much, where and with whom

CAGE questionnaire to identify problem drinking

Perceptions of respondents own drinking habits

Amount spent on drink at offs ales and in pubs/bars.

### **New items for 2013 included:**

Minimum Pricing

Attitudes to Alcohol

## ***Rounding***

All percentages quoted in the main body of the report are rounded to the nearest whole number and therefore may not sum exactly to 100%.

Some of the questions allowed respondents to choose multiple answers such as ‘what did you have to drink?’ The sum of the percentages for these questions will not add up to 100%.

## ***Statistical Significance Tests***

Statistical significance tests (Chi-Square Tests) have been carried out on the comparisons undertaken throughout this report. These tests are used to establish the level of confidence with which we can infer that the observed findings from the sample are an accurate reflection of the behaviour of the general population. Observed differences that are not statistically significant will not be highlighted.

## ***Definitions***

Definitions used throughout this report include:

### **Daily Limits:**

The current recommended daily drinking limits state that drinking four or more units of alcohol a day for males and three or more units of alcohol a day for females increases drink related health risks.

### **Weekly Limits:**

Although there are no official weekly recommended drinking limits set, levels of alcohol consumption have been banded into broad categories of risk levels of drinking habits.

On a weekly basis, males drinking 21 units or less are considered to be drinking within sensible limits, those drinking between 22 and 50 are considered to be above sensible but below dangerous levels and those drinking 51 units and above are drinking at dangerous levels.

The sensible limit for females is 14 units per week, the above sensible and below dangerous level is between 15 and 35 units and dangerous levels are 36 units and above.

### **Binge Drinking Levels:**

For the purposes of this study a binge is defined as consuming 10 or more units of alcohol in one session for males and seven or more units of alcohol for females.

### **'Beer' includes:**

Beer, Cider, Lager, Stout

### **'Strong Beer' includes:**

Strong or Extra Strength Beer, Cider, Lager, Stout

### **'Alcopops' include:**

Alcopops, Coolers, Spirit-Based Mixers

## CAGE Analysis

A CAGE<sup>4</sup> analysis (a test of alcohol dependence developed to identify people who may have a problem with alcohol) was incorporated into the questionnaire. Respondents were asked whether they agreed or not with each of the four statements listed below. The first letter of each key word spells out the word CAGE. Agreeing to two or more of these questions suggests that it is highly likely that a problem with alcohol exists.

I have felt that I ought to **C**ut down on my drinking.

People have **A**nnoyed me by criticising my drinking.

I have felt ashamed or **G**uilty about my drinking.

I have had a drink first thing in the morning (**E**ye opener) to steady my nerves or get rid of a hangover.

<sup>4</sup> Ewing JA; Detecting alcoholism. The CAGE questionnaire. JAMA. 1984 Oct 12;252(14):1905-7. © 1984 American Medical Association

## Alcohol Units in each type of Drink

It was possible to calculate how many units of alcohol had been consumed per drinking session using the following table.

**Table A5: Calculation of alcohol units**

Drink	Volume	Number of Units
<b>Shandy</b>	Bottle	0.5
	Can	0.5
	Pint	0.5
<b>Beer/Lager/Cider/Stout</b>	Bottle	1.5
	Can	2.0
	Pint	2.0
<b>Strong or extra strength Beer/Lager/Cider/Stout</b>	Bottle	2.0
	Can	2.5
	Pint	3.5
<b>Low alcohol Beer/Lager/Cider/Wine</b>	Bottle	0.5
	Can	0.5
	Pint	0.5
	Glass	0.3
<b>Glass of Wine</b>	125ml	1.5
<b>Small glass of Sherry/Martini/Vermouth/Port</b>	50ml	1.0
<b>Measure of Spirits/Liqueurs</b>	35ml	1.5
<b>Bottle/Can of Coolers/Spirit based mixers/Alcopops</b>	Bottle	1.5

Source: DHSSPSNI-PHIRB