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MÁNNYSTRIE O

**Poustie, Resydènter Heisin  
an Fowk Siccar**

# Adult Drinking Patterns in Northern Ireland 2008

This research was commissioned by the  
Public Health Information and  
Research Branch in the  
Department of Health, Social Services  
and Public Safety

**Central Survey Unit**



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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report presents the main findings of a survey carried out to provide an up-to-date picture of adult drinking patterns in Northern Ireland in 2008. The findings are based on responses to a questionnaire from a representative sample of 1753 respondents aged between 18 and 75 years old. The report examines the amount of alcohol respondents consumed, when, where and what they drank and who they drank with, together with binge and problem drinking. Those respondents who said that they drank alcohol were asked a series of questions about their alcohol consumption in the week prior to the survey.

### **Alcohol Consumption**

- More than seven in ten (72%) adults drink alcohol.
- A larger proportion of males (74%) than females (70%) drink alcohol.
- Younger adults (18-29 years) are more likely to drink than older adults (60-75 years), 83% and 54% respectively.
- The Eastern Health and Social Services Board has the highest alcohol prevalence (78%) compared to the lowest (67%) in the Southern Health and Social Services Board.
- The likelihood of drinking increases with socio-economic group, household income and education achievement.

### **Frequency of drinking**

- Over six in ten (62%) drinkers report drinking alcohol at least once a week and 8% do so either everyday or almost everyday.
- Nearly twice the proportion of male respondents (11%) compared to females respondents (6%) drink on most days.
- Respondents who are 45 years old or over are more likely than those aged under 45 to drink alcohol on most days.

### **Days when drinking occurs**

- Most drinking occurs over the weekend and peaks on Saturdays.
- Males are more likely than females to drink during the week, and similar proportions of males and females drink during the weekend.

- Respondents in the youngest age group (18-29 years) are more likely to drink at the weekend and are less likely to drink during the week than those in the oldest age group (60-75 years).

### **Drinks Consumed**

- The most common drink consumed is wine (50%), closely followed by beer (48%).
- The most common alcoholic drinks for males are beer (73%), wine (37%) and spirits (24%). The most common drinks for females are wine (64%), spirits (31%) and then beer (22%).
- The most common drinks for younger respondents (18-29 years) are beer (58%), wine (31%), spirits (27%) and alcopops (26%). The most common drinks for older respondents (60-75 years) are wine (54%), beer (39%) and spirits (34%).

### **Where and with whom people drink**

- Most of those who drank in the week prior to the survey had consumed alcohol at home (64%) and nearly one quarter had consumed alcohol in the pub (24%).
- Males are more likely than females to drink in pubs and less likely than females to drink in restaurants.
- The respondents in the youngest age group (18-29 years) are more likely than those in the oldest age group (60-75 years) to drink in a pub, in someone else's home or nightclub/disco and less likely than older drinkers to drink in sports clubs, hotels and social clubs.
- Most of those who had drunk in the week prior to the survey had consumed alcohol with their partner (44%) or with two or more friends of both genders (25%).
- Males are more likely than females to drink alone and less likely to drink with family.

### **Amount of alcohol consumed**

- More than four in five (81%) respondents had exceeded the recommended daily limits during the week prior to the survey.

- Approximately four in five males (79%) and females (83%) exceed their recommended daily limits during the week prior to the survey.
- The recommended daily limits are exceeded most often on a Saturday and then on a Friday.
- Nearly one quarter (24%) of respondents drank above the weekly sensible levels.
- Over one quarter (26%) of males respondents and over one fifth (22%) of female respondents drank above the weekly sensible levels in the week prior to the survey.
- The majority of drinkers across all four HSSBs, ranging from four in five (80%) in the Southern HSSB to nearly three quarters (72%) in the Eastern HSSB, consume alcohol below sensible drinking levels.
- Younger drinkers (18-29 years) are more likely than older drinkers (60-75 years) to exceed the weekly guidelines for sensible drinking limits.

### **Binge drinking**

- Nearly a third (32%) of those who drank in the week before the survey had engaged in at least one binge drinking session.
- Males (35%) are more likely than females (29%) to binge drink.
- Over half (54%) of respondents in the youngest age group (18-29) who drank in the week prior to the survey binge drank compared to 16% of respondents in the oldest age group (60-75).
- For those who drank in the week prior to the survey, Saturday is when just over seven in ten (72%) respondents consumed alcohol and two in ten (20%) respondents engaged in at least one binge drinking session.

### **Problem drinking**

- CAGE question analysis (clinical interview questions) indicated that one in ten (10%) of those who drank in the week prior to the survey are highly likely to have a problem with alcohol.
- Respondents that drank above the sensible levels limits are more likely to have a problem with alcohol.

### Perceptions of drinking

- Over half (56%) of those who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey consider themselves to be light drinkers, two in five (40%) consider themselves to be moderate drinkers and 4% consider that they are heavy drinkers.
- Of the 33 respondents who consider themselves to be heavy drinkers, nine are female and 24 male:
  - Twenty-one of the 24 males had consumed above sensible levels of alcohol in the week prior to the survey,
  - Nineteen of the 24 males had indulged in one or more binge drinking sessions, and,
  - Twelve of the 24 males are highly likely to have a problem with alcohol according to the CAGE questions.

# 1 THE SURVEY

## Introduction

This report presents the main findings of a survey carried out by the Central Survey Unit (CSU) of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). The survey 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 inform policy on alcohol drinking patterns in Northern Ireland.

## Background

The main aim of the survey was to provide an up-to-date picture of adult drinking patterns in Northern Ireland. It examines not just the amount of alcohol people drink but also when, where and what they drink and who they drink with. It also looks at how drinking behaviour varies among different sections of the public i.e. whether it differs among those of different socio-economic status, gender and age.

CSU previously conducted this survey on behalf of the Health Promotion Agency (HPA) in October and November 1999<sup>1</sup>. The survey was then carried out in October 2005 for the Drugs and Alcohol Information and Research Unit<sup>2</sup> in the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

## Methodology and Fieldwork

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 2,050 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 7<sup>th</sup> April 2008 to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2008. During this time 1753 computer assisted face to face interviews were

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<sup>1</sup> Health Promotion Agency: Adult Drinking Patterns in Northern Ireland, December 2002.

<sup>2</sup> The Public Health Information and Research Branch was formerly known as The Drug and Alcohol Information and Research Unit.



achieved. These came from 1067 households out of a possible 1697 eligible addresses giving a response rate of 63%.

The questionnaire began by asking respondents for background demographic details e.g. gender, age and employment status. The bulk of the questionnaire consisted of questions concerned with drinking behaviour and a recall of drinking sessions where questions concentrated on the week prior to the day of interview. Respondents were asked to recount their drinking activities over this period identifying what, how much, where, when and with whom they drank. They were then asked four CAGE questions. These are clinical interview questions that have been used internationally as an assessment tool for identifying potential problems with alcohol. Finally they were asked about their perceptions of their own drinking habits, and their expenditure on alcohol and smoking.

The technical appendix in this report outlines, in detail, rounding conventions, statistical significance testing and reporting, and definitions used in the body of this report.

In brief;

- Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number and may not sum exactly to 100%.
- Where respondents are permitted to give multiple response answers, percentages will not add to 100%.
- All statistically significant findings are reported at the 5% level.
- Comparisons are also made with the 2007 mid-year population estimates in order to look at the representativeness of the achieved sample.

## 2 FINDINGS

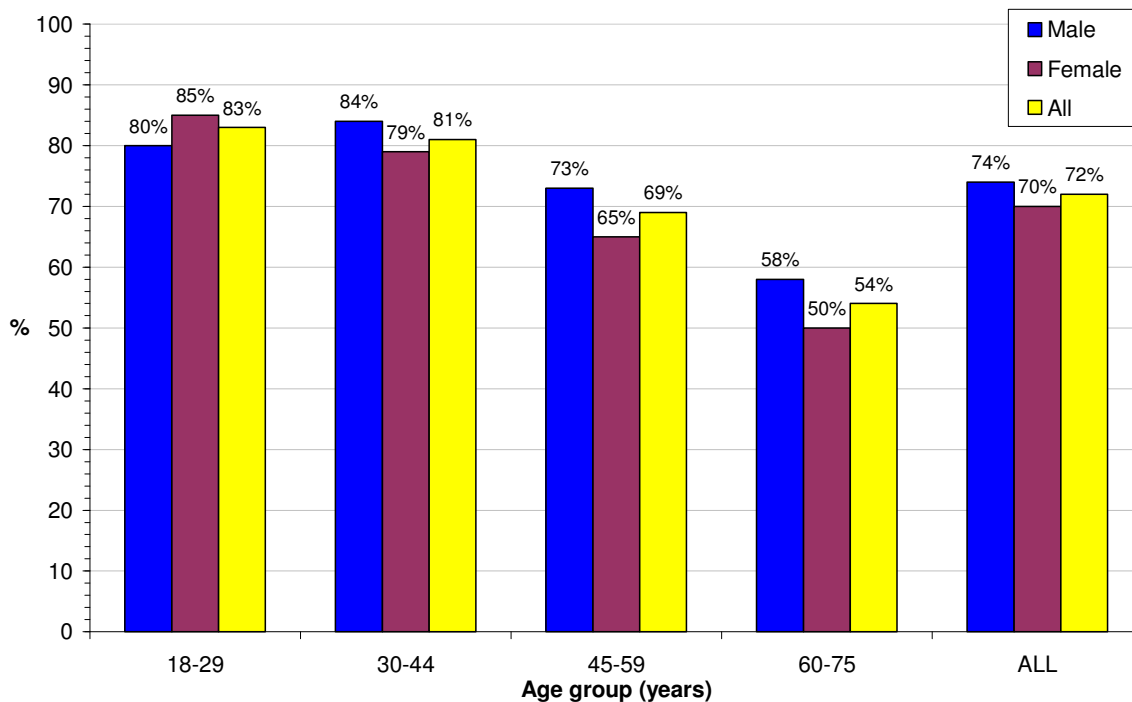
### 2.1 Alcohol consumption

The survey began by establishing the proportion of respondents who drank alcohol. Just over seven in ten (72%) respondents reported drinking alcohol, this is similar to levels recorded in 2005 (73%) and 1999 (70%).

#### Gender

Seventy-four percent of males and 70% of females reported that they drink alcohol. This difference in drinking prevalence is statistically significant. A similar statistically significant difference between males and females was recorded in both previous studies (77% of males and 70% of females in 2005 and 75% of males and 67% of females in 1999). Figure 1 shows the percentage who reported that they had drunk alcohol by age group and gender.

Figure 1: Percentage who drank by age group and gender



Base: all respondents, N = 1738

## Age

The proportions of both males and females who drink, significantly decreases with age. Eight in ten males (80%) and more than eight in ten females (85%) aged 18-29 years drink compared to half of females (50%) and almost three out of five (58%) males aged 60-75 years old (see Figure 1).

A similar proportion of both males and females drink in each age group. In the youngest age group (18-29 years) 80% of males and 85% of females drink and for those aged 30-44 years 84% of males and 79% of females drink. In the older age groups, 73% of males compared to 65% of females drink (those aged 45-59 years) and for those aged 60-75 years 58% of males compared to 50% of females drink.

There is no association in the level of drinking prevalence between this survey and the 2005 survey, for either age or gender.

## Health and Social Services Boards

Table 1 shows the level of drinking prevalence for respondents across the four Health and Social Services Boards (HSSBs). There is a statistically significant difference between the four HSSBs. Nearly eight in ten (78%) respondents in the Eastern HSSB drink while approximately seven in ten in both the Western HSSB (72%) and Northern HSSB (69%) drink and two in three in the Southern HSSBs drink (67%). The prevalence of respondents drinking across the four HSSBs broadly reflects the 2005 survey results, 81% in the Eastern HSSB, 71% in the Western HSSB and 67% in both the Northern and Southern HSSBs.

**Table 1: Percentage who drank by Health and Social Services Board and gender**

Health & Social Services Boards	Males	Females	All
Eastern HSSB	79%	76%	78%
Northern HSSB	70%	67%	69%
Southern HSSB	71%	63%	67%
Western HSSB	75%	69%	72%
<b>Total</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>72%</b>

There is no significant difference in the proportion of males and females who drank in each of the four boards. The Eastern HSSB had the highest proportion of both male (79%) and female (76%) drinkers whilst the Northern HSSB had the lowest proportion of male drinkers (70%) and the Southern HSSB had the lowest proportion of female drinkers (63%). There is a statistically significant association between HSSB and prevalence of females drinking with no association between HSSBs and prevalence of male drinking.

### **Socio-economic group, household income and educational status**

Overall, respondents with a managerial and professional occupation are most likely to drink (81%). Nearly three in four (74%) respondents with an intermediate occupation and seven in ten (70%) respondents with routine and manual occupations drink alcohol. Those respondents who are not classified within the three main groupings are the least likely to drink alcohol, with over half (56%) of them reporting that they drink alcohol. There is a statistically significant association between socio-economic group and drinking alcohol for both males and females.

The proportion of respondents who drink increases as household income increases, which is statistically significant. More than nine in ten (91%) male respondents who live in households with an income of £52,000 or more drink compared to six in ten (60%) males in households with incomes of less than £10,400. There is a significant association between male prevalence and household income and a similar pattern was observed for female respondents, as shown in Table 2.

Approximately four fifths of respondents with A Levels or higher educational qualifications (81%) and O Levels (77%) drink compared to just over half (55%) of those without qualifications. There is a statistically significant difference between education attainment and drinking for both males and females.

**Table 2: Alcohol consumption by socio-economic group, household income and education status**

	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>All</b>
<b>Socio-economic group</b>			
<b>Managerial &amp; professional</b>	82%	79%	81%
<b>Intermediate occupations</b>	75%	73%	74%
<b>Routine &amp; manual</b>	73%	67%	70%
<b>Not classified<sup>1</sup></b>	55%	56%	56%
<b>Household income</b>			
<b>£52,000 or over</b>	91%	85%	88%
<b>£36,400 – 51,999</b>	84%	79%	81%
<b>£26,000 – 36,399</b>	83%	70%	76%
<b>£15,600 – 25,999</b>	74%	74%	74%
<b>£10,400 – 15,599</b>	66%	64%	65%
<b>Under £10,400</b>	60%	65%	63%
<b>Education Attainment</b>			
<b>A Level / Higher education</b>	82%	80%	81%
<b>O Level / Commercial</b>	81%	74%	77%
<b>No qualifications</b>	59%	51%	55%

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

## 2.2 Frequency of Drinking

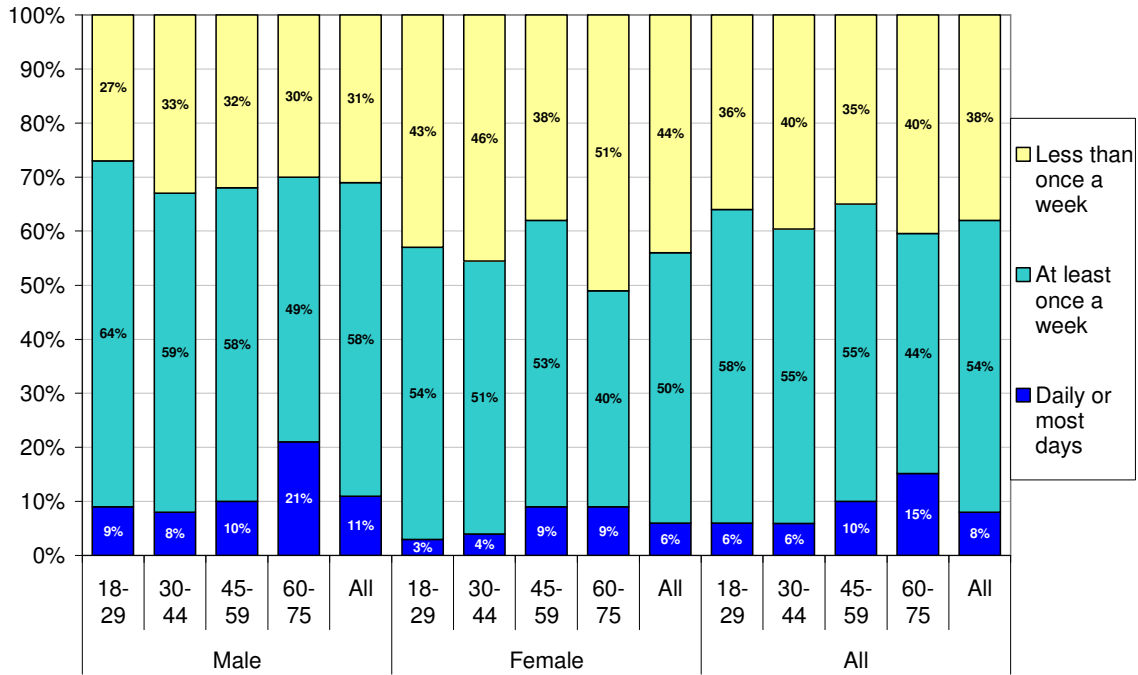
This section reports on how often respondents who stated that they drank alcohol, had consumed an alcoholic drink.

### Age and Gender

Figure 2 shows how often respondents who drink reported having an alcoholic drink. Over three fifths (62%) of respondents who drink usually drink alcohol at least once a week (69% male and 56% female respondents). Males who drink are more likely to drink daily than females, with more than one in ten (11%) male respondents drinking most days of the week compared to over one in twenty (6%) females. Females are more likely to drink less often than males, with over two fifths (44%) of

females drinking less than once a week compared to just under a third (31%) of males. There is a significant difference in the frequency of male and female drinking.

**Figure 2: How often respondents drink by age group and gender**



Base: all respondents who drink, N=1249

There is a significant association between respondent's age group and frequency of drinking by gender. Nine percent of female respondents aged over 45 drank daily or most days compared to 3% of 18-29 year olds and 4% of 30-44 year olds. Similarly, approximately two in ten (21%) male respondents aged 60-75 drank daily or most days compared to approximately one in ten in the other age groups (9% aged 18-29, 8% aged 30-44 and 10% aged 45-59).

The results from the 2005 survey are similar with 9% of respondents (13% males, 6% females) drinking daily or most days.

### Health and Social Services Boards

There is a significant difference between frequency of drinking and HSSB. One in eight (12%) respondents reported drinking on most days in the Eastern HSSB compared to approximately one in twenty in the other HSSBs (7% in Northern HSSB, 6% in Western HSSB and 5% in Southern HSSB). These figures are similar

to those reported in the 2005 survey (Eastern HSSB 12%, Northern HSSB 8%, Western HSSB 8% and Southern HSSB 5%).

When looking at Health and Social Services Boards by gender there is no association in the proportion of female respondents and the frequency of their drinking across the four HSSBs. There is a significant difference between males in the HSSBs and the frequency of their drinking. Nearly one in five male respondents drink most days in the Eastern HSSB (17%), almost one in ten (9%) do so in both the Northern and Western HSSBs whilst one in twenty (5%) does so in the Southern HSSB.

## 2.3 Drinking Behaviour

Those who reported that they had an alcoholic drink in the week preceding the survey were asked more detailed questions about when, where and what they had to drink and with whom they had a drink. The results are outlined below. It is important to note that these results are presented as a proportion of all those who drank in the week before the survey and **not** as a proportion of all those who responded to the survey or who stated that they drank.

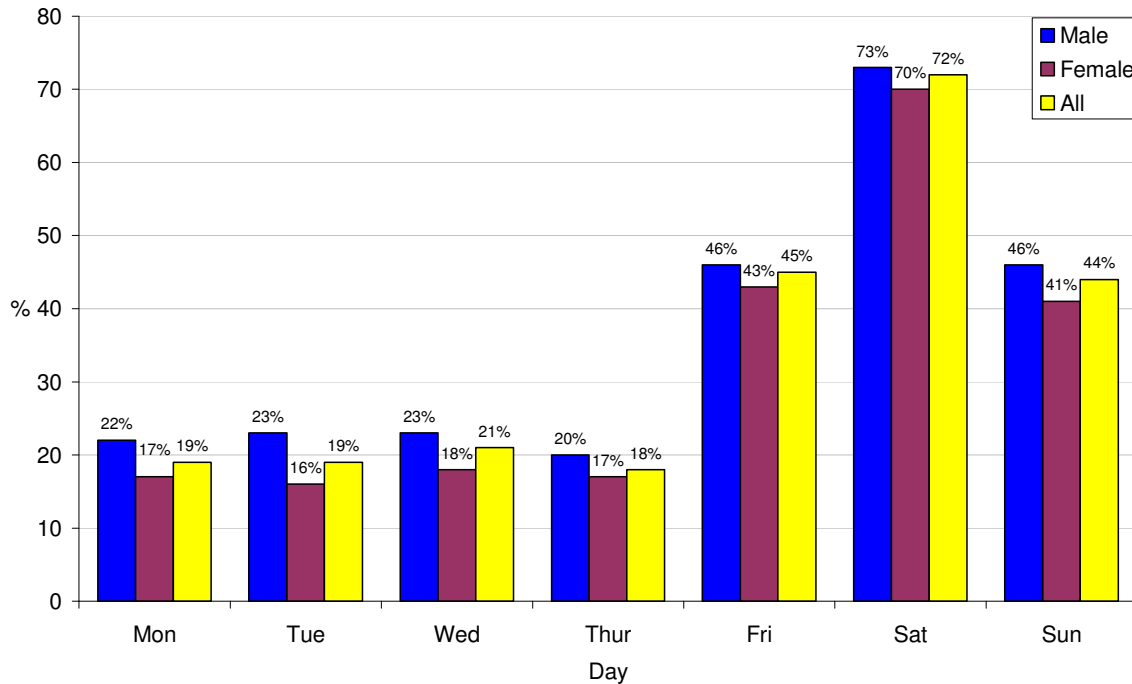
### 2.3.1 Days on which drinking occurs

Most drinking occurs over the weekend period - this is true for both males and females (Figure 3). In the week preceding the survey, 45% of respondents consumed alcohol on a weekday (Monday to Thursday) compared to 93% who did so over the weekend (Friday to Sunday). Males are significantly more likely than females to drink during the week (Males 48% and Females 41%). There is no association in weekend drinking between males (94%) and females (93%).

Approximately one in five drank on Monday (19%), Tuesday (19%), Wednesday (21%) and Thursday (18%) compared to over two in five on both Sunday (44%) and Friday (45%) and almost three in four (72%) on Saturday.

This general pattern of lower prevalence during the week with a steep rise at weekends, peaking on Saturday, is consistent with the 1999 and 2005 surveys' findings.

**Figure 3: Days on which drinking occurs by gender**



*Base: those who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey, N = 912*

## Age

Nearly two fifths (37%) of those who drank alcohol at least once in the week prior to the survey were aged between 30 and 44, over a quarter (27%) were aged 45 to 59, a fifth (21%) were aged 18 to 29 and more than one in ten (14%) were aged 60 to 75.

Over nine in ten (93%) of those who drank in the last week had done so at the weekend. There is a significant difference between the age of respondents and those who reported drinking at the weekend, with those aged under 45 having a higher drinking prevalence than those aged over 45 years old.

Overall, 45% of respondents had a drink on a weekday (Mon – Thur). There is a significant difference between the age of respondents and those who reported drinking on weekdays. Older respondents are more likely to drink on a weekday with



54% of those aged 60-75 drinking during the week compared to 35% of those aged 18-29.

**Table 3: Day on which drinking occurs by age group**

	Age group (years)				Total
	18-29	30-44	45-59	60-75	
<b>Weekdays</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>45%</b>
<b>Monday</b>	13%	16%	23%	29%	<b>19%</b>
<b>Tuesday</b>	13%	18%	21%	27%	<b>19%</b>
<b>Wednesday</b>	16%	20%	22%	27%	<b>21%</b>
<b>Thursday</b>	16%	16%	19%	27%	<b>18%</b>
<b>Weekend</b>	<b>96%</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>93%</b>
<b>Friday</b>	44%	43%	45%	47%	<b>45%</b>
<b>Saturday</b>	78%	71%	71%	67%	<b>72%</b>
<b>Sunday</b>	32%	46%	48%	48%	<b>44%</b>
<b>Base (N)</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>338</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>912</b>

### **Health & Social Services Board**

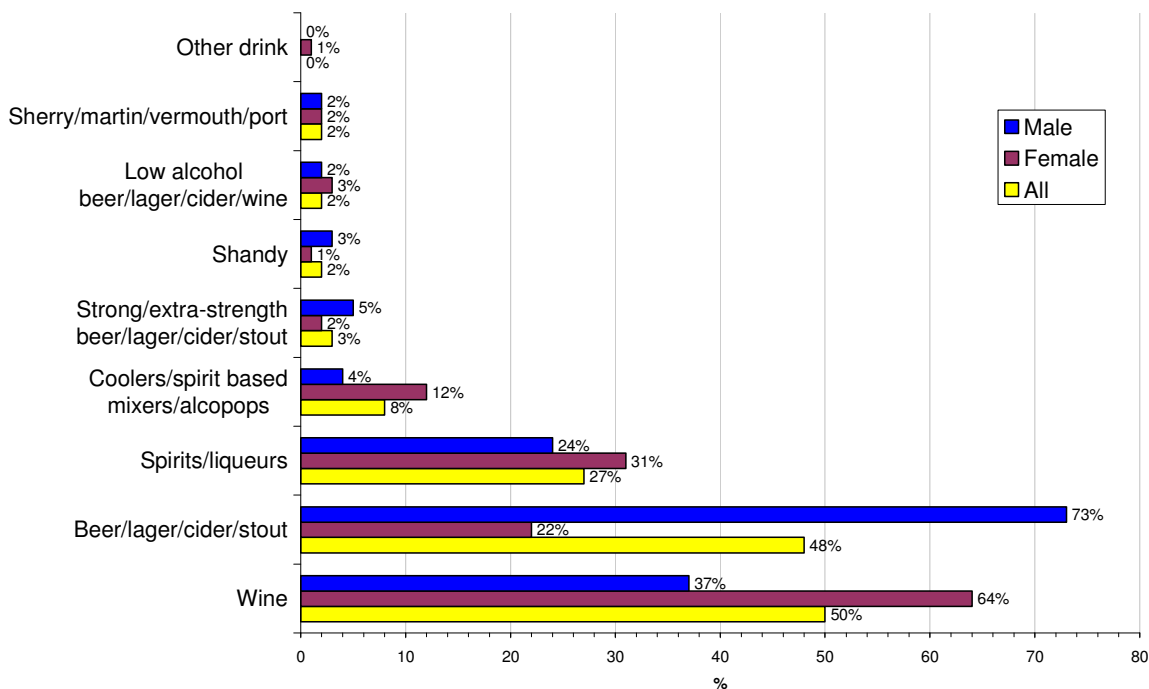
Over half (51%) of those who consumed alcohol in the Eastern HSSB did so on a weekday (Monday – Thursday), which is significantly more than in other HSSBs. Approximately two fifths of the those in the remaining HSSBs had a drink on a weekday (43% in both Northern HSSB and Western HSSB, and 37% in Southern HSSB).

The proportion of weekend drinkers is similar across the four HSSBs, with all of them reporting that over nine in ten respondents had a drink in the weekend prior to the survey.

### **2.3.2 Type of drinks consumed**

Half (50%) of those respondents who consumed alcohol reported that they had drunk wine; making it the most commonly reported alcoholic drink (see Figure 4). A similar proportion (48%) had consumed beer and just under three in ten (27%) had spirits or liqueurs. This is consistent with previous surveys.

**Figure 4: Type of drinks consumed in the week prior to the survey by gender**



*Base: those who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey, N = 912*

## Gender

There is a significant difference between the type of drink respondents consumed in the week prior to the survey and gender. Almost three in four (73%) males compared to just over one in five (22%) females had drunk beer, and more than twice as many males (5%) than females (2%) reported drinking strong beer, and 3% of male respondents compared to 1% of female respondents reported drinking shandy. While a larger proportion of female respondents than male respondents had drunk spirits/liqueurs (31% of females and 24% of males). Over three fifths (64%) of females compared to just over a third (37%) of males had drunk wine during this time. A higher proportion of females (12%) than males (4) had consumed coolers, spirit based mixers or alcopops during the week prior to the survey.

These results mirror those in the 2005 and 1999 surveys in which wine was also the most popular drink for females. Just over three in five females in 2005 (61%) and half in 1999 (50%) who had consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey drank wine. Similarly, beer was the most common choice for males with approximately

three quarters consuming it in the week prior to both surveys (73% in 2005 and 77% in 1999).

The proportion of females who consumed spirits in the week prior to the survey has decreased from 42% in 1999 to 31% in 2008, although it has remained unchanged between 2005 (36%) and 2008. Twenty-six percent of males consumed spirits in the week prior to the survey in 1999; this increased to 33% in 2005 and decreased to 24% in 2008.

### Age

The proportion of those drinking beer, lager, cider or stout in the week prior to the survey significantly decreases with age. Nearly three fifths (58%) of those aged 18-29 drink beer, lager, cider or stout compared to those aged 30-44 (49%), 45-59 (45%) and those aged 60-75 (39%).

Half (50%) of those who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey drank wine. Significantly less respondents in the youngest age group (18-29) drank wine (31%) compared to over half in all the other age groups (55% aged 30-44, 56% aged 45-59 and 54% aged 60-75).

**Table 4: Drinks consumed in the week prior to the survey by age**

	18-29	30-44	45-59	60-75	All
Wine	31%	55%	56%	54%	50%
Beer/lager/cider/stout	58%	49%	45%	39%	48%
Spirits/liqueurs	27%	24%	29%	34%	27%
Coolers/spirit based mixers/alcopops	26%	4%	2%	2%	8%
Strong/extra-strength beer/lager/cider/stout	3%	3%	4%	3%	3%
Shandy	4%	1%	4%	2%	2%
Low alcohol beer/lager/cider/wine	5%	2%	2%	0%	2%
Sherry/martini/vermouth/port	3%	<1%	2%	5%	2%
Other drink	1%	<1%	0%	1%	<1%
<b>Base (N)</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>338</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>912</b>

Significantly more respondents aged 18-29 drank coolers, spirit based mixers or alcopops with more than one in four (26%) drinking them in the week prior to the survey compared to less than one in 20 in all other age groups (4% aged 30-44, 2% aged 45-59 and 2% aged 60-75).

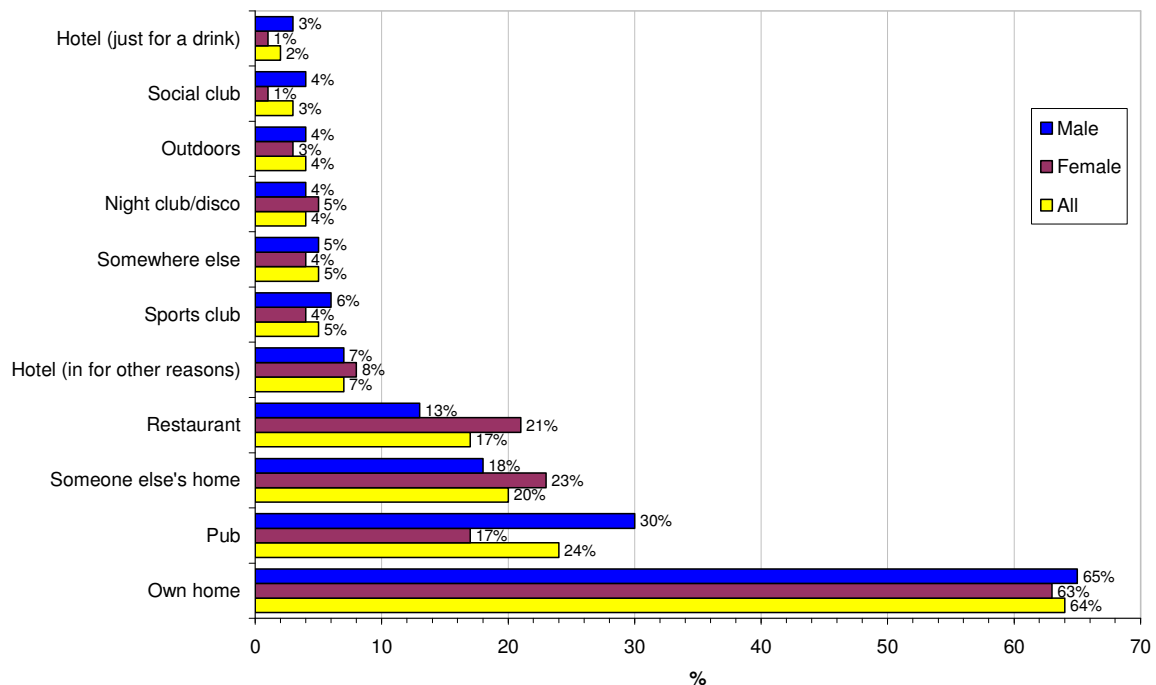
## Health and Social Services Board

The only difference between Health and Social Services Boards and the type of drink consumed was in the Eastern HSSB where a higher proportion of respondents drank wine than in the other HSSBs (58% in the Eastern HSSB, 49% in the Northern HSSB, 42% in the Southern HSSB and 44% in the Western HSSB).

### 2.3.3 Where people drink

Respondents who had consumed alcohol during the week prior to the survey were asked in what locations they had consumed alcohol. The most common setting for drinking alcohol is in the home (see Figure 5). Just under two thirds (64%) of those who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey drank in their own homes (65% of males and 63% of females). This reflects the proportions observed in previous surveys when more than half (61% in 2005 and 55% in 1999) of respondents consumed alcohol in their own homes.

Figure 5: Where alcohol was consumed in the week prior to the survey by gender



Base: those who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey, N = 912

The second most common location for drinking alcohol was in the pub (24%). This proportion is significantly less than those who drank in the pub in 1999 (33%) and 2005 (30%).

The next most common location for drinking alcohol in the week prior to the survey is in someone else’s home (20% of respondents, with 18% of males and 23% of females doing so), which reflects the proportions observed in previous surveys (21% in 2005 and 19% in 1999).

**Gender**

There is a statistically significant association between gender and locations in which alcohol is consumed. Significantly more males than females drink in pubs (30% of males and 17% of females) and social clubs (4% of males and 1% of females). Significantly more females (21%) drink alcohol in restaurants than males (13%).

Table 5 shows the most popular drinking locations for males for each day of the week. The most common settings for drinking alcohol are in the respondents own home and followed by the pub. The third most popular drinking location throughout the week varies between a restaurant and someone else’s home.

Respondent’s own home and the pub were the two most popular locations for drinking for males in the 2005 and 1999 surveys. The third most popular location for drinking was either a restaurant or someone else’s home in both the 2005 and 2008 surveys.

**Table 5: The most popular drinking locations for males for each day of the week**

Rank	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	Own home	Own home	Own home	Own home	Own home	Own home	Own home
2	Pub	Pub	Pub	Pub	Pub	Pub	Pub
3	Restaurant	Someone else’s home	Restaurant	Restaurant / Someone else’s home	Someone else’s home	Restaurant	Someone else’s home
<b>Base</b>	<b>N = 102</b>	<b>N = 107</b>	<b>N = 110</b>	<b>N = 94</b>	<b>N = 216</b>	<b>N = 345</b>	<b>N = 114</b>

*Base: all males who drank on the day in question.*

Table 6 shows that the most common drinking locations for females throughout the week are in their own homes, restaurants and then someone else’s home.

In both the 2005 and 1999 surveys, their own home was also the most popular place for females to drink. However, pubs ranked either second or third on each day of the 2005 survey and restaurants ranked either second or third on four days of the week in 1999 whilst they do not feature in the top three in 2005.

**Table 6: The most popular drinking locations for females for each day of the week**

Rank	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	Own home	Own home	Own home	Own home	Own home	Own home	Own home
2	Pub / Restaurant	Restaurant	Someone else's home	Restaurant	Someone else's home	Restaurant	Someone else's home
3	Pub / Restaurant	Someone else's home	Restaurant	Someone else's home	Restaurant	Someone else's home	Pub
<b>Base</b>	<b>N = 73</b>	<b>N = 70</b>	<b>N = 78</b>	<b>N = 73</b>	<b>N = 190</b>	<b>N = 310</b>	<b>N = 84</b>

*Base: all females who drank on the day in question.*

## Age

There is a significant difference between age groups and some of the locations where alcohol was consumed (see Table 7). Those in the youngest age group (aged 18-29) are more likely to drink in pubs, night clubs/discos and someone else's home than any other age group. They are also least likely to drink in their own home.

Those in the oldest age group (60-75) are more likely to drink in sports and social clubs. Those aged 45-59 are the most likely to drink in a restaurant and the youngest age group (18-29) are least likely. Those in the age group 30-44 are most likely to drink in their own home.

Nearly one in four (23%) of those aged 60-75, stated that they drank in the pub which is a significant increase since the 2005 survey (13%). However, for respondents aged 18-29 and 45-59 there is a significant decrease in the proportions drinking in the pub from 2005 to 2008 (from 47% to 36% and from 26% to 16%, respectively). There is no significant difference in the proportion of respondents aged 30-44 who drank in the pub between the 2008 and 2005 surveys. The proportion of respondents who drank in their own homes has not changed between the surveys.

**Table 7: The location where alcohol was consumed in the week prior to the survey by age**

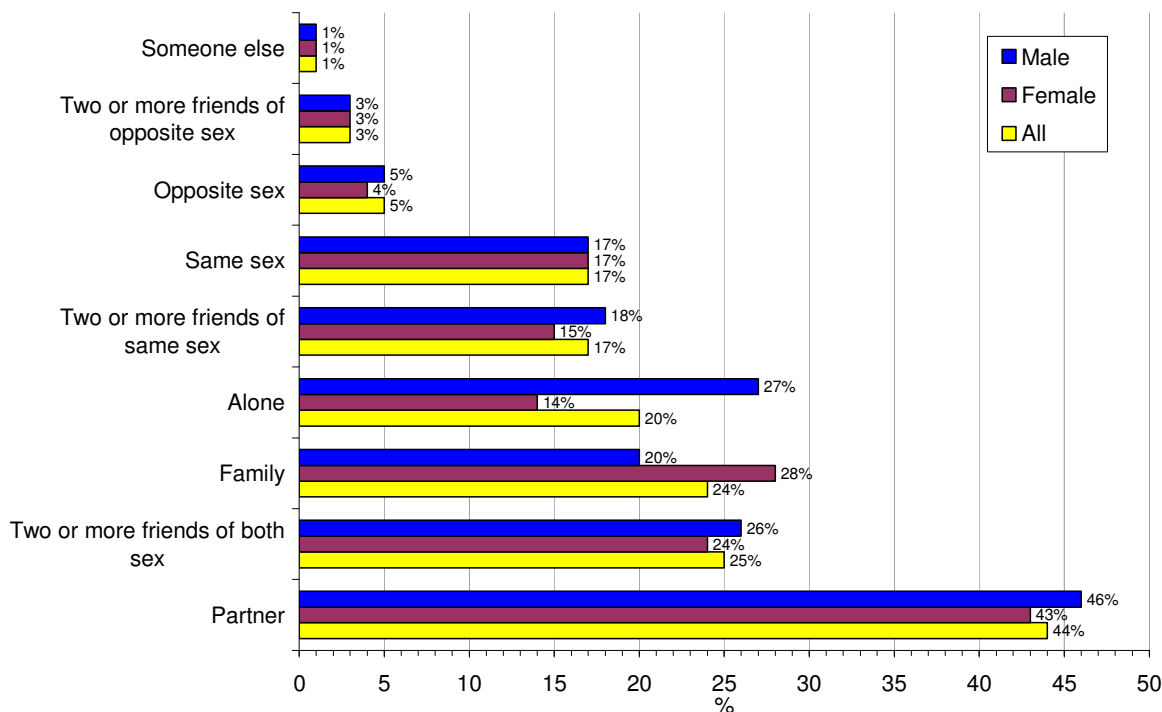
	Age Group				
	18 - 29	30-44	45-59	60-75	All
Own Home	50%	72%	65%	63%	64%
Pub	36%	22%	16%	23%	24%
Someone else's home	33%	18%	15%	15%	20%
Restaurant	13%	16%	23%	15%	17%
Hotel	4%	10%	12%	11%	9%
Sports club	3%	4%	6%	11%	5%
Night club / Disco	15%	2%	1%	1%	4%
Social club	2%	<1%	4%	9%	3%
Outdoors	6%	3%	4%	2%	4%
Somewhere else	5%	4%	5%	5%	5%
Base (N)	193	338	250	131	912

The percentage of respondents aged 45-59 who have consumed alcohol in a restaurant has significantly increased since the last survey (15% in 2005 and 23% in 2008). There is a significant increase in the proportion of 18-29 year old respondents drinking outdoors between the 2005 and 2008 surveys (0% to 6% respectively), for respondents aged 30-44 (0% to 3% respectively) and also for respondents aged 45-59 (1% to 4% respectively). There is also an increase in the proportion of respondents aged 60-75 drinking somewhere else between 2005 and 2008 (1% in 2005 to 5% in 2008).

### ***2.3.4 With whom do people drink?***

The largest proportion (44%) of those who drank in the week prior to the survey consumed alcohol with their partners. A quarter (25%) drank with two or more friends of both sexes, 24% drank in the company of family, one in five (20%) drank alone, 17% drank with two or more friends of the same sex and 17% with someone of the same sex. These results are similar to those found in both the 2005 and 1999 surveys.

**Figure 6: The company respondents drank in by gender**



*Base: those who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey, N = 912*

## Gender

Figure 6 shows that males (27%) are significantly more likely than females (14%) to drink alone while females (28%) are significantly more likely than males (20%) to drink with family.

### 2.3.5 Amount of alcohol consumed

Respondents who said that they drunk alcohol were asked a series of questions about their alcohol consumption in the week prior to the survey. This approach gathered information on what types of drinks they had and the quantity they had consumed during each of five possible sessions for each of the days on which they had consumed alcohol.

### Recommended daily drinking 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 a day for females, increases alcohol related health risks.

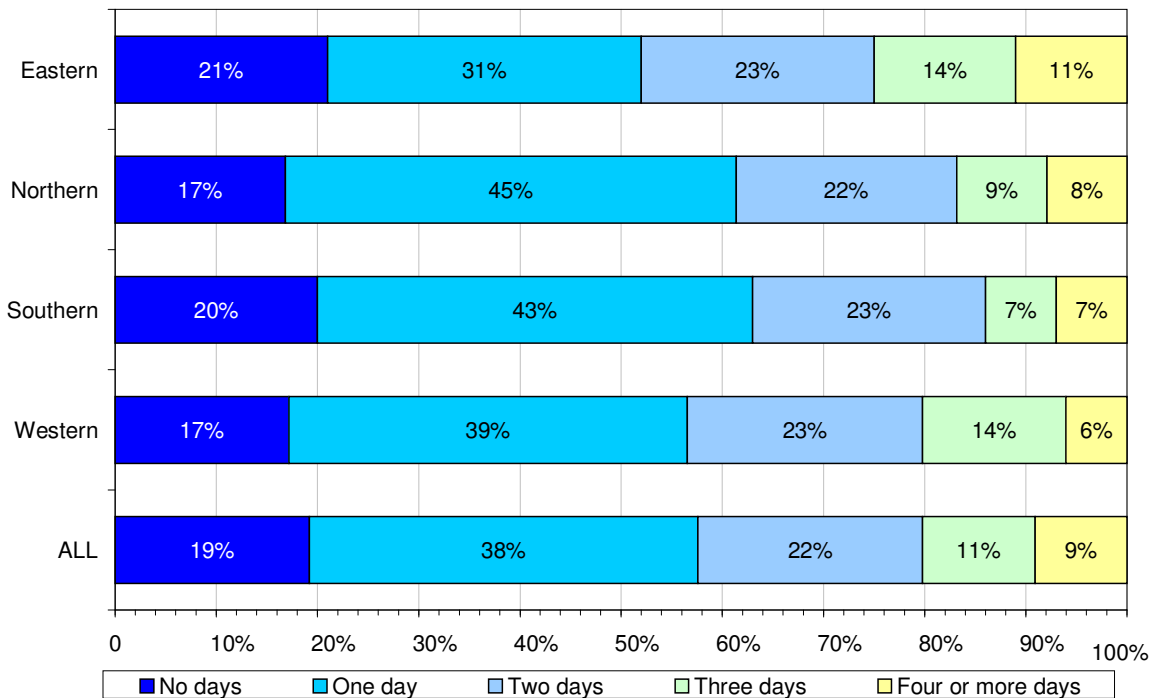


Figure 7 shows the percentage of those who exceeded the recommended daily limits during that week and the number of days on which they exceeded the limits. Over four fifths (81%) of respondents who had consumed alcohol in the week before the survey exceeded the recommended daily limits, and nearly one fifth (19%) did not exceed the recommended daily limits.

**Health and Social Services Board**

One in five respondents from the Southern HSSB (20%) and Eastern HSSB (21%) had not reached or exceeded the recommended daily limits compared to 17% in the Northern and Western Boards. The Eastern HSSB has the highest proportion (11%) of those reaching or exceeding the recommended daily limits four or more times per week whilst the Western HSSB has the lowest proportion (6%). There is a significant difference between HSSB and the number of occurrences in the week that alcohol consumption reached or exceeded daily limits.

**Figure 7: Number of days in the week prior to the survey where alcohol consumption reached or exceeded the recommended daily limit**

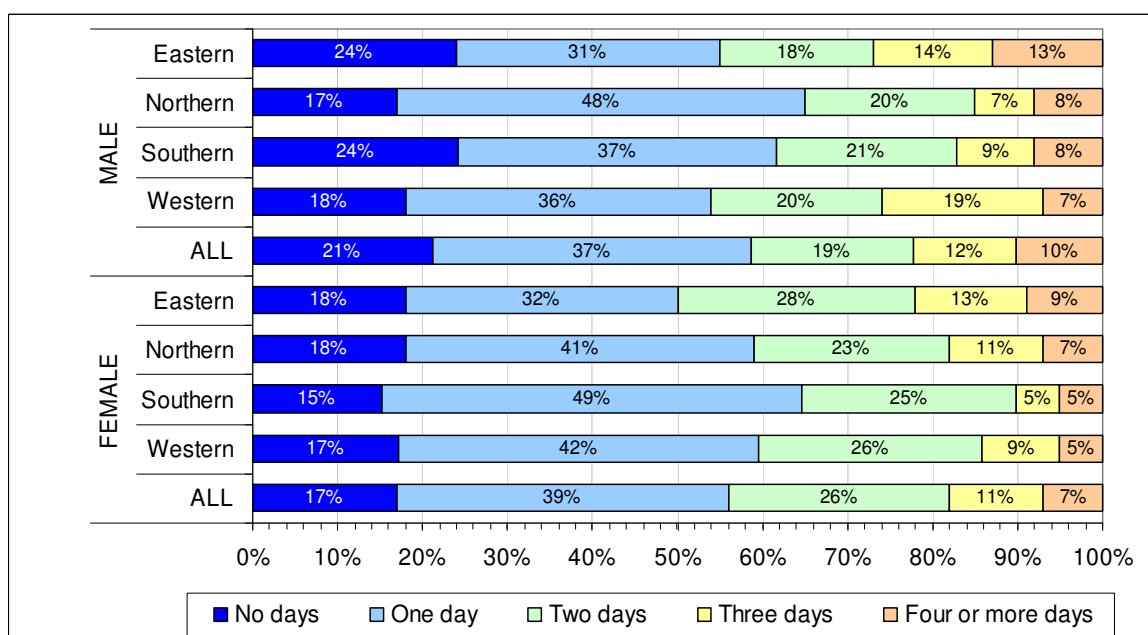


*Base: those who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey, N = 912*

## Gender

Approximately one in five males (21%) and females (17%) did not exceed their recommended daily limits in the week prior to the survey. Nearly two fifths of females (39%) and males (37%) exceeded their recommended daily limits on one day whilst over a quarter (26%) of females and under a fifth (19%) of males exceeded the recommended daily limits on two days. The recommended daily limit was exceeded on three days by 12% of males and 11% of females and on four or more days by 10% of males and 7% of females.

**Figure 8: Number of days in the week prior to the survey where alcohol consumption reached or exceeded the recommended daily limit by gender**



*Base: those who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey, (male N=470, female N=442)*

Table 8 shows the proportion of respondents who have reached or exceeded the recommended daily limits by socio-economic group, household income and educational achievement. There is no association between respondent's socio-economic group, income or educational levels and the number of times they exceeded the recommended daily drinking levels.

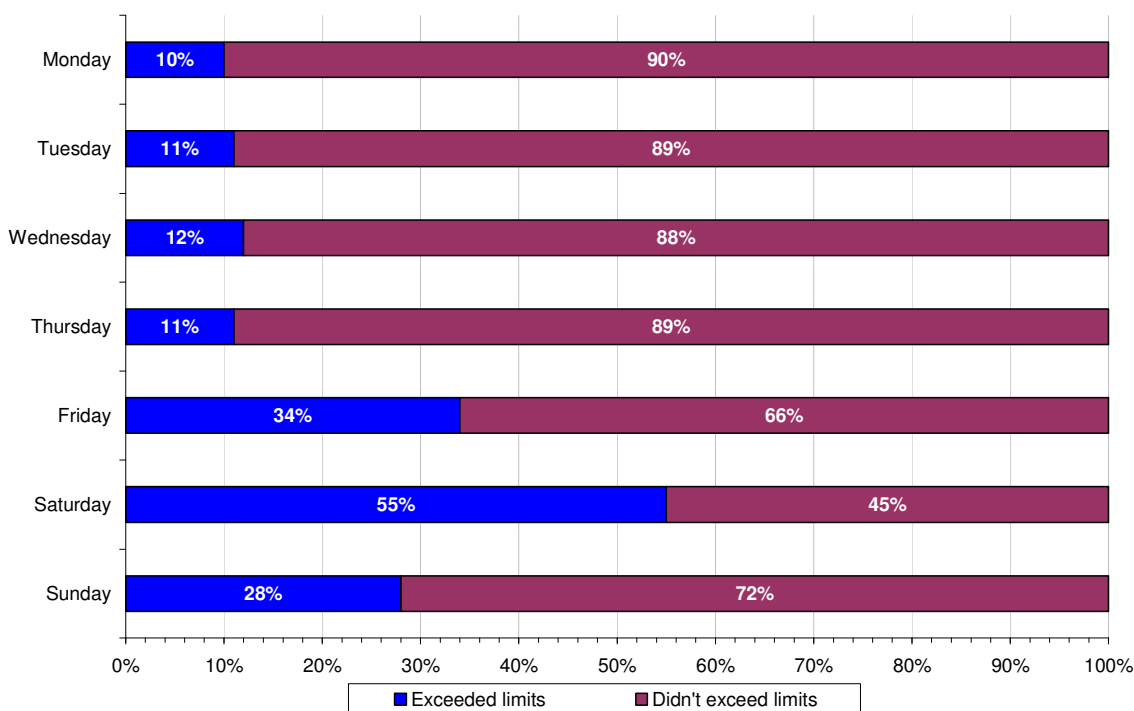
**Table 8: Proportion of respondents that have reached or exceeded the recommended daily drinking limits by socio-economic group, household income and education status**

	Respondents that have reached or exceeded the recommended daily limits				
	None	One	Two	Three	Four or more
<b>Socio-economic group (N=912)</b>					
Managerial & professional	25%	34%	23%	11%	8%
Intermediate occupations	22%	34%	25%	9%	10%
Routine & manual	14%	43%	22%	12%	8%
Not classified <sup>1</sup>	14%	44%	18%	16%	9%
<b>Household income (N=759)</b>					
£52,000 or over	22%	37%	22%	15%	4%
£36,400 – 51,999	25%	38%	21%	6%	9%
£26,000 – 36,399	15%	33%	30%	13%	8%
£15,600 – 25,999	18%	42%	18%	12%	9%
£10,400 – 15,599	18%	47%	13%	10%	12%
Under £10,400	15%	42%	23%	10%	10%
<b>Education status (N=906)</b>					
A Level / Higher education	19%	37%	24%	12%	9%
O Level / Commercial	19%	36%	25%	12%	8%
No qualifications	18%	45%	15%	11%	10%

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

Figure 9 shows that the prevalence of exceeding recommended daily limits was highest over the weekend period. Over half (55%) of those respondents who consumed alcohol in the previous week exceeded the recommended daily limits on Saturday, over a third (34%) on Friday and more than one in four (28%) on Sunday. This compares to approximately one in ten on Monday (10%), Tuesday (11%), Wednesday (12%) and Thursday (11%). These figures have significantly increased from the proportions reported in 2005 on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays (8% to 11%, 9% to 12%, 28 to 34%, 48% to 55% and 21% to 28% respectively).

**Figure 9: Proportions who exceeded the recommended daily limits in the week prior to being surveyed**



*Base: those who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey, N = 912*

The survey found that there are no significant differences between male and female respondents who exceeded the recommended drinking levels on any of the days in the week. Whilst the variation on Tuesday between males and females appeared quite different (13% of males and 9% of females), this is not significantly different.

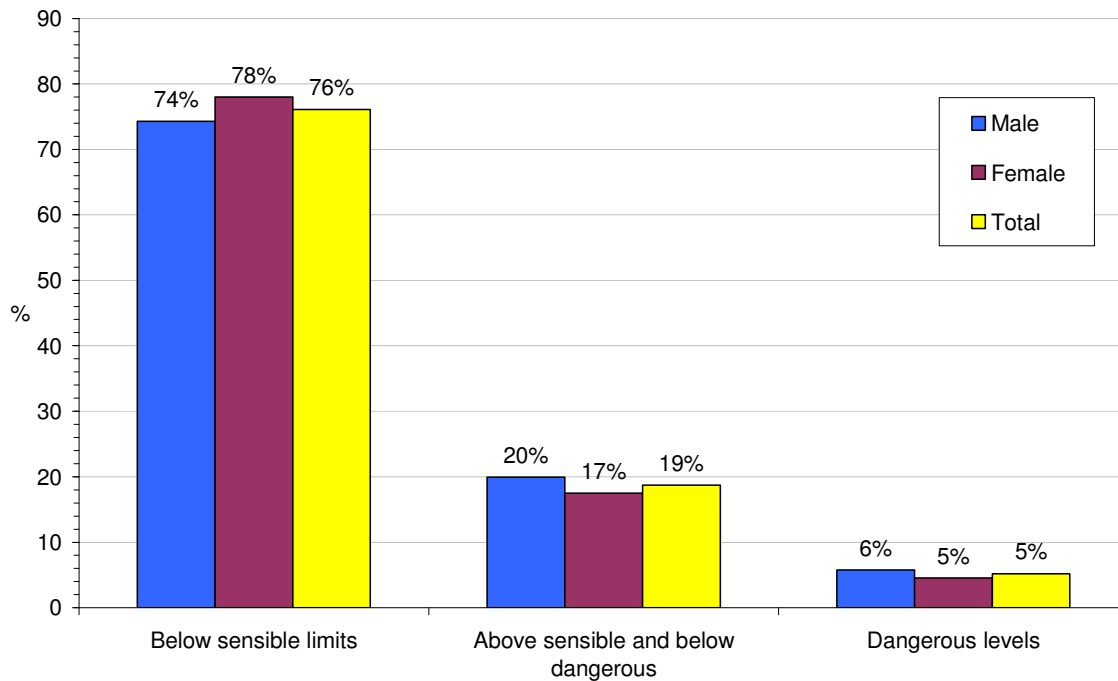
In 2005 a higher proportion of males than females exceeded the recommended daily limits on each day of the week prior to the survey.

### **Weekly Guidelines for Sensible Drinking Limits**

Levels of alcohol consumption can be banded into weekly guidelines for sensible drinking. 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.

Nearly one in four (24%) respondents drank above the weekly sensible limits in the week prior to the survey, 19% drank above sensible and below dangerous and 6% drank above dangerous levels. Over three in four (76%) respondents drank below the weekly sensible levels. There is no association between weekly consumption levels and gender.

**Figure 10: Weekly drinking levels in the week prior to the survey**



*Base: those who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey, N=908*

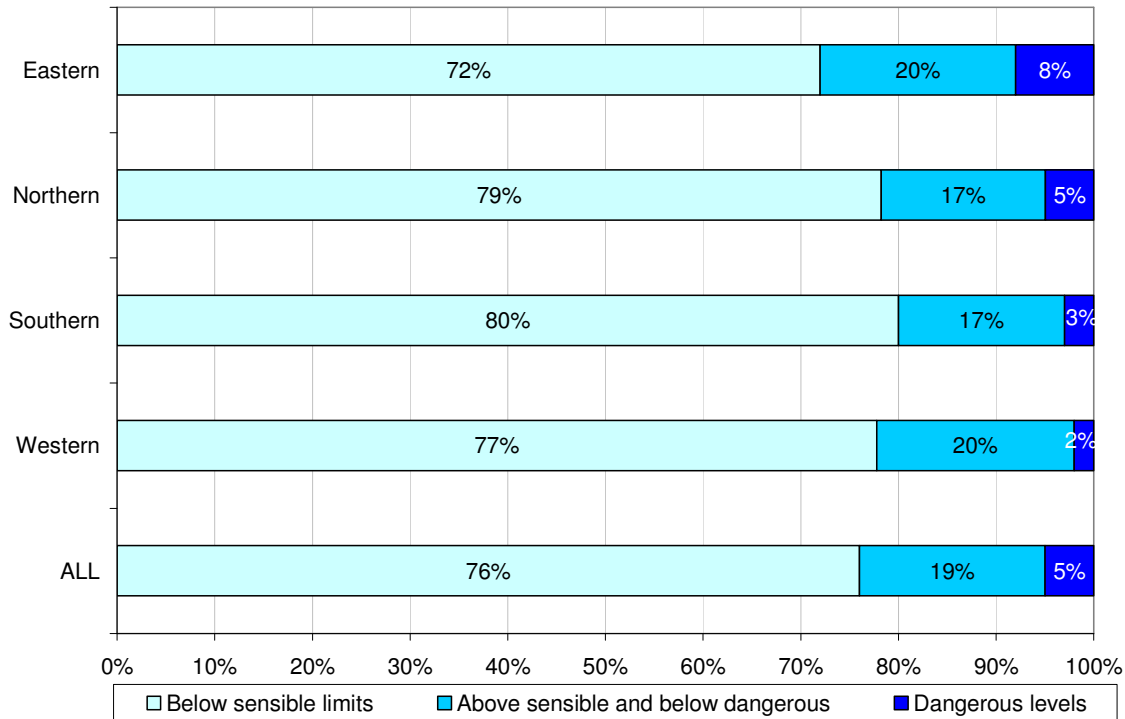
A comparison of the 2005 and 2008 surveys shows a significant increase in the proportion of respondents drinking below sensible levels (71% and 76% respectively) and a significant increase in the proportion of males drinking within sensible levels (67% in 2005 and 74% in 2008). There is a significant decrease in the percentage of respondents drinking above sensible and below dangerous levels (from 23% in 2005 to 19% in 2008). There is no association between the surveys in the percentage of those drinking above the dangerous level of weekly units.

### Health and Social Services Board

There is no significant association between the Health and Social Service Boards in this survey and the respondents' drinking levels. The percentage of respondents drinking within sensible drinking levels (<21 units for males and <14 units for

females) ranged from over seven out of ten respondents (72%) in the Eastern HSSB to four out of five respondents (80%) in the Southern HSSB. The proportion of respondents who consumed alcohol at dangerous levels ranged from 2% in the Western HSSB to 8% in the Eastern HSSB.

**Figure 11: Weekly drinking levels by HSSBs**



*Base: those who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey, N=908*

The proportion of those in the Western HSSB who drank above sensible but below dangerous levels has significantly decreased between the 2005 and 2008 surveys (31% to 20% respectively). There is a significant increase in the proportion of respondents in the Western HSSB drinking within sensible levels (64% in 2005 to 77% in 2008).

### **Gender by Health and Social Services Board**

Approximately, three in four males (74%) and females (78%) across all four HSSBs consumed alcohol below sensible drinking levels. One in ten (10%) males in the Eastern HSSB consumed alcohol above dangerous levels compared to 4% in both the Northern and Southern HSSBs and 2% in the Western HSSB. None of these differences are significant.

In 2005, one in ten males (10%) in the Western HSSB, 8% in the Eastern HSSB, 7% in the Northern and Southern HSSBs consumed alcohol above dangerous levels. The Western HSSB shows a significant decrease in the proportion of males drinking above dangerous levels between 2005 and 2008 surveys (10% and 2% respectively).

**Table 9: Weekly drinking levels within HSSB by gender**

		Area HSSBs				Total
		Eastern	Northern	Southern	Western	
Male	Below sensible limits	70%	79%	78%	74%	74%
	Above sensible and below dangerous	21%	17%	19%	24%	20%
	Dangerous levels	10%	4%	4%	2%	6%
	<b>BASE (N)</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>467</b>
Female	Below sensible limits	74%	79%	83%	80%	78%
	Above sensible and below dangerous	20%	16%	14%	17%	17%
	Dangerous levels	6%	5%	3%	3%	5%
	<b>BASE (N)</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>441</b>

Approximately one in twenty females across all four HSSBs have consumed alcohol at a dangerous level in the week prior to the survey. This is similar to the proportion observed in the 2005 survey.

### Age

Those who drink above sensible weekly limits (more than 21 units for males and more than 14 units for females) are categorised as risk drinkers. Table 10 shows that over one in three respondents (35%) who consumed alcohol were classified as risk drinkers in the 18-29 aged group compared to 16% in the 60-75 age group. Risk drinking behaviour decreases with age for males, more than a third (36%) of 18-29 year old males who consumed alcohol were classified as risk drinkers compared to less than three in ten respondents in any of the other age groups (29% of 30-44 year olds, 19% of 45-59 year olds and 18% of 60-75 year olds).

More than one in five (22%) females who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey were classified as risk drinkers. The level of sensible drinking also varies with age for females as the proportion of female risk drinkers decreases with age. Over a third (35%) of females aged 18-29 years were classified as risk drinkers,

which decreased to less than one in five of 30-44 year olds (19%) and 45-59 year olds (19%) and over one in ten (14%) 60-75 year olds.

**Table 10: Proportion of drinkers exceeding weekly limit by age group**

		Age bands				Total
		18-29	30-44	45-59	60-75	
MALE	Below sensible limits	64%	71%	81%	82%	74%
	Above sensible and below dangerous	25%	24%	14%	15%	20%
	Dangerous levels	11%	5%	5%	3%	6%
	<b>BASE (N)</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>467</b>
FEMALE	Below sensible limits	65%	81%	81%	86%	78%
	Above sensible and below dangerous	24%	17%	15%	12%	17%
	Dangerous levels	11%	2%	4%	2%	5%
	<b>BASE (N)</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>441</b>
All	Below sensible limits	65%	76%	81%	84%	76%
	Above sensible and below dangerous	24%	20%	15%	14%	19%
	Dangerous levels	11%	4%	4%	2%	5%
	<b>BASE (N)</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>335</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>908</b>

Significantly more males, in 2008, drink below sensible limits than in 2005 (67% in 2005 to 74% in 2008). This is also observed for males aged 18-29 and 45-59 (49% in 2005 to 64% in 2008 and 70% in 2005 to 81% in 2008 respectively). There is a significant decrease, in 2008, in the proportion of young males (aged 18-29) drinking above a sensible and below dangerous level when compared to 2005 (42% in 2005 and 25% in 2008).

There is a significant association between female drinking levels and age group. The youngest age group (18-29 year olds) are most likely to drink at a dangerous level and least likely to drink below sensible limits. The only significant difference between the 2005 and 2008 surveys for females and drinking levels is that females aged 30-44 were more likely to drink below the sensible limits in 2008 (81%) than in 2005 (72%).



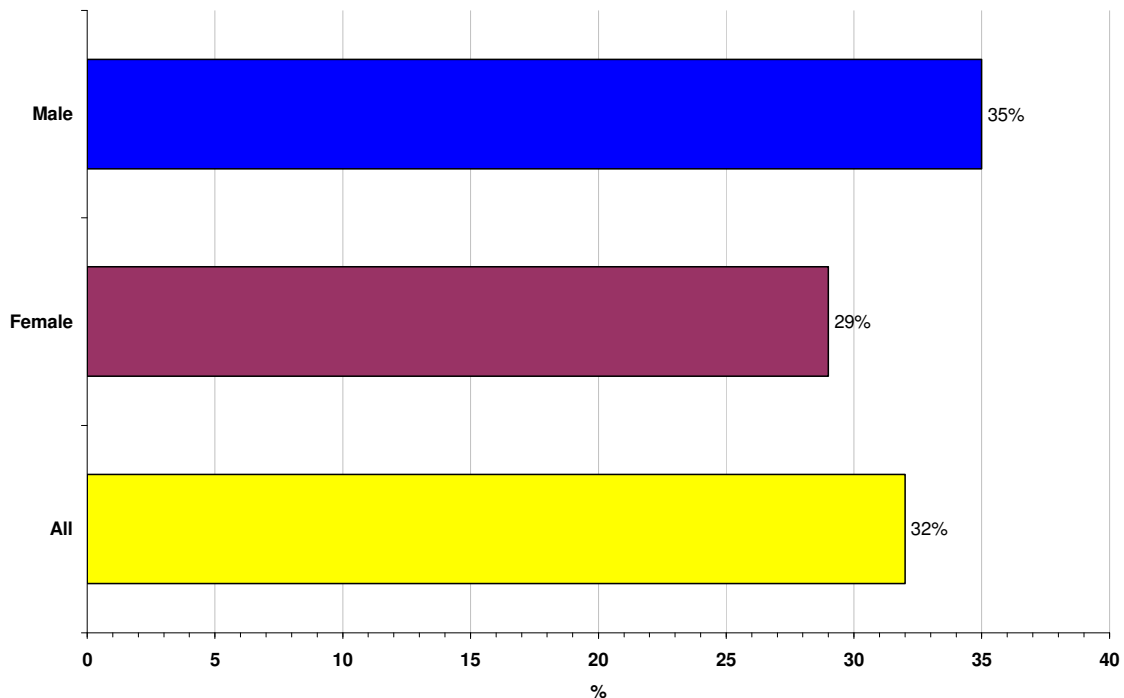
### 3 BINGE DRINKING

There are various definitions of binge drinking. 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. These are the same levels as were used in the previous surveys. Figures in this section are based on those who had consumed an alcoholic drink in the week prior to the survey.

Nearly one in three (32%) respondents engaged in at least one binge drinking session during the week prior to the survey. Significantly more males (35%) than females (29%) are classified as binge drinkers.

The proportion of respondents who had at least one binge drinking session has decreased significantly between 2005 and 2008 (38% and 32% respectively). The percentage of male respondents who had at least one binge drinking session has significantly decreased between 2005 (43%) and 2008 (35%). No significant associations are observed in females (33% in 2005 and 29% in 2008).

**Figure 12: Percentage of binge drinkers by sex**

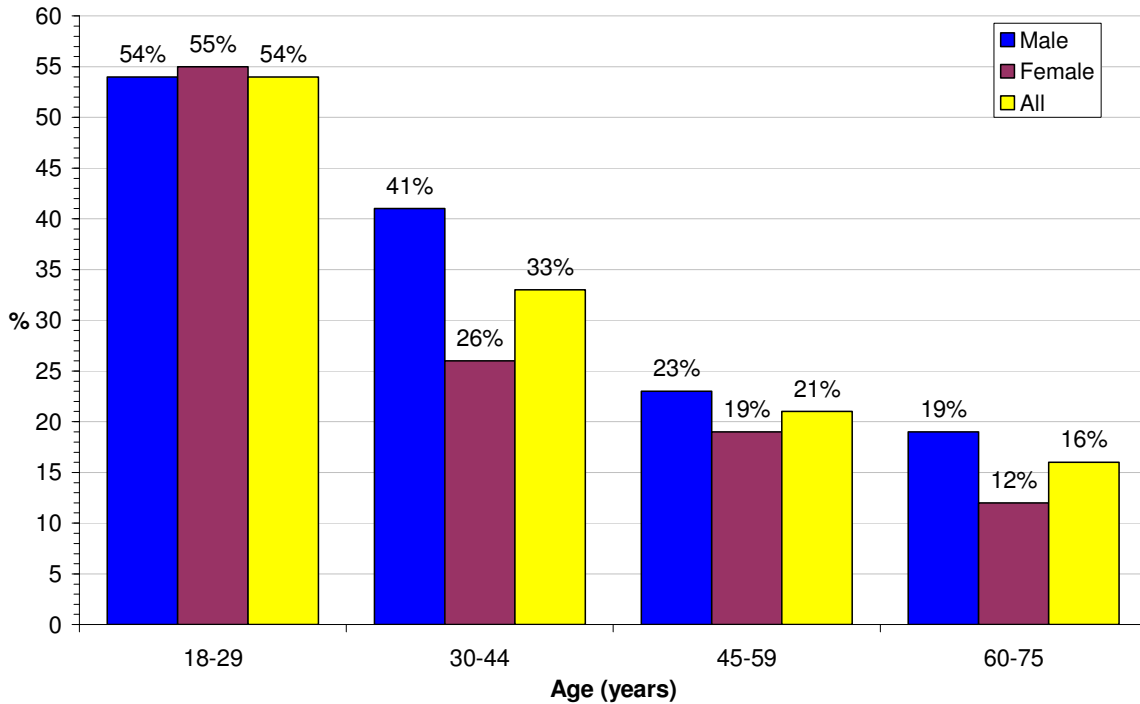


*Base: those who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey, N=912*

### 3.1 Age

The proportion of respondents who had consumed alcohol and engaged in a binge drinking session significantly decreases with age. Over half (54%) of those aged 18-29 had participated in at least one binge drinking session, compared to a third (33%) of those aged 30-44, approximately a fifth (21%) aged 45-59 and 16% aged of those 60-75.

**Figure 13: Percentage of binge drinkers by age**



*Base: those who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey, N = 912*

The proportion of males who had at least one binge drinking session significantly decreases with age. The same pattern is observed for females. The only significant difference between gender and age group is for respondents aged 30-44 who had at least one binge drinking session (41% of males and 26% of females).

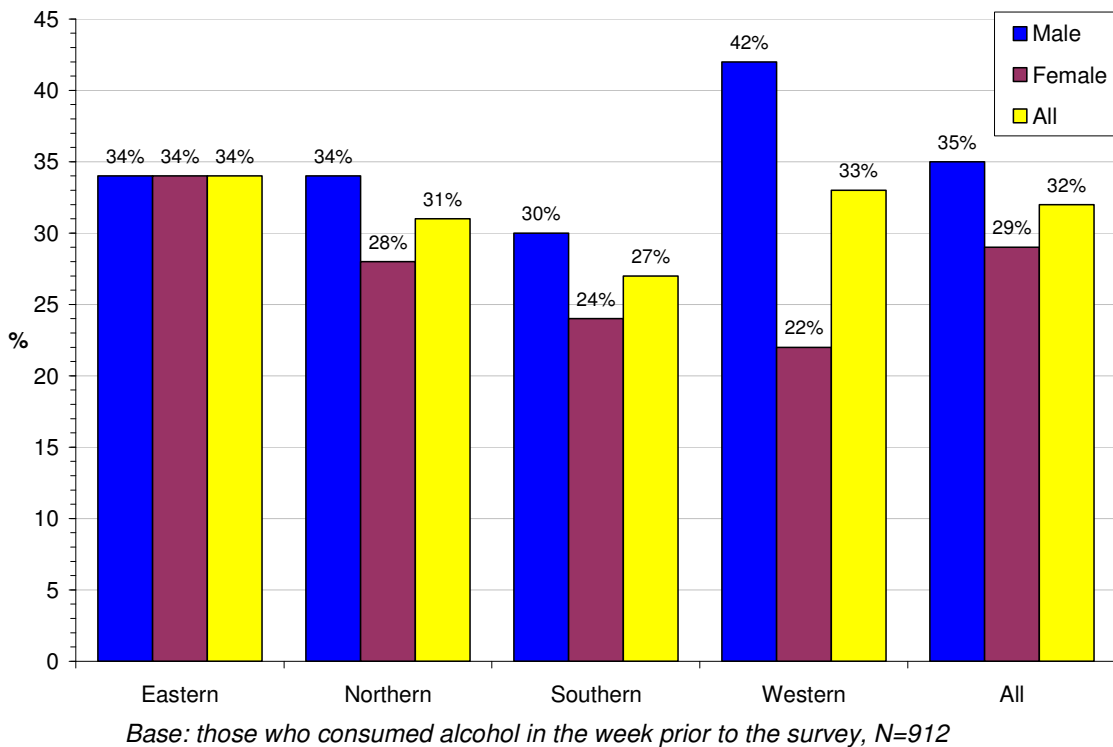
In 2005 the proportion of males who consumed alcohol and were classified as binge drinkers, ranged from almost two in three (63%) 18-29 year olds to less than one in five (19%) 60-75 year olds. Similarly the proportion of females who were classified as binge drinkers ranged from one in two (50%) of 18-29 year olds to less than one in twenty (3%) 60-75 year olds. There is a statistically significant change in binge

drinking levels between the 2005 and 2008 surveys for females aged 30-44, all respondents aged 45-59 and males aged 45-59.

### 3.2 Health & Social Services Board

Less than a third (32%) of respondents had at least one binge drinking session across the four HSSBs. There is no significant difference in the level of binge drinking observed across the HSSBs (Southern HSSB 27%, Northern HSSB 31%, Western HSSB 33% and Eastern HSSB 34%).

**Figure 14: Percentage of binge drinkers by HSSB**



### 3.3 Socio-Economic Grouping

In the managerial and professional occupations approximately a fifth (21%) of respondents had at least one binge drinking session compared to approximately three in ten of those in both the intermediate occupations (29%) and unclassified occupations (31%). Just over two in five (43%) of those in routine and manual occupations had at least one binge drinking session. There is a significant relationship between binge drinking and socio-economic group (Table 11).

Adults in households with an income of over £36,400 are less likely to have had at least one binge drinking session (21% with a household income £52,000 or more and 25% with a household income of £36,400 - £51,999) than adults in households with lower incomes. There is a significant relationship between binge drinking and household income (Table 11).

**Table 11: Proportion of binge drinkers by socio-economic group, household income and education status**

	Proportion of respondents binge drinking
<b>Socio-economic group (N=912)</b>	
Managerial & professional	21%
Intermediate occupations	29%
Routine & manual	43%
Not classified <sup>1</sup>	31%
<b>Household income (N=759)</b>	
£52,000 or over	21%
£36,400 – 51,999	25%
£26,000 – 36,399	41%
£15,600 – 25,999	35%
£10,400 – 15,599	34 out of 90 (38%)
Under £10,400	42 out of 91 (46%)
<b>Education status (N=906)</b>	
A Level / Higher education	28%
O Level / Commercial	34%
No qualifications	40%

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

Table 11 also shows that the proportion of those binge drinking decreases as level of education attainment increases. Two fifths (40%) of those with no qualifications, just over a third (34%) of those with O Levels or equivalent and less than three in ten of those (28%) with A Levels or higher education had at least one binge drinking session. There is a significant relationship between the level of education attainment and the proportion of respondents having at least one binge drinking session.

Table 12 illustrates the number of days in which binge drinking occurred. Over two thirds (68%) of respondents did not binge drink at all, while approximately a quarter (23%) exceeded binge drinking levels on one day and 6% did so on two days. Only 5 respondents in the survey (<1%) binged on 6 or more days of the week.

There is a significant decrease since 2005 in the percentage of respondents engaging in one (27% to 23%) or two (10% to 6%) binge drinking sessions. The proportion of respondents who do not binge drink has significantly increased from 58% in 2005 to 68% in 2008.

**Table 12: Number of days in which binge drinking occurred**

	Male	Female	ALL
None	65%	71%	68%
One	24%	21%	23%
Two	7%	4%	6%
Three	2%	2%	2%
Four	1%	<1%	<1%
Five	<1%	<1%	<1%
Six	<1%	<1%	<1%
Seven	<1%	0%	<1%
<b>Base (N)</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>442</b>	<b>912</b>

### 3.4 Days on which binge drinking occurs.

A similar pattern can be seen for days on which binge drinking occurred with that for the consumption of alcohol. The weekend is the most common time for consuming alcohol (Table 13) and also for exceeding binge drinking levels. One in five (20%) respondents engaged in a binge drinking session on the Saturday prior to the survey, which is significantly less than the previous survey (26% in 2005). The next most likely day for binge drinking to occur is on Fridays followed by Sundays. The proportion of those engaging in a binge drinking session on Friday has significantly decreased from 13% in 2005 to 10% in 2008.

**Table 13: Proportion drinking and proportion binge drinking on each day by gender**

	Male		Female		All	
	Exceeded binge drinking levels	Had an alcoholic Drink	Exceeded binge drinking levels	Had an alcoholic Drink	Exceeded binge drinking levels	Had an alcoholic Drink
<b>Monday</b>	3%	22%	2%	17%	3%	19%
<b>Tuesday</b>	4%	23%	2%	16%	3%	19%
<b>Wednesday</b>	4%	23%	2%	18%	3%	21%
<b>Thursday</b>	3%	20%	2%	17%	3%	18%
<b>Friday</b>	11%	46%	9%	43%	10%	45%
<b>Saturday</b>	20%	73%	20%	70%	20%	72%
<b>Sunday</b>	9%	46%	3%	41%	6%	44%

*Base: those who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey, N=912*

The proportion of respondents having a binge drinking session on a weekday (Monday to Thursday) is consistent at 3% each day and mirrors the proportions observed in 2005 (4% on Wednesday and 3% on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday).

Although slightly more males than females engaged in binge drinking from Mondays to Saturdays none of these are significant. However, on Sunday significantly more males than females engaged in binge drinking (9% of males and 3% of females).

### **3.5 Drinking classifications**

Males who drink above sensible weekly limits (more than 21 units) are categorised as risk drinkers. Males who drink more than 50 units per week are categorised as heavy drinkers. Females who drink above sensible weekly limits (more than 14 units for females) are categorised as risk drinkers and above 35 units are categorised as heavy drinkers. However, as so few females are classified as heavy drinkers, the heavy and risky drinkers will be analysed together.

Almost three quarters (74%) of males drank within sensible limits, one in five (20%) are considered to be risky drinkers and 6% would be considered heavy drinkers. Nearly four in five females (78%) drank within a sensible level in the week prior to the survey.

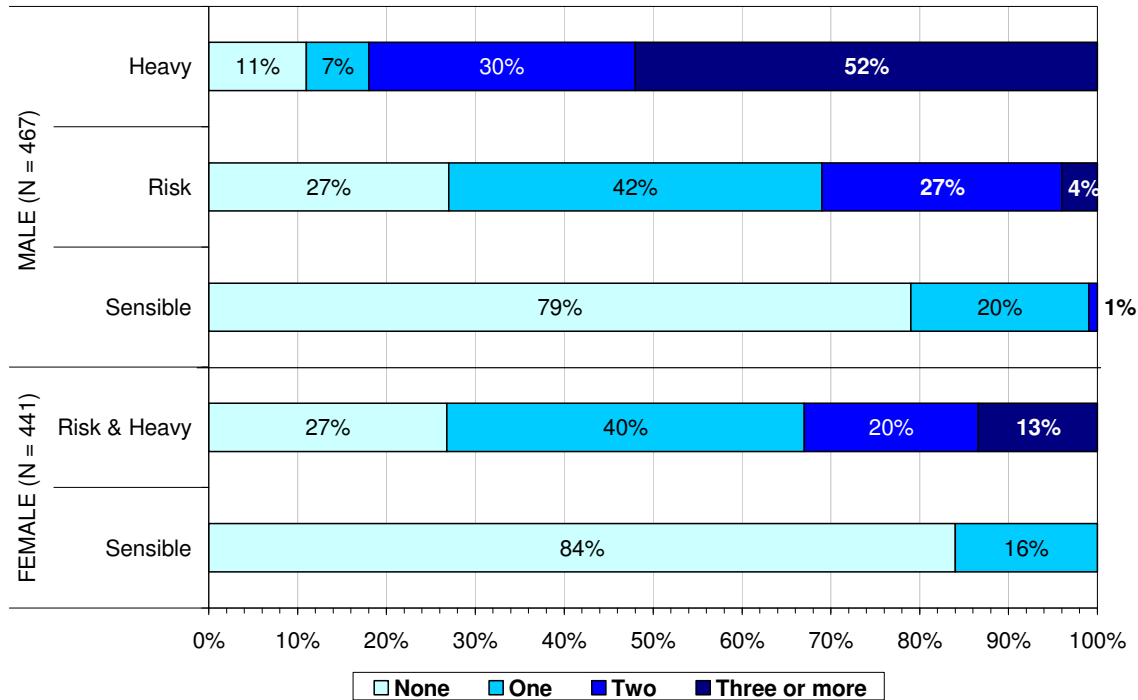
**Table 14: Proportion of respondents in each drinking category**

Drinking levels:	Sensible	Risky	Heavy	Base (N)
Male	74%	20%	6%	467
Female	78%	22%		441

*Base: those who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey*

More than one in five males (21%) that drank at sensible levels engaged in at least one binge drinking session, 20% had one binge drinking session and 1% had two binge drinking sessions. Nearly three in four (73%) males that drank at a risky level engaged in at least one binge drinking session, more than two in five (42%) had one binge drinking session, over one in four (27%) had two binge drinking sessions and 4% had three or more binge drinking sessions. Almost nine in ten (89%) males that are classified as heavy drinkers had at least one binge drinking session, less than one in ten (7%) had one binge drinking session, three in ten (30%) had two binge drinking sessions and over half (52%) had three or more binge drinking sessions in the week before the survey.

**Figure 15: Binge drinking sessions by each drinking category**



*Base: Males and Females who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey*

The majority (84%) of females who are classified as sensible drinkers had no binge drinking sessions while the rest (16%) had one binge drinking session. Over one in ten (13%) females drinking above the sensible level had 3 or more binge drinking sessions, one in five (20%) had two binge drinking sessions and two in five (40%) had one binge drinking session.

There is a significant decrease in the proportion of females who drank above sensible levels and had two binge sessions (33% in 2005 to 20% in 2008), there are no other significant differences between the two surveys for males or females.



## 4 PROBLEM DRINKING

It is widely acknowledged that drinking consumption is frequently underreported which is why these results have been presented in terms of what, when, where and who people drink with. A test of alcohol dependence that is developed in order to identify people who have a problem with alcohol is therefore incorporated into the questionnaire. This simple tool called the CAGE<sup>3</sup> questions asks respondents whether they agree or not with each of the four statements listed below. 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 to steady my nerves or get rid of a hangover (**E**ye opener).

### 4.1 CAGE questions

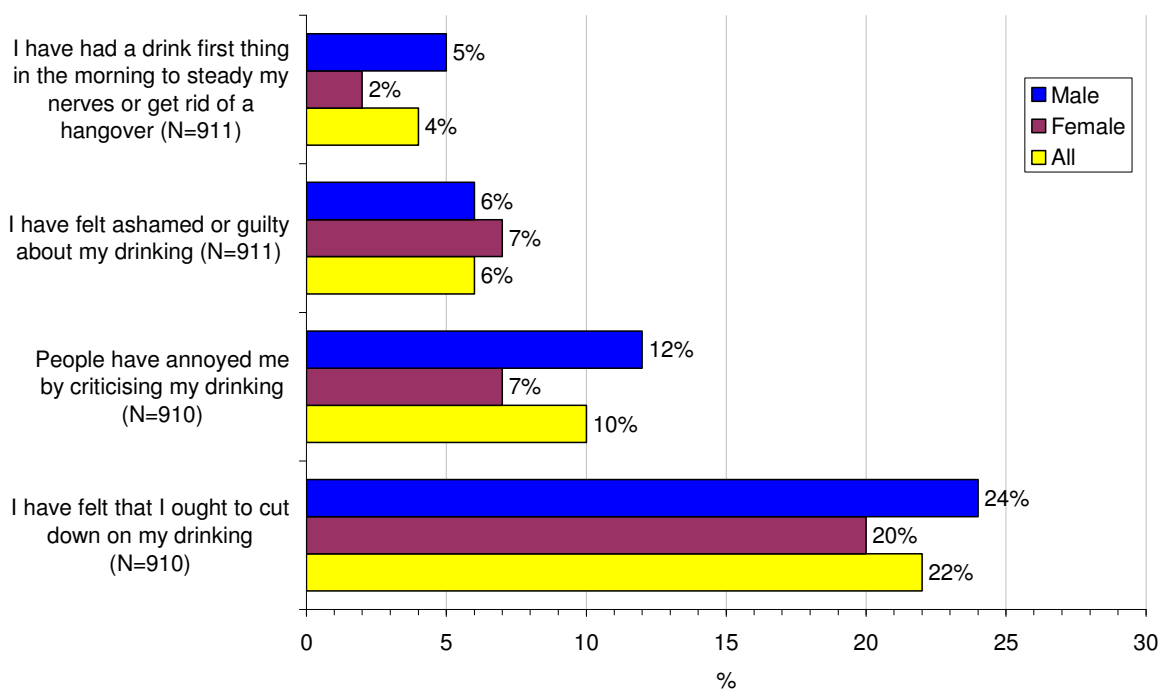
More than one in five (22%) respondents who drank during the week before being interviewed have felt they ought to cut down on their drinking and one in ten (10%) said people have annoyed them by criticising their drinking. Smaller proportions said they have felt ashamed or guilty about their drinking (6%) and 4% have had a drink first thing in the morning to steady their nerves or get rid of a hangover. These figures reflect the results from the 2005 survey.

Significantly larger proportions of males than females answered positively to the CAGE questions on being annoyed by people criticising their drinking (12% of males compared to 7% of females) and having had a drink first thing in the morning (5% of males and 2% of females).

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<sup>3</sup> CAGE questions were validated in 1974 and have been widely used since.

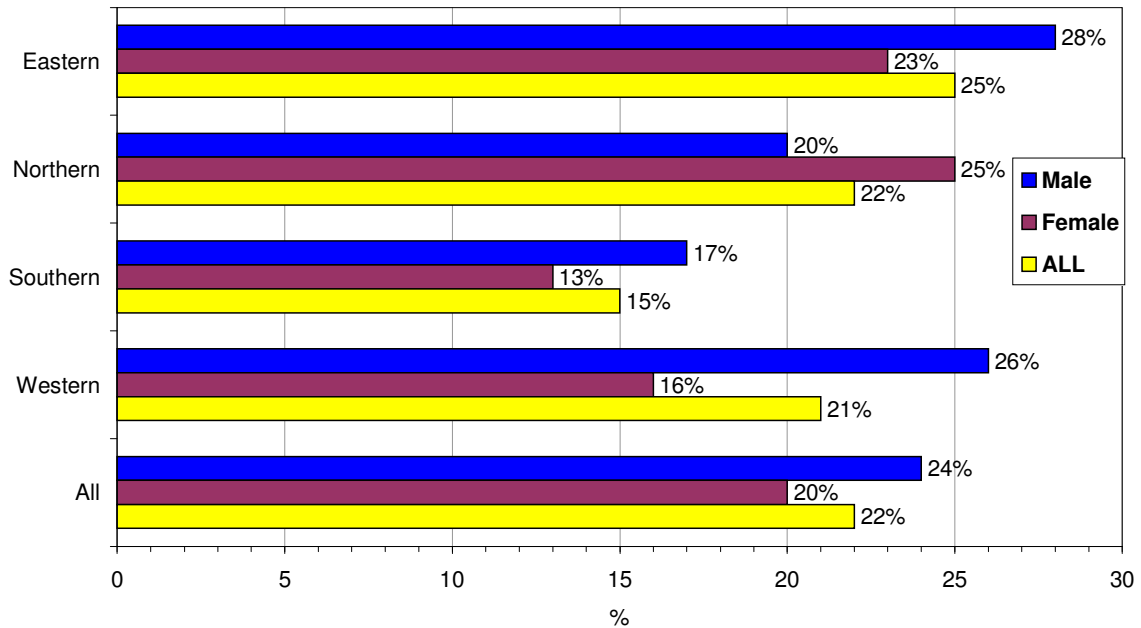
**Figure 16: Proportion of those who had a drink in the week prior to the survey who answered positively to each CAGE question**



### Health and Social Services Board

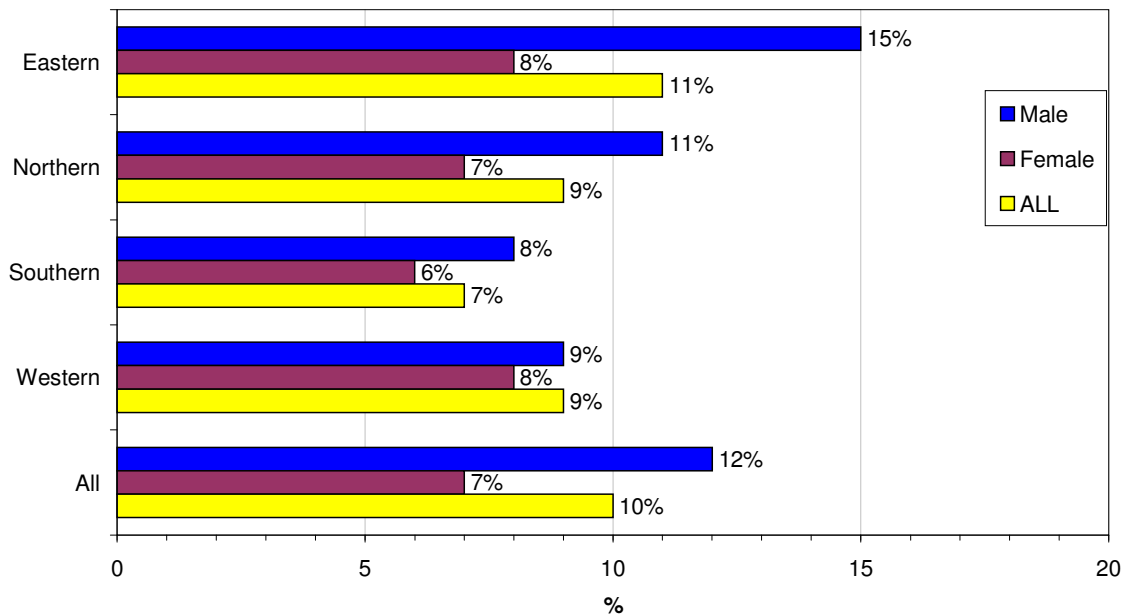
One in four (25%) respondents in the Eastern HSSB who drank in the week prior to the survey compared to 15% in the Southern Board said that they felt that they ought to cut down on their drinking. Over one in four males in the Eastern HSSB (28%) and Western HSSB (26%) said that they felt that they ought to cut down on their drinking. Approximately one in four female drinkers in the Northern HSSB (25%) and Eastern HSSB (23%) felt that they ought to cut down on their drinking compared to 13% in the Southern HSSB and 16% in the Western HSSB. There is no significant association between HSSBs and respondents feeling that they ought to cut down on their drinking, the percentages are illustrated in Figure 17.

**Figure 17: Percentage of drinkers who answered positively to 'I have felt that I ought to cut down on my drinking'**



*Base: those who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey (N = 910)*

**Figure 18: Percentage of drinkers who answered positively to 'People have annoyed me by criticising my drinking'**

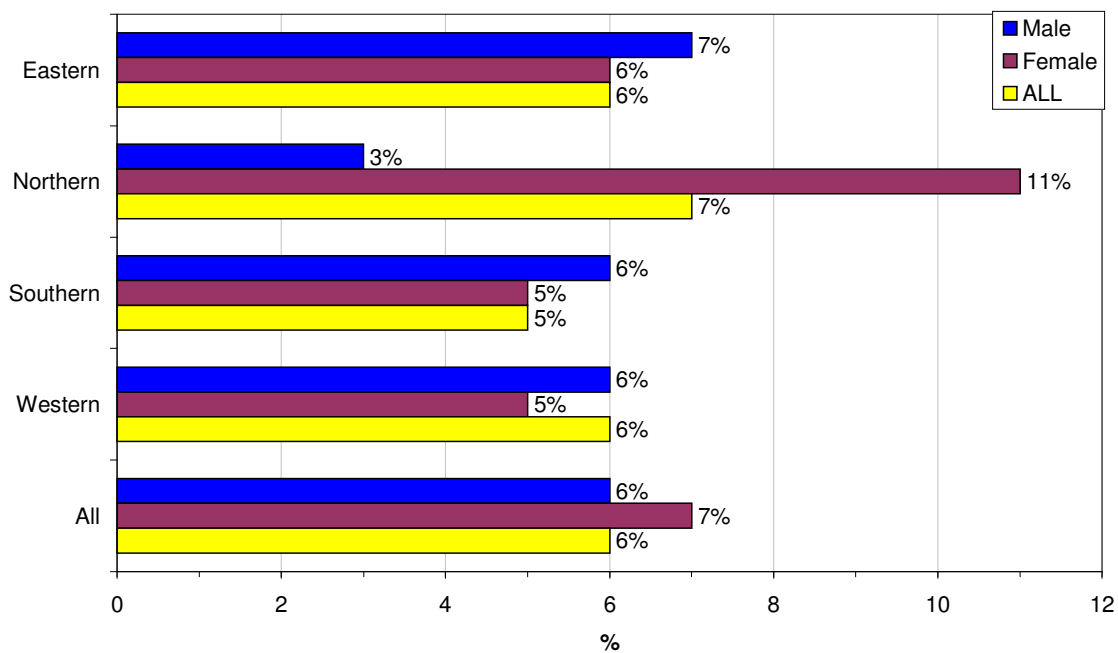


*Base: those who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey (N = 910)*

One in ten (10%) respondents that have drunk in the week before the survey were annoyed by people criticising their drinking and the proportions are similar within each HSSB. There are no significant associations between HSSBs and respondents reporting that they were annoyed by people criticising their drinking (see Figure 18).

The Northern HSSB is the only HSSB that showed any variation in response to the CAGE question asking whether respondents felt ashamed or guilty about their drinking and gender (Figure 19). In general, approximately one in twenty males (6%) and females (7%) felt ashamed or guilty about their drinking. In the Northern HSSB over one in ten (11%) females compared to 3% of males felt ashamed or guilty about their drinking. There are no significant associations between this question and the HSSBs.

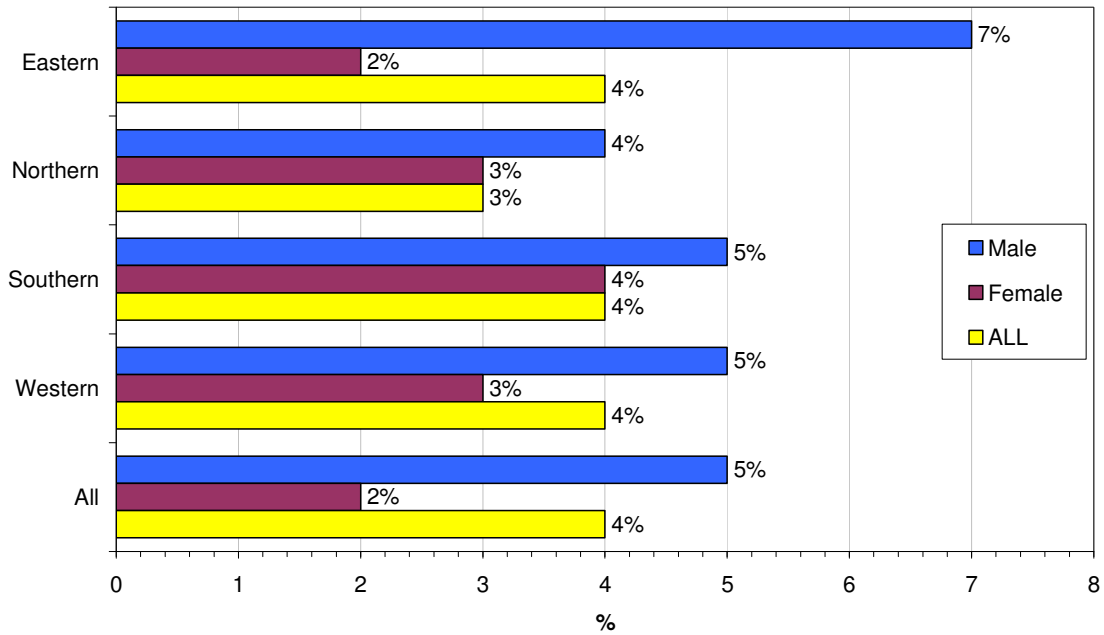
**Figure 19: Percentage of drinkers who answered positively to 'I have felt ashamed or guilty about my drinking'**



*Base: those who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey (N = 911)*

Less than one in twenty (4%) respondents who drank in the week prior to the survey stated that they had a drink first thing in the morning to steady their nerves or to get rid of a hangover (Figure 20). Whilst there are no significant differences between the HSSBs, there is a significant difference between male (7%) and female (2%) respondents within the Eastern HSSB.

**Figure 20: Percentage of drinkers who answered positively to 'I have had a drink first thing in the morning to steady my nerves or get rid of a hangover'**



*Base: those who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey (N = 911)*

### **Socio-economic group, household income and educational status**

The CAGE questions shows a significant difference by respondent's socio-economic group and whether they have been annoyed by people criticising their drinking (managerial/professional (6%), intermediate (8%), routine/manual (12%) and unclassified (15%)) (Table 15).

Approximately one in twenty respondents stated that they felt ashamed or guilty about their drinking which is equivalent across the different socio-economic group classifications (Table 15).

**Table 15: CAGE questions by socio-economic group, household income and education status**

	I have felt that I ought to cut down on my drinking.	People have annoyed me by criticising my drinking.	I have felt ashamed or guilty about my drinking.	I have had a drink first thing in the morning to steady my nerves or get rid of a hangover.
<b>Socio-economic group</b>				
Managerial/professional	23%	6%	6%	2%
Intermediate	19%	8%	6%	4%
Routine/manual	23%	12%	7%	5%
Unclassified	22%	15%	4%	6%
<b>Household income</b>				
Less than £10,400	29%	20%	10%	10%
£10,400 - £15,599	23%	6%	3%	3%
£15,600 - £25,999	21%	11%	5%	4%
£26,000 - £36,399	23%	7%	8%	6%
£36,400 - £51,999	19%	9%	6%	3%
Over £52,000	21%	8%	2%	2%
<b>Education status</b>				
A Level / Higher education	24%	9%	7%	4%
O Level / Commercial	21%	10%	6%	4%
No qualifications	19%	12%	4%	3%

There is no significant difference between income and response to the individual CAGE questions with the exception of the question that asked if ‘people have annoyed them by criticising their drinking’. One in five (20%) respondents with a household income of less than £10,400 stated that people had annoyed them by criticising their drinking as did 11% of respondents with a household income of £15,600 to £25,999. Proportions are lower in all other household income bands (6%-9%) for respondents stating that people had annoyed them by criticising their drinking (Table 15).

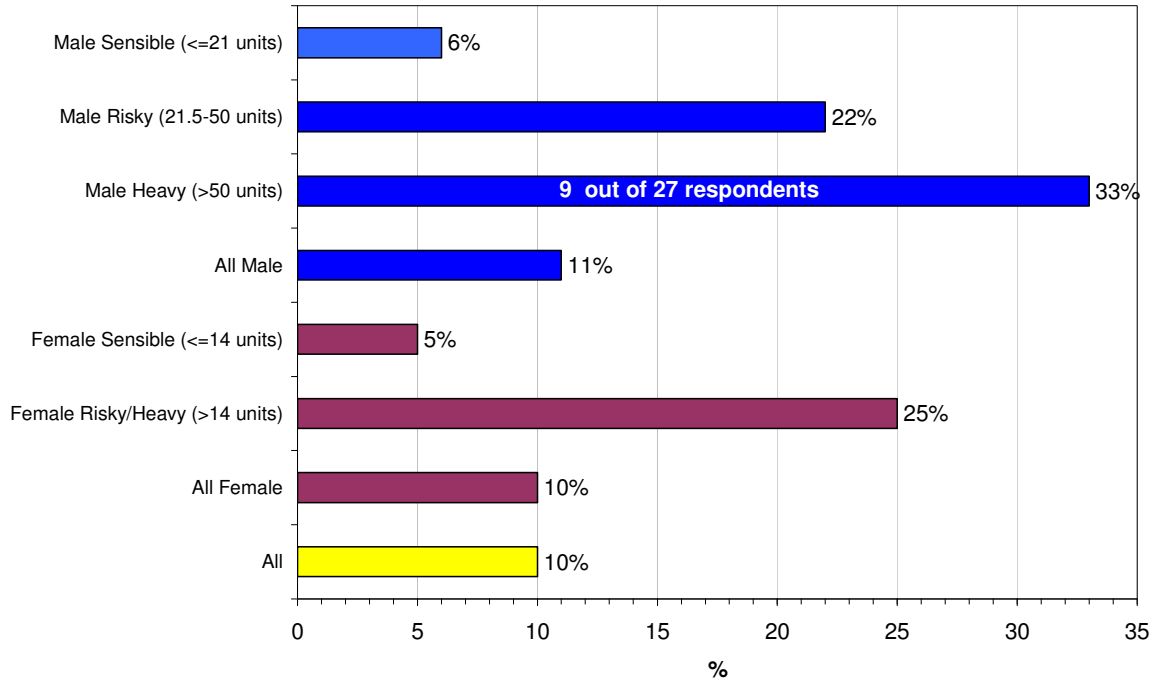
There are no significant associations between education attainment and the CAGE questions.

## 4.2 Problem drinkers

The CAGE questions ask respondents whether they agree or not with four statements - agreeing to two or more of these statements suggests that it is highly likely that a problem with alcohol exists.

One in ten (10%) respondents received a score to their CAGE questions that would imply they are highly likely to have a problem with alcohol (11% of male, 10% of female). This is similar to that observed in the 2005 survey (13% of males and 7% of females).

**Figure 21: Percentage of those in each drinking category that the CAGE questions indicated had a problem with alcohol by gender**



*Base: those who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey, N=908*

*(male N = 467, female N = 441)*

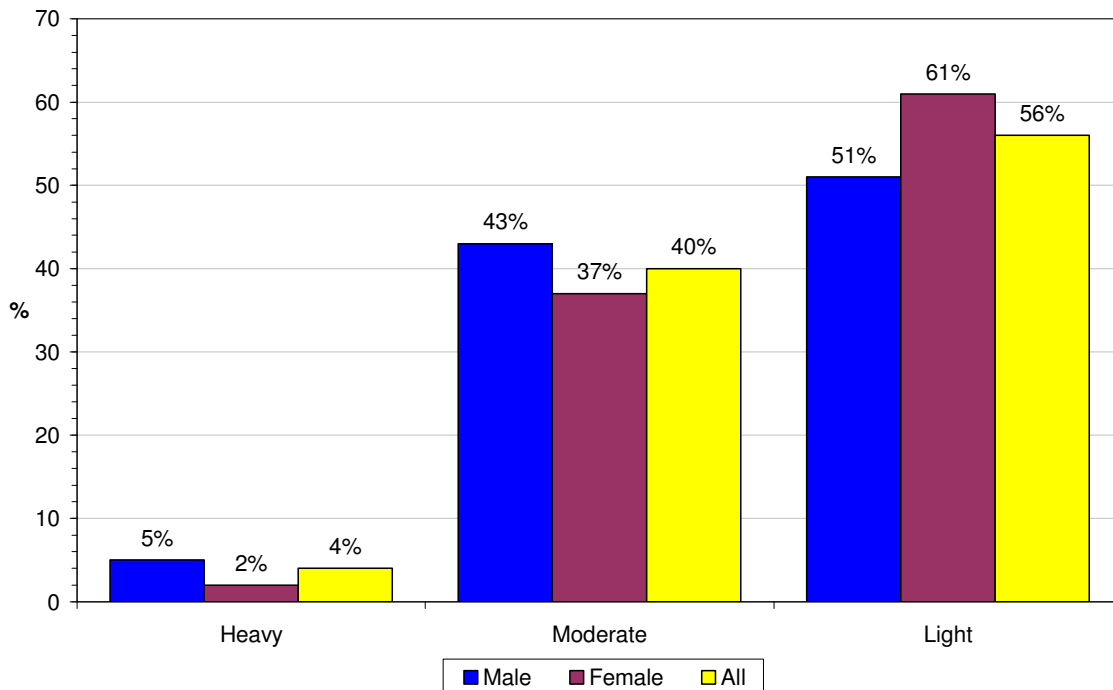
The proportion of males for whom the CAGE questions indicate are highly likely to have a problem with alcohol increases from those who consume below sensible levels to those who consume dangerous levels of alcohol. The CAGE questions indicate that approximate one in twenty males (6%) and females (5%) who drank below the sensible limits are highly likely to have a problem with alcohol. This figure increases to more than one in five (22%) males who drank above sensible but below dangerous levels and for 9 out of 27 males who drank at dangerous levels. One in four (25%) females who drank above sensible levels have answered two or more CAGE questions positively thus making them high likely to have a drinking problem.

## 5 PERCEPTIONS OF DRINKING

All respondents who had a drink in the week prior to the survey were asked if they considered themselves to be heavy, moderate or light drinkers. Over half (56%) believe that they are light drinkers, two in five (40%) believe that they are moderate drinkers and 4% believe that they are heavy drinkers. These figures are very similar to those in both the 1999 and 2005 surveys.

More than three in five females (61%), compared to just over half of males (51%), considered themselves to be light drinkers while over two in five males (43%) and less than two in five females (37%) believe that they are moderate drinkers. Five percent of males, compared to 2% of females considered themselves to be heavy drinkers. There is a statistically significant association between gender and how people perceive their drinking levels. Again, these figures reflect the proportions observed in previous surveys.

**Figure 22: Self perception of drinking by gender**



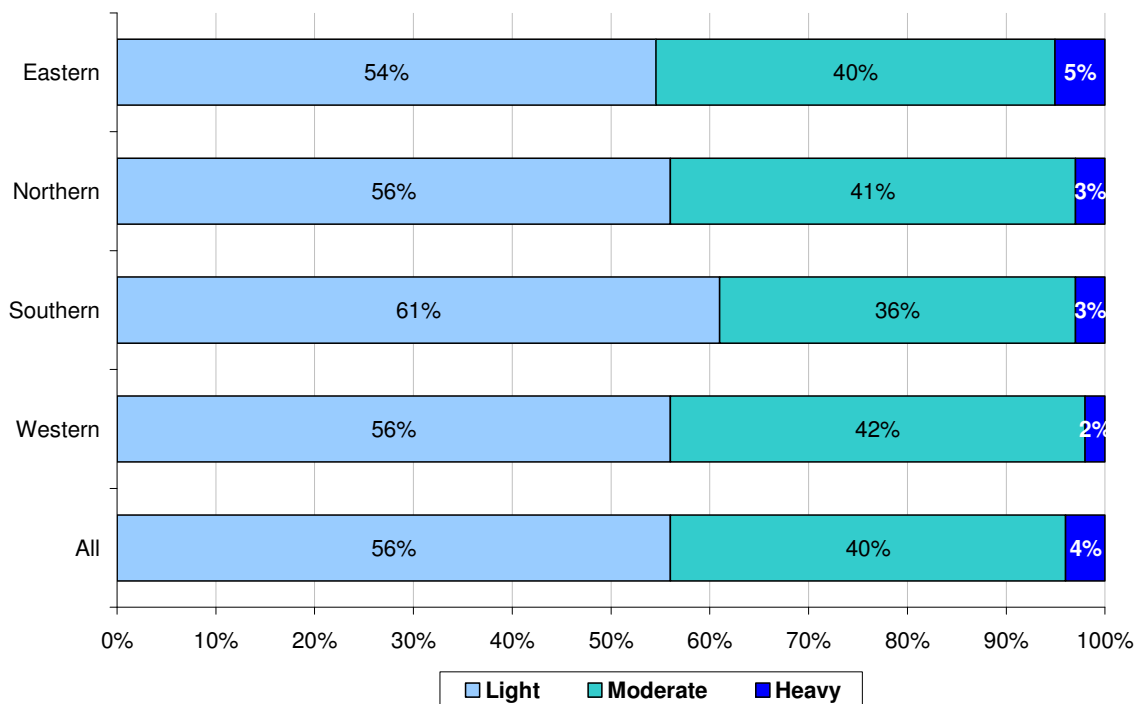
*Base = those who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey, N=911*



## 5.1 Health & Social Services Boards

There are no significant differences in the proportion of respondents' drinking perceptions across the HSSBs. Over six in ten (61%) of those in the Southern HSSB perceived themselves to be light drinkers compared to over half in the other HSSBs (54% in Eastern and 56% in both Western and Northern HSSBs). Five percent of those in the Eastern HSSB classified themselves as a heavy drinker compared to 2% in the Western HSSB (Figure 23).

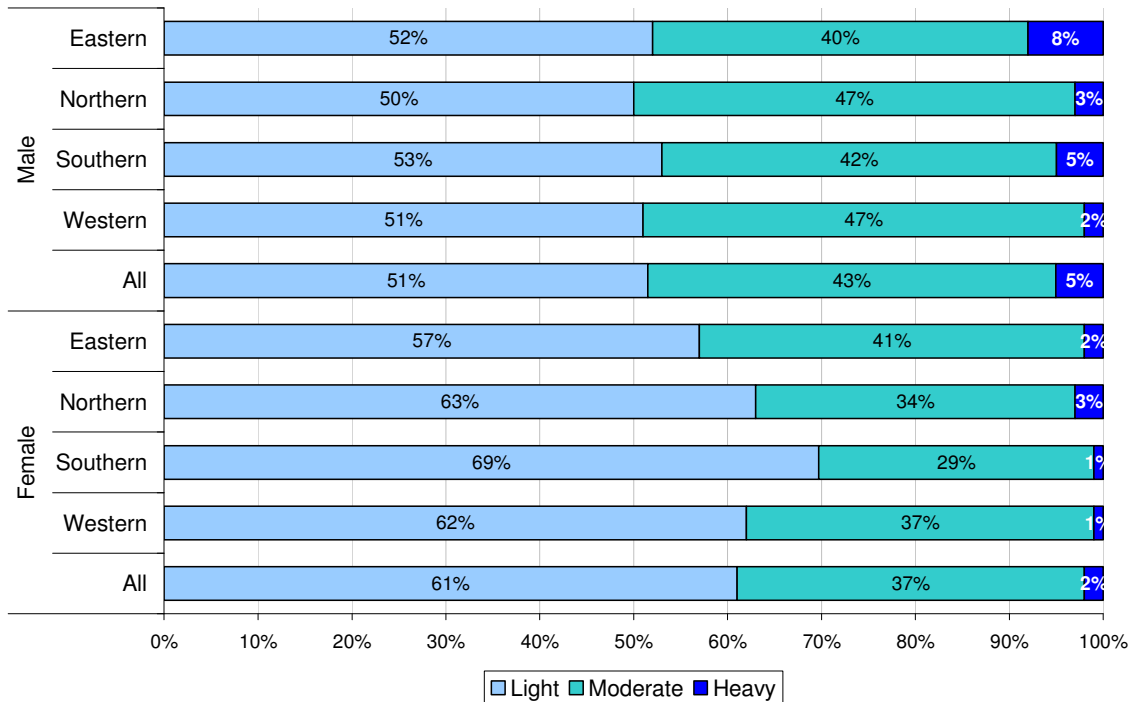
**Figure 23: Self perception of drinking by HSSB**



*Base: those who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey, N = 911*

There is no significant difference between self perceptions of drinking across the HSSBs by gender (Figure 24).

**Figure 24: Self perception of drinking by HSSB and gender**



*Base: those who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey  
(N = 470/441 for males/females).*

## 5.2 Socio-economic group, household income and educational status

Over half of those in the intermediate (52%), routine/manual (54%) and unclassified (53%) socio-economic groups perceived themselves as light drinkers compared to nearly two thirds (63%) of those in the managerial/ professional group. One in twenty (5%) routine/manual respondents perceived themselves as heavy drinkers (Table 16).

Over half of those in any household income group or education attainment group thought they are light drinkers whilst approximately two fifths believed they are moderate drinkers (Table 16). There is no significant association for either household income or educational attainment.

**Table 16: Self Perception of drinking by socio-economic group, household income and education status**

	Heavy	Moderate	Light
<b>Socio-economic group (N = 911)</b>			
Managerial/professional	3%	34%	63%
Intermediate	3%	45%	52%
Routine/manual	5%	42%	54%
Unclassified <sup>1</sup>	1%	46%	53%
<b>Household income (N = 759)</b>			
Less than £10,400	5%	38%	56%
£10,400 - £15,599	3%	41%	56%
£15,600 - £25,999	4%	43%	53%
£26,000 - £36,399	4%	39%	57%
£36,400 - £51,999	3%	36%	60%
Over £52,000	2%	40%	58%
<b>Education status (N = 905)</b>			
A Level / Higher education	4%	40%	56%
O Level / Commercial	3%	41%	56%
No qualifications	4%	38%	57%

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

### 5.3 Self perception by levels of alcohol consumed by gender

Over nine in ten males (92%) who described themselves as light drinkers drank below sensible levels, whilst 1% consumed dangerous levels of alcohol. Ten out of 24 males who consider themselves to be heavy drinkers had consumed dangerous levels of alcohol (>50 units). Three of the 24 males who consider themselves as heavy drinkers drank below the sensible level.

Almost one in five males (18%) who consider themselves to be light drinkers had indulged in one or more binge drinking sessions compared to half (50%) of those who considered themselves to be moderate drinkers. Nineteen out of 24 males who consider themselves to be heavy drinkers had indulged in one or more binge drinking sessions. There is a statistically significant association between drinking perceptions and binge drinking for males.

The CAGE analysis of the 24 males who describe themselves as heavy drinkers indicates that 12 are highly likely to have a drinking problem. The majority of those who consider themselves to be moderate or light drinkers, 85% and 96% respectively, did not receive a positive scoring as a result of the CAGE questions

and therefore there is no indication that they are highly likely to have a problem with alcohol. There is a statistically significant association between drinking perceptions and indicators of problem drinking for males.

**Table 17: Self-perception by levels of alcohol consumption, binge drinking and CAGE analysis for males**

Alcohol consumption in the week prior to the survey	Self-perception		
	Heavy <sup>(1)</sup>	Moderate	Light
<b>Levels of alcohol consumed</b>	<b>(N= 24)</b>	<b>(N=201)</b>	<b>(N=242)</b>
<b>Below sensible limits</b>	3 (13%)	121 (60%)	223 (92%)
<b>Above sensible, below dangerous levels</b>	11 (46%)	66 (33%)	16 (7%)
<b>Dangerous levels</b>	10 (42%)	14 (7%)	3 (1%)
<b>Binge Drinking</b>	<b>(N= 24)</b>	<b>(N=204)</b>	<b>(N=242)</b>
<b>One or more binge sessions</b>	19 (79%)	101 (50%)	44 (18%)
<b>Drank but did not binge</b>	5 (21%)	103 (50%)	198 (82%)
<b>Problem drinking</b>	<b>(N= 24)</b>	<b>(N=204)</b>	<b>(N=242)</b>
<b>'CAGE Positive' Score</b>	12 (50%)	30 (15%)	9 (4%)
<b>Non 'CAGE Positive' Score</b>	12 (50%)	174 (85%)	233 (96%)
<b>Note: (1) Percentages should be treated with caution as the base number, 24, is small. Base: males who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey.</b>			

The majority (92%) of females that described themselves as light drinkers drank below sensible limits.

Just under half (46%) who considered themselves to be moderate drinkers had indulged in one or more binge drinking sessions in the week prior to the survey compared to less than one in five (17%) of those who considered themselves to be light drinkers. There is a significant relationship between female drinking perception and binge drinking.

**Table 18: Self-perception by levels of alcohol consumption, binge drinking and CAGE analysis for females**

Alcohol consumption in the week prior to the survey	Self-perception	
	Moderate	Light
<b>Levels of alcohol consumed</b>	<b>(N=160)</b>	<b>(N=271)</b>
<b>Below sensible limits</b>	89 (56%)	253 (93%)
<b>Above sensible limits</b>	71 (44%)	18 (7%)
<b>Binge Drinking</b>	<b>(N=161)</b>	<b>(N=271)</b>
<b>One or more binge sessions</b>	74 (46%)	45 (17%)
<b>Drank but did not binge</b>	87 (54%)	226 (83%)
<b>Problem Drinking</b>	<b>(N=161)</b>	<b>(N=271)</b>
<b>'CAGE Positive' Score</b>	27 (17%)	8 (3%)
<b>Non 'CAGE Positive' Score</b>	134 (83%)	263 (97%)
<b>Note: The number of females who perceived themselves to be heavy drinkers is too small to be reported (9).</b>		

The majority of those who consider themselves to be moderate or light drinkers, (83% and 97% respectively), did not receive a positive scoring as a result of the CAGE analysis and therefore there is no indication of them being highly likely to have a problem with alcohol. There is a significant association between their perception of their drinking and their CAGE scoring.

## **APPENDIX I**

### **Introduction**

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 again in 2005 for the Drugs and Alcohol Information and Research Unit<sup>4</sup> in the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

### **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 2,050 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 7<sup>th</sup> April 2008 to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2008. During this time 1753 computer assisted face to face interviews were achieved. These came from 1067 households out of a possible 1697 eligible addresses giving a response rate of 63% (see Table 19).

**Table 19: Response Rate**

	<i>Number</i>	<i>Relative Frequency</i>	<i>Valid Percent from eligible sample</i>
<b>Issued addresses</b>	2050	100%	N/A
<b>Ineligible addresses</b>	353	17%	N/A
<b>Eligible addresses</b>	1697	83%	100%
<b>Refusal</b>	381	19%	22%
<b>Non Contact</b>	249	12%	15%
<b>Achieved (addresses)<sup>1,2</sup></b>	1067	52%	63%

1. Interview achieved includes partial interviews and 3 interviews that were invalid

2. 1753 individual interviews were achieved

### **Sample Profile**

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 2007 mid year estimates of the population in Northern Ireland.

**Table 20: Comparison of gender with mid-year estimates for those aged 18-75**

	<b>2007 Mid Year Estimates of the Population</b>	<b>Sampled Respondents</b>
<b>Male</b>	49%	47%
<b>Female</b>	51%	53%

A slightly larger number of females than males aged 18-75 participated in the study: 53% female and 47% males. The gender profile of the sample is broadly similar to that in the 2007 mid year estimates of the population.

<sup>4</sup> The Public Health Information and Research Branch was formerly known as The Drugs and Alcohol

**Table 21: Comparison of age groups with mid-year estimates**

	<b>2007 Mid Year Estimates of the Population</b>	<b>Sampled Respondents</b>
<b>18-29</b>	24%	18%
<b>30-44</b>	30%	33%
<b>45-59</b>	26%	27%
<b>60-75</b>	19%	22%

Again, the profile of age groups in the sample broadly mirrors those in the 2007 mid year estimates of the population. The 18-29 age group is underestimated in the sample.

**Table 22: Comparison of HSSB Area for those aged 18-75 with mid-year estimates**

	<b>2007 Mid Year Estimates of the Population</b>	<b>Sampled Respondents</b>
<b>Eastern Health Social Services Board</b>	38%	34%
<b>Northern Health Social Services Board</b>	26%	28%
<b>Southern Health Social Services Board</b>	19%	19%
<b>Western Health Social Services Board</b>	17%	19%

The profile of the sample is broadly similar to that of the 2007 Mid-Year Estimates of the population for Northern Ireland's Health and Social Services Board areas as illustrated in Table 22. The only exception is the Eastern Health and Social Services Board where the sample underestimates the mid-year estimate of the population.

### **Questionnaire**

The content and structure of the questionnaire was agreed in consultation with the client. Whilst some questions were amended and some new ones added, the overall format was similar to that used in 1999 and 2005. The questionnaire began by asking respondents for background demographic details e.g. gender, age and employment status. Questions were asked to ascertain whether respondents drank



alcohol or not. Those who did were asked whether or not they had anything alcoholic to drink in the week prior to the survey and only those who did were then asked the rest of the questions regarding alcohol consumption. The bulk of the questionnaire consisted of questions concerned with drinking behaviour and a recall of drinking sessions where questions concentrated on the week prior to the day of interview. Respondents were asked to recount their drinking activities over this period identifying what, how much, where, when and with whom they drank. They were then asked four CAGE questions. These are clinical interview questions that have been used internationally as an assessment tool for identifying potential problems with alcohol. Finally they were asked about their perceptions of their own drinking habits, and expenditure on alcohol and smoking.

### ***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 a range of variables. 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. Where tests have emerged as Statistically Significant, these have been reported at the 5% level ( $p < 0.05$ ) which means that we can be confident that 95 times out of 100, the findings we have observed in the sample occur in the population i.e. the findings are not due to sampling error.

### ***Comparisons with the 1999 and 2005 survey***

Where a difference (increase or decrease) has been identified between the current survey and either of the 1999 and 2005 survey findings it was reported to be statistically significant using the z-test. Where no statistically significant difference

has been identified then the corresponding figures from the previous surveys have been supplied with no reference to any increase or decrease.

### **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:** Levels of alcohol consumption can be banded into weekly guidelines for sensible drinking. On a weekly basis, males drinking 21 units or less are considered to be 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' includes:** Coolers, Spirits Based Mixers, Alcopops.

### **CAGE Analysis**

A CAGE 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 **Annoyed** me by criticising my drinking.
- I have felt ashamed or **Guilty** about my drinking.
- I have had a drink first thing in the morning to steady my nerves or get rid of a hangover (**Eye opener**).

### **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 23: Calculation of alcohol units**

<b>Drink</b>	<b>Volume</b>	<b>Number of Units</b>
<b>Shandy</b>	Bottle	0.5
	Can	0.5
	Pint	0.5
<b>Beer/Lager/Cider/Stout</b>	Bottle	1.5
	Can	2
	Pint	2
<b>Strong or extra strength Beer/Lager/Cider/Stout</b>	Bottle	2
	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
<b>Measure of Spirits/Liqueurs</b>	35ml	1.5
<b>Bottle/Can of Coolers/Spirit based mixers/Alcopops</b>	Bottle	1.5

*Source: DHSSPS.*

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