

Adult Drinking Patterns in Northern Ireland 2005

Central Survey Unit



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This research was commissioned by the
Drug and Alcohol Information and
Research Unit in the
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and Public Safety



Department of

**Health, Social Services
and Public Safety**

An Roinn

**Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta
agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí**

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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 2005. The findings are based on responses to a questionnaire from a representative sample of 1880 respondents aged between 18 and 75 years old. The report examines the amount people drink, when, where and what they drink and who they drink with, together with binge drinking levels 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

- Nearly three in four (73%) adults drink alcohol.
- A larger proportion of males (77%) than females (70%) drink alcohol.
- Younger adults (18-29 years) are more likely to drink than older adults (60-75 years).
- The Eastern Health and Social Services Board has the highest alcohol prevalence (81%) compared to the lowest (67%) in both the Northern and Southern Health and Social Services Boards.
- The likelihood of drinking increases with socioeconomic group, household income and education status.

Frequency of drinking

- Just over half (52%) of drinkers report drinking alcohol at least once a week and a further 9% do so on an almost daily basis.
- More than twice the proportion of male drinkers (13%) compared to female drinkers (6%) drink on an almost daily basis.
- Drinkers who are 45 years old or over are more likely than those under 45 to drink alcohol every day.

Days when drinking occurs

- Most drinking occurs over the weekend and peaks on Saturdays.
- Males are more likely than females to drink both during the week and at the weekend.
- Younger drinkers (18-29 years) are more likely to drink at the weekend than during the week.

Drinks Consumed

- The most common drink consumed is wine (48%), closely followed by beer (46%).
- The most common alcoholic drinks for males are beer (73%), wine (35%) and spirits (33%). The most common drinks for females are wine (61%), spirits (36%) and then beer (18%).
- The most common drinks for younger drinkers (18-29 years) are beer (55%), spirits (39%), wine (31%) and alcopops (23%). The most common drinks for older drinkers (60-75 years) are wine (48%), spirits (42%) and beer (33%).

Where and with whom people drink

- Most of those who drank in the week prior to the survey had consumed alcohol at home (61%), followed by at the pub (30%) during this time.
- More than three in five (61%) of both males and females drink at home.
- Males are more likely than females to drink in pubs and sports clubs and less likely than females to drink in someone else's home.
- Younger drinkers (18-29 years) are more likely than older drinkers (60-75 years) to drink in a pub, nightclub/disco or in someone else's home 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 or with two or more friends.
- Males are more likely than females to drink with two or more friends of the same sex, or alone and less likely to drink with family.

Amount of alcohol consumed

- Almost a quarter (24%) of male drinkers compared to 16% of female drinkers reached or exceeded their respective recommended daily limits on three or more days that week.
- The recommended daily limits are exceeded most often on a Saturday.
- More males than females exceed their recommended daily limits on every day of the week.
- More females (74%) compared to males (67%) stayed within their respective weekly guidelines for sensible drinking limits.
- The majority of drinkers across all four HSSBs, ranging from almost four in five (78%) in the Southern HSSB to more than two in three (64%) in the Western 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 two in five (38%) of those who drank in the week before the survey had engaged in at least one binge drinking session.
- Males (43%) are more likely than females (33%) to binge drink.
- Younger people are more likely than older people to binge drink.
- The proportion of younger drinkers (18-29 years) who had engaged in at least one binge drinking session in the week prior to the survey ranged from almost two in three (65%) in the Northern HSSB to less than half (46%) in the Southern HSSB.
- For those who drank in the week prior to the survey, Saturday is when seven in ten (70%) respondents consumed alcohol and when the highest rates of binge drinking (26%) were recorded.
- Both male and female drinkers who consume alcohol above their respective weekly guidelines for sensible drinking limits are more likely to binge.

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.
- Males are more likely than females 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 as light drinkers, more than two in five (41%) consider themselves as moderate drinkers and 3% consider that they are heavy drinkers.
- Of the 30 respondents who considered themselves to be heavy drinkers:
 - fourteen of the 23 males (61%) and five of the seven females (71%) had consumed dangerous levels of alcohol in the week prior to the survey,
 - eighteen of the 23 males (78%) and six of the seven females (86%) had indulged in one or more binge drinking session, and,
 - seventeen of the 23 males (74%) and four of the seven females (57%) 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 Drug and Alcohol Information and Research Unit within the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for Northern Ireland (DHSSPSNI).

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 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 socioeconomic status, gender and age.

CSU previously ran this survey on behalf of the Health Promotion Agency (HPA) in October and November 1999⁽¹⁾.

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 Valuation and Lands Agency list of properties. Within households, all adults aged 18 to 75 were eligible for interview. The fieldwork period was 17th October 2005 to 25th November 2005. During this time 1880 computer assisted face to face interviews were achieved. These came from 1103 households out of a possible 1736 eligible addresses giving a response rate of 64% (see Table 1).

Note (1): Health Promotion Agency: Adult Drinking Patterns in Northern Ireland, December 2002.

Table 1: Response Rate

	<i>Number</i>	<i>Relative Frequency</i>	<i>Valid Percent from eligible sample</i>
<i>Issued addresses</i>	2050	100%	N/A
<i>Ineligible addresses</i>	314	15%	N/A
<i>Eligible addresses</i>	1736	85%	100%
<i>Refusal</i>	357	17%	21%
<i>Non Contact</i>	274	13%	16%
<i>Achieved (addresses)^{1,2}</i>	1103	54%	64%

1. Interview achieved includes partial interviews

2. 1880 individual interviews were achieved

The questionnaire began by asking respondents for basic information e.g. gender, age and employment status. The bulk of the questionnaire consisted of questions concerned with drinking behaviour and a diary 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.

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 views of the general population. Where tests have emerged as Statistically Significant, these have been reported at the 5% ($p \leq 0.05$), the 1% ($p \leq 0.01$) or the 0.1% level ($p \leq 0.001$). For example, where a value of p less than or equal to 0.05 was found, we can be confident that 95 times out of 100 that the findings we have

observed in the sample are real in the population i.e. the findings are not due to sampling error.

Comparisons with the 1999 survey

Where a difference (increase or decrease) has been identified between the 1999 survey findings and the current findings and was found to be statistically significant (using the z-test) then it is reported as such. Where no statistically significant difference has been identified then the corresponding figures from the 1999 survey 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 that was developed in order to identify people who have a problem with alcohol) was incorporated into the questionnaire. Respondents are asked whether they agree 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 to steady my nerves or get rid of a hangover (**E**ye opener).

Alcohol Units in each type of drink

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

Table 2: Calculation of alcohol units

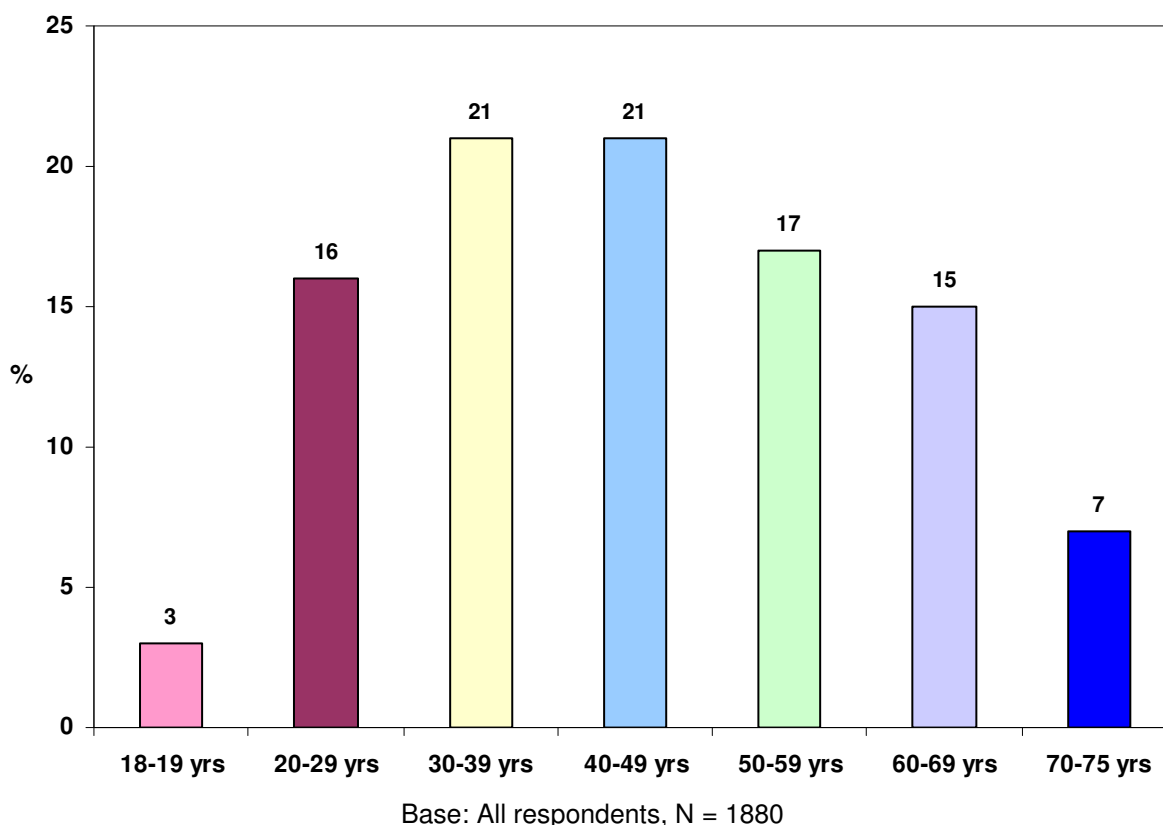
Drink	Volume	Number of Units
Shandy	Bottle	0.5
	Can	0.5
	Pint	0.5
Beer/Lager/Cider/Stout	Bottle	1.5
	Can	2
	Pint	2
Strong or extra strength Beer/Lager/Cider/Stout	Bottle	2
	Can	2.5
	Pint	3.5
Low alcohol Beer/Lager/Cider/Wine	Bottle	0.5
	Can	0.5
	Pint	0.5
	Glass	0.3
Glass of Wine	125ml	1.5
Small glass of Sherry/Martini/Vermouth/Port	50ml	1
Measure of Spirits/Liqueurs	35ml	1.5
Bottle/Can of Coolers/Spirit based mixers/Alcopops	Bottle	1.5

Source: DHSSPS.

2. Respondents Overall Profile

- A total of 1880 people responded to the survey.
- **GENDER:** A slightly larger number of females than males participated in the study: 53% female and 47% males.

Figure 1: Breakdown of respondents by age



- **AGE:** All those who took part in the survey were aged 18 to 75 years (inclusive). All age groups were represented, as Figure 1 illustrates. The age profile of the sample is broadly similar to that of the 2005 Mid-Year Estimates of Population for Northern Ireland, however exceptions are in the 18-19 age group (3% in the sample, 4% in the Mid-Year Estimates) and the 20-29 age group (16% in the sample, 19% in the Mid-Year Estimates).

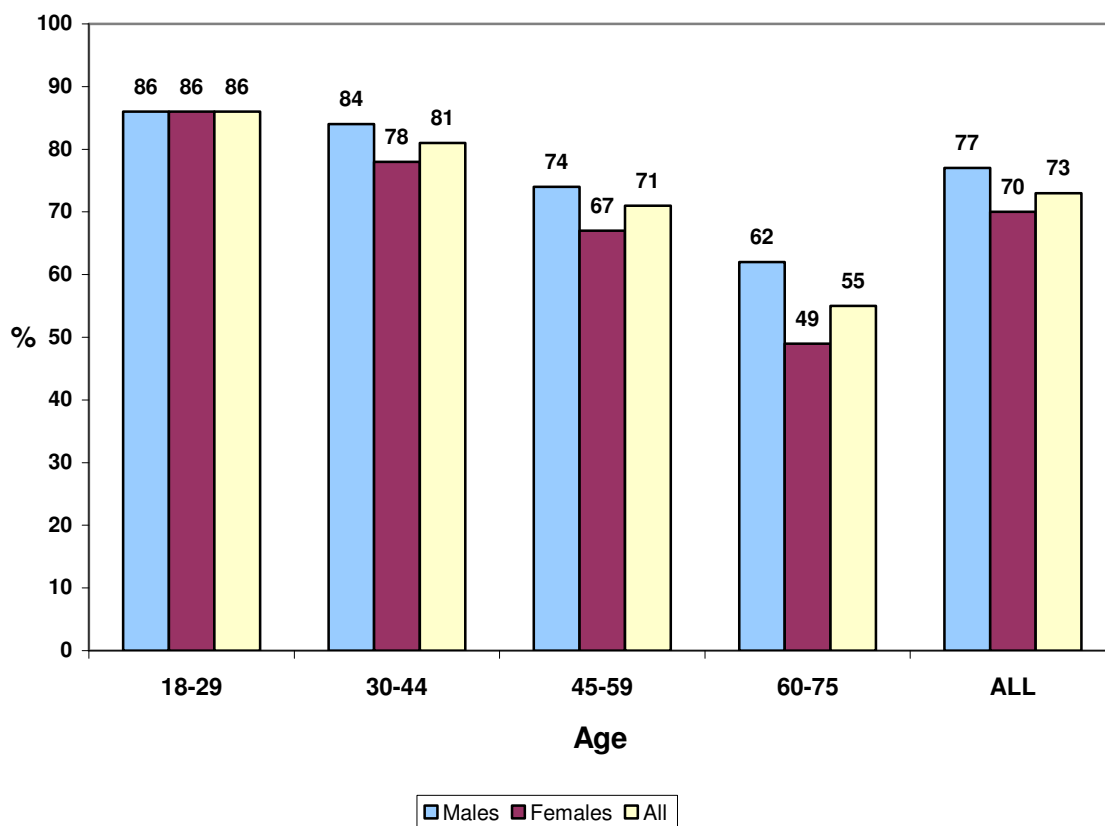
3. Findings

3.1 Alcohol consumption

The survey began by establishing the proportion of respondents who drank alcohol. Nearly three in four (73%) respondents reported drinking alcohol. This is a small increase on the overall level recorded in 1999 (70%).

Gender

Figure 2: Percentage who drink by age group and gender



Base: all respondents, N = 1880

Figure 2 shows that more than three in four males (77%) compared to seven in ten females (70%) reported that they drink alcohol, this difference in drinking prevalence is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). A similar statistically significant difference between males and females was recorded in the previous study (75% of males and 67% of females).

Age

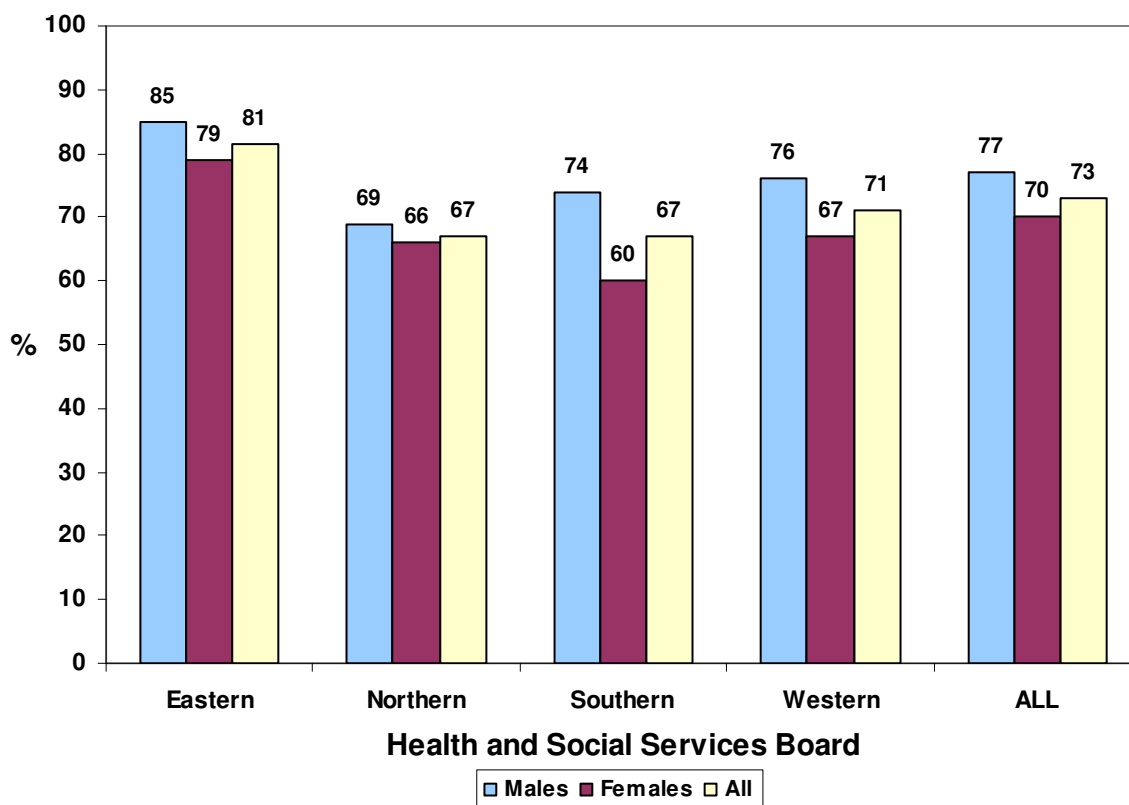
The proportions of both males ($p < 0.001$) and females ($p < 0.001$) who drink decreases with age. Nearly nine in ten of both males (86%) and females (86%) aged 18-29 years drink compared to just under one in two (49%) females and almost two thirds (62%) of males in the 60-75 year old age group (See Figure 2).

There has been an increase in drinking prevalence for the 18-29 and 60-75 year age groups since the previous survey. In 1999, almost four in five (79%) of 18-29 year olds and almost half (48%) of the 60-75 year olds drank, compared to 86% and 55% respectively in 2005.

There is also an increase in the proportion of drinkers for females in the 18-29 year old age group when in 1999 more than three in four (78%) of these respondents drank compared to almost nine in ten (86%) in 2005.

Health and Social Services Boards

Figure 3: Percentage who drink by Health and Social Services Board and gender



Base: all respondents, N = 1878

Figure 3 shows the drinking prevalence for respondents across the four Health and Social Services Boards (HSSBs). More than eight in ten (81%) respondents in the Eastern HSSB reported drinking alcohol compared to approximately seven in ten in each of the other HSSBs (Northern and Southern HSSBs, 67% and Western HSSB, 71%).

A higher proportion of males than females drink in each of the four boards. The Eastern HSSB had the highest proportion of both male (85%) and female (79%) drinkers whilst the Northern HSSB had the lowest proportion of male drinkers (69%) and the Southern HSSB had the lowest proportion of female drinkers (60%). There is a statistically significant association between HSSB and prevalence of drinking for both males ($p < 0.001$) and females ($p < 0.001$).

Socioeconomic group, household income and educational status

Table 3: Drinking by socioeconomic group, household income and education status

	Males who drink	Females who drink	All who drink
Socioeconomic group N=1870			
Managerial & professional	81%	75%	78%
Intermediate occupations	78%	74%	76%
Routine & manual	80%	69%	74%
Not classified ⁽¹⁾	52%	59%	56%
Household income N=1679			
£26,000 or over	84%	77%	80%
£15,600 – 25,999	76%	74%	75%
£10,400 – 15,599	74%	66%	69%
Under £10,400	65%	60%	62%
Education status N=1739			
A Level / Higher education	86%	80%	82%
O Level / Commercial	79%	72%	76%
No qualifications	70%	62%	66%
Overall	77%	70%	73%

(1) Includes those in retirement, the long term sick or disabled, those looking after the family home and students.

Table 3 shows the proportion of respondents who drink alcohol by socioeconomic group, household income and highest educational qualification.

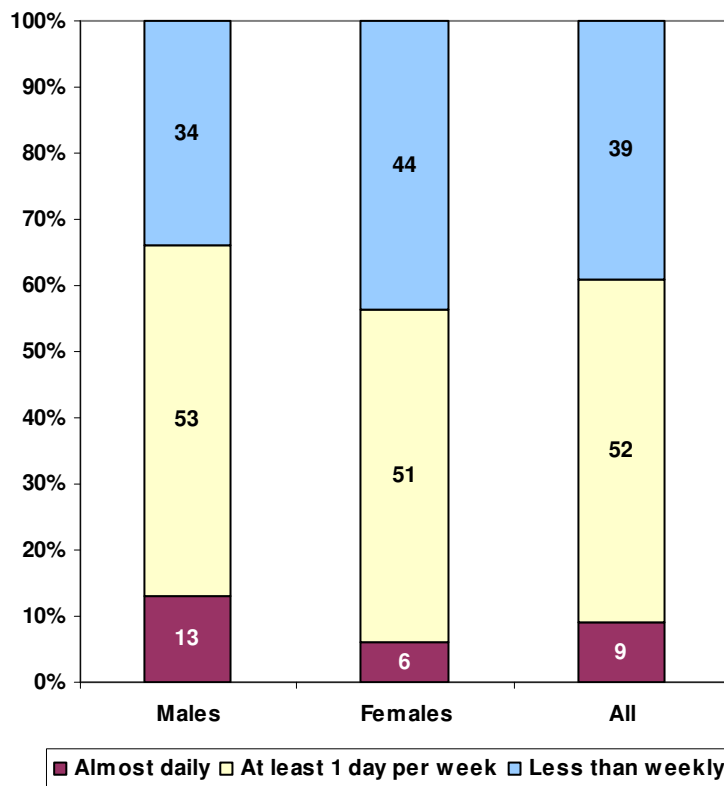
Approximately three quarters of those in the managerial and professional (78%), the intermediate (76%) and the routine and manual (74%) occupations drink alcohol. Those who are not classified within the three main groupings are the least likely to drink alcohol with over half (56%) of respondents in this category reporting that they drink alcohol. There is a statistically significant association between socioeconomic group and drinking alcohol for both males ($p < 0.001$) and females ($p < 0.01$).

Four in five (80%) of those with household incomes of £26,000 or more drink compared to just over three in five (62%) of those with under £10,400. The higher the household income the more likely both males ($p < 0.001$) and females ($p < 0.001$) are to drink alcohol.

More than four fifths (82%) of respondents with A Levels or higher educational qualifications drink compared to just over three quarters (76%) of those whose highest qualifications are O Levels or commercial qualifications and two thirds (66%) of those without qualifications. There is a statistically significant association between education level and drinking for both males ($p < 0.001$) and females ($p < 0.001$).

3.2 Frequency of Drinking

Figure 4: How often respondents drink by gender



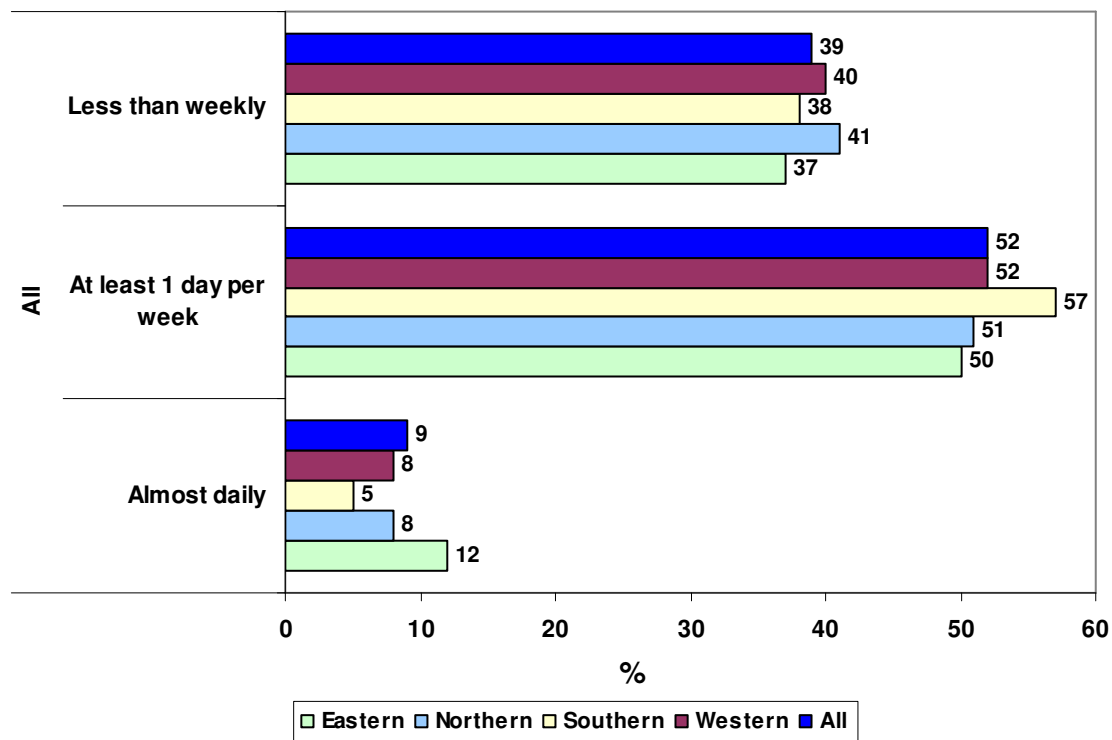
Base: all drinkers, N=1380

Figure 4 shows how often respondents who drink reported having an alcoholic drink. Just over half of drinkers (52%), both males (53%) and females (51%) said they drink alcohol at least once a week. Additionally, nearly one in ten (9%) respondents reported drinking on an almost daily basis. More males (13%) than females (6%) described their drinking pattern in this manner. There is a significant association between gender and frequency of drinking ($p < 0.001$).

In 1999 approximately the same proportions of both male (15%) and female (7%) drinkers said they drank almost daily. The proportion of males drinking on at least one occasion per week, but less than almost daily, was higher in the 1999 survey when over three in five (62%) described their drinking behaviour in this way.

Health and Social Services Boards

Figure 5: Frequency of drinking by Health and Social Services Board

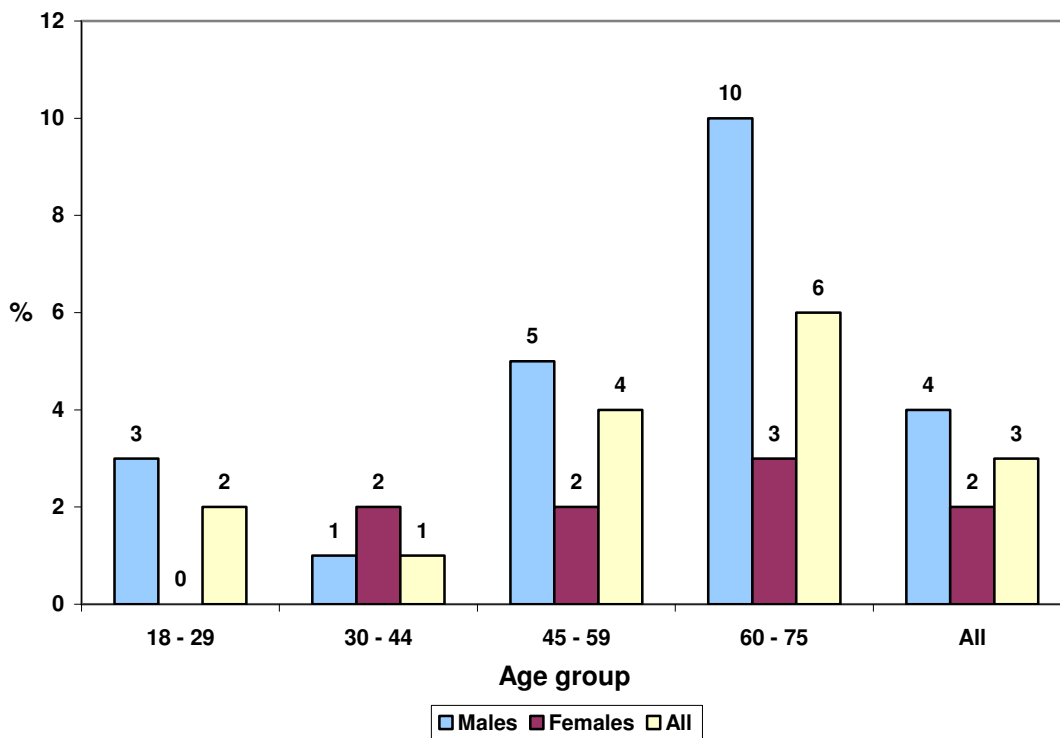


Base: all drinkers, N = 1378

The Eastern HSSB had the highest proportion of drinkers (12%) who said they drink almost daily. Both the Western and Northern HSSBs had less than one in ten (8%) drinkers who reported drinking almost daily whilst the Southern HSSB had the lowest proportion (5%) of “almost daily” drinkers (See Figure 5). Figures for those respondents who reported that they drank ‘less than weekly’ were broadly similar across the four HSSBs ranging from 37% in the Eastern HSSB through to 41% in the Northern HSSB. There is a statistically significant association between HSSB and frequency of drinking ($p < 0.05$).

Gender and Age

Figure 6: Proportion drinking every day by age and gender



Base: all drinkers, N = 1380

Figure 6 shows the proportion of those drinkers who described themselves as having an alcoholic drink every day. It is important to note that these respondents account for a very small proportion (3%) of all drinkers.

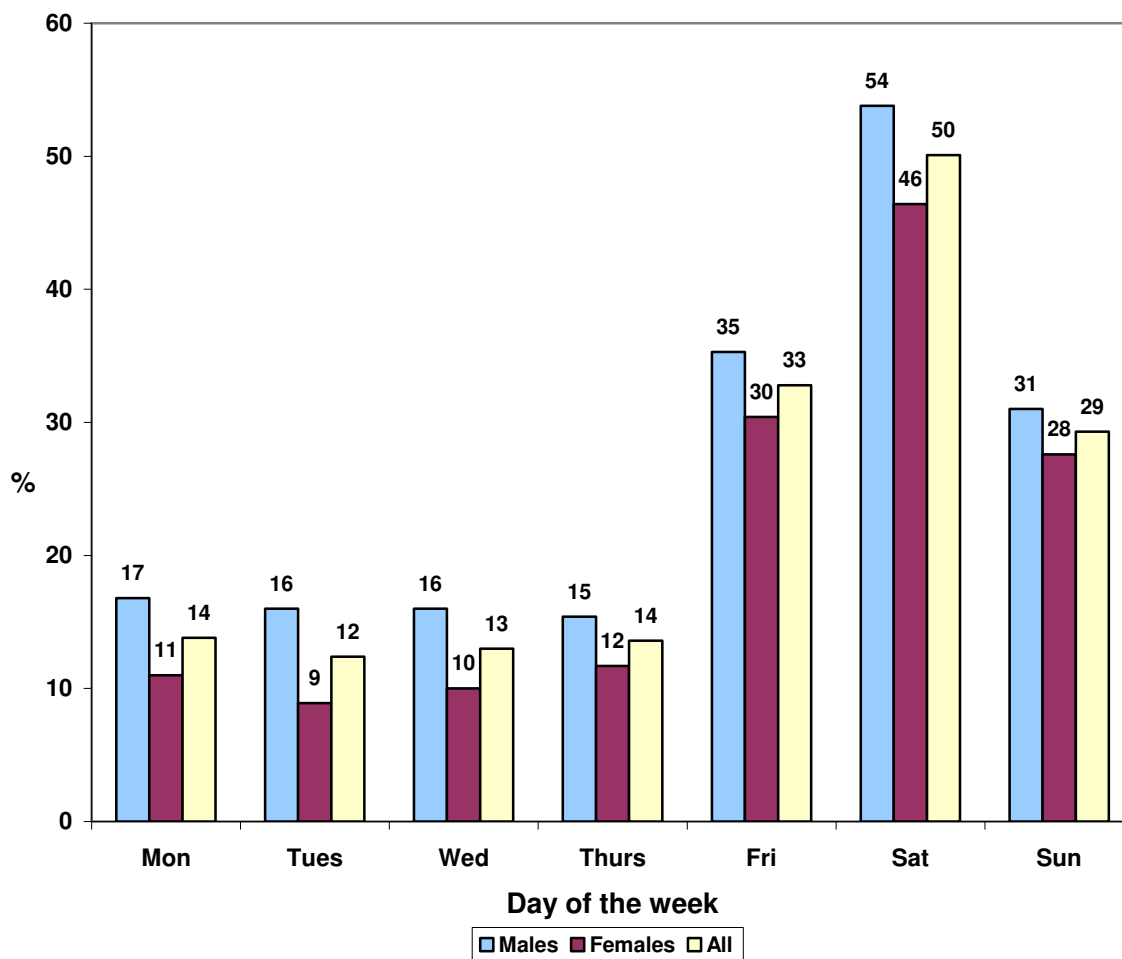
The proportion of drinkers who drink every day increases with age - larger proportions of respondents of both genders in the 60-75 year old age group said they drink every day - one in ten (10%) males who drink in this age group do so on a daily basis compared to one in a hundred (1%) of those aged 30-44. There is a statistically significant association between frequency of drinking and age ($p < 0.001$) for both males ($p < 0.01$) and females ($p < 0.001$).

Drinking Behaviour

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

3.3 Days when drinking occurs

Figure 7: Days on which drinking occurs by gender



Base: all drinkers, N = 1380

Most drinking occurs over the weekend period - this is true for both males and females (Figure 7). In the week preceding the survey, three in ten (30%) drinkers consumed alcohol during the week (Monday to Thursday) compared to two in three

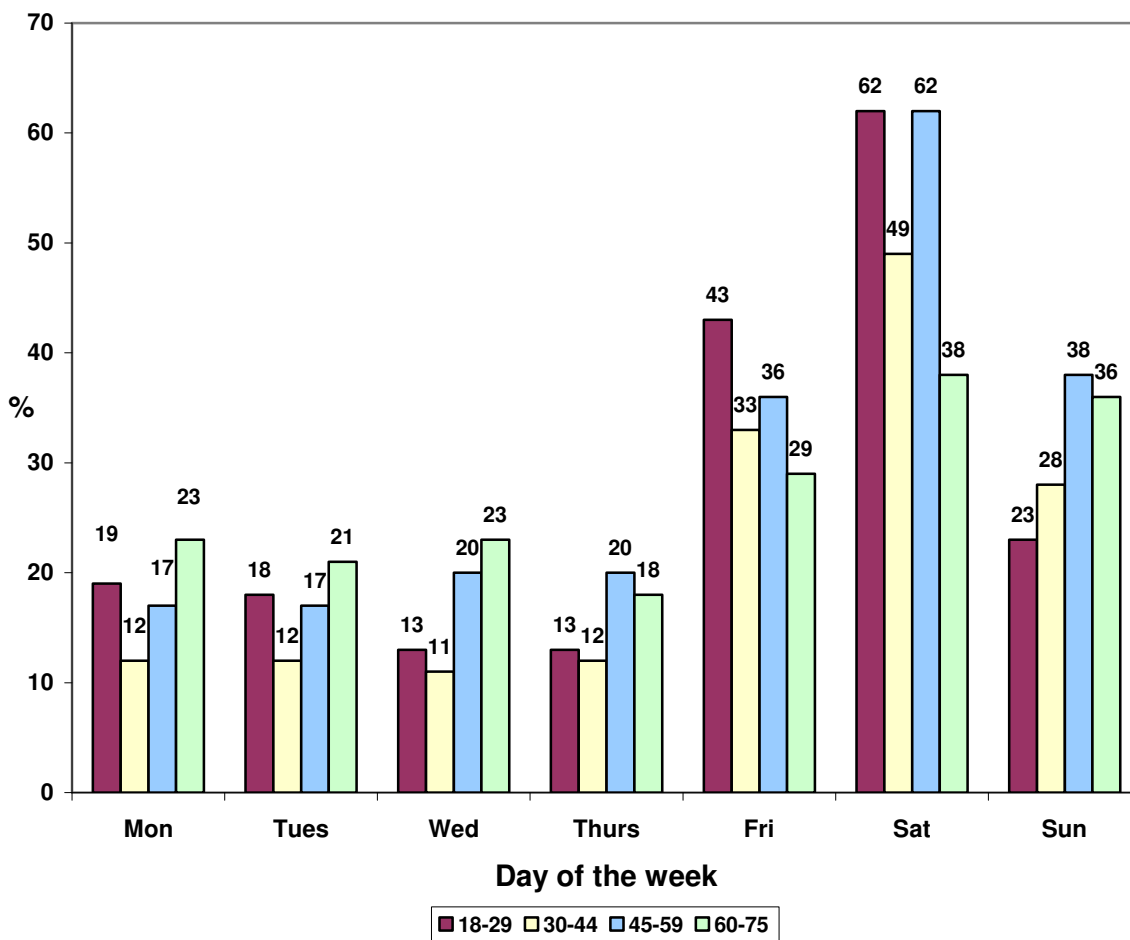
(67%) over the weekend (Friday to Sunday). Males are more likely than females to drink both during the week ($p < 0.01$) and at the weekend ($p < 0.05$).

Less than one in five drinkers had an alcoholic drink on the Monday (14%), Tuesday (12%), Wednesday (13%) and Thursday (14%) prior to the survey, whereas nearly three in ten (29%) drank on the Sunday, one in three (33%) on the Friday and half (50%) on the Saturday.

This general pattern of low prevalence during the week with a steep rise at weekends, peaking on Saturday, is consistent with the 1999 survey's findings.

Gender and Age

Figure 8: Days on which male drinkers drink by age group

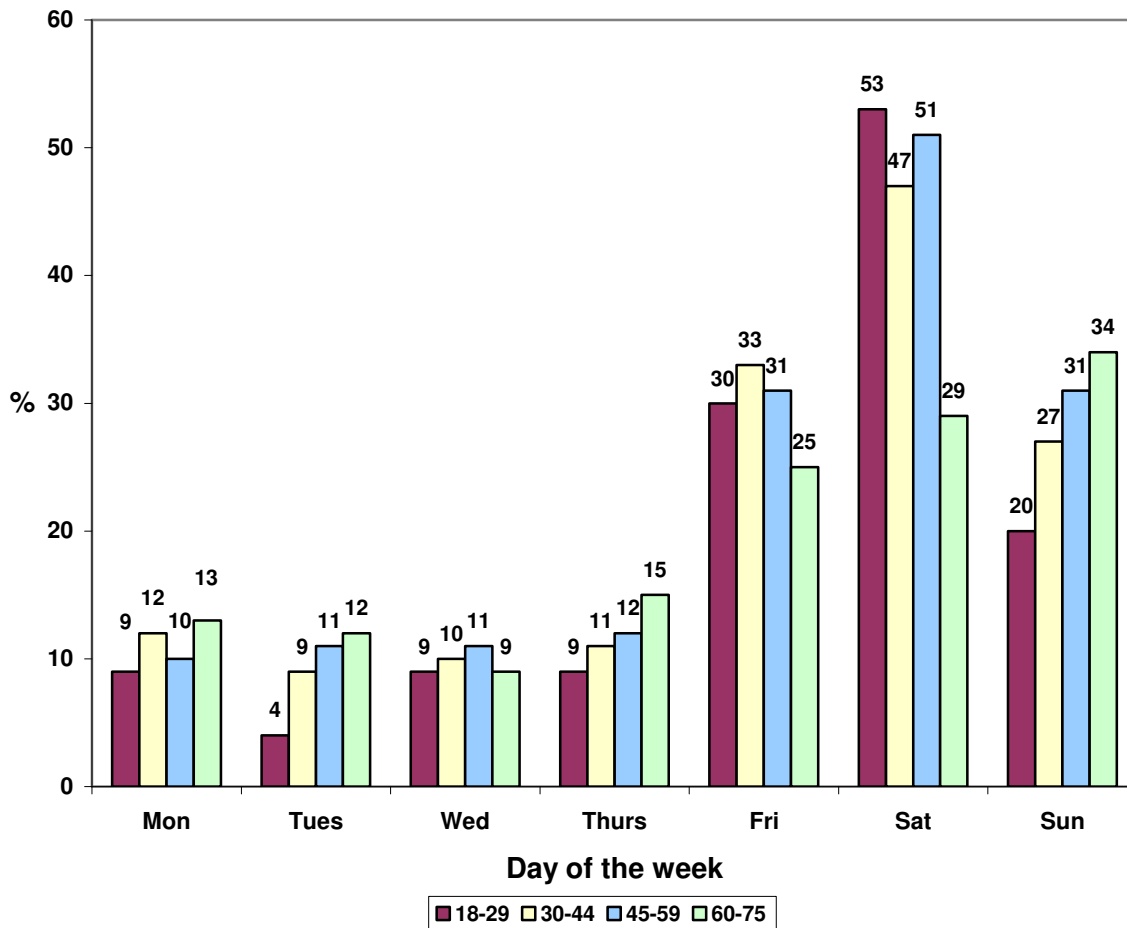


Base: male drinkers, N = 680

Figure 8 shows the proportion of male drinkers by age group who drank alcohol on each day of the week prior to the survey. It shows that most drinking occurs over

the weekend period for males in all age groups. Younger males (18-29 years) drink most frequently on Saturdays (62%) and Fridays (43%) compared to Wednesdays (13%) and Thursdays (13%). Males in the oldest age group (60-75 years) drink most consistently throughout the week – 38% drink on Saturdays compared to 21% on Tuesdays and 18% on Thursdays.

Figure 9: Days on which female drinkers drink by age group

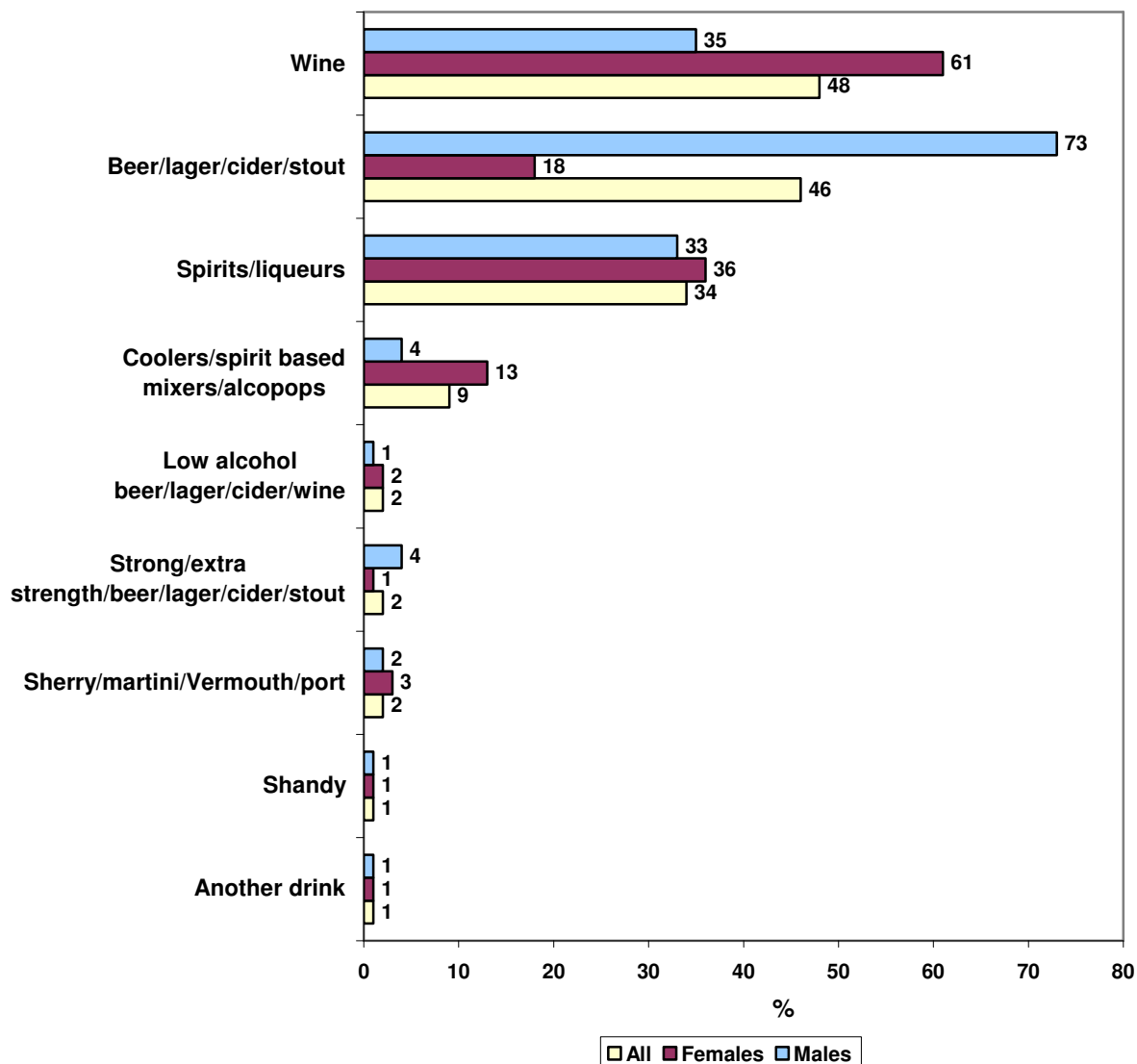


Base: female drinkers, N = 700

Female drinking patterns, by age group, are broadly similar to that of males. Younger females (18-29 years) drink most frequently on Saturdays (53%) and Fridays (30%) compared to Tuesdays (4%). However, females in the oldest age group (60-75 years) drink more consistently throughout the week – 34% drink on Sundays compared to 29% on Saturdays, 12% on Tuesdays and 9% on Wednesdays (See Figure 9).

3.4 Drinks consumed

Figure 10: Drinks consumed in the week prior to the survey by gender



Base: those who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey, N = 981

Nearly half (48%) of those respondents who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey reported that they had consumed wine, making it the most commonly reported alcoholic drink (see Figure 10). A similar proportion (46%) had consumed beer and just over a third (34%) had spirits or liqueurs.

Gender

Almost three in four (73%) males who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey compared to almost one in five (18%) females had drunk beer ($p < 0.001$). Over three fifths (61%) of females who consumed alcohol in the week before the

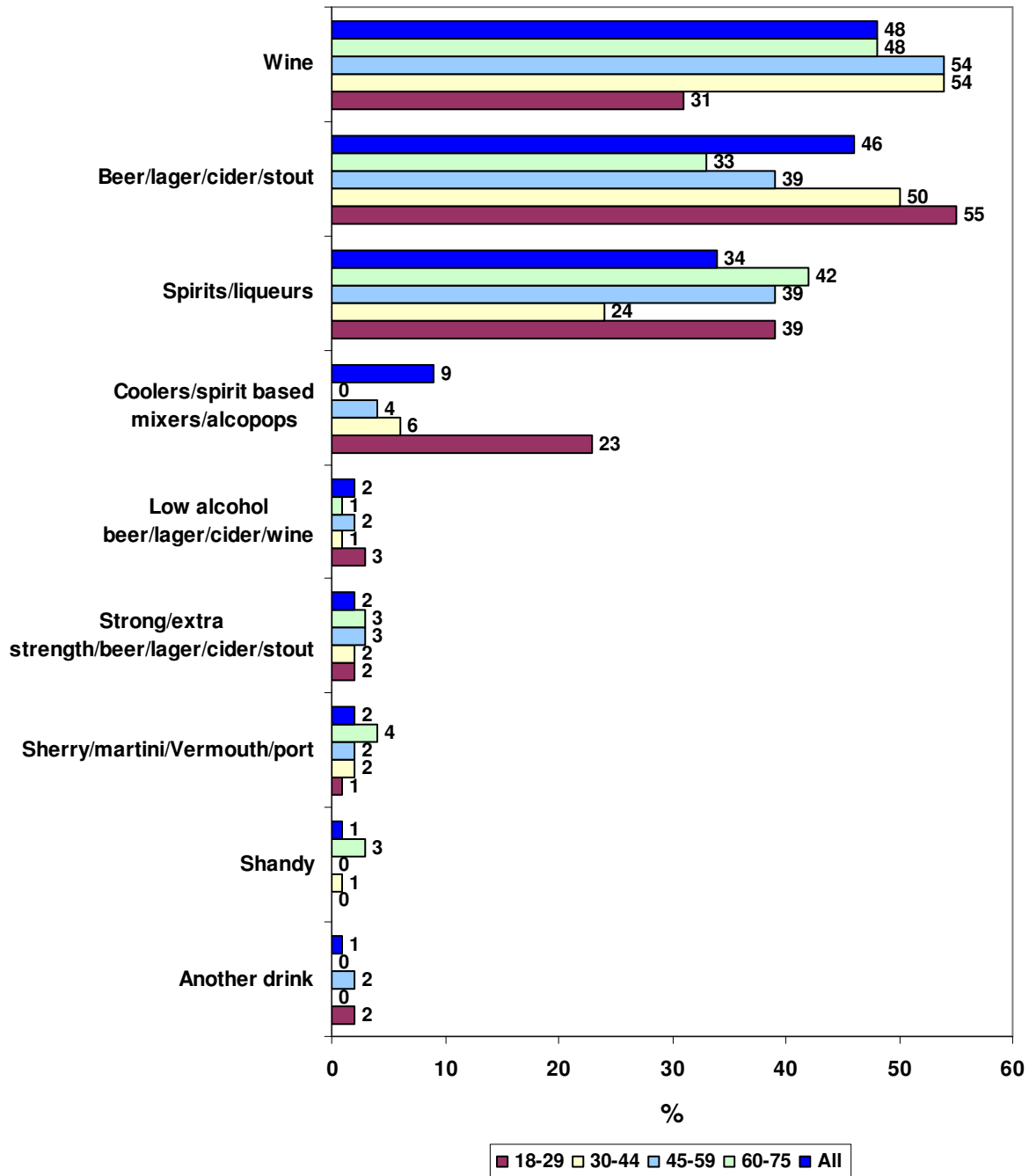
survey compared to just over a third (35%) of males had drunk wine during this time ($p < 0.001$). A higher proportion of females (13%) than males (4%) had consumed alcopops during the week prior to the survey ($p < 0.001$).

Drinking strong beer is also associated with gender ($p < 0.01$). Consumption of these extra strength drinks had been generally low but a higher proportion of males (4%) than females (1%) had drunk them.

These results mirror those in the 1999 survey as wine was also the most popular drink for females. One in two (50%) females who had consumed alcohol in the week prior to the 1999 survey drank wine during that week. As with the 2005 survey, beer was the most common choice for males (77%) in 1999. A similar proportion of females who had consumed alcohol in the week before the survey drank spirits in both the 2005 and the 1999 studies (36% and 42% respectively), whilst a higher proportion of males had drunk spirits/liqueurs in this study (33%) than in the previous one (26%).

Age

Figure 11: Drinks consumed in the week prior to the survey by age



Base: those who had alcohol in the week prior to the survey, N = 981

Figure 11 shows the type of drink consumed by different age groups of those respondents who had a drink in the week prior to the survey. Over half (55%) of respondents aged 18-29 years consumed beer compared to almost two in five (39%) who had spirits, 31% had wine whilst almost a quarter (23%) had alcopops.

This age group are the least likely to drink wine ($p < 0.001$). Over half (54%) of respondents aged 30 - 44 reported that they had wine whilst half (50%) reported that they had beer. Those aged 30 - 44 years old are the least likely to drink spirits or liqueurs ($p < 0.001$). Older respondents (60-75 years) reported that almost half (48%) had wine, over two in five (42%) had spirits and a third (33%) had beer.

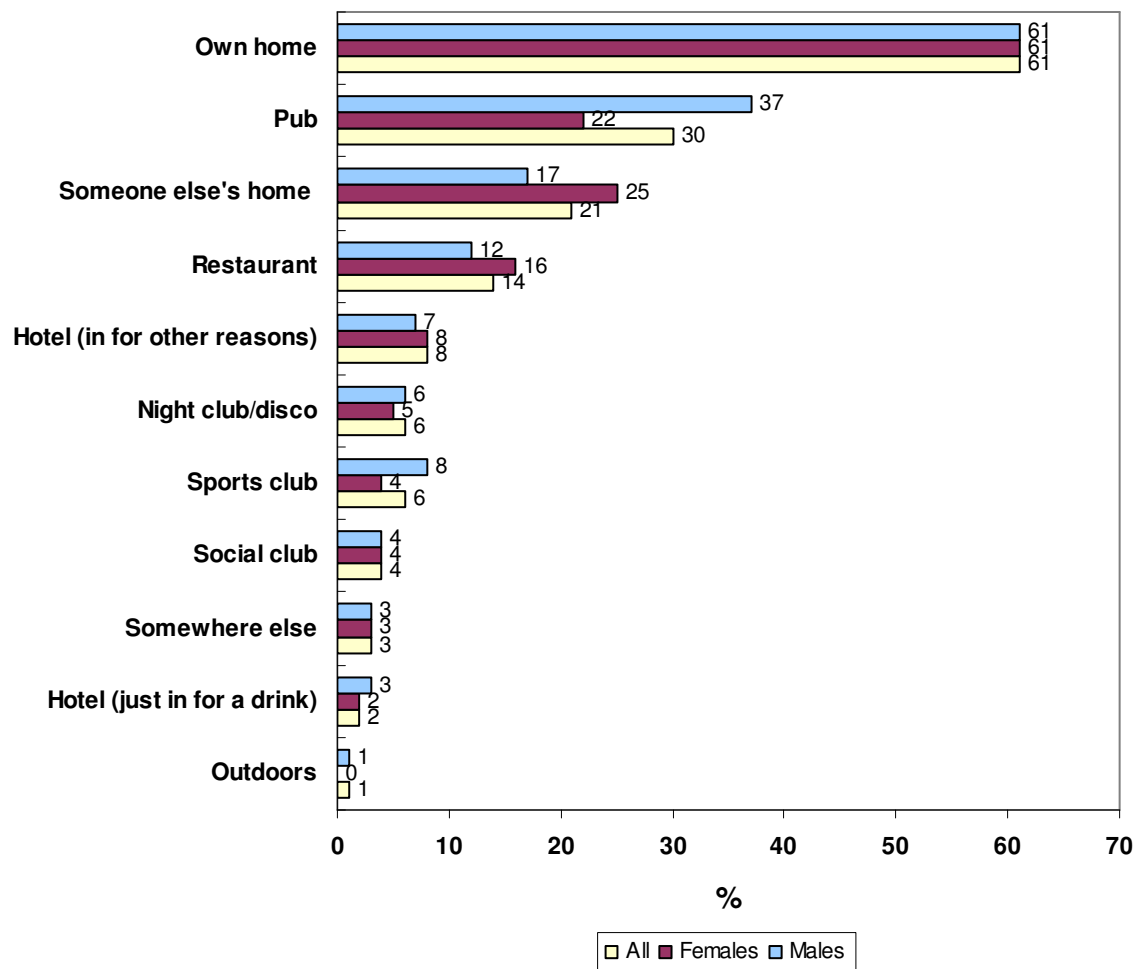
Females in the older age groups who had consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey were most likely to have drunk wine (30-44 year olds (68%), 45-59 year olds (66%), 60-75 year olds (60%)) in the week prior to the survey whilst nearly one in two (47%) females in the youngest age group drink wine. Less than one in five (16%) males (18-29 years) had had drunk wine. This is compared to two in five (40%) males in the 30-44 age group, 44% of those 45-59 and 37% of those in the 60-75 age group.

The likelihood of drinking beer ($p < 0.001$) and alcopops ($p < 0.001$) decreases with age. Nearly nine in ten (87%) males in the youngest age group consumed beer during the week compared to less than three in five (57%) males in the oldest age group ($p < 0.001$). Younger females are also more likely to have beer with more than one in five (22%) 18-29 year old females consuming it compared to less than one in twenty (3%) of those aged 60-75 ($p < 0.001$).

Younger females are the most likely to drink alcopops - more than a third (34%) of 18-29 year old females who had drunk alcohol in the week prior to the survey had drunk alcopops during this time compared to just over one in ten (12%) of males in this age group and less than one in ten females and males in the other age groups.

3.5 Where people drink

Figure 12: 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=984

Respondents were asked what locations they had consumed alcohol in during each of the week prior to the survey. The most common setting for drinking alcohol is in the home (see Figure 12). Just over three fifths (61%) of both males and females who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey drank in their own homes during that time. The next most common locations for drinking alcohol were the pub (30% - 37% of males and 22% of females) and someone else's home (21% - 17% of males and one in four (25%) females).

These preferences are the same as in the 1999 survey when more than half (55%) consumed alcohol in their own home, one in three (33%) drank in the pub and less than one in five drank in someone else's home (19%).

Gender

There is a statistically significant association between gender and the locations where people consume alcohol. Males are more likely than females to drink in pubs ($p < 0.001$), hotels ($p < 0.05$) and sports clubs ($p < 0.01$). Females are more likely than males to drink alcohol in someone else's home ($p < 0.05$).

Table 4: 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 / Pub
2	Pub	Pub	Pub	Pub	Pub	Pub	Own home / Pub
3	Someone else's home	Sports club	Restaurant	Restaurant	Someone else's home	Someone else's home	Someone else's home
Base	N = 114	N = 109	N = 109	N = 105	N = 240	N = 366	N = 211

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

Table 4 shows the most popular drinking locations for males throughout the week. The most common setting for drinking alcohol is in the home. The pub is the second most popular drinking location throughout the week.

Home and the pub also ranked as first and second choice in the 1999 survey. However, social clubs were the third most frequented drinking locations on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays in 1999, whilst they do not feature in the most popular drinking locations for males on any day of the week in the present survey.

Table 5: 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	Pub / Someone else's home	Pub	Pub / Someone else's home	Someone else's home	Someone else's home	Someone else's home
3	Someone else's home	Pub / Someone else's home	Someone else's home	Pub / Someone else's home	Pub	Pub	Pub
Base	N = 77	N = 62	N = 70	N = 82	N = 213	N = 325	N = 193

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

Table 5 shows that the most common drinking locations for females throughout the week are their own homes or someone else's home.

In the 1999 study, the home was also the most popular place for females to drink throughout the week. However, 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.

Age

Table 6: Where alcohol was consumed in the week prior to the survey by age

		Age Group				
		18 - 29	30-44	45-59	60-75	All
Where Alcohol is Consumed	Own Home	49	67	70	52	61
	Pub	47	28	26	13	30
	Someone else's home	29	21	17	15	21
	Restaurant	14	14	15	13	14
	Hotel	5	11	12	12	10
	Sports club	5	5	4	15	6
	Night club / Disco	20	2	1	0	6
	Social club	3	2	3	11	4
	Outdoors	0	0	1	0	1
	Somewhere else	2	4	4	1	3

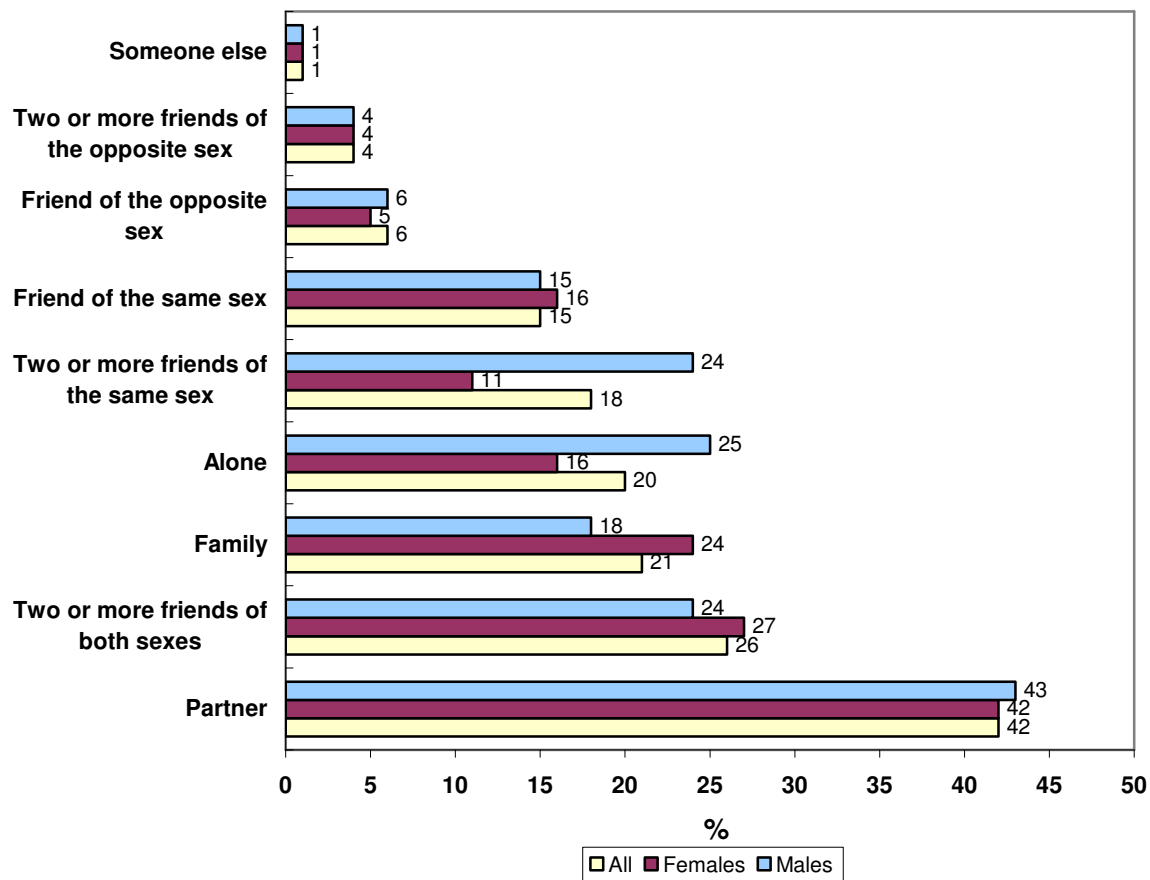
Base: those who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey, N = 984

Table 6 shows that almost half (49%) of younger respondents (18–29 years) reported that they had drunk alcohol either in their own home or in the pub (47%). Almost three in ten (29%) had consumed alcohol in someone else's home whilst one in five (the highest across all age groups) reported that they had consumed alcohol in a night club/disco. Two in three (67%) respondents aged 30–44 years consumed alcohol in their own home whilst almost three in ten (28%) drank in the pub. Seven in ten respondents aged 45–59 drank at home, over a quarter (26%) drank in the pub. Over half (52%) of respondents aged 60–75 years drank in their own home whilst 15% (the highest across all age groups) drink in a Sports Club.

There is a statistically significant association between age and the location where people consume alcohol. The likelihood of drinking in a pub ($p < 0.001$), nightclub or disco ($p < 0.001$) or in someone else's home ($p < 0.01$) decreases with age (see Figure 13). Those in the two middle age groups, 30-44 year olds (67%) and 45-59 years olds (70%), are the most likely to consume alcohol in their own homes ($p < 0.001$). Those in the oldest age group are more likely than those in the other age groups to drink in hotels ($p < 0.05$), sports clubs ($p < 0.001$) and social clubs ($p < 0.001$).

3.6 Who people drink with

Figure 13: Company respondents drank in by gender



Base: All those who consumed alcohol in the week before the survey, N=984

Figure 13 shows how the largest proportion (42%) of those who drank in the week prior to the survey consumed alcohol with their partners during that period. More than a quarter (26%) drank with two or more friends of both sexes and approximately one in five drank with family (21%), alone (20%) or with two or more friends of the same sex (18%). These results are very similar to those of the 1999 survey, although at that time a lower proportion drank with family (17%) and a higher proportion drank with two or more friends of the same sex (22%).

Gender

Males are more likely than females to drink alone ($p < 0.001$) or with two or more friends of the same sex ($p < 0.001$). Females are more likely than males to drink with family ($p < 0.05$).

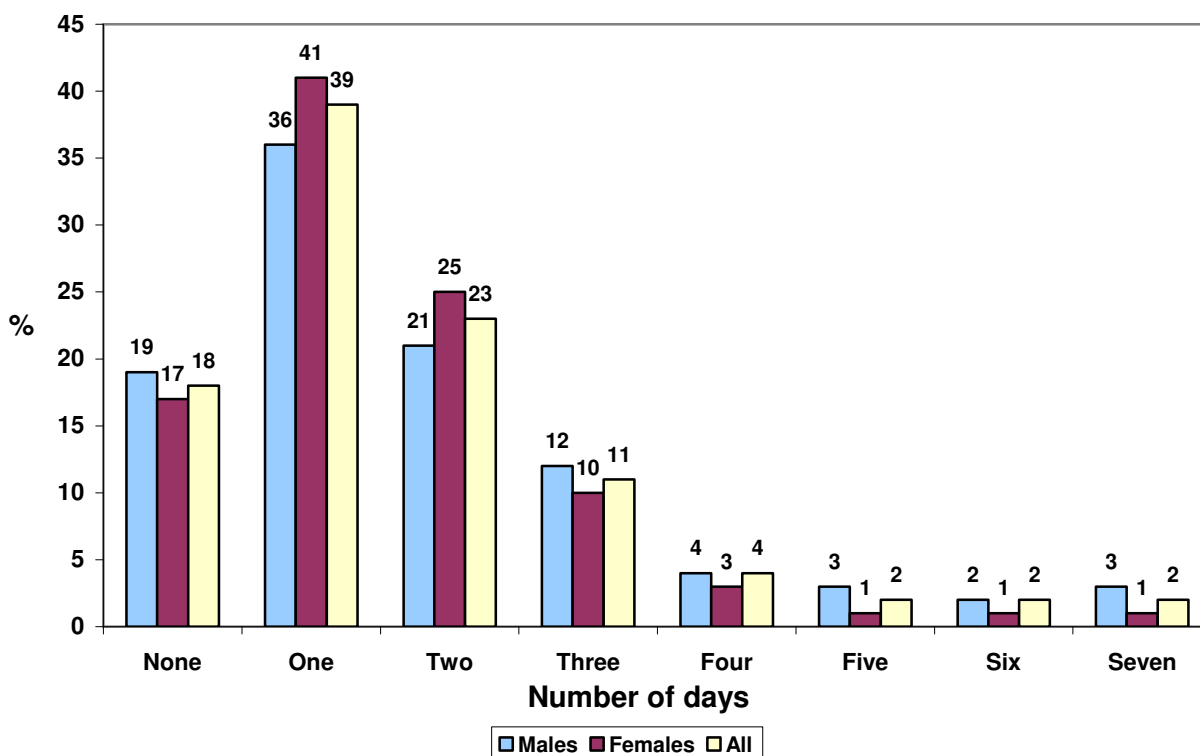
3.7 Amount of alcohol consumed

Respondents who said that they drank 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 14: 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=979

Figure 14 shows the percentage of those who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey who exceeded the recommended daily limits during that week and the number of days on which they exceeded the limits. Nearly a fifth of males (19%)

and females (17%) who consumed alcohol in the week before the survey did not exceed the recommended daily limits.

However, over two fifths (41%) of females and over a third (36%) of males exceeded their recommended daily limits on one day whilst a further quarter (25%) of females and 21% of males exceeded the recommended daily limits on two days. A further 24% of males and 16% of females exceeded the recommended daily limit on three days or more.

Table 7: Number of days per week reached or exceeded the recommended daily limit by gender within Health and Social Services Board

		Eastern	Northern	Southern	Western	All
All	None	16%	20%	24%	14%	18%
	One	39%	37%	39%	39%	39%
	Two	24%	25%	20%	24%	23%
	Three	10%	12%	12%	13%	11%
	Four	4%	2%	3%	5%	4%
	Five	2%	1%	2%	1%	2%
	Six	2%	3%	0	2%	2%
	Seven	3%	2%	0	2%	2%
Base:		N = 453	N = 204	N = 180	N = 140	N = 977
		Eastern	Northern	Southern	Western	All
Males	None	17%	21%	27%	14%	19%
	One	37%	36%	34%	35%	36%
	Two	22%	24%	20%	18%	21%
	Three	11%	12%	14%	16%	12%
	Four	4%	2%	2%	8%	4%
	Five	3%	2%	3%	1%	3%
	Six	2%	3%	0%	4%	2%
	Seven	4%	1%	0%	4%	3%
Base:		N = 227	N = 101	N = 94	N = 77	N = 499
		Eastern	Northern	Southern	Western	All
Females	None	16%	19%	22%	14%	17%
	One	41%	38%	44%	43%	41%
	Two	26%	26%	20%	32%	26% ⁽¹⁾
	Three	9%	12%	9%	10%	10%
	Four	4%	1%	4%	2%	3%
	Five	2%	0%	1%	0%	1%
	Six	1%	2%	0%	0%	1%
	Seven	2%	2%	0%	0%	1%
Base:		N = 226	N = 103	N = 86	N = 63	N = 478

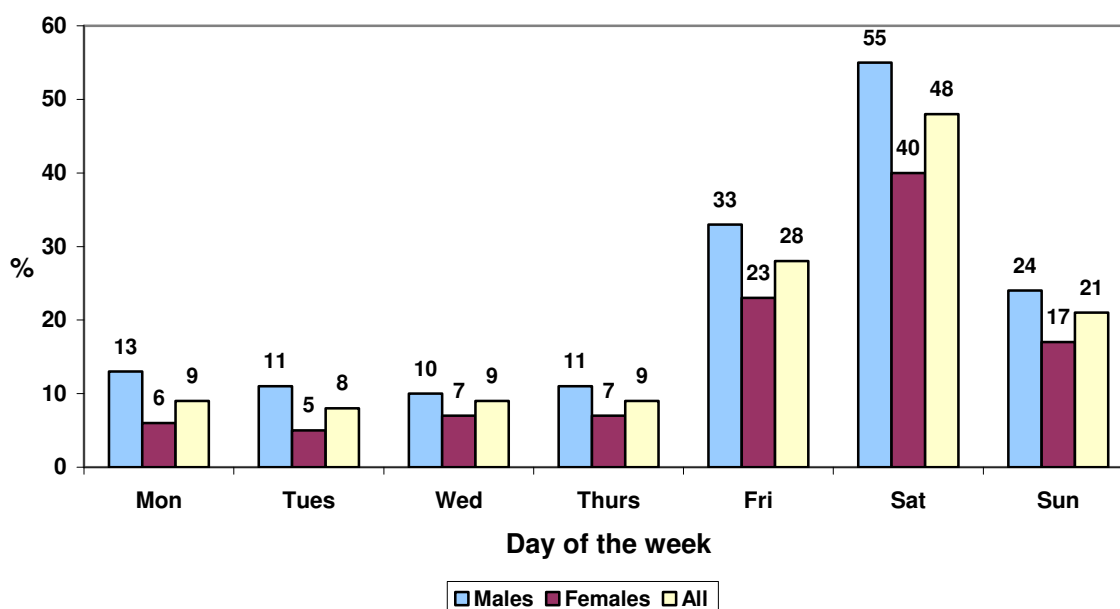
Note: (1) Two females could not be allocated to a HSSB

Base: those who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey, N = 977

Table 7 shows the number of days per week the recommended daily limit was reached or exceeded within each of the HSSBs. Almost one in four (24%) respondents from the Southern Board had not reached or exceeded the recommended daily limits compared to 20% in the Northern Board, 16% in the Eastern Board and 14% in the Western Board. The Eastern HSSB has the highest proportion (11%) reaching or exceeding the recommended daily limits four or more times per week whilst the Southern HSSB has the lowest proportion (5%).

Gender

Figure 15: 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=984

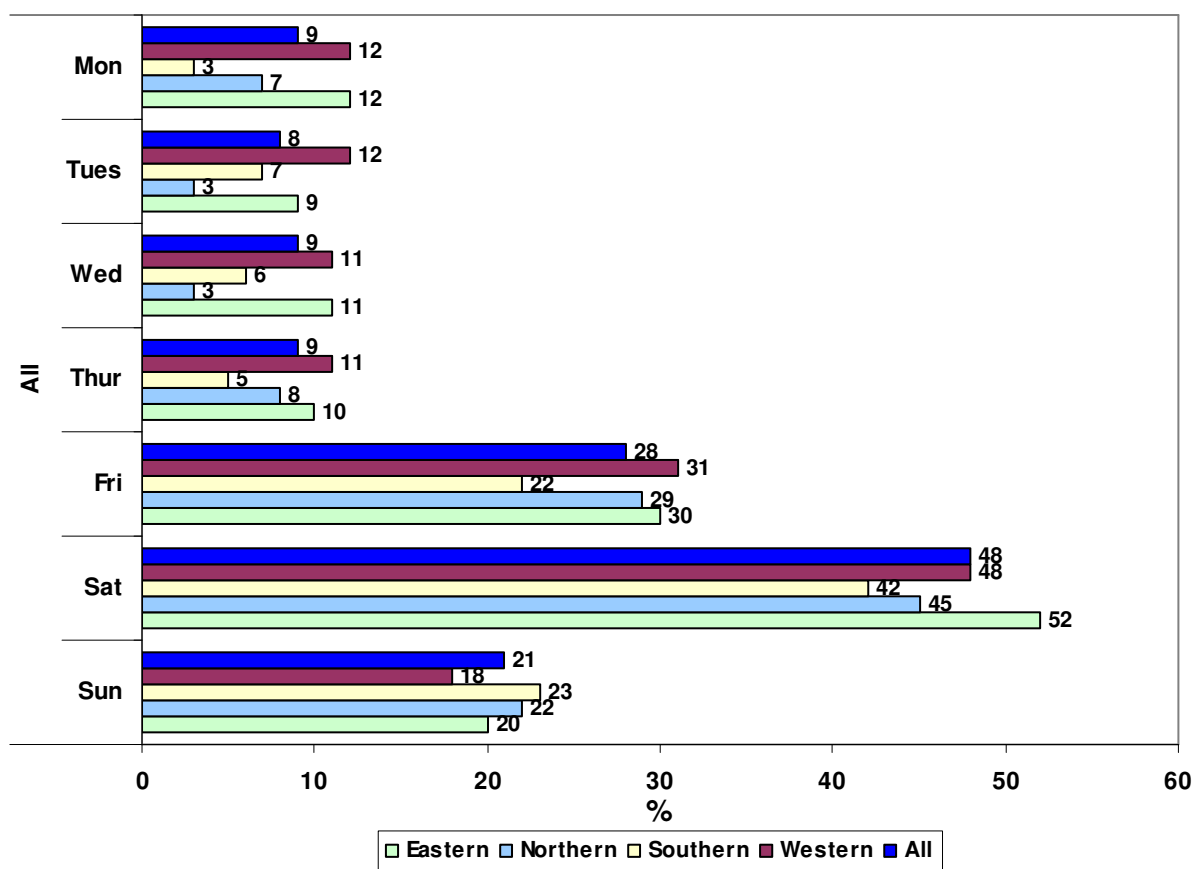
Prevalence of exceeding these recommended daily limits was highest over the weekend period. Nearly one in two (48%) of those respondents who consumed alcohol in the previous week exceeded the recommended daily limits on Saturday, more than one in four (28%) on Friday and more than one in five (21%) on Sunday. This compares to less than one in ten on Monday (9%), Tuesday (8%), Wednesday (9%) and Thursday (9%).

A higher proportion of males than females exceeded the recommended daily limits on each day of the week prior to the survey. On Saturday more than half (55%) of

males who had a drink in the week prior to the survey compared to two in five (40%) females exceeded the recommended daily limit ($p < 0.001$). On Friday a third (33%) of males compared to almost a quarter (23%) of females exceeded the limit ($p < 0.01$). On Sunday nearly a quarter (24%) of males compared to less than a fifth (17%) of females exceeded the limit ($p < 0.01$).

Health and Social Services Board

Figure 16: Proportion who exceeded the recommended daily alcohol limits per day within Health Board (All)

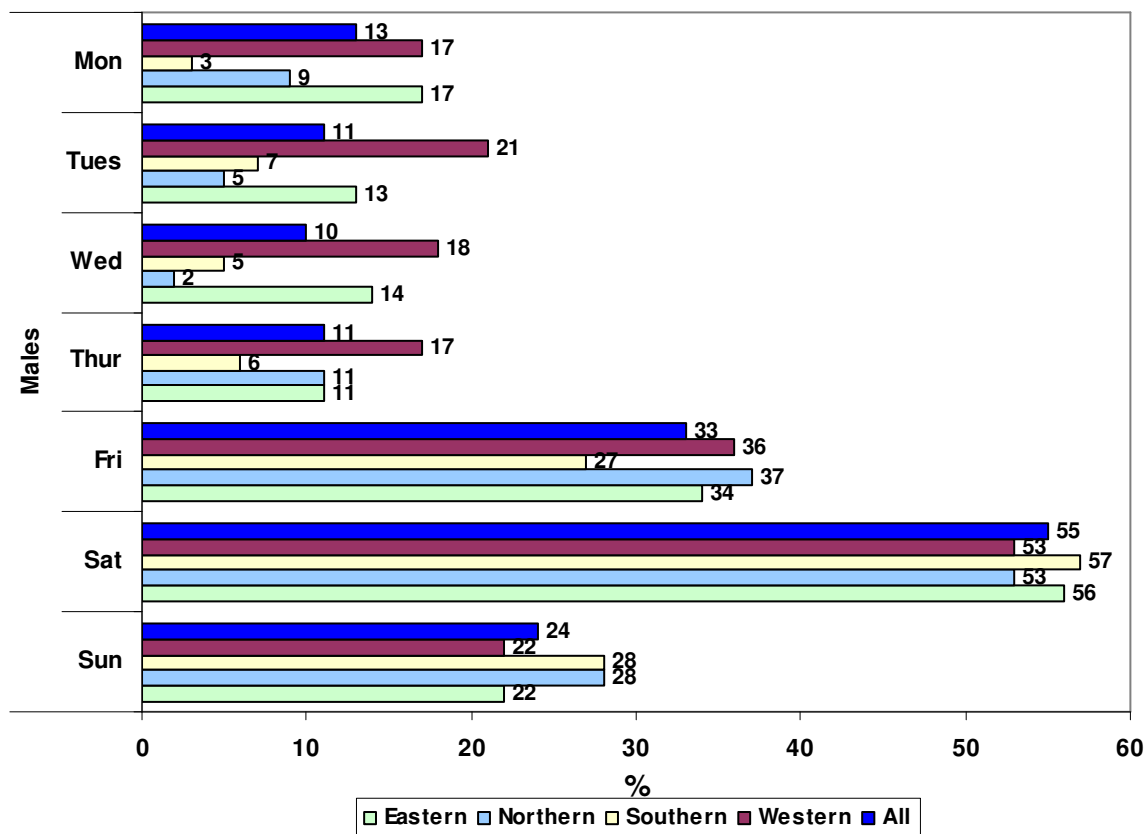


Base: those who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey, N=979

Figure 16 shows that the recommended daily drinking levels were exceeded most frequently, across all four HSSBs, at the weekends (most frequently on Saturday (48%), Friday (28%) and then Sunday (21%)). Figures for Saturday ranged from over half (52%) of those who had consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey in the Eastern HSSB to more than two in five (42%) in the Southern HSSB. Figures for Friday ranged from almost one in three (31%) in the Western HSSB to more than one in five (22%) in the Southern HSSB whilst figures for Sunday ranged from

almost one in four (23%) in the Southern HSSB to less than one in five (18%) in the Western HSSB.

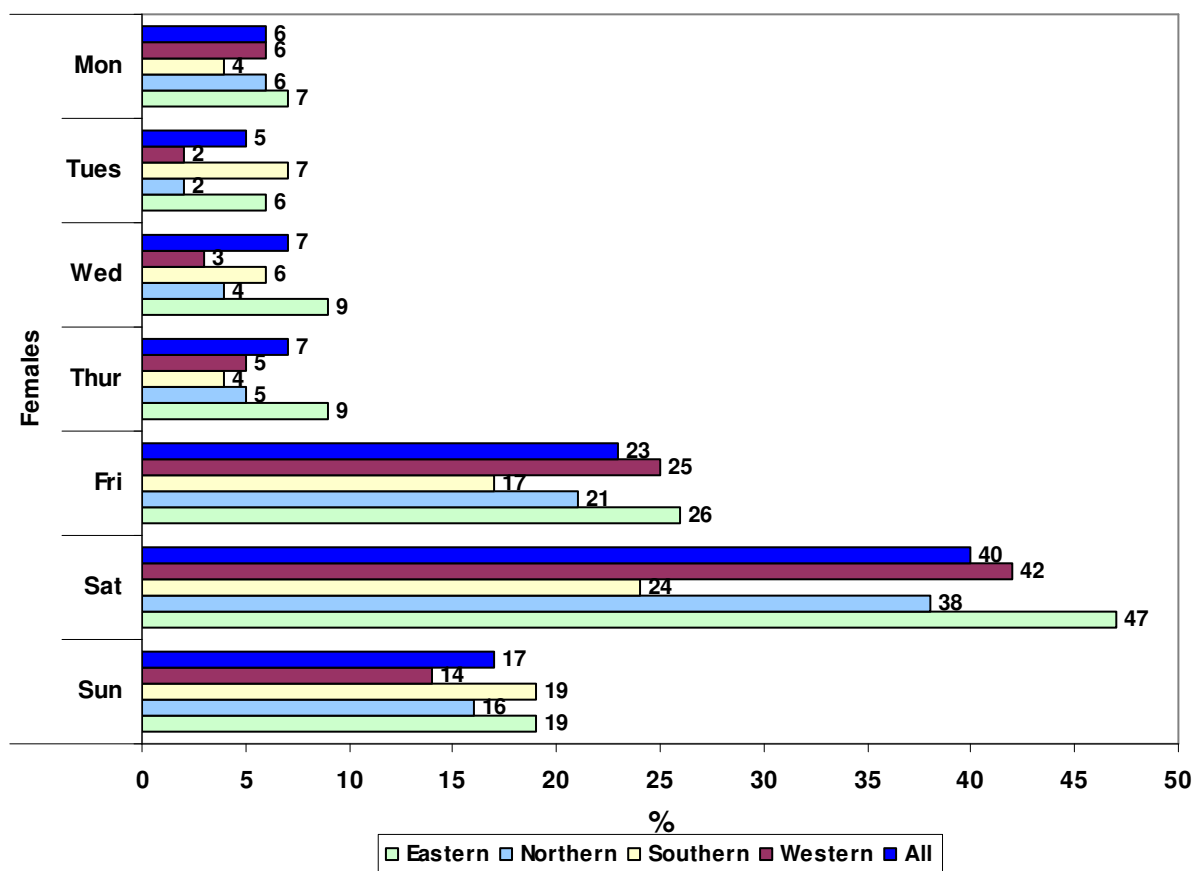
Figure 17: Proportion exceeding recommended daily limits per day within Health Board (Males)



Base: those males who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey, N=500

The recommended daily drinking levels were exceeded most frequently by males, across all four HSSBs, at the weekends (most frequently on Saturday (55%), Friday (33%) and then Sunday (24%)). Figures for Saturday ranged from almost three in five (57%) of those who had consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey in the Southern HSSB to more than half (53%) in both the Northern and Western HSSBs. Figures for Friday ranged from almost two in five (37%) in the Northern HSSB to more than one in four (27%) in the Southern HSSB whilst figures for Sunday ranged from almost three in ten (28%) in the Northern and Southern HSSBs to just over one in five (22%) in the Eastern and Western HSSBs.

Figure 18: Proportion exceeding recommended daily limits per day within Health Board (Females)



Base: those females who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey, N=479

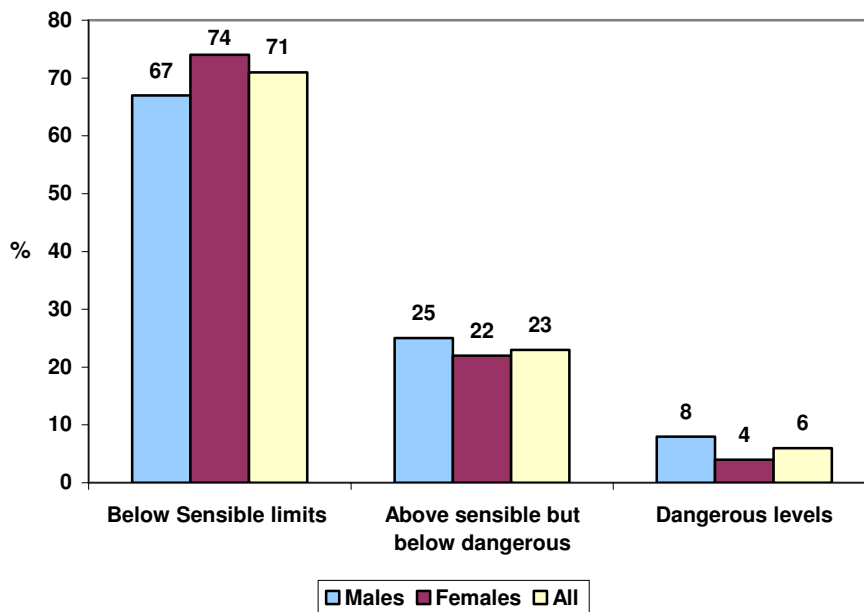
The recommended daily levels were exceeded most frequently by females, across all four HSSBs, at the weekends (most frequently on Saturday (40%), Friday (23%) and then Sunday (17%)). Figures for Saturday ranged from almost half (47%) of those who had consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey in the Eastern HSSB to just less than one in four (24%) in the Southern HSSB. Figures for Friday ranged from more than one in four (26%) in the Eastern HSSB to less than one in five (17%) in the Southern HSSB whilst figures for Sunday ranged from almost one in five (19%) in the Eastern and Southern HSSBs to just over one in ten (14%) in the Western HSSB.

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 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.

Figure 19: Units of alcohol drunk in the week prior to the survey



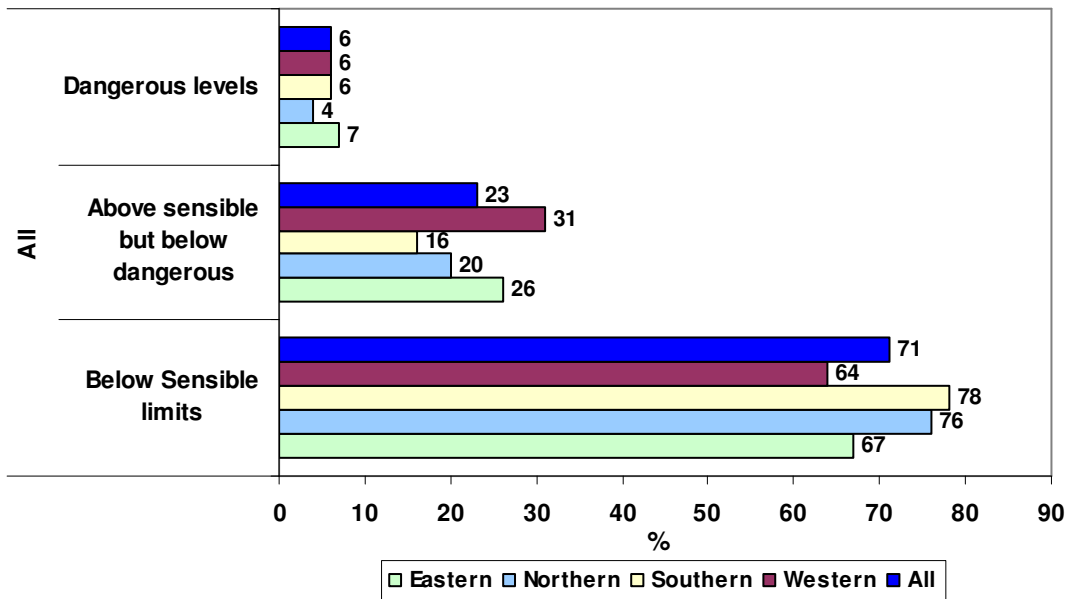
Base: those who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey, N=979

Figure 19 shows the levels of alcohol consumption for those who drank in the week prior to the survey - more than seven in ten (71%) respondents consumed alcohol below sensible limits. There is a statistical association between gender and weekly drinking levels ($p < 0.01$). More females (74%) than males (67%) stayed within their respective sensible limits and more males (8%) than females (4%) consumed dangerous levels of alcohol.

The 1999 study used slightly different groupings for this analysis so direct comparison is not possible. However, the proportions drinking below sensible limits (less than 14 units for females and less than 21 unit for males) can be compared. In 1999, a greater proportion (80%) of females who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey had stayed within their sensible limits and a similar proportion of males (63%) had stayed within their sensible limits.

Health and Social Services Board

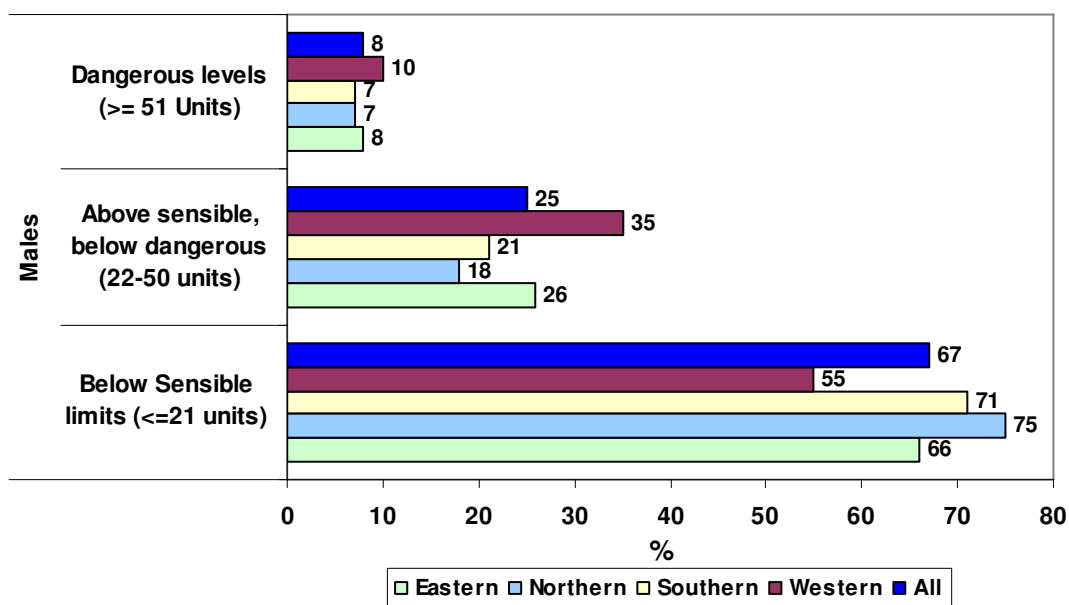
Figure 20: Units of alcohol consumed in the week prior to the study within Health Board (All)



Base: those who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey, N=977

Figure 20 shows that the majority (71%) of respondents, in all four HSSBs, ranging from almost four in five respondents (78%) in the Southern HSSB to over two in three respondents (64%) in the Western HSSB, consumed alcohol below sensible drinking levels (21 units or less for males and 14 units or less for females) in the week prior to the survey. The proportion of respondents who consumed alcohol at dangerous levels ranged from 7% in the Eastern HSSB to 4% in the Northern HSSB. There is a statistically significant association between HSSB and units of alcohol consumed in the week prior to the survey ($p < 0.05$).

Figure 21: Units of alcohol consumed in the week prior to the study within Health Board (Males)



More than two in three (67%) males, across all four HSSBs, consumed alcohol below sensible drinking levels (21 units or less) in the week prior to the survey. Three in four (75%) males who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey in the Northern HSSB stayed within sensible limits. This compares to more than seven in ten (71%) in the Southern HSSB, two in three (66%) in the Eastern HSSB and more than half (55%) in the Western HSSB. One in ten (10%) males in the Western HSSB compared to 7% in the Northern and Southern HSSBs, consumed alcohol above dangerous levels in the week prior to the survey (Figure 21).

Figure 22: Units of alcohol consumed in the week prior to the study within Health Board (Females)

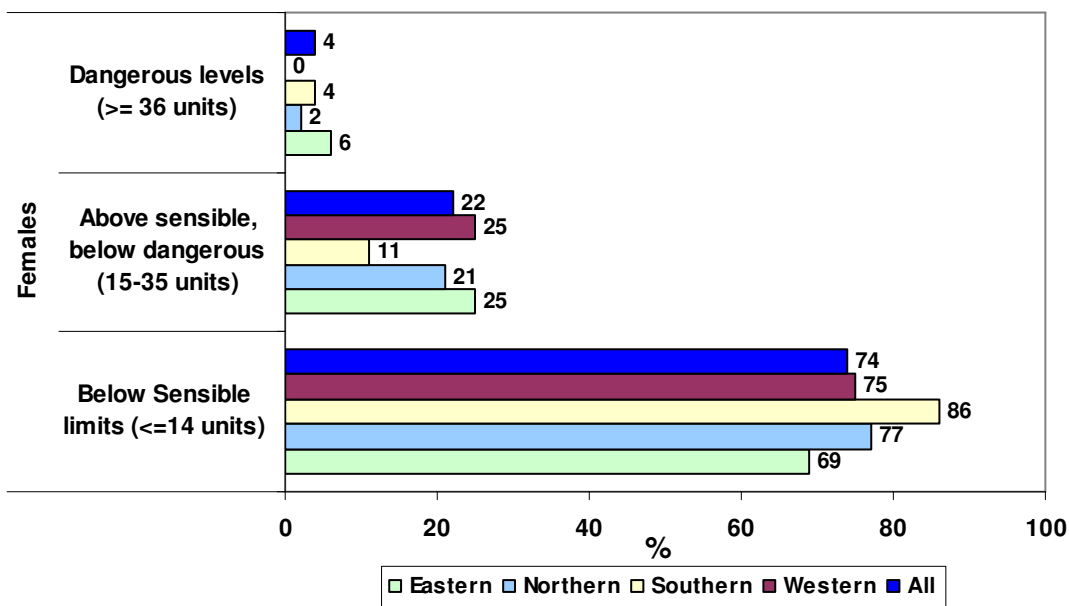
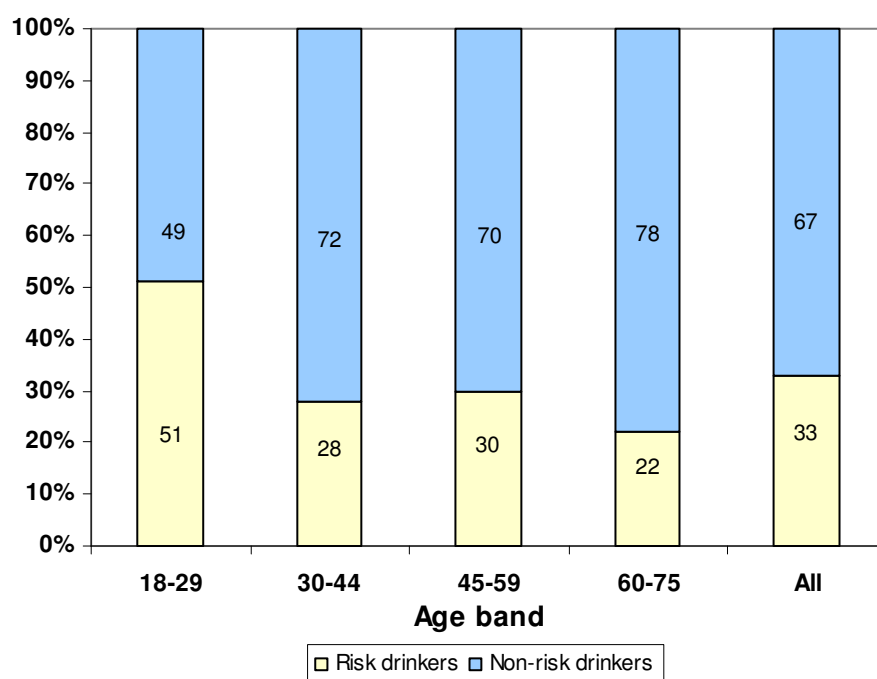


Figure 22 shows that almost three in four (74%) females, across all four HSSBs, consumed alcohol below sensible drinking levels (14 units or less) in the week prior to the survey. Nearly nine in ten (86%) females who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey in the Southern HSSB stayed within sensible limits. This compares to approximately three in four females in the Northern (77%) and Western (75%) HSSBs and less than seven in ten (69%) in the Eastern HSSB. In comparison, 6% of females in the Eastern HSSB compared to 2% in the Northern HSSB and none in the Western HSSB, consumed alcohol above dangerous levels in the week prior to the survey.

Age

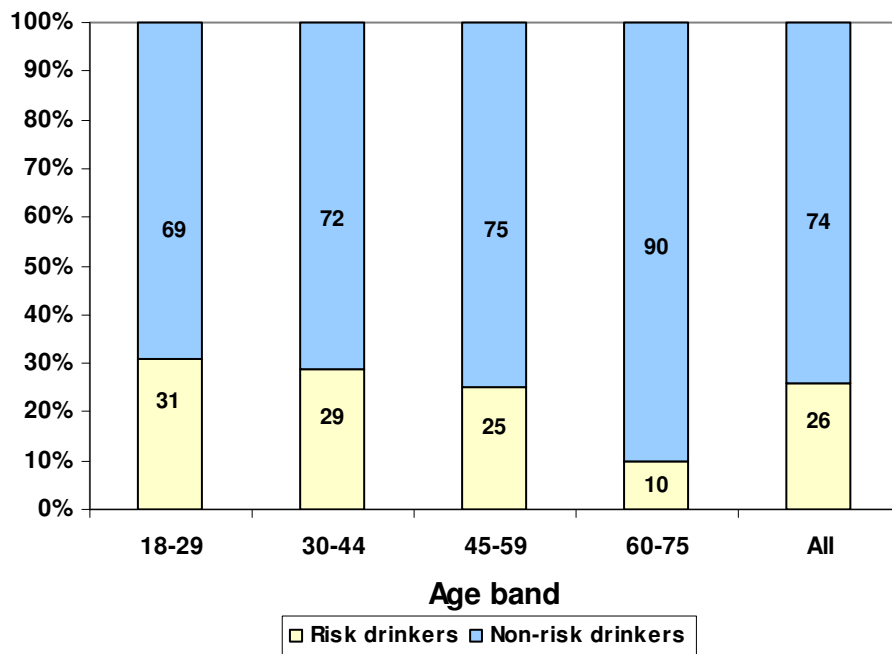
Figure 23: Proportion of males exceeding weekly limit by age group



Base: males who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey, N = 499

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. Figure 23 shows that one in three males (33%) who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey were classified as risk drinkers. Risk drinking behaviour varies with age for males ($p < 0.001$). More than half (51%) of 18-29 year old males who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey were classified as risk drinkers compared to less than a third of each of the other age groups (30-44 year olds (28%), 45-59 year olds (30%), 60-75 year olds (22%).

Figure 24: Proportion of females exceeding weekly limit by age group



Base: females who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey, N = 480

Figure 24 shows that more than one in four (26%) females who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey were classified as risk drinkers. The level of sensible drinking varies with age for females ($p < 0.05$) - the proportion of female risk drinkers decreases with age. More than three in ten (31%) females aged 18-29 years who had alcohol in the week prior to the survey drank enough during this period to be classified as risk drinkers. This figure decreased to less than three in ten (29%) 30-44 year olds, one in four (25%) 45-59 years olds and to one in ten (10%) 60-74 year olds.

4. Binge drinking

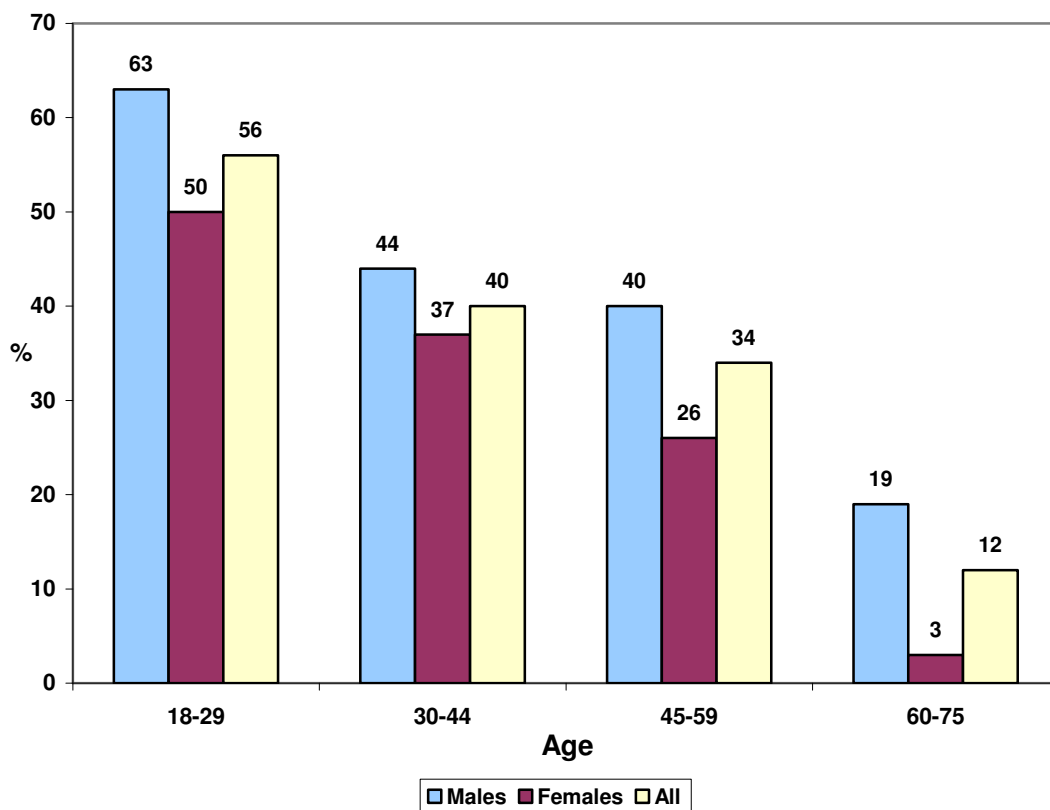
There are various definitions of binge drinking. For the purposes of this study a binge is defined as consuming 10 or more units of alcohol in one session for males and seven or more units of alcohol for females. These are the same levels as were used in the 1999 survey.

Nearly two in five (38%) respondents who drank in the week before the survey had engaged in at least one binge drinking session. More males (43%) than females (33%) were classified as binge drinkers ($p < 0.01$).

The findings from the 1999 survey were that almost half the males (48%) and more than a third (35%) of the females who had been drinking in the week leading up to the survey had binged at least once.

Age

Figure 25: Percentage of binge drinkers by age

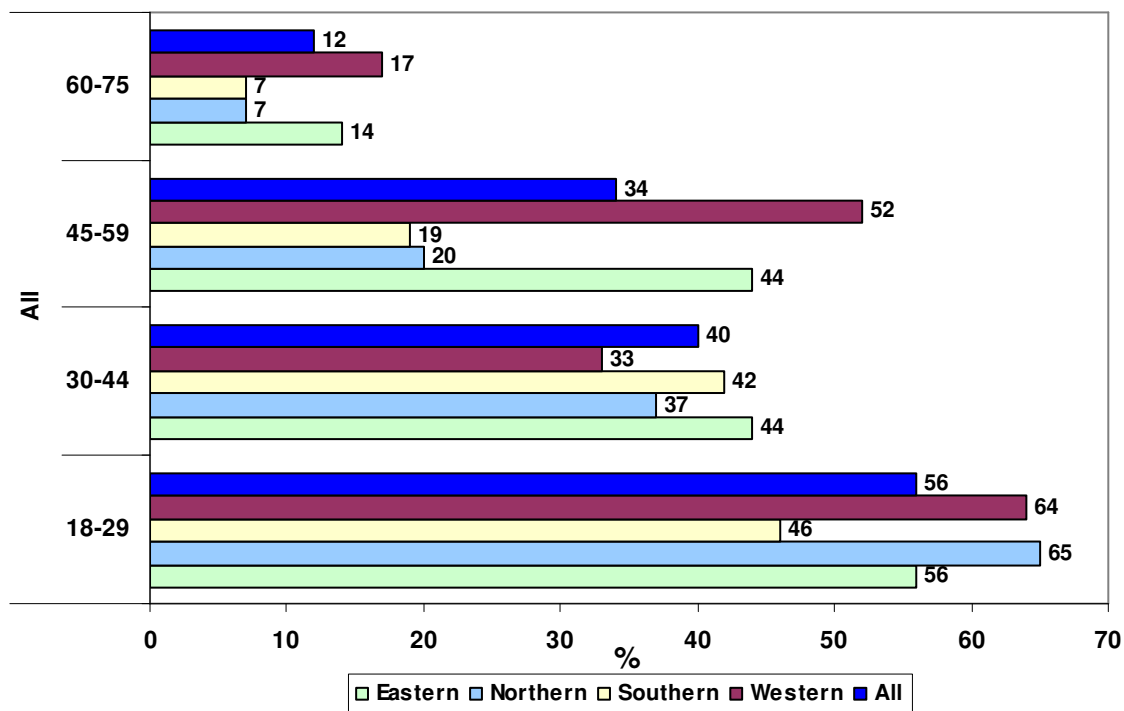


Base: those who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey, N = 979

Figure 25 shows the proportions of respondents who had consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey, who had engaged in a binge drinking session. Levels of binge drinking decrease with age for both males ($p < 0.001$) and females ($p < 0.001$). The proportion of males who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey and were classified as binge drinkers, fell from almost two in three (63%) 18-29 year olds to less than one in five (19%) 60-75 year olds. The proportion of females who are classified as binge drinkers fell from one in two (50%) of the 18-29 year olds who had a drink in the week leading up to the survey to less than one in twenty (3%) in the 60-75 year old age group.

There are no statistically significant changes in binge drinking levels between the 1999 and 2005 surveys for either gender in any of the age groups.

Figure 26: Proportion of binge drinkers in each age group within Health and Social Services Boards (All)

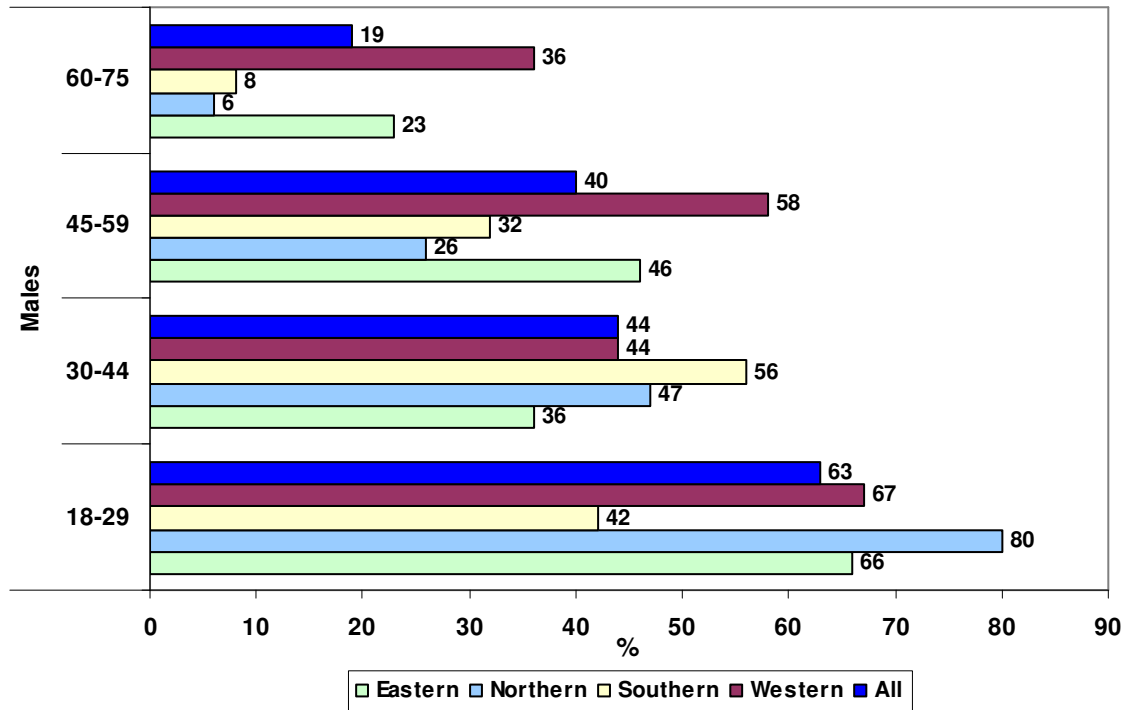


Base: those who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey, N=979

Figure 26 shows that, with the exception of the Western HSSB, the proportion of binge drinkers in each of the HSSBs decreases with age. More than two-thirds of drinkers in the 18–29 age group in the Northern (65%) and Western (64%) HSSBs

had engaged in binge drinking compared to 7% of 60–75 year old drinkers in both the Northern and Southern HSSBs.

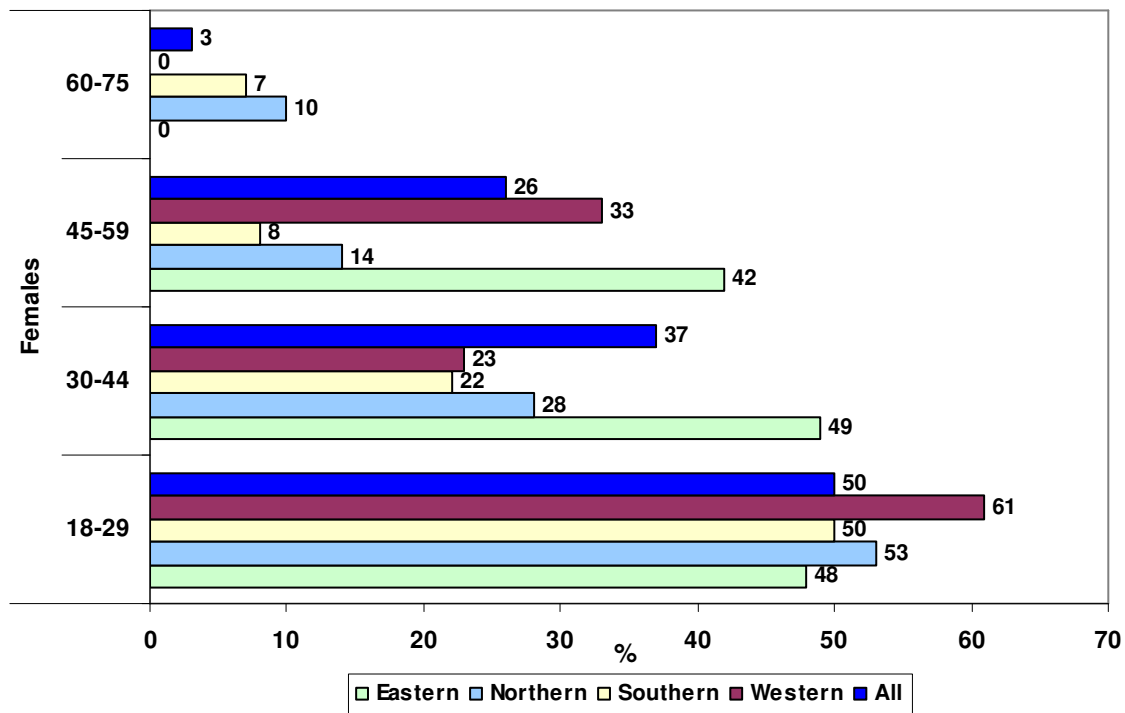
Figure 27: Proportion of male binge drinkers in each age group within health and social services boards



Base: Males who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey, N=499

Male binge drinking also decreases with age (Figure 27). However, in the Western and Eastern HSSBs more 45-59 year olds (58% and 46% respectively) than 30-44 year olds (44% and 36% respectively) engage in binge drinking sessions. In the Southern HSSB a higher proportion of 30-44 year olds (56%) binge drink than 18-29 year olds (42%).

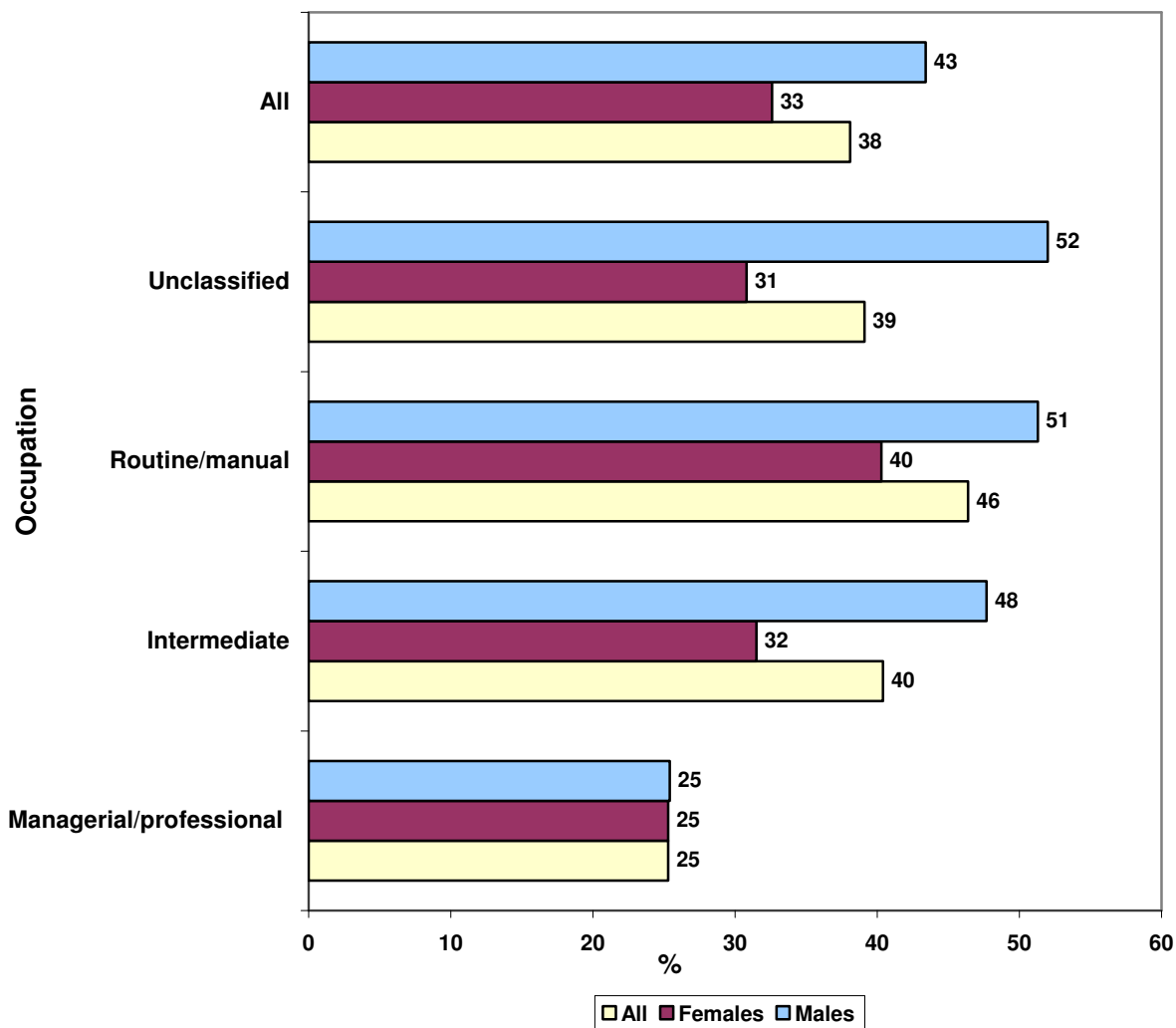
Figure 28: Proportion of female binge drinkers in each age group within Health and Social Services Board



Base: Females who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey, N=480

Figure 28 shows how the proportion of female binge drinkers generally decreases with age for all HSSBs apart from the Western HSSB. In the Western HSSB a third (33%) of 45-59 year old females binge drink compared to under a quarter (23%) of 30-44 year olds.

Figure 29: Proportion of binge drinkers in each socioeconomic group by gender



Base: those who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey, N = 976

Figure 29 shows how the proportion of binge drinkers varies with socioeconomic group ($p < 0.001$). A quarter (25%) of those in the managerial and professional occupations who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey were classified as binge drinkers. This figure rises to two fifths (40%) of those in the intermediate occupations, and nearly half (46%) of those in routine or manual occupations. This pattern is observed in both males ($p < 0.001$) and females ($p < 0.05$).

Table 8: Number of days that drinkers⁽¹⁾ exceed binge limits

Number of days binged	Males	Females	All
	%	%	%
None	52	64	58
One	29	25	27
Two	12	9	10
Three	4	2	3
Four	1	1	1
Five	1	0	< 1
Six	< 1	< 1	< 1
Seven	2	< 1	1
Base	N = 499	N = 480	N = 979

Note: (1) Those who had alcohol in the week prior to the survey

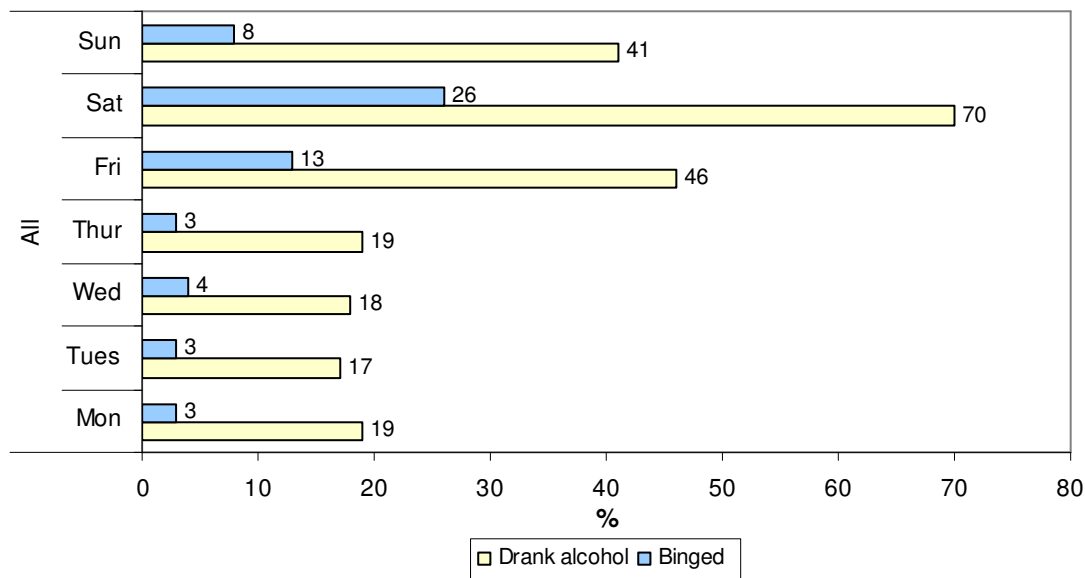
Table 8 shows the number of days those who consumed alcohol during the week before the survey engaged in a binge drinking session. The majority (58%) of these drinkers did not binge at all. However, more than two fifths (43%) of them reached binge drinking levels on at least one day and 16% on at least two days. Only one in a hundred (1%) binged on every day of the week.

Gender

Almost half (48%) of the males who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey had binged on at least one day of the week. Just over four in ten (41%) of those males who had binged did so on more than one day. These figures have not changed since 1999.

As in 1999, over a third (37%) of the females who consumed alcohol in the week preceding the survey had binged on at least one day of the week. A third (33%) of those females who binged did so on more than one day. This figure has increased since the previous survey when less than a fifth (18%) of those females who binged did so on two or more days.

Figure 30: Proportion drinking and proportion binge drinking on each day by gender (All)

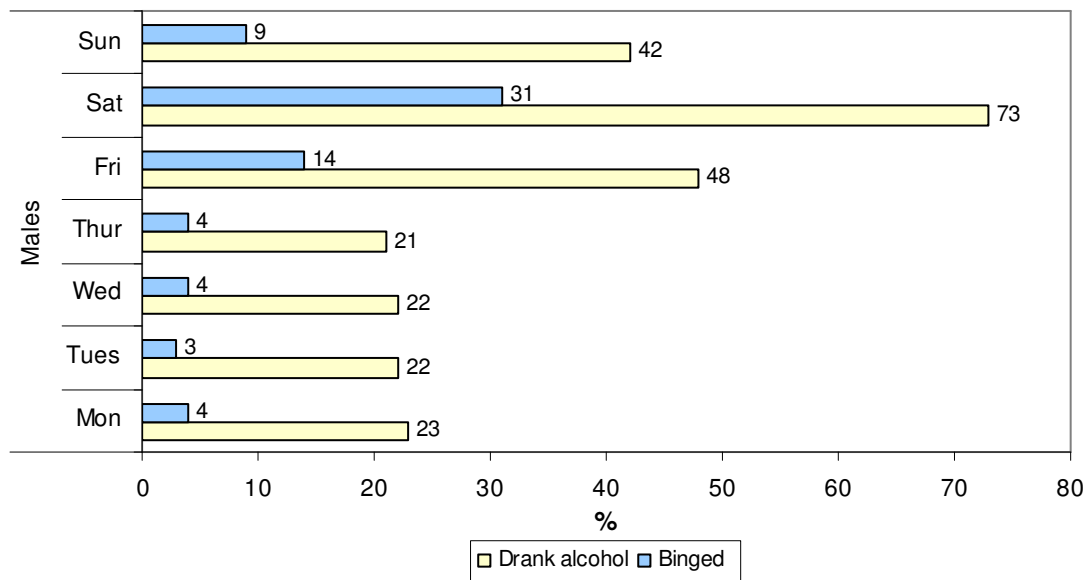


Base: those who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey, N=985

Figure 30 shows the proportions of those respondents (who consumed alcohol in the week before the survey) who drank on each day of the week and compared to the proportion who binged on each day of the week.

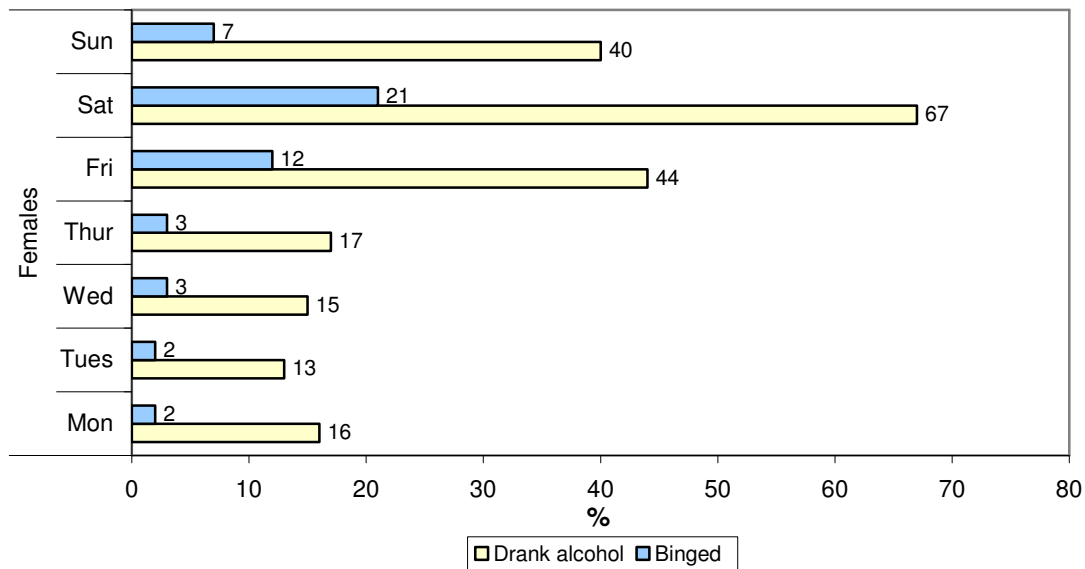
Where the weekend is the most common time for consuming alcohol (see figure 7), binge drinking for those who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey follows a similar pattern. Figure 30 shows that Saturday is when most (70%) respondents who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey drank alcohol, and also when the highest rates of binge drinking (26%) were reported. This pattern is also true for Friday – almost half (46%) reported that they drank on Fridays whilst 13% reported that they binged on Fridays. In contrast, where 17% of respondents reported that they drank on Tuesdays, 3% reported that they binged on Tuesdays.

Figure 31: Proportion of males drinking and proportion binge drinking on each day



This pattern of bingeing during higher levels of alcohol consumption is more pronounced for males. Figure 31 shows that Saturday is when most males (almost three in four – 73%), who consume alcohol in the week prior to the survey drank alcohol, and also when the highest rates of binge drinking (almost one in three – 31%) were reported. This pattern is also true for Friday – almost half (48%) of males reported that they drank on Fridays whilst 14% reported that they bingeed on Fridays. In contrast, where more than one in five (22%) reported that they drank on Tuesdays, 3% reported that they bingeed on Tuesdays.

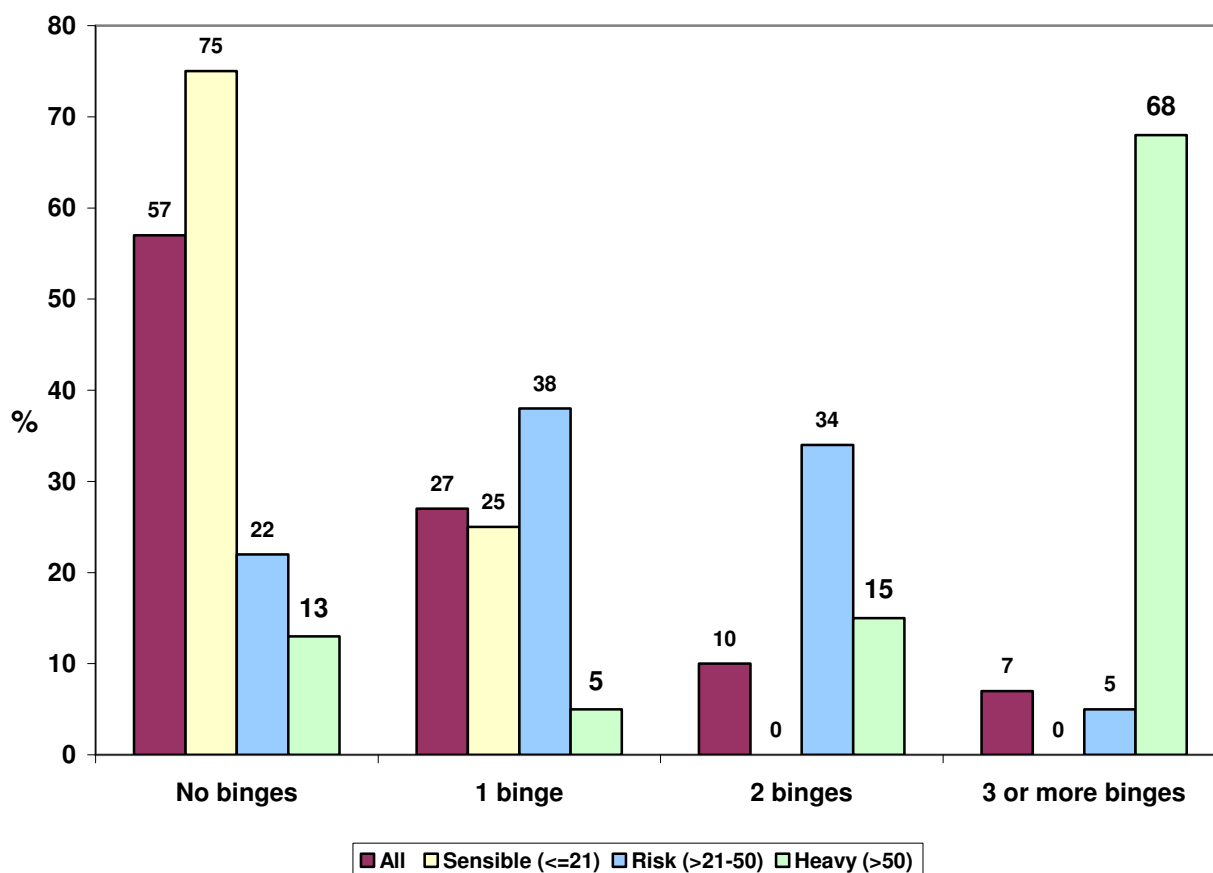
Figure 32: Proportion of females drinking and proportion binge drinking on each day



Base: those who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey, N=985

There is a similar pattern for females. Figure 32 shows that Saturday is when most females (over two in three – 67%) who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey drank alcohol, and also when the highest rates of binge drinking (more than one in five – 21%) were reported. This pattern is again true for Friday – more than two in five (44%) females reported that they drank on Fridays whilst 12% reported that they binged on Fridays. In contrast, where 13% reported that they drank on Tuesdays, 2% reported that they binged on Tuesdays.

Figure 33: Binge drinking by category of male drinker

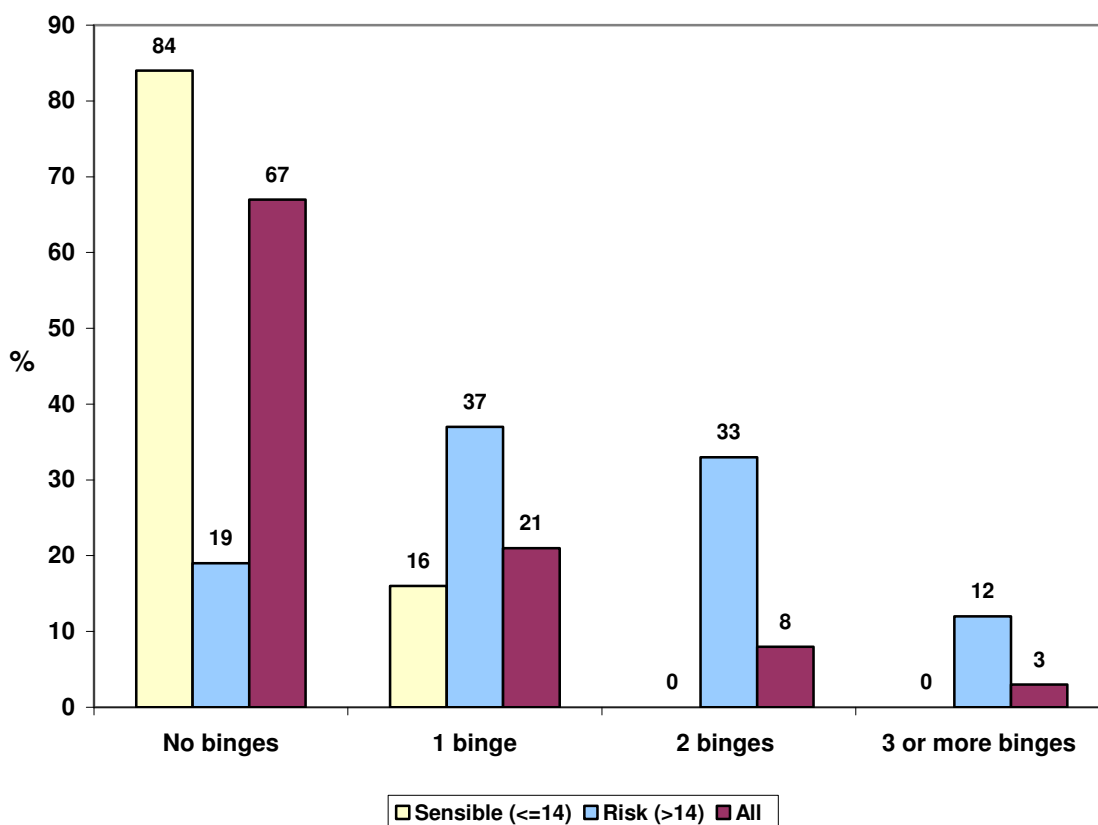


Base: Males who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey, N =499

Those males who drink above sensible weekly limits (i.e. more than 21 units for males) are categorised as risk drinkers – those males who drink more than 50 units per week are categorised as heavy drinkers. Figure 33 shows that the number of binges male drinkers engage in increases as the category of drinker moves from sensible to heavy ($p < 0.001$).

Three quarters (75%) of those males who drank within the sensible limits did not have any binges. This figure drops to just over one in five (22%) of those categorised as risk drinkers and to just over one in ten (13%) of those categorised as heavy drinkers. Over two thirds (68%) of heavy drinkers had three or more binges in the week prior to the survey. No male drinkers who stayed within the sensible limits binged more than once.

Figure 34: Binge drinking by category of female drinker



Base: females who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey, N = 480

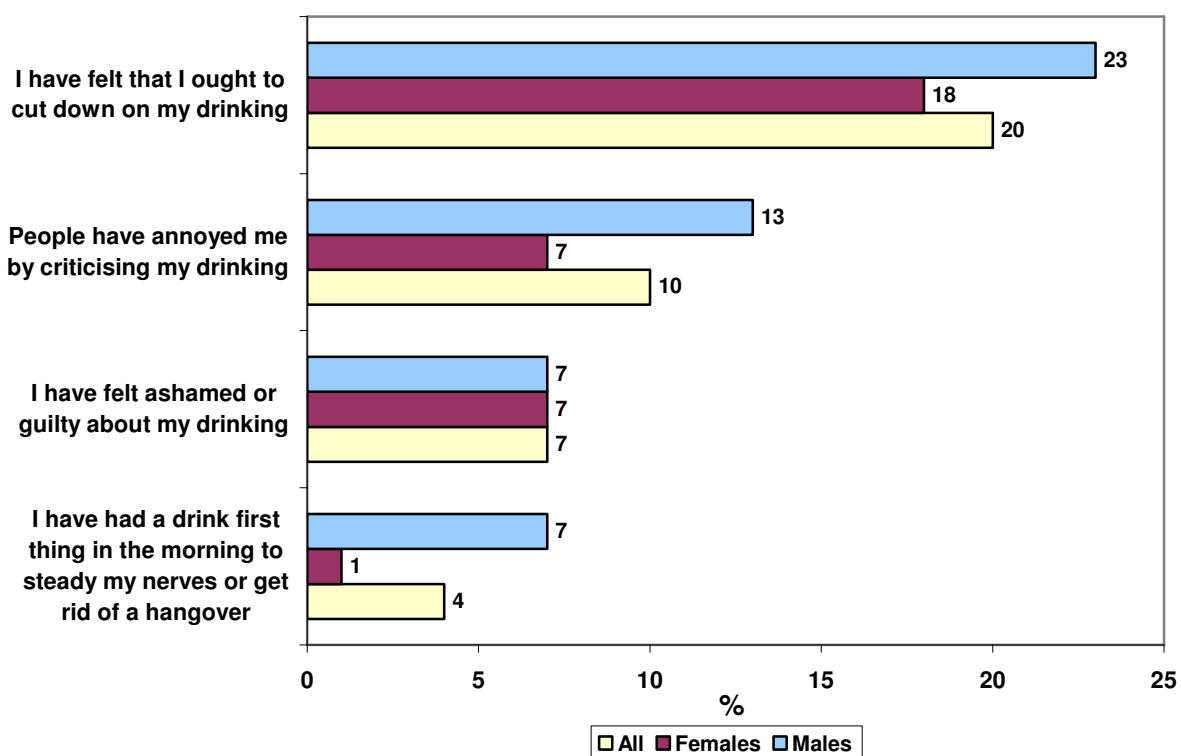
Those females who drink above sensible weekly limits (i.e. more than 14 units for females) are categorised as risk drinkers. The number of binges also varies with category of female drinker ($p < 0.001$). Figure 34 shows how female drinkers follow the same pattern as male drinkers with more than four fifths (84%) of sensible drinkers having had no binges, compared to less than one fifth (19%) of risk drinkers. A third (33%) of risk drinkers binged twice and more than one in ten (12%) binged three or more times throughout the week. No female drinkers who stayed within the sensible limits binged more than once.

5. Problem drinking

It is widely acknowledged that drinking consumption is frequently underreported which is why these results have been discussed in terms of when, where and who people drink with and why the number of units they have consumed have been dealt with in wide groups. A test of alcohol dependence that was developed in order to identify people who have a problem with alcohol was therefore incorporated into the questionnaire. This simple tool called the CAGE questions asks respondents whether they agree 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 to steady my nerves or get rid of a hangover (**E**ye opener).

Figure 35: Proportion of those who had a drink in the week prior to the survey who answered positively to each CAGE question



Base: those who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey, N = 982

Figure 35 shows the proportion of those who had a drink in the week prior to the survey who answered positively to each CAGE question. It shows that one in five (20%) of the respondents who drank during the week before being interviewed have felt they ought to cut down on their drinking. 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 (7%) and have had a drink first thing in the morning to steady their nerves or get rid of a hangover (4%).

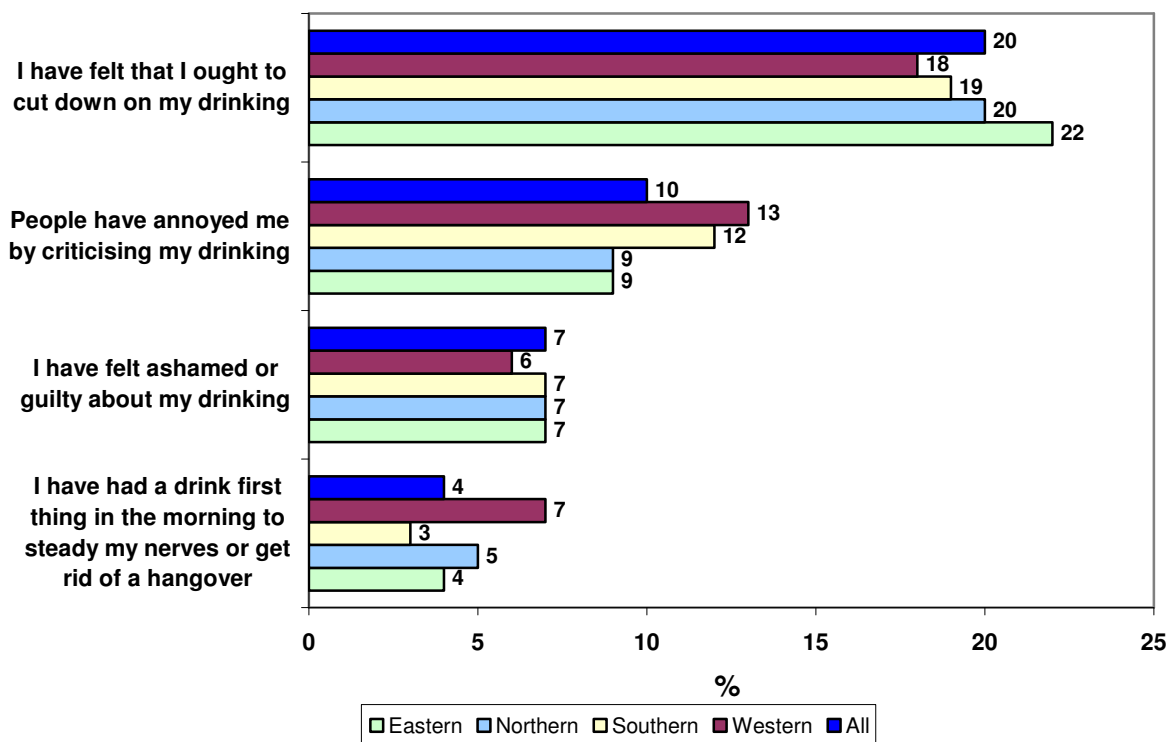
These figures broadly depict a similar picture to those collected in 1999. However, the proportion of respondents who said they felt they ought to cut down on their drinking has increased from 14% to 20% overall. The proportion of females who said that they felt that they ought to cut down on their drinking also increased from one in ten (10%) to almost one in five (18%) whilst the proportion of males was similar for both surveys (19% in 1999 and 23% in 2005).

Gender

Larger proportions of males than females answered positively to the CAGE questions on cutting down on their drinking ($p < 0.05$), being annoyed by people criticising their drinking ($p < 0.01$) and having had a drink first thing in the morning ($p < 0.001$).

Health and Social Services Board

Figure 36: Percentage of those who had a drink in the week prior to the survey who answered positively to each CAGE question within Health and Social Services Board (All)



Base: those who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey, N=980

Figure 36 shows that more than one in five (22%) respondents in the Eastern HSSB who drank in the week prior to the survey compared to 18% in the Western Board said that they felt that they ought to cut down on their drinking. More than one in ten (13%) respondents in the Western Board compared to 9% of respondents in both the Northern and Eastern HSSBs said that people had annoyed them by criticising their drinking. Seven percent of respondents in the Western HSSB who drank in the week prior to the survey compared to 3% in the Southern HSSB said that they have had a drink first thing in the morning to steady their nerves or get rid of a hangover.

Figure 37: Percentage of males who had a drink in the week prior to the survey who answered positively to each CAGE question within Health and Social Services Board

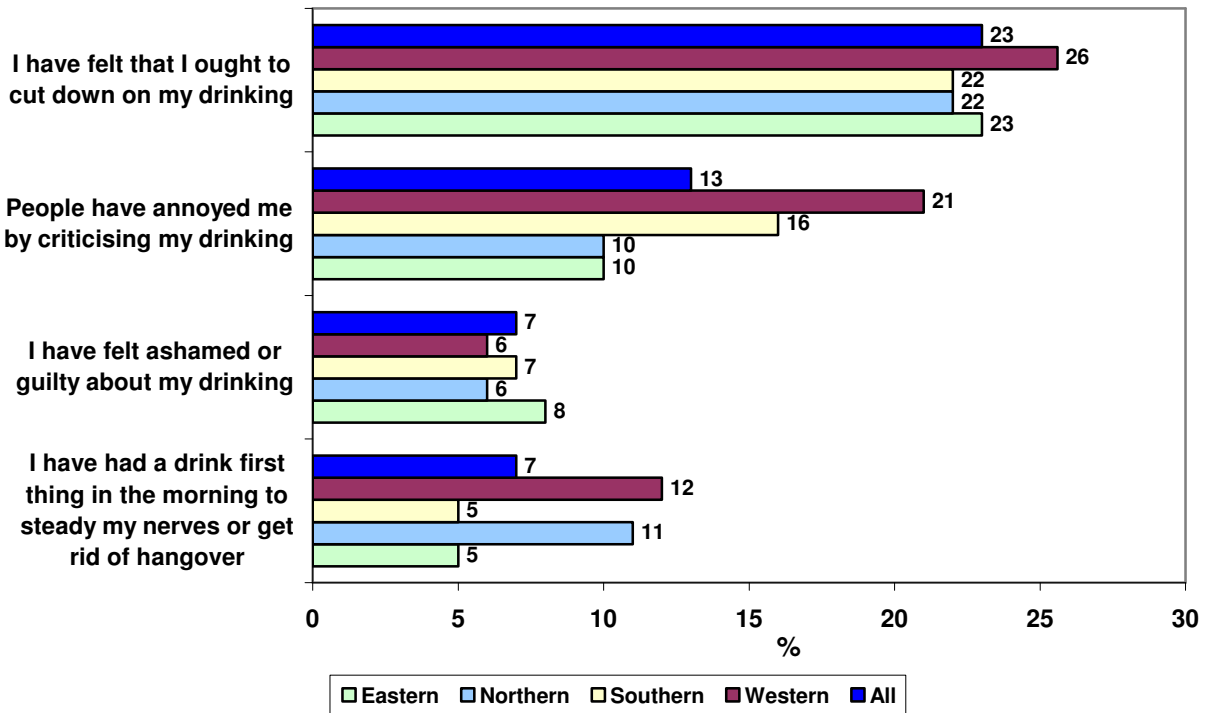
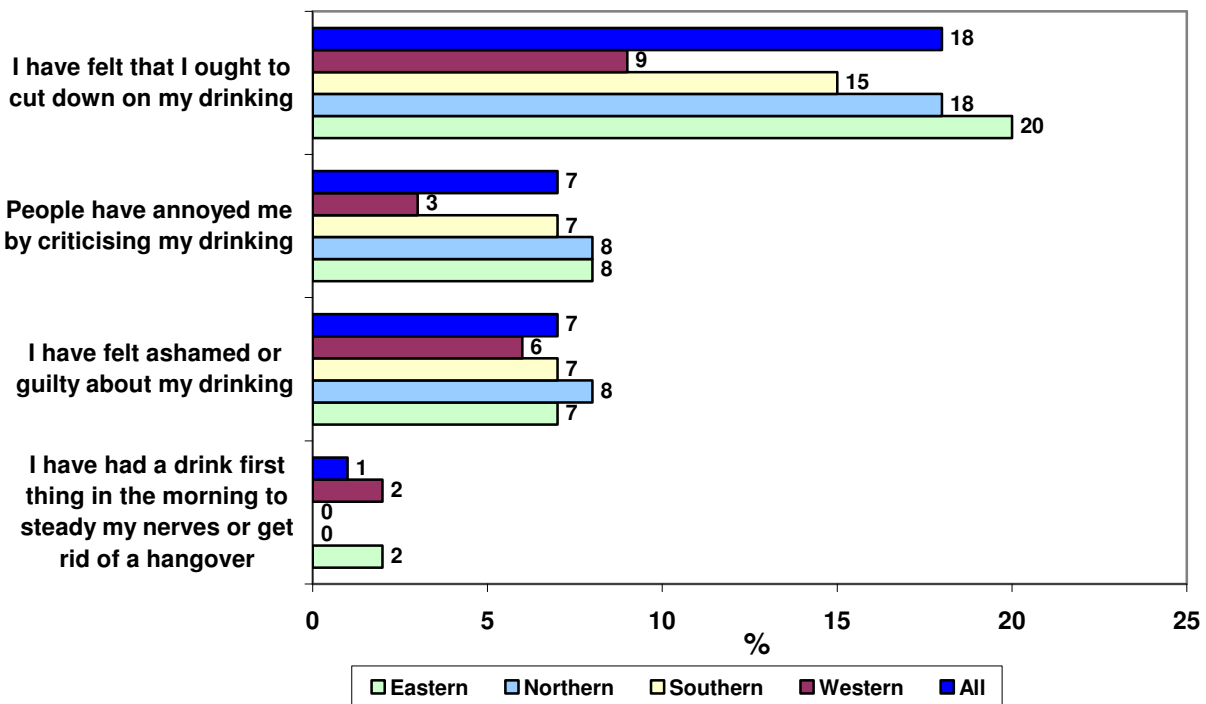


Figure 38: Percentage of females who had a drink in the week prior to the survey who answered positively to each CAGE question within Health and Social Services Board.



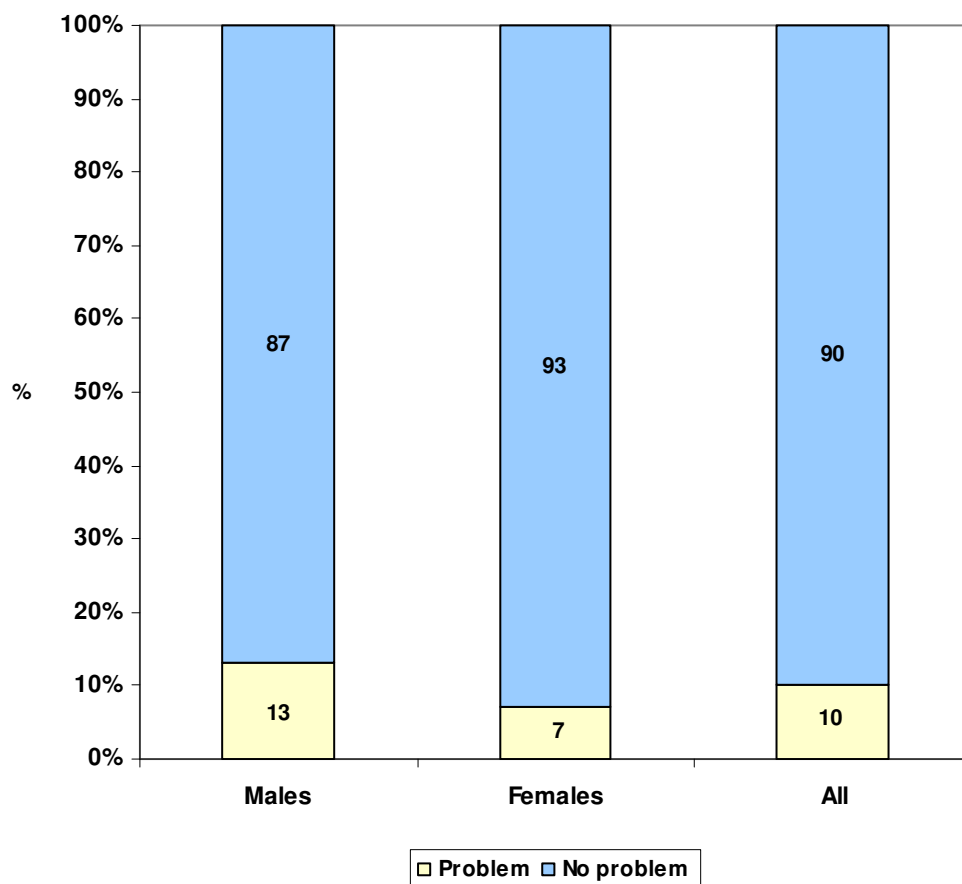
Figures 37 and 38 show the responses to the CAGE questions broken down by HSSB for males and females separately. Higher proportions of males (figure 37) compared to females (figure 38), said that they felt that they ought to cut down on their drinking – figures for males ranged from more than one in four (26%) in the Western HSSB to more than one in five (22%) in both the Northern and Southern HSSBs. Figures for females ranged from one in five (20%) in the Eastern HSSB to less than one in ten (9%) in the Western HSSB.

Higher proportions of males compared to females said that people have annoyed them by criticising their drinking – figures for males ranged from more than one in five (21%) in the Western HSSB to one in ten (10%) in both the Eastern and Northern HSSBs. Figures for females ranged from less than one in ten (8%) in both the Eastern and Northern HSSBs to less than one in twenty (3%) in the Western HSSB. Broadly similar proportions of males and females said that they have felt ashamed or guilty about their drinking – figures for both ranged between 6% and 8%.

Higher proportions of males compared to females, said that they had a drink first thing in the morning to steady their nerves/get rid of a hangover – figures for males ranged from less than one in eight (12%) in the Western HSSB to one in twenty (5%) in both the Eastern and Southern HSSBs. Figures for females ranged from 2% in both the Eastern and Western HSSBs to none in both the Northern and Southern HSSBs.

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.

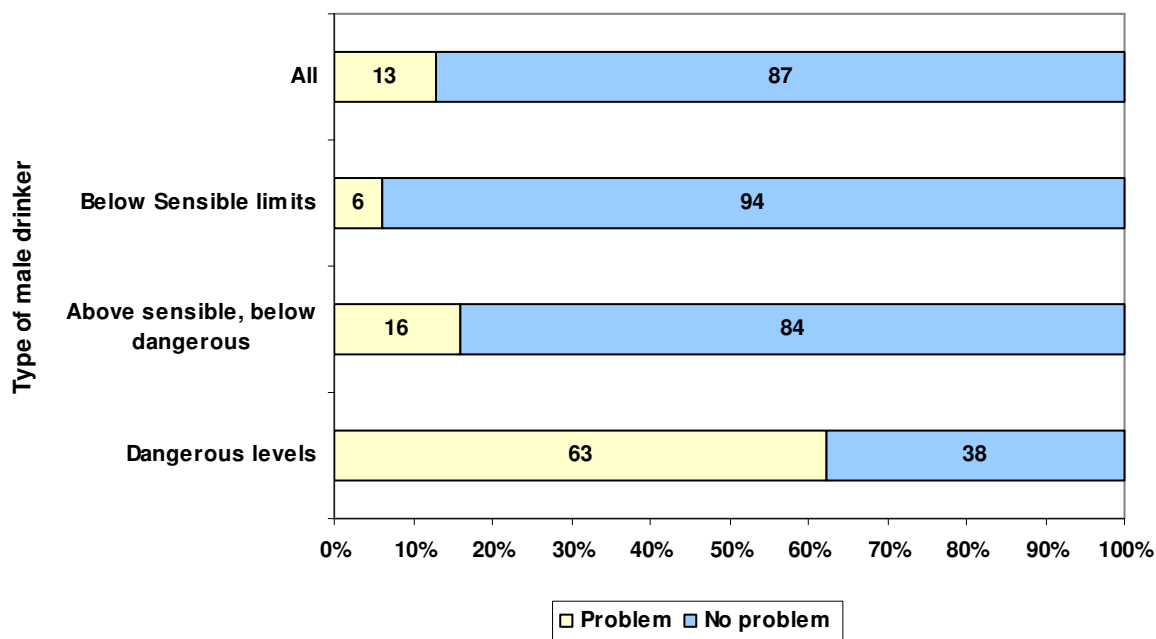
Figure 39: Percentage of those the CAGE questions indicated had a problem with alcohol by gender



Base: those who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey, N=982

Figure 39 shows that the responses received to the CAGE questions indicate one in ten (10%) respondents who drank in the week prior to the survey are highly likely to have a problem with alcohol. The responses indicated that significantly ($p < 0.01$) more males (13%) than females (7%) are highly likely to have a problem with alcohol. In the 1999 survey, males were also more likely than females to answer positively to two or more of the CAGE questions (12% and 3% respectively).

Figure 40: Proportion of each of the categories of male drinkers who the CAGE questions indicate have a problem with alcohol



Base: males who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey, N=498

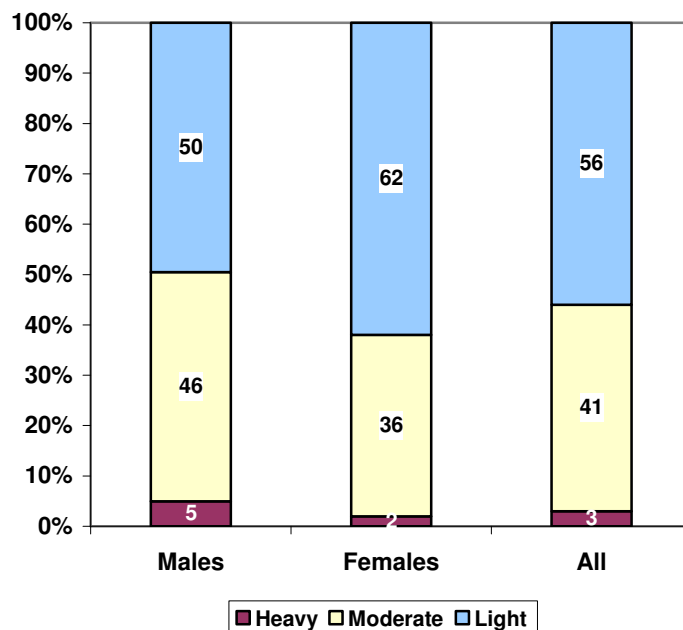
Figure 40 shows the proportions of the different categories of male drinkers who the CAGE questions indicate are highly likely to have a problem with alcohol. The proportion of male drinkers the CAGE questions indicate are highly likely to have a problem with alcohol rises as drinkers move from those who consume below sensible levels to those who consume dangerous levels ($p < 0.001$). The CAGE questions indicate that just over one in twenty (6%) of those male drinkers who drank below the sensible limits in the week prior the survey are highly likely to have a problem with alcohol. This figure increases to nearly one in five (16%) of those who drank above sensible but below dangerous levels.

The proportion of male respondents who drank at dangerous levels who answered positively to two or more CAGE questions was almost two in three (63%). The corresponding figure in 1999 was 34%.

6. 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, more than two in five (41%) believe that they are moderate drinkers and 3% believe that they are heavy drinkers. These figures are very similar to those of the 1999 survey when 55% of respondents considered themselves to be light drinkers, 43% moderate drinkers and 3% heavy drinkers.

Figure 41: Self perception of drinking by gender



Base = those who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey, N=984

Figure 41 shows the difference in drinking perceptions between males and females. Almost two in three females (62%), compared to half of males (50%), considered themselves to be light drinkers while almost half (46%) of males, compared to more than one in three (36%) females, 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 ($p < 0.001$).

Again, the breakdown of results by gender are similar to those in 1999, when 44% of males and 65% of females believed they were light drinkers, 52% of males and 34%

of females described themselves as moderate drinkers and 4% of males and 1% of females felt thought they were heavy drinkers.

Table 9: 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 ⁽¹⁾ (23 males)	Moderate (226 males)	Light (250 males)
Levels of alcohol consumed			
Dangerous levels (>= 51 units)	14 (61%)	21 (9%)	5 (2%)
Above sensible, below dangerous levels (22-50 units)	7 (30%)	92 (41%)	26 (10%)
Below sensible limits (<= 21 units)	2 (9%)	113 (50%)	219 (88%)
Binge Drinking			
One or more binge sessions	18 (78%)	131 (58%)	67 (27%)
Drank but did not binge	5 (22%)	95 (42%)	183 (73%)
Problem drinking			
'CAGE Positive' Score	17 (74%)	37 (16%)	11 (4%)
Non 'CAGE Positive' Score	6 (26%)	191 (84%)	239 (96%)

Note: (1) Percentages should be treated with caution as the base number, 23, is small.
Base: males who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey, N = 499

Further analysis of drinking perceptions for males and females are shown in Tables 9 and 10 respectively.

Fourteen (61%) of the 23 males who consider themselves to be heavy drinkers had consumed dangerous levels of alcohol (>=51 units) in the week prior to the survey. Two (9%) had consumed 21 or less units, which was below the sensible limit. Almost nine in ten (88%) who described themselves as light drinkers drank 21 or less units of alcohol, although 2% had consumed dangerous levels of alcohol (>= 51 units) in the week prior to the survey. There is a statistically significant association between drinking perceptions and levels of alcohol consumption for males ($p < 0.001$).

Eighteen (78%) of the 23 males who consider themselves to be heavy drinkers had indulged in one or more binge drinking sessions in the week prior to the survey.

Almost three in five (58%) who consider themselves to be moderate drinkers had indulged in one or more binge drinking sessions in the week prior to the survey compared to more than one in four (27%) of those who considered themselves to be light drinkers. There is also a statistically significant association between drinking perceptions and binge drinking for males ($p < 0.001$).

The CAGE analysis of the 23 males who describe themselves as heavy drinkers indicates that 17 (74%) are highly likely to have a drinking problem. The majority of those who consider themselves to be moderate or light drinkers, 84% and 96% respectively, did not receive a positive scoring as a result of the CAGE questions and therefore there is no indication of them being highly likely to have a problem with alcohol. There is a statistically significant association between drinking perceptions and indicators of problem drinking for males ($p < 0.001$).

Table 10: 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		
	Heavy ⁽¹⁾ (7 females)	Moderate (174 females)	Light (299 females)
Levels of alcohol consumed			
Dangerous levels (≥ 36 units)	5 (71%)	13 (8%)	1 (0.3%)
Above sensible, below dangerous levels (15-35 units)	2 (29%)	75 (43%)	27 (9%)
Below sensible limits (≤ 14 units)	0	86 (49%)	271 (91%)
Binge Drinking			
One or more binge sessions	6 (86%)	98 (56%)	53 (18%)
Drank but did not binge	1 (14%)	76 (44%)	246 (82%)
Problem drinking			
'CAGE Positive' Score	4 (57%)	23 (13%)	5 (2%)
Non 'CAGE Positive' Score	3 (43%)	151 (87%)	295 (98%)

Note: (1) Percentages should be treated with caution as the base number, 7, is small.
Base: females who consumed alcohol in the week prior to the survey, N = 480

Five (71%) of the seven females who consider themselves to be heavy drinkers had consumed dangerous levels of alcohol (≥ 36 units) in the week prior to the survey,

none had consumed less than 14 units of alcohol in the week prior to the survey. More than nine in ten (91%) who described themselves as light drinkers drank 14 or less units of alcohol.

Six (86%) of the seven females who consider themselves to be heavy drinkers had indulged in one or more binge drinking sessions in the week prior to the survey. Over half (56%) 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 (18%) of those who considered themselves to be light drinkers.

The CAGE analysis of the seven females who describe themselves as heavy drinkers indicates that 4 (57%) are highly likely to have a drinking problem. The majority of those who consider themselves to be moderate or light drinkers, 87% and 98% 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.

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