

Alcohol consumption

6

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Summary

- This chapter presents adults' alcohol consumption in several ways: frequency; the maximum amount drunk on any day in the last week; and usual weekly consumption. Each of these measures provides a different perspective on individuals' drinking.
- In 2012, 86% of men and 80% of women said they had drunk alcohol in the last 12 months. Men and women in the youngest and oldest age groups were least likely to have drunk alcohol in the last 12 months.
- Men were also more likely than women to have drunk in the last week; 67% of men and 53% of women did so, including 18% of men and 10% of women who drank on five or more days in the week.
- 81% of men and 69% of women in the highest income quintile drank in the last week, compared with 51% of men and 39% of women in the lowest income quintile. There was a similar pattern for frequent drinking.
- Drinking was also related to area deprivation, measured by the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). In the least deprived quintile, 77% of men and 62% of women had drunk alcohol in the last week, compared with 50% of men and 38% of women who lived in the most deprived quintile.
- 67% of men had drunk alcohol in the last week; this included 30% of men who did not exceed 4 units on any day that they drank, 17% who drank between 4 and 8 units, and 21% who drank more than 8 units on at least one day in the last week. 53% of women had drunk alcohol in the last week, including 25% who drank 3 units or less on the day drank most, 16% who had drunk between 3 and 6 units and 13% who had drunk more than 6 units.
- Among adults who had drunk alcohol in the last week, 55% of men and 53% of women drank more than the recommended daily amounts, including 31% of men and 24% of women who drank more than twice the recommended amounts. Drinking above recommended levels was highest among men aged 16-24 and women aged between 16 and 34, and lowest among men and women aged 75 and over.
- There were regional variations, among adults who had drunk alcohol in the last week, in the proportions who drank above recommended levels. Men and women in the South West were least likely to have drunk more than the daily recommendation, while those in the North West (among men) and North East (among women) were most likely to have done so. The pattern was similar for those who drank more than twice recommended levels, being highest in the North East for both men and women.
- The majority of men who had drunk alcohol in the last week had drunk normal strength beer, cider or shandy (62%); a third had drunk wine (33%), and just over a fifth had drunk spirits (22%). In contrast, the majority of women had drunk wine (64%); a quarter had drunk spirits (26%), and a fifth had drunk normal strength beer, cider or shandy (19%).

- The proportions who drank fortified wines and alcopops were each very small, but consumption of these was concentrated in particular age groups: those aged 75 and over for fortified wine, and those aged 16-24 for alcopops.
- Assessment of average weekly alcohol consumption showed that 62% of men usually drank up to 21 units a week and 61% of women usually drank up to 14 units a week, the level of drinking defined as lower risk.
- Almost a quarter of men drank more than 21 units a week, at an increased risk level (24%), including 5% who drank more than 50 units (higher risk). Among women, 18% usually drank more than 14 units a week (increased risk), including 4% who drank more than 35 units (higher risk).
- The pattern of average weekly consumption by region was similar to that for the heaviest drinking day in the last week. Both increased and higher risk drinking were most likely in the North East for both men and women. Drinking at increased risk levels was least likely in London, and higher risk drinking least likely in London and the South West.
- Men and women in the highest equivalised household income quintile were most likely to drink at increased risk levels (31% of men, 25% of women); those in the lowest two income quintiles were least likely to do so (19% of men, 13% of women). There was no equivalent pattern for higher risk drinking.
- Similarly, men and women who lived in least deprived areas were most likely to drink at increased risk levels, and those in the most deprived areas less likely to do so. As with income, this pattern was not apparent among higher risk drinkers.

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 Alcohol and risks to health

Most adults in Britain drink alcohol, at least occasionally, and alcohol has an established place in British social life. In recent years, changes in the patterns of consumption and increasing awareness of the associated risks have given rise to widespread concern among policy makers, health professionals and the general public. In the last ten years, governments have published successive strategies for promoting sensible drinking and reducing alcohol-related harm: the 2004 *Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy for England*;¹ *Safe. Sensible. Social. The next steps in the national alcohol strategy in 2007*;² and *The Government's Alcohol Strategy in 2012*.³

Alcohol has been identified as a causal factor in more than 60 medical conditions, including mouth, throat, stomach, liver and breast cancers; cirrhosis of the liver; high blood pressure; and depression.^{4,5,6} The health harms of alcohol are generally 'dose-dependent', that is the risk of harm increases with the amount drunk. Additionally, alcohol increases the risk of accidents, violence and injuries. In England, hospital admissions related to alcohol consumption more than doubled in the last decade from 510,700 in 2002/3 to 1,220,300 in 2011/12; this includes an increase in the proportion of those that were wholly attributable to alcohol from 131,100 to 304,200.⁷

Alcohol-related deaths in England have risen in recent years, from 5,476 in 2001 to 6,923 in 2011. Men are more likely than women to die from an alcohol-related cause. Alcohol-related mortality disproportionately affects men and women in the more disadvantaged social classes: in England and Wales in 2001-2003, the alcohol-related mortality rate for men in the routine class was 3.5 times that of men in higher and managerial occupations; the corresponding increase for women in the routine class was 5.7 times that of women in higher and managerial class.⁸ These inequalities are one element of what has been called the 'alcohol harm paradox': the most deprived drink the least but suffer the most harm from alcohol.⁹

These trends have been ascribed to a long-term increase in the amount of alcohol drunk in the UK. Per capita alcohol consumption rose over the second half of the twentieth century.¹⁰ From 1990, the average amount drunk each year increased from 9.8 litres of pure alcohol per head to a peak of 11.6 litres in 2004, though it has since returned to 1990 levels (9.7 litres in 2012).¹¹ The increase in consumption took place at a time when alcohol became more affordable: that is the price of alcohol relative to adults' disposable income declined over the late 1980s and 1990s. The affordability of alcohol has remained at broadly similar levels since the early 2000s. In 2012, alcoholic drinks were estimated to be 61% more affordable than in 1980.⁷

In recent years, there has been increasing evidence in support of using alcohol pricing, specifically a minimum unit price, to reduce alcohol-related harm.¹² In Scotland legislation was passed in 2012, providing for a minimum price per unit.¹³ This has been subject to ongoing legal challenge and has not so far been implemented.¹⁴ In England, the 2012 Alcohol Strategy included a commitment to a minimum unit price.³ In 2013, it was announced that there were no immediate plans to introduce legislation to implement this.¹⁵

6.1.2 Guidance on alcohol consumption

Official guidance about alcohol consumption was first introduced in 1987. Specifically the 'unit' of alcohol, previously a term used in clinical practice, was introduced as a means of monitoring the alcohol content of specific drinks¹⁶ following the concept of 'sensible drinking' by government and health educators in the 1980s.⁵ The recommended limits, 21 units per week for men, 14 units per week for women, were endorsed by the Royal Colleges of General Practitioners, of Psychiatrists, and of Physicians.¹⁷ This guidance was revised in 1995 and linked to daily rather than weekly consumption.

The NHS now advises that men should not regularly drink more than three to four units of alcohol per day, and women should not regularly drink more than two to three units of

alcohol per day. 'Regularly' is defined as most days in the week. Pregnant women are advised to avoid alcohol altogether.¹⁸ In the course of a week, men are advised to drink no more than 21 units, women no more than 14 to avoid the risk of alcohol-related harm. Drinking at these levels is defined as 'lower risk'. Adults who regularly drink more than these amounts are considered to be at 'increased risk'.¹⁹ Men who regularly drink more than eight units a day (or 50 units a week) and women who regularly drink more than six units a day (or 35 units a week) are considered to be at particular risk of harm, and are described as 'higher risk' drinkers.

These guidelines have remained broadly similar since their revision in 1995. More recently The Royal College of Physicians in 2011 refined recommendations to include 'three alcohol-free days a week' in light of evidence that daily drinking is a risk factor for alcohol dependency and alcoholic liver disease.²⁰ The same report also suggested that new guidelines be given for older people since they are more susceptible to the effects of alcohol, due to physiological changes related to ageing.

Until 2004, one unit of alcohol was generally accepted as being equivalent to a half pint of ordinary beer or lager, a small (125ml) glass of wine or a single measure of spirits. In 2004, the *Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy* acknowledged that these assumptions were no longer valid.¹ Two changes were identified as being particularly significant. The alcoholic strength of beers and wines had increased over time. For example, the average strength of wine was around 12.5% alcohol by volume (ABV), rather than the 9% assumed earlier, increasing the alcoholic content of an average bottle of wine from six to nine units. In addition, instead of the 125ml glass used previously, a standard glass of wine sold in a pub or bar was likely to be 175ml or even 250ml, increasing the alcohol consumed in one glass from one unit to more than two or three units, respectively. As a consequence, advice on the alcoholic content of drinks became more specific.²¹

6.2 Methods and definitions

6.2.1 Methods

The Health Survey for England (HSE) has asked about drinking alcohol since its inception in 1991. Until 1997, drinking was measured using a series of questions that, for each type of drink, recorded the frequency of drinking within the last 12 months and the usual amount drunk on any single day. This information was combined to calculate average weekly consumption (known as the 'quantity-frequency' method of measuring alcohol consumption).^{22,23}

In 1998, questions were introduced about the maximum amount of alcohol consumed on any day in the previous week. These reflected changes in government guidelines, specifically the move from recommended limits for weekly consumption to those based on daily consumption,²⁴ and have been used in each HSE year since then. The quantity-frequency questions were dropped from the questionnaire from 2003, but were reinstated in 2011.

In 2012, the HSE questionnaire covered the following areas:

- Frequency of drinking in the last 12 months (including those who never drink)
- Number of drinking days in the last week
- For those who drank in the last week, the amounts of different types of alcohol drunk on the day they drank most ('heaviest drinking day in the last week').
- For those who drank in the last 12 months, the frequency of drinking different types of drink and the amounts of each drunk on a typical day.

Information on drinking alcohol is generally collected from adults as part of the main survey interview. In 2012, as in previous years, there were two exceptions to this, designed to provide greater privacy for younger participants. Teenagers aged 16 and 17, below the legal age for buying alcohol, were asked to fill in a self-completion questionnaire covering smoking and drinking; young adults aged between 18 and 24 were offered this questionnaire as an alternative to the interview.²⁵

6.2.2 Measuring alcohol intake

Alcohol consumption is reported in terms of units of alcohol; one unit of alcohol is 10ml by volume of pure alcohol.

The method used by the HSE to convert drinks to units remained essentially unchanged from 1991 until 2005. The assumptions were similar to those which have been used by other major surveys since they were introduced by the General Household Survey (GHS) in 1990.²⁶ However, in the same way that the original health promotion advice about alcoholic drinks had become out of date as the drinking environment changed (see Section 6.1.2), it became clear that the assumptions about the strength of drinks and standard glass sizes were no longer valid. In response, changes were made from 2006 onwards to the way the HSE and other surveys estimate alcohol consumption.^{27,28}

In 2007, the questions about the quantities of wine drunk were revised from the previous format which measured consumption by the number of glasses drunk, with no definition of glass size. The new format asked separately about large (250ml), medium (175ml) and small (125ml) glasses, and also included the option of specifying the quantity of wine drunk in bottles or fractions of a bottle; a bottle was treated as the equivalent of six small (125ml) glasses.

Table 6A below shows the conversion factors used in this report; drinks other than wine are the same as the revised unit measures used since 2006.²⁷ In 2006, the unit conversion for a glass of wine (size unspecified) was two units (revised from one unit in previous years), and the different assumptions for different glass sizes were introduced from 2007. Those who drank bottled or canned beer, lager, stout or cider were asked in detail about what they drank, and this information was used to estimate the amount in pints.²⁹

Type of drink	Measure	Units of alcohol
Normal strength beer, lager, stout, cider, shandy (less than 6% ABV)	Pint	2
	Can or bottle	Amount in pints multiplied by 2 ^a
	Small cans (size unknown)	1.5
	Large cans or bottles (size unknown)	2
Strong beer, lager, stout, cider (6% ABV or more)	Pint	4
	Can or bottle	Amount in pints multiplied by 4
	Small cans (size unknown)	2
	Large cans or bottles (size unknown)	3
Wine	Small glass (125ml)	1.5
	Medium glass (175ml)	2
	Large glass (250ml)	3
	Bottle	9
Spirits and liqueurs	Glass (single measure)	1
Sherry, martini and other fortified wines	Glass	1
Alcopops	Small can or bottle	1.5

^a In previous years, this table has shown an incorrect conversion factor of 2.5. The correct conversion factor has been used in analysis in all survey years.

6.2.3 Definitions

The current NHS guidelines for sensible drinking are described in Section 6.1.2.

This chapter reports on the following measures of consumption:

- The maximum amount drunk on any day in the last week
- The average amount usually drunk in a week

To some extent these measures reflect the NHS guidelines. However, there is no measure of how much adults regularly drink on a single day. In reporting how much men and women drank in the last week, the maximum is taken as a proxy for this. Daily consumption is described as ‘within recommendations’ (up to 4 units for men, up to 3 units for women), ‘above recommendations’ (more than 4 units for men, more than 3 for women) and ‘more than twice recommendations’ (more than 8 units for men, more than 6 for women). These do not account for the regularity of consuming these amounts in a single day.

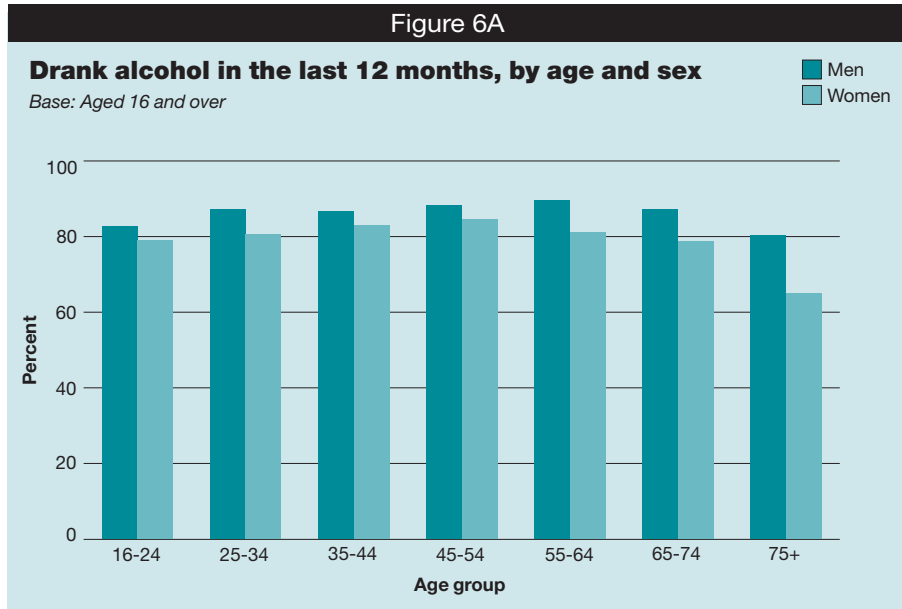
Measures of usual weekly consumption are presented in line with the guidelines as ‘lower risk’ (up to 21 units for men, up to 14 units for women), ‘increased risk’ (above 21 units for men, above 14 units for women) and ‘higher risk’ (above 50 units a week for men, above 35 units for women). The weekly categories are approximate only and do not take into account varying patterns of consumption, for example on different days of the week or at different times of year. By definition they cover a ‘typical’ day, and therefore do not reflect occasions when consumption might be higher than usual (for instance holidays, or celebrations such as parties, weddings, Christmas).

6.3 Prevalence and frequency of drinking alcohol

6.3.1 Prevalence and frequency of drinking alcohol, by sex and age

Most adults in England drink alcohol. In 2012, 86% of men and 80% of women said they had drunk alcohol in the last 12 months. The prevalence of drinking varied with age, as shown in Figure 6A. Men and women in the youngest and oldest age groups were least likely to have drunk alcohol in the last 12 months.

Men were also more likely than women to have drunk in the last week; 67% of men and 53% of women did so, including 18% of men and 10% of women who drank on five or more days in the week.



Men aged 55 to 64 and women aged 45 to 64 were most likely to have drunk in the last week (74% and 60% respectively), as shown in Figure 6B. The proportion who drank on five or more days in the last week increased with age, from 6% of men and 2% of women aged 16 to 24 to 30% of men and 17% of women aged between 65 and 74, but was lower in the oldest age group.

Tables 6.1, 6.2, Figures 6A, 6B

Figure 6B



6.3.2 Prevalence and frequency of drinking alcohol, by equivalised household income

Household income was strongly related to whether adults had drunk alcohol in the last week, as shown in Figure 6C. 81% of men and 69% of women in the highest income quintile drank in the last week, compared with 51% of men and 39% of women in the lowest income quintile. There was a similar pattern for frequent drinking. The proportion who drank on five or more days in the last week increased from 13% of men and 6% of women in the lowest income quintile to 25% of men and 15% of women in the highest income quintile.

Table 6.3, Figure 6C

6.3.3 Prevalence and frequency of drinking alcohol, by Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)

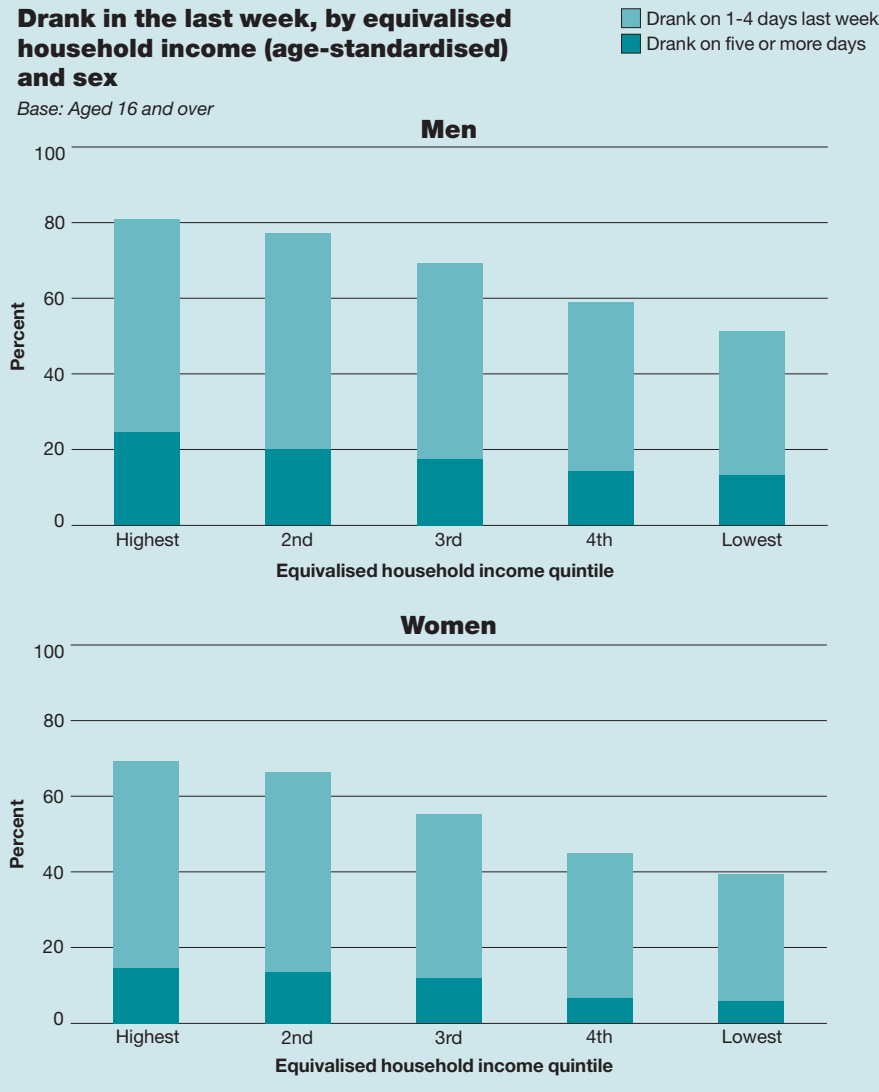
Drinking was also related to area deprivation, measured by IMD. Men and women in the least deprived areas were more likely to have drunk alcohol than those in more deprived areas. In the least deprived quintile, 77% of men and 62% of women had drunk alcohol in the last week, compared with 50% of men and 38% of women who lived in the most deprived quintile. There was a similar pattern for the proportions who had drunk alcohol on five or more days in the last week.

Table 6.4

Figure 6C

Drank in the last week, by equivalised household income (age-standardised) and sex

Base: Aged 16 and over



6.4 Maximum alcohol consumption on any day in the last week

6.4.1 Maximum alcohol consumption on any day in the last week, by sex and age

In 2012, 67% of men had drunk alcohol in the last week; this included 30% of men who did not exceed 4 units on any day that they drank, 17% who drank between 4 and 8 units, and 21% who drank more than 8 units on at least one day in the last week. 53% of women had drunk alcohol in the last week, including 25% who drank 3 units or less on the day drank most, 16% who had drunk between 3 and 6 units and 13% who had drunk more than 6 units on at least one day.

More than a quarter of 16 to 24 year old men (27%) drank more than twice the recommended daily amount (more than 8 units). This proportion was slightly lower (between 22% and 24%) among men aged between 25 and 64. Smaller proportions of older men drank at this level; 11% of those aged between 65 and 74, and 2% of those aged 75 and over. Similarly, the proportion of women who drank more than 6 units declined broadly with age from 19% of 16 to 24 year olds to 1% of those aged 75 and over.

Among adults who had drunk alcohol in the last week, 55% of men and 53% of women drank more than the recommended daily amounts, including 31% of men and 24% of women who drank more than twice the recommended amounts (see Section 6.2.3 for definitions of these categories). Drinking above recommended levels was highest among men aged 16 to 24 and women aged between 16 and 34, and lowest among men and women aged 75 and over, as shown in Figure 6D.

Figure 6D



At all ages, women’s average (mean) consumption on the day they drank the most was lower than that of men. Young men aged between 16 and 24 drank an average of 11.7 units; this declined with age to 3.0 units among men aged 75 or over. Similarly for women, the highest average consumption on the day they drank most was 7.1 units among young women aged between 16 and 24; this declined with age to 2.2 units for women aged 75 and over.

Tables 6.5, 6.6, Figure 6D

6.4.2 Maximum alcohol consumption on any day in the last week, by region

Among adults who had drunk alcohol in the last week, the proportions who drank above recommendations on at least one day in the last week varied between regions. Among men who had drunk in the last week the proportion who had drunk more than 4 units in one day was lowest in the South West (49%) and highest in the North West (64%). Among women, the proportion who drank more than 3 units on at least one day varied between 45% in the South West and 66% in the North East. The proportions of men who drank more than twice the recommended amounts on a single day varied between 24% (London) and 45% (the North East). The proportions of women who drank more than twice the recommended amounts on a single day varied between 15% to 16% (the South West and London respectively) and 37% (the North East). These estimates have been age-standardised to take into account the different age profiles in each region.

Table 6.7

6.4.3 Maximum alcohol consumption on any day in the last week, by equivalised household income and IMD

The proportions of adults drinking more than the recommended daily amounts and twice the recommended daily amounts on any day in the last week were similar in all income quintiles, once these had been standardised to take account of differences in age profile.

Similarly, the likelihood of drinking more than the recommended daily amounts and twice the recommended daily amounts was not related to the level of neighbourhood deprivation once age was taken into account.

Tables 6.8, 6.9

6.5 Types of drink consumed on the day of maximum alcohol consumption in the last week

The types of drink consumed on the day that men and women drank the most in the last week varied with age and sex. The majority of men had drunk normal strength beer, cider or shandy (62%); a third had drunk wine (33%), and just over a fifth had drunk spirits (22%). In contrast, the majority of women had drunk wine (64%); a quarter had drunk spirits (26%), and a fifth (19%) had drunk normal strength beer, cider or shandy.

The proportions of men and women who had drunk normal strength beer, cider and shandy declined with age. Among men and women, drinking spirits was most likely among those aged between 16 and 34 (particularly those in the youngest age group), and among men aged 75 and over. The proportion of men who drank wine increased with age. The proportions of women who drank wine also increased with age, levelling out between the aged of 55 and 74, and decreasing in the oldest age group.

The proportions who drank fortified wines and alcopops were each very small, but consumption of these was concentrated in particular age groups. 1% of men and 4% of women had drunk fortified wine, but this included 7% of men and 20% of women aged 75 and over. 2% of both men and women had drunk alcopops, but these were most likely to be aged between 16 and 24 (14% of young men, 10% of young women).

Table 6.10

6.6 Average weekly alcohol consumption

6.6.1 Average weekly alcohol consumption, by sex and age

Average weekly alcohol consumption over the last 12 months is calculated using the frequency of drinking alcohol and the amount of each type of drink usually consumed on a day when it is drunk (see Section 6.2.1).

62% of men usually drank up to 21 units a week and 61% of women usually drank up to 14 units a week, the level of drinking defined as lower risk. The likelihood of drinking at this level did not vary significantly by sex or age.

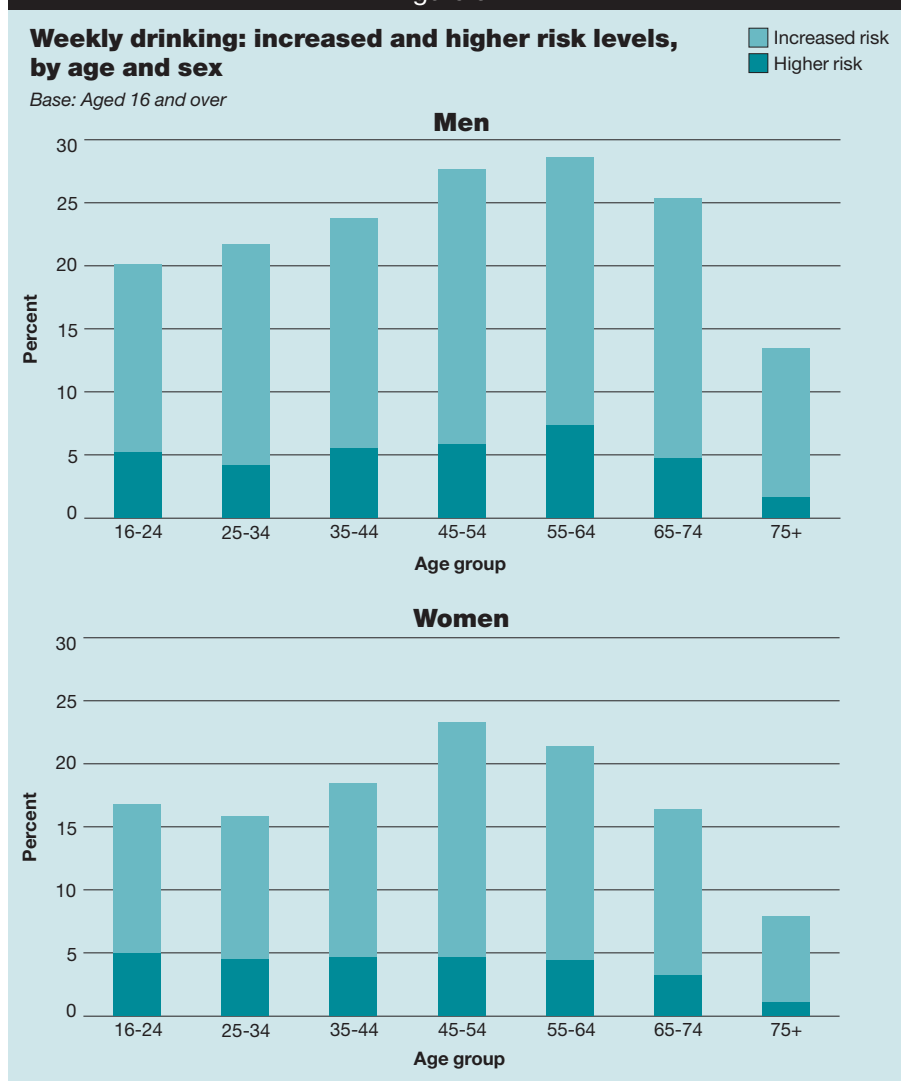
Almost a quarter of men (24%) drank more than 21 units a week, including 5% who drank more than 50 units, a level considered to be higher risk. Among women, 18% usually drank more than 14 units a week, including 4% who drank more than 35 units, and were therefore at higher risk from their drinking. For both men and women, drinking at levels where the risk of harm was increased was highest between the ages of 45 and 64, as shown in Figure 6E. Men were more likely than women to drink at the level defined as higher risk (5% and 4% respectively). For men, higher risk drinking was most likely between the ages of 55 and 64 (7%); among women there was little variation in the proportion who drank at this level between the ages of 16 and 64 (4% or 5% in each age group).

Tables 6.11, 6.12, Figure 6E

6.6.2 Average weekly alcohol consumption, by region

The proportion of adults whose average weekly consumption was at levels that would put them at increased risk of harm varied with region, from 18% of men and 14% of women in

Figure 6E



London to 32% of men and 22% of women in the North East. The North East was also the region where both men and women were most likely to drink at higher risk levels (11% of men, 7% of women). Men and women in London and the South West were least likely to drink at this level (3% of men, 2% of women in both regions). These estimates have been age-standardised to take into account the different age profiles in each region. **Table 6.13**

6.6.3 Average weekly alcohol consumption, by equivalised household income

There was a strong relationship between income and the likelihood of drinking at levels that increased the risk of harm, as shown in Figure 6F. Men and women in the highest equivalised household income quintile were most likely to drink at these levels (31% of men, 25% of women); those in the lowest two income quintiles were least likely to do so (19% of men, 13% of women). However, income was not related to the likelihood of drinking at levels defined as higher risk. **Table 6.14, Figure 6F**

6.6.4 Average weekly alcohol consumption, by IMD

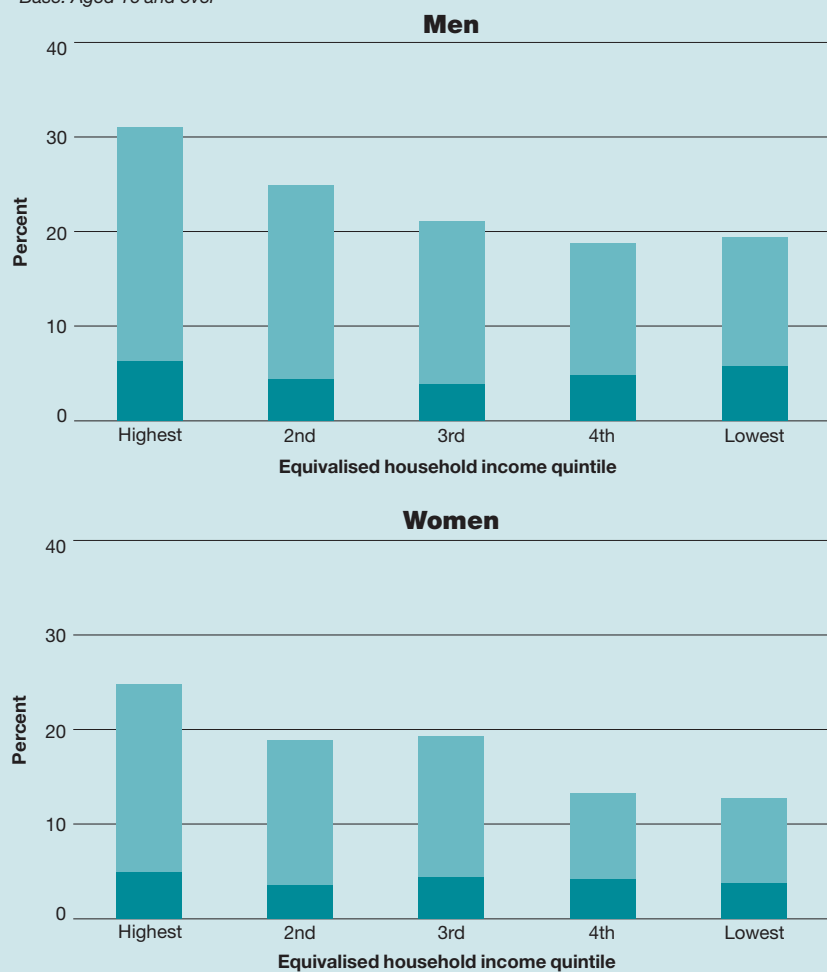
Men and women who lived in least deprived areas were most likely to drink at the levels defined as increased risk. Among men in the two least deprived quintiles, 26% usually drank more than 21 units a week, compared with between 20% and 23% in other areas. Among women, 21% in the least deprived quintile and 22% in the second least deprived quintile usually drank more than 14 units a week, compared with 13% to 17% in other areas. There was no link between area deprivation and higher risk drinking. **Table 6.15**

Figure 6F

Weekly drinking: increased and higher risk levels, by equivalised household income (age-standardised) and sex

Increased risk
Higher risk

Base: Aged 16 and over



6.7 Discussion

This chapter has presented adults' alcohol consumption in several ways: frequency; the maximum amount drunk on any day in the last week; and usual weekly consumption. Each of these measures provides a different perspective on individuals' drinking, but none provide a complete indication of risky drinking behaviour. The maximum amount drunk on any day in the last week can be viewed in combination with the number of days on which alcohol was drunk, but there is no indication, for individuals who drank on more than one day in the week, whether the maximum was unusual or the norm. The daily drinking recommendations are made in relation to regular drinking patterns, so it is not possible to infer from these data how much individuals recording high levels of drinking on a particular day are placing themselves at risk. The measure of usual weekly drinking is probably the most authoritative indication of which individuals are most at risk.

On all measures, women drank less than men: they drank less often and their consumption was lower, whether measured on a single day in the last week or as usual weekly drinking across the year. Women were more likely than men to drink within NHS guidelines, even though these specify lower amounts for women than for men.

The pattern of drinking by age is more complex. Broadly speaking, the frequency of drinking increases with age, but the maximum amount drunk on any day in the last week decreases with age. In other words, younger adults drink more than their elders, but do so

less often. These different patterns of consumption both carry their own risks. Around a quarter of young men and just under a fifth of young women aged between 16 and 34 drank more than twice the recommended daily amounts on at least one day in the last week, levels which potentially put them at a higher risk of harm. The risks incurred by older drinkers are indicated by usual weekly drinking patterns; more than a quarter of men and more than a fifth of women aged between 45 and 64 drank at levels indicating increased risk.

There are variations across region: in particular, men and women in the North East are more likely than those elsewhere to drink risky amounts of alcohol on a regular basis. Otherwise, prosperity, both personal and neighbourhood, is linked to higher levels of alcohol consumption.

Although the quantity of alcohol consumed is a clear indicator of potential harm to health, the situation is not clear-cut. There is a body of evidence to suggest that deprivation is linked to increased vulnerability to alcohol-related harm, even in the absence of particularly high levels of alcohol consumption.

The proposed minimum unit price of alcohol has been contested as being likely to have an impact on moderate drinkers on low incomes.¹⁵ However, the most recent impact assessment produced for the UK government suggests that moderate drinkers, even those on low incomes, would not be substantially affected. The policy, if implemented, would have significant impacts on harmful and hazardous drinkers at all income levels, and could be expected to reduce their alcohol consumption, with consequent effects on alcohol-related harms.¹²

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- 9 Alcohol Research UK have funded the Centre for Public Health at John Moores University to investigate this paradox. Initial findings were presented at the Alcohol Research UK 2013 conference. <http://alcoholresearchuk.org/2013/03/15/conference-2013-professor-mark-bellis-on-the-alcohol-harm-paradox/> (accessed 10th October 2013). The final research report is due to be published in August 2014. Possible reasons for the paradox may be significant under-measurement of consumption within specific groups, risks associated with patterns of alcohol consumption as well as the amounts consumed, and the cumulative effect of other health inequalities.
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- 14 www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-22182607 accessed 10th October 2013.
- 15 www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-23346532 accessed 10th October 2013.
- 16 A unit is equivalent to 10ml of pure alcohol.
- 17 For the Royal College of Psychiatrists, a significant revision from their previous recommendation that sensible drinking indicated an intake of up to 56 units per week for men and women; see Department of Health (1995), reference 5 above.
- 18 www.nhs.uk/Livewell/alcohol/Pages/Effectsofalcohol.aspx accessed 10th October 2013.
- 19 Drinking at this level is sometimes defined as 'hazardous drinking'; if accompanied by related health problems this is described as 'harmful drinking'.
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- 20 Royal College of Physicians. *The evidence base for alcohol guidelines*. RCP, London, 2011.
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- 22 Goddard E. *Estimating alcohol consumption from survey data: improved method of converting volume to units*. ONS, London, 2007.
www.ons.gov.uk/ons/search/index.html?newquery=Estimating+Alcohol+Consumption+from+Survey+Data%3A+Updated+method+of+converting+volumes+to+units accessed 10th October 2013
- 23 Weekly consumption is estimated by multiplying what is usually consumed in a day by a fraction derived from the usual frequency of drinking.
Every day or almost every day: usual day's consumption*7
Five or six days a week: usual day's consumption*5.5
Three or four days a week: usual day's consumption*3.5
Once or twice a week: usual day's consumption*1.5
Once or twice a month: usual day's consumption*0.375
Once every couple of months: usual day's consumption*0.115
Once or twice a year: usual day's consumption*0.029.
- 24 See reference 1 above. Questions about average daily consumption, which enabled the estimation of weekly consumption, were asked by the Health Survey for England until 2002, and reinstated in 2011.
- 25 In 2012, 21% of this age group chose to complete the questionnaire rather than be interviewed about their drinking. The proportion who requested the booklet declined from 41% of 18 year olds to 13% of 21 year olds, and varied between 10% and 14% for participants aged over 20.
- 26 Smyth M, Browne F. *General Household Survey 1990*. HMSO, London, 1992.
- 27 Fuller E. *Alcohol consumption*. Chapter 9 in Craig R, Mindell J (eds). *Health Survey for England 2006. Volume 1: Cardiovascular disease and risk factors in adults*. Health and Social Care Information Centre, Leeds, 2008. www.hscic.gov.uk/pubs/hse06cvdandriskfactors
- 28 Goddard E. *Smoking and drinking among adults 2006*. ONS, London, 2008.
- 29 One pint is equivalent to 0.568 litres.

- 6.1 Usual frequency of drinking alcohol in the last year, by age and sex
- 6.2 Number of days on which drank alcohol in the last week, by age and sex
- 6.3 Number of days on which drank alcohol in the last week (age-standardised), by equivalised household income and sex
- 6.4 Number of days on which drank alcohol in the last week (age-standardised), by Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) and sex
- 6.5 Summary of maximum alcohol consumption on any day in the last week, by age and sex, among all adults
- 6.6 Maximum alcohol consumption on any day in the last week, by age and sex, among adults who drank in the last week
- 6.7 Maximum alcohol consumption on any day in the last week (observed and age-standardised), by region and sex, among adults who drank in the last week
- 6.8 Maximum alcohol consumption on any day in the last week (age-standardised), by equivalised household income and sex, among adults who drank in the last week
- 6.9 Maximum alcohol consumption on any day in the last week (age-standardised), by Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) and sex, among adults who drank in the last week
- 6.10 Types of drinks consumed on the day of maximum alcohol consumption in the last week, by age and sex, among adults who drank in the last week
- 6.11 Summary of estimated weekly alcohol consumption, by age and sex
- 6.12 Estimated weekly alcohol consumption, by age and sex
- 6.13 Estimated weekly alcohol consumption (observed and age-standardised), by region and sex
- 6.14 Estimated weekly alcohol consumption (age-standardised), by equivalised household income and sex
- 6.15 Estimated weekly alcohol consumption (age-standardised), by Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) and sex

Notes on the tables

1. The group on which the figures in the table are based is stated at the upper left corner of the table.
2. The data in most tables have been weighted. See Volume 2, Chapter 7, of this report for more detail. Both unweighted and weighted sample sizes are shown at the foot of each table.
3. Apart from tables showing age breakdowns, data have been age-standardised to allow comparisons between groups after adjusting for the effects of any differences in their age distributions. See Volume 2, Chapter 8.4, of this report for more detail.
4. The following conventions have been used in tables:
 - no observations (zero value)
 - 0 non-zero values of less than 0.5% and thus rounded to zero
 - [] used to warn of small sample bases, if the unweighted base is less than 50. If a group's unweighted base is less than 30, data are normally not shown for that group.
5. Because of rounding, row or column percentages may not add exactly to 100%.
6. 'Missing values' occur for several reasons, including refusal or inability to answer a particular question; refusal to co-operate in an entire section of the survey (such as the nurse visit or a self-completion questionnaire); and cases where the question is not applicable to the participant. In general, missing values have been omitted from all tables and analyses.

Table 6.1

Usual frequency of drinking alcohol in last year, by age and sex

Aged 16 and over

2012

Usual frequency of drinking	Age group							Total
	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Men								
Almost every day	3	4	8	11	16	21	20	11
Five or six days a week	2	4	6	8	8	10	8	6
Three or four days a week	8	18	18	20	22	17	11	17
Once or twice a week	37	32	28	27	25	19	17	28
Once or twice a month	17	16	14	11	9	8	11	13
Once every couple of months	11	8	7	6	4	7	7	7
Once or twice a year	5	5	6	5	5	5	7	5
Not at all in the last 12 months/ Non-drinker	17	13	13	12	10	13	20	14
<i>Drank alcohol in the last year</i>	83	87	87	88	90	87	80	86
Women								
Almost every day	1	1	4	7	9	14	12	6
Five or six days a week	0	3	3	3	6	4	2	3
Three or four days a week	8	11	15	17	17	10	6	13
Once or twice a week	26	30	29	27	19	19	15	24
Once or twice a month	28	17	13	10	12	9	7	14
Once every couple of months	11	10	10	9	9	9	8	9
Once or twice a year	5	10	9	11	9	14	15	10
Not at all in the last 12 months/ Non-drinker	21	20	17	15	19	21	35	20
<i>Drank alcohol in the last year</i>	79	80	83	85	81	79	65	80
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>								
<i>Men</i>	355	484	591	613	622	595	389	3649
<i>Women</i>	428	694	765	818	685	637	534	4561
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>								
<i>Men</i>	565	695	721	716	595	428	312	4032
<i>Women</i>	553	704	729	725	611	463	427	4212

Table 6.2

Number of days on which drank alcohol in the last week, by age and sex

Aged 16 and over

2012

Number of days	Age group							Total
	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Men								
Did not drink in the last week	43	35	30	29	26	28	42	33
One	21	20	20	15	13	14	11	17
Two	18	18	14	15	15	11	11	15
Three	10	10	15	12	10	11	6	11
Four	1	7	5	8	10	5	3	6
Five	2	5	6	7	7	6	6	6
Six	2	2	2	4	5	6	3	3
Seven	2	4	7	10	14	18	18	9
<i>Drank in the last week</i>	57	65	70	71	74	72	58	67
<i>Drank on five or more days in the last week</i>	6	10	15	21	25	30	27	18
Mean number of days ^a	2.3	2.7	3.0	3.4	3.7	3.9	4.1	3.2
Standard error of the mean	0.11	0.10	0.10	0.11	0.10	0.12	0.17	0.04
Women								
Did not drink in the last week	53	50	42	40	40	48	61	47
One	24	19	18	16	15	16	13	17
Two	12	13	15	14	13	9	6	12
Three	7	9	11	11	11	7	4	9
Four	3	3	5	6	5	5	3	4
Five	0	3	3	3	5	3	1	3
Six	1	1	2	2	3	3	1	2
Seven	1	2	4	7	8	10	11	6
<i>Drank in the last week</i>	47	50	58	60	60	52	39	53
<i>Drank on five or more days in the last week</i>	2	6	9	13	16	17	13	10
Mean number of days ^a	1.9	2.4	2.6	3.0	3.3	3.4	3.5	2.8
Standard error of the mean	0.10	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.11	0.14	0.17	0.04
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>								
Men	355	484	591	613	622	595	388	3648
Women	429	695	766	818	685	638	534	4565
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>								
Men	565	695	721	716	595	428	311	4032
Women	554	705	730	725	611	464	427	4216

^a Based on adults who had drunk alcohol in the last week.

Table 6.3

Number of days on which drank alcohol in the last week (age-standardised), by equivalised household income and sex

Aged 16 and over

2012

Number of days	Equivalised household income quintile				
	Highest %	2nd %	3rd %	4th %	Lowest %
Men					
Did not drink in the last week	19	23	31	41	49
One	18	17	19	20	15
Two	16	17	14	13	12
Three	13	16	11	6	8
Four	9	6	7	5	3
Five	8	7	6	2	3
Six	7	5	2	3	1
Seven	11	9	9	9	9
<i>Drank in the last week</i>	<i>81</i>	<i>77</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>59</i>	<i>51</i>
<i>Drank on five or more days in the last week</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>13</i>
Mean number of days ^a	3.4	3.2	3.1	3.0	3.1
Standard error of the mean	0.12	0.10	0.12	0.14	0.13
Women					
Did not drink in the last week	31	34	45	55	61
One	18	19	18	20	16
Two	15	15	13	11	9
Three	14	13	8	4	7
Four	7	6	4	3	2
Five	4	5	3	1	1
Six	2	3	3	1	1
Seven	8	6	6	4	4
<i>Drank in the last week</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>66</i>	<i>55</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>39</i>
<i>Drank on five or more days in the last week</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>6</i>
Mean number of days ^a	3.1	2.9	2.9	2.5	2.6
Standard error of the mean	0.12	0.09	0.11	0.10	0.11
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>					
<i>Men</i>	<i>612</i>	<i>714</i>	<i>592</i>	<i>493</i>	<i>521</i>
<i>Women</i>	<i>683</i>	<i>763</i>	<i>719</i>	<i>722</i>	<i>744</i>
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>					
<i>Men</i>	<i>678</i>	<i>785</i>	<i>638</i>	<i>512</i>	<i>589</i>
<i>Women</i>	<i>648</i>	<i>718</i>	<i>653</i>	<i>632</i>	<i>672</i>

^a Based on adults who had drunk alcohol in the last week.

Table 6.4

Number of days on which drank alcohol in the last week (age-standardised), by Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)^a and sex

Aged 16 and over

2012

Number of days	IMD quintile				
	Least deprived	2nd	3rd	4th	Most deprived
	%	%	%	%	%
Men					
Did not drink in the last week	23	25	33	37	50
One	19	18	17	16	17
Two	18	16	14	16	11
Three	12	14	12	9	8
Four	8	7	7	5	3
Five	7	7	7	4	2
Six	5	4	2	3	2
Seven	9	9	10	10	8
<i>Drank in the last week</i>	77	75	67	63	50
<i>Drank on five or more days in the last week</i>	21	21	19	17	11
Mean number of days ^b	3.2	3.2	3.3	3.2	2.9
Standard error of the mean	0.09	0.10	0.10	0.11	0.13
Women					
Did not drink in the last week	38	37	47	53	62
One	19	18	19	16	17
Two	13	14	11	13	9
Three	11	12	9	6	5
Four	6	5	5	3	1
Five	3	4	3	2	1
Six	3	2	2	1	1
Seven	6	7	5	5	4
<i>Drank in the last week</i>	62	63	53	47	38
<i>Drank on five or more days in the last week</i>	12	13	10	8	6
Mean number of days ^b	2.9	3.0	2.8	2.7	2.4
Standard error of the mean	0.09	0.09	0.10	0.10	0.12
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>					
<i>Men</i>	806	778	734	696	634
<i>Women</i>	998	959	920	881	807
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>					
<i>Men</i>	830	852	825	780	744
<i>Women</i>	890	881	872	829	744

^a The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010 combines a number of indicators, chosen to cover a range of economic, social and housing issues, into a single deprivation score at the small area level in England.

^b Based on adults who had drunk alcohol in the last week.

Table 6.5

Summary of maximum alcohol consumption on any day in the last week, by age and sex (among all adults)

Aged 16 and over

2012

Maximum daily consumption	Age group							Total
	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Men								
Did not drink in the last week	43	35	30	29	26	28	42	33
Up to 4 units	18	26	30	27	33	40	48	30
More than 4, up to 8 units	12	16	18	19	19	21	8	17
More than 8 units	27	24	22	24	22	11	2	21
Women								
Did not drink in the last week	52	50	42	40	40	48	61	47
Up to 3 units	18	18	24	25	30	32	33	25
More than 3, up to 6 units	10	14	19	21	20	15	6	16
More than 6 units	19	18	14	14	10	5	1	13
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>								
Men	356	483	591	613	621	596	389	3649
Women	430	695	765	816	684	637	534	4561
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>								
Men	566	693	721	716	594	429	312	4032
Women	555	705	729	724	610	463	427	4213

Table 6.6

Maximum alcohol consumption on any day in the last week, by age and sex (among adults who drank in the last week)

Aged 16 and over, drank alcohol in last week

2012

Maximum daily consumption	Age group							Total
	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Men								
2 units or less	23	20	23	17	24	31	61	25
More than 2, up to 3 units	3	7	9	8	8	11	9	8
More than 3, up to 4 units	5	13	12	13	13	15	13	12
More than 4, up to 5 units	6	3	6	6	4	6	3	5
More than 5, up to 6 units	8	8	9	9	12	12	7	10
More than 6, up to 8 units	8	12	10	13	9	10	3	10
More than 8 units	47	37	31	35	29	15	4	31
<i>More than 4 units</i>	69	60	56	62	55	44	17	55
<i>More than 8 units</i>	47	37	31	35	29	15	4	31
Mean number of units	11.7	8.8	7.4	7.9	6.4	5.1	3.0	7.5
Standard error of the mean	0.85	0.48	0.35	0.36	0.22	0.19	0.15	0.18
Women								
2 units or less	31	28	29	30	37	48	72	36
More than 2, up to 3 units	7	8	13	12	13	14	11	11
More than 3, up to 4 units	9	11	12	14	13	14	8	12
More than 4, up to 5 units	6	6	6	5	7	6	4	6
More than 5, up to 6 units	7	11	15	15	13	9	3	12
More than 6, up to 8 units	7	8	7	6	7	4	1	6
More than 8 units	34	28	18	18	10	5	-	17
<i>More than 3 units</i>	62	64	58	58	50	38	17	53
<i>More than 6 units</i>	41	36	25	24	17	9	1	24
Mean number of units	7.1	6.6	5.3	5.2	4.2	3.4	2.2	5.1
Standard error of the mean	0.47	0.32	0.21	0.19	0.16	0.14	0.10	0.11
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>								
<i>Men</i>	202	320	407	435	457	427	226	2474
<i>Women</i>	202	339	448	495	416	338	211	2449
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>								
<i>Men</i>	320	454	502	505	440	308	180	2708
<i>Women</i>	264	351	421	434	365	243	169	2246

Table 6.7

Maximum alcohol consumption on any day in the last week (observed and age-standardised), by region^a and sex, among adults who drank in the last week

Aged 16 and over, drank alcohol in last week

2012

Maximum daily consumption	Region								
	North East	North West	Yorkshire & the Humber	East Midlands	West Midlands	East of England	London	South East	South West
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Men									
Observed									
2 units or less	17	20	28	25	21	24	28	26	31
More than 2, up to 3 units	9	5	7	9	6	12	8	7	10
More than 3, up to 4 units	13	10	11	13	12	12	13	13	10
More than 4, up to 5 units	2	4	5	4	5	6	7	5	5
More than 5, up to 6 units	7	12	8	10	11	9	10	11	7
More than 6, up to 8 units	8	12	11	10	13	7	10	11	10
More than 8 units	44	36	31	29	32	30	26	28	28
<i>More than 4 units</i>	<i>61</i>	<i>65</i>	<i>54</i>	<i>53</i>	<i>61</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>52</i>	<i>54</i>	<i>49</i>
<i>More than 8 units</i>	<i>44</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>32</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>28</i>
Mean number of units	10.4	8.4	8.3	7.4	7.6	7.3	6.5	6.7	6.9
Standard error of the mean	1.34	0.53	0.69	0.64	0.46	0.56	0.43	0.33	0.46
Standardised									
2 units or less	17	21	26	26	21	25	28	26	32
More than 2, up to 3 units	9	5	7	9	6	11	8	7	9
More than 3, up to 4 units	13	10	11	13	12	12	12	13	10
More than 4, up to 5 units	2	4	5	4	5	6	8	5	5
More than 5, up to 6 units	7	13	8	10	11	8	11	10	7
More than 6, up to 8 units	8	11	11	9	13	7	9	11	10
More than 8 units	45	36	33	29	31	31	24	29	27
<i>More than 4 units</i>	<i>61</i>	<i>64</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>52</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>52</i>	<i>54</i>	<i>49</i>
<i>More than 8 units</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>27</i>
Mean number of units	10.5	8.4	8.6	7.6	7.6	7.4	6.3	6.9	7.1
Standard error of the mean	1.34	0.57	0.72	0.79	0.48	0.58	0.40	0.38	0.52
<i>Bases: men (unweighted)</i>	<i>194</i>	<i>346</i>	<i>242</i>	<i>216</i>	<i>260</i>	<i>287</i>	<i>256</i>	<i>404</i>	<i>269</i>
<i>Bases: men (weighted)</i>	<i>139</i>	<i>356</i>	<i>270</i>	<i>224</i>	<i>291</i>	<i>304</i>	<i>360</i>	<i>452</i>	<i>311</i>

^a Regions defined as the former Government Office Regions.

Continued...

Table 6.7 continued

Aged 16 and over, drank alcohol in last week

2012

Maximum daily consumption	Region								
	North East	North West	Yorkshire & the Humber	East Midlands	West Midlands	East of England	London	South East	South West
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Women									
Observed									
2 units or less	24	31	38	36	32	38	39	33	48
More than 2, up to 3 units	11	9	10	11	13	12	12	13	9
More than 3, up to 4 units	12	11	10	13	12	12	14	12	11
More than 4, up to 5 units	7	6	7	5	6	5	6	4	7
More than 5, up to 6 units	8	14	11	10	11	8	12	14	11
More than 6, up to 8 units	12	6	6	8	6	6	6	6	4
More than 8 units	25	23	18	17	20	18	11	18	9
<i>More than 3 units</i>	65	60	52	53	55	50	49	54	43
<i>More than 6 units</i>	37	29	24	25	26	24	16	24	14
Mean number of units	6.3	6.0	5.2	5.2	5.1	5.0	4.2	5.1	3.9
Standard error of the mean	0.42	0.36	0.51	0.44	0.30	0.35	0.22	0.25	0.23
Standardised									
2 units or less	24	34	40	35	34	39	41	34	47
More than 2, up to 3 units	10	8	10	14	13	12	12	12	9
More than 3, up to 4 units	12	11	9	12	12	12	13	12	11
More than 4, up to 5 units	8	6	7	5	6	5	6	4	8
More than 5, up to 6 units	9	13	10	10	11	8	12	13	10
More than 6, up to 8 units	11	5	6	8	6	6	5	6	4
More than 8 units	26	22	18	17	19	18	10	19	11
<i>More than 3 units</i>	66	58	51	51	53	49	47	54	45
<i>More than 6 units</i>	37	28	25	25	25	24	16	25	15
Mean number of units	6.4	5.9	5.2	5.2	5.0	5.0	4.1	5.2	4.0
Standard error of the mean	0.47	0.40	0.54	0.46	0.30	0.37	0.21	0.28	0.27
<i>Bases: women (unweighted)</i>	211	323	227	199	233	281	261	454	260
<i>Bases: women (weighted)</i>	126	287	222	183	220	257	293	419	241

^a Regions defined as the former Government Office Regions.

Table 6.8

Maximum alcohol consumption on any day in the last week (age-standardised), by equivalised household income and sex, among adults who drank in the last week

Aged 16 and over, drank alcohol in last week

2012

Maximum daily consumption	Equivalised household income quintile				
	Highest %	2nd %	3rd %	4th %	Lowest %
Men					
2 units or less	23	25	30	29	23
More than 2, up to 3 units	8	8	8	7	6
More than 3, up to 4 units	12	11	10	12	13
More than 4, up to 5 units	6	4	5	5	4
More than 5, up to 6 units	10	10	9	11	8
More than 6, up to 8 units	10	8	10	8	14
More than 8 units	30	34	28	28	32
<i>More than 4 units</i>	57	56	51	52	58
<i>More than 8 units</i>	30	34	28	28	32
Mean number of units	7.4	8.0	6.8	7.4	7.9
Standard error of the mean	0.39	0.50	0.41	0.57	0.50
Women					
2 units or less	34	35	33	39	38
More than 2, up to 3 units	12	12	15	9	9
More than 3, up to 4 units	11	12	11	16	13
More than 4, up to 5 units	7	5	6	4	7
More than 5, up to 6 units	13	11	12	10	9
More than 6, up to 8 units	6	6	8	5	5
More than 8 units	16	18	15	17	19
<i>More than 3 units</i>	54	53	52	52	53
<i>More than 6 units</i>	23	24	23	22	24
Mean number of units	5.0	5.1	5.0	4.9	5.4
Standard error of the mean	0.27	0.24	0.26	0.26	0.35
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>					
<i>Men</i>	503	559	415	289	273
<i>Women</i>	490	513	416	323	297
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>					
<i>Men</i>	563	609	445	302	297
<i>Women</i>	467	478	364	283	263

Table 6.9

Maximum alcohol consumption on any day in the last week (age-standardised), by Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)^a and sex, among adults who drank in the last week

Aged 16 and over, drank alcohol in last week

2012

Maximum daily consumption	IMD				
	Least deprived	2nd	3rd	4th	Most deprived
	%	%	%	%	%
Men					
2 units or less	28	22	26	28	22
More than 2, up to 3 units	10	8	7	7	5
More than 3, up to 4 units	13	12	12	11	13
More than 4, up to 5 units	4	5	5	5	5
More than 5, up to 6 units	10	10	8	10	9
More than 6, up to 8 units	8	11	12	10	10
More than 8 units	28	31	29	29	37
<i>More than 4 units</i>	50	58	55	54	60
<i>More than 8 units</i>	28	31	29	29	37
Mean number of units	6.9	7.7	7.5	7.7	8.5
Standard error of the mean	0.34	0.42	0.50	0.46	0.59
Women					
2 units or less	37	37	37	41	36
More than 2, up to 3 units	11	12	10	11	8
More than 3, up to 4 units	12	11	12	12	12
More than 4, up to 5 units	4	7	5	7	5
More than 5, up to 6 units	14	7	12	10	14
More than 6, up to 8 units	6	7	6	4	6
More than 8 units	16	18	18	16	18
<i>More than 3 units</i>	52	51	52	48	56
<i>More than 6 units</i>	22	26	24	20	24
Mean number of units	4.9	5.1	5.1	4.6	5.6
Standard error of the mean	0.26	0.28	0.29	0.23	0.33
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>					
<i>Men</i>	628	586	505	441	314
<i>Women</i>	637	599	490	417	306
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>					
<i>Men</i>	648	643	561	492	365
<i>Women</i>	564	551	461	387	283

^a The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010 combines a number of indicators, chosen to cover a range of economic, social and housing issues, into a single deprivation score at the small area level in England.

Table 6.10

Types of drinks consumed on the day of maximum alcohol consumption in the last week, by age and sex, among adults who drank in the last week

Aged 16 and over, drank alcohol in last week

2012

Types of drink ^a	Age group							Total
	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Men								
Beer, lager, cider and shandy: normal strength ^b	80	69	67	62	59	51	31	62
Beer, lager and cider: strong ^b	9	3	5	8	4	4	3	5
Wine	16	25	31	37	39	44	43	33
Spirits and liqueurs	41	28	18	15	16	19	28	22
Fortified wines	2	0	0	1	2	1	7	1
Alcopops	14	3	1	0	1	0	-	2
Women								
Beer, lager, cider and shandy: normal strength ^b	27	27	22	18	13	11	8	19
Beer, lager and cider: strong ^b	4	1	1	3	1	1	1	2
Wine	50	64	66	65	72	69	56	64
Spirits and liqueurs	48	31	23	21	19	21	20	26
Fortified wines	2	2	1	1	5	6	20	4
Alcopops	10	4	1	1	0	-	-	2
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>								
<i>Men</i>	197	321	407	435	458	426	225	2469
<i>Women</i>	198	338	449	497	417	339	211	2449
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>								
<i>Men</i>	313	455	502	505	441	307	179	2702
<i>Women</i>	259	351	422	436	366	243	169	2244

^a More than one answer was possible.

^b Normal strength beer, lager, cider and shandy is below 6% ABV; strong beer, lager and cider is 6% ABV or more.

Table 6.11

Summary of estimated weekly alcohol consumption, by age and sex

<i>Aged 16 and over</i>								2012
Estimated weekly alcohol consumption	Age group							Total
	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Men								
Non-drinker ^a	20	13	13	12	11	13	20	14
Up to 21 units (lower risk)	60	65	63	60	61	62	66	62
More than 21, up to 50 units (increased risk)	15	18	18	22	21	21	12	19
More than 50 units (higher risk)	5	4	6	6	7	5	2	5
Women								
Non-drinker ^a	24	20	17	16	19	22	35	21
Up to 14 units (lower risk)	59	64	64	61	59	62	57	61
More than 14, up to 35 units (increased risk)	12	11	14	19	17	13	7	14
More than 35 units (higher risk)	5	4	5	5	5	3	1	4
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>								
<i>Men</i>	315	478	586	606	614	592	378	3569
<i>Women</i>	382	676	753	805	674	623	531	4444
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>								
<i>Men</i>	501	686	713	708	587	426	303	3923
<i>Women</i>	491	686	718	713	601	453	424	4087

^a Bases exclude adults who did not answer questions about their usual consumption of different types of drinks, and so the estimates shown for non-drinkers are not definitive. Definitive estimates are shown in Table 6.1.

Table 6.12

Estimated weekly alcohol consumption, by age and sex								
<i>Aged 16 and over</i>								2012
Estimated weekly alcohol consumption	Age group							Total
	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Men								
Non drinker/did not drink in last 12 months ^a	20	13	13	12	11	13	20	14
1 unit or less	6	7	9	7	9	10	16	8
More than 1, up to 10 units	39	39	35	32	29	29	36	34
More than 10, up to 21 units	15	20	19	21	23	22	14	20
More than 21, up to 35 units	11	14	14	16	14	14	9	14
More than 35, up to 50 units	4	4	4	6	7	7	3	5
More than 50 units (higher risk)	5	4	6	6	7	5	2	5
<i>More than 21 units (increased risk)</i>	20	22	24	28	29	25	14	24
Mean number of units ^b	17.2	14.9	16.5	18.3	21.1	16.9	10.7	17.0
Standard error of mean	2.54	0.87	1.00	1.07	1.41	0.82	0.84	0.51
Women								
Non drinker/did not drink in last 12 months ^a	24	20	17	16	19	22	35	21
1 unit or less	7	15	14	17	16	22	24	16
More than 1, up to 7 units	39	35	34	32	30	28	23	32
More than 7, up to 14 units	14	15	17	12	14	13	9	14
More than 14, up to 21 units	7	6	7	9	7	6	3	7
More than 21, up to 35 units	5	6	7	10	10	7	3	7
More than 35 units (higher risk)	5	4	5	5	5	3	1	4
<i>More than 14 units (increased risk)</i>	17	16	19	23	21	16	8	18
Mean number of units ^b	10.2	9.5	12.0	11.4	10.9	9.3	5.5	10.2
Standard error of mean	1.08	0.65	1.17	0.77	0.66	1.03	0.49	0.35
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>								
<i>Men</i>	315	478	586	606	614	592	378	3569
<i>Women</i>	382	676	753	805	674	623	531	4444
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>								
<i>Men</i>	501	686	713	708	587	426	303	3923
<i>Women</i>	491	686	718	713	601	453	424	4087

^a Bases exclude adults who did not answer questions about their usual consumption of different types of drinks, and so the estimates shown for non-drinkers are not definitive. Definitive estimates are shown in Table 6.1.

^b Mean consumption based on adults who drank alcohol in the last 12 months.

Table 6.13

**Estimated weekly alcohol consumption (observed and age-standardised),
by region^a and sex**

Aged 16 and over

2012

Estimated weekly alcohol consumption	Region								
	North East	North West	Yorkshire & the Humber	East Midlands	West Midlands	East of England	London	South East	South West
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Men									
Observed									
Non drinker/did not drink in last 12 months ^b	14	13	15	13	11	13	23	13	8
1 unit or less	6	10	8	7	8	11	7	10	7
More than 1, up to 10 units	29	34	37	38	33	35	32	31	41
More than 10, up to 21 units	21	18	16	21	21	18	19	21	23
More than 21, up to 35 units	15	12	16	9	15	14	12	16	13
More than 35, up to 50 units	6	6	5	6	5	4	4	5	4
More than 50 units (higher risk)	10	8	3	6	7	4	3	5	3
<i>More than 21 units (increased risk)</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>21</i>
Mean number of units ^c	21.3	20.5	14.9	15.7	19.5	16.4	14.6	16.9	14.7
Standard error of mean	2.17	1.98	0.96	1.07	2.42	1.29	1.10	1.02	1.02
Standardised									
Non drinker/did not drink in last 12 months ^b	13	13	15	13	10	14	24	13	7
1 unit or less	6	10	7	7	9	11	7	10	7
More than 1, up to 10 units	29	34	36	38	33	35	32	31	43
More than 10, up to 21 units	20	18	16	21	21	18	18	21	23
More than 21, up to 35 units	14	12	16	9	15	14	12	16	13
More than 35, up to 50 units	6	5	6	6	5	4	3	4	4
More than 50 units (higher risk)	11	8	3	6	7	4	3	5	3
<i>More than 21 units (increased risk)</i>	<i>32</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>20</i>
Mean number of units ^c	21.6	20.8	15.0	15.6	19.3	16.0	14.1	16.7	14.3
Standard error of mean	2.22	2.25	0.97	1.09	2.42	1.29	1.01	1.06	1.00
<i>Bases: men (unweighted)</i>	<i>277</i>	<i>517</i>	<i>361</i>	<i>329</i>	<i>364</i>	<i>411</i>	<i>405</i>	<i>551</i>	<i>354</i>
<i>Bases: men (weighted)</i>	<i>199</i>	<i>532</i>	<i>404</i>	<i>341</i>	<i>409</i>	<i>435</i>	<i>575</i>	<i>621</i>	<i>407</i>

^a Regions defined as the former Government Office Regions.

^b Bases exclude adults who did not answer questions about their usual consumption of different types of drinks, and so the estimates shown for non-drinkers are not definitive.

^c Mean consumption based on adults who drank alcohol in the last 12 months.

Continued...

Table 6.13 continued

Aged 16 and over

2012

Estimated weekly alcohol consumption	Region								
	North East	North West	Yorkshire & the Humber	East Midlands	West Midlands	East of England	London	South East	South West
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Women									
Observed									
Non drinker/did not drink in last 12 months ^b	18	21	24	20	23	17	28	16	20
1 unit or less	13	16	14	18	19	16	16	14	16
More than 1, up to 7 units	34	31	30	31	27	34	30	34	36
More than 7, up to 14 units	13	14	15	12	14	14	11	16	13
More than 14, up to 25 units	7	6	7	6	7	7	6	7	7
More than 25, up to 35 units	9	6	7	8	7	8	7	7	6
More than 35 units (higher risk)	7	6	4	6	3	3	2	6	2
<i>More than 14 units (increased risk)</i>	22	18	17	20	17	18	14	20	15
Mean number of units ^c	12.2	11.7	9.3	10.8	10.6	8.8	8.5	10.9	10.1
Standard error of mean	1.26	1.12	0.59	1.03	1.34	0.90	0.90	0.71	1.60
Standardised									
Non drinker/did not drink in last 12 months ^b	18	21	23	20	23	17	29	16	19
1 unit or less	12	16	13	18	19	17	17	14	15
More than 1, up to 7 units	34	31	30	31	28	34	29	34	37
More than 7, up to 14 units	14	14	15	12	14	14	11	16	13
More than 14, up to 25 units	7	6	7	6	7	7	5	7	7
More than 25, up to 35 units	9	6	7	8	7	8	7	7	5
More than 35 units (higher risk)	7	6	4	5	3	3	2	6	2
<i>More than 14 units (increased risk)</i>	22	18	18	19	17	18	14	20	15
Mean number of units ^c	12.5	11.3	9.4	10.7	10.5	8.7	8.8	10.8	9.9
Standard error of mean	1.34	1.04	0.63	1.00	1.38	0.93	1.24	0.73	1.64
<i>Bases: women (unweighted)</i>	362	621	431	369	446	497	548	732	438
<i>Bases: women (weighted)</i>	212	541	409	334	415	454	618	691	413

^a Regions defined as the former Government Office Regions.

^b Bases exclude adults who did not answer questions about their usual consumption of different types of drinks, and so the estimates shown for non-drinkers are not definitive.

^c Mean consumption based on adults who drank alcohol in the last 12 months.

Table 6.14

Estimated weekly alcohol consumption (age-standardised), by equivalised household income and sex

Aged 16 and over

2012

Estimated weekly consumption	Equivalised household income quintile				
	Highest %	2nd %	3rd %	4th %	Lowest %
Men					
Non drinker/did not drink in last 12 months ^a	6	7	10	18	25
1 unit or less	6	7	9	10	12
More than 1, up to 10 units	33	36	39	38	29
More than 10, up to 21 units	25	26	21	15	14
More than 21, up to 35 units	18	15	13	11	10
More than 35, up to 50 units	6	6	5	3	4
More than 50 units (higher risk)	6	4	4	5	6
<i>More than 21 units (increased risk)</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>19</i>
Mean number of units ^b	18.9	16.0	14.9	14.4	18.3
Standard error of mean	1.05	0.76	1.00	1.33	1.79
Women					
Non drinker/did not drink in last 12 months ^a	11	9	17	24	33
1 unit or less	9	16	16	22	16
More than 1, up to 7 units	34	38	34	32	27
More than 7, up to 14 units	20	18	14	9	10
More than 14, up to 25 units	9	7	8	4	4
More than 25, up to 35 units	11	8	7	5	5
More than 35 units (higher risk)	5	4	4	4	4
<i>More than 14 units (increased risk)</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>13</i>
Mean number of units ^b	11.4	9.7	9.7	9.6	10.7
Standard error of mean	0.59	0.82	0.61	1.29	1.35
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>					
<i>Men</i>	<i>608</i>	<i>700</i>	<i>581</i>	<i>486</i>	<i>500</i>
<i>Women</i>	<i>677</i>	<i>745</i>	<i>695</i>	<i>700</i>	<i>714</i>
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>					
<i>Men</i>	<i>672</i>	<i>764</i>	<i>624</i>	<i>502</i>	<i>560</i>
<i>Women</i>	<i>641</i>	<i>700</i>	<i>627</i>	<i>609</i>	<i>639</i>

^a Bases exclude adults who did not answer questions about their usual consumption of different types of drinks, and so the estimates shown for non-drinkers are not definitive.

^b Mean consumption based on adults who drank alcohol in the last 12 months.

Table 6.15

Estimated weekly alcohol consumption (age-standardised), by Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)^a and sex

Aged 16 and over

2012

Estimated weekly consumption	IMD quintile				
	Least deprived	2nd	3rd	4th	Most deprived
	%	%	%	%	%
Men					
Non drinker/did not drink in last 12 months ^b	8	9	12	15	27
1 unit or less	7	6	9	10	11
More than 1, up to 10 units	36	35	39	35	28
More than 10, up to 21 units	23	23	19	18	14
More than 21, up to 35 units	16	16	13	12	10
More than 35, up to 50 units	5	5	4	5	5
More than 50 units (higher risk)	5	5	4	6	5
<i>More than 21 units (increased risk)</i>	26	26	21	23	20
Mean number of units ^c	16.9	17.1	14.8	17.4	17.0
Standard error of mean	0.91	0.85	0.78	1.44	1.74
Women					
Non drinker/did not drink in last 12 months ^b	13	13	23	26	34
1 unit or less	13	15	17	17	19
More than 1, up to 7 units	37	34	31	31	26
More than 7, up to 14 units	17	17	13	13	8
More than 14, up to 25 units	9	8	7	4	4
More than 25, up to 35 units	8	9	6	6	5
More than 35 units (higher risk)	4	6	4	4	4
<i>More than 14 units (increased risk)</i>	21	22	17	14	13
Mean number of units ^c	9.8	11.2	9.3	10.8	8.9
Standard error of mean	0.51	0.76	0.58	1.27	0.76
<i>Bases (unweighted)</i>					
<i>Men</i>	788	767	716	676	622
<i>Women</i>	983	932	891	860	778
<i>Bases (weighted)</i>					
<i>Men</i>	804	835	800	755	729
<i>Women</i>	875	850	838	808	716

^a The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010 combines a number of indicators, chosen to cover a range of economic, social and housing issues, into a single deprivation score at the small area level in England.

^b Bases exclude adults who did not answer questions about their usual consumption of different types of drinks, and so the estimates shown for non-drinkers are not definitive.

^c Mean consumption based on adults who drank alcohol in the last 12 months.