

What do risky drinkers drink at home?

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Introduction

While anyone can be at risk of harm from alcohol, the [alcohol harm paradox](#) means that drinkers from the UK's most deprived neighbourhoods¹ are likely to experience more harm from alcohol than their more affluent counterparts, despite consuming similar levels of alcohol. Whilst adults living in the UK's most deprived neighbourhoods are more likely not to drink alcohol, or to drink less frequently, it is also the case that rates of hospital admissions and deaths from alcohol are substantially higher in the UK's most deprived neighbourhoods². To assist our understanding of this important area, Drinkaware wanted to understand more about the **types of drinks** chosen by drinkers in the UK's most and least deprived neighbourhoods.

This analysis focuses on the 22% of UK drinkers who drink above the Chief Medical Officer's low risk guidelines of 14 units per week. This equates to over 9.8 million adults³. These are the drinkers who are putting themselves at increasing or high risk of harm from their drinking.

The data discussed in this note has been analysed by Drinkaware from YouGov Profiles. YouGov Profiles is a subscription service which combines data from YouGov Panel members on a wide variety of variables, including purchase and consumption of alcoholic drinks.

Where differences are described as statistically significant it means we can be confident that the differences between the groups of drinkers are not just down to chance.

This paper covers data on reported drinking at home or someone else's home (off-trade settings), and doesn't include data on drinking in bars or pubs.

The analysis included in this paper should be treated as an indication of the types of drinks preferred by risky drinkers, rather than conclusive evidence. Further research is needed to understand the differences in drinking behaviour between risky drinkers who live in the UK's most and least deprived neighbourhoods, and how this contributes to alcohol harm.

How often do risky drinkers choose particular types of drink?

The first YouGov Profiles data we looked at is one which asks participants how often they consume drinks of a particular type either in their own home or someone else's home.

¹ Deprivation is measured using the Indices of Multiple Deprivation. The indices relatively rank each small area in England from most deprived to least deprived. For the purposes of this analysis, the least deprived areas are the 20% of neighbourhoods in the UK classified as the least deprived in the UK; and the most deprived are those defined as the 20% most deprived. For more detail on the IMD see [here](#).

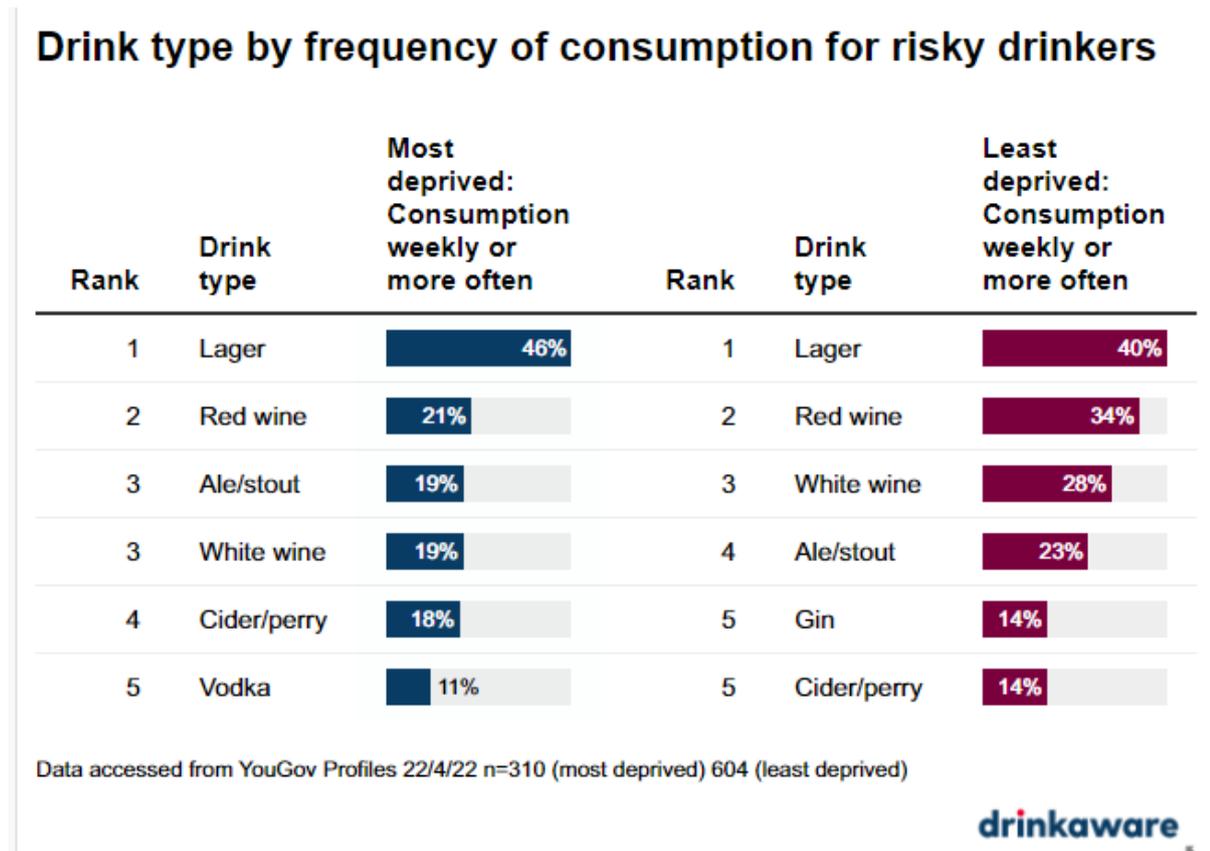
² ONS, [Quarterly alcohol specific deaths in England and Wales](#)

³ [Drinkaware Monitor 2021](#)

Summary

Lager is popular among risky drinkers, with those in the most deprived areas more likely to report drinking it weekly or more frequently. Wine is markedly more popular among risky drinkers in more affluent areas when it comes to a frequent drink choice.

The data is summarised in the table below.



Wine

Both red and white wine are popular drinks amongst risky drinkers in the UK. Risky drinkers in the UK's least deprived neighbourhoods are far more likely to report drinking wine at home than those in the most deprived ones.

The difference is particularly marked when you look at frequent consumption, where 34% of risky drinkers in the least deprived areas drinking **red wine** weekly or more frequently; compared to 21% of risky drinkers in the most deprived neighbourhoods. The same figures for **white wine** are 28% and 19%.

Beer

Lager is a popular drink among risky drinkers, and there is little difference between deprivation quintile; 76% of risky drinkers in the most deprived areas report drinking lager at home; as do 75% of their more affluent counterparts. 46% of risky drinkers in the UK's most deprived neighbourhoods report drinking lager once a week or more; as do 40% in the least deprived ones.

Ale and stout, however, are less popular in general. 51% of risky drinkers in the least deprived areas report ever drinking ales and stout at home, as do 45% of risky drinkers in deprived areas. 23% of risky drinkers in the UK's most deprived neighbourhoods report drinking ale or stout once a week or more; as do 19% in the least deprived ones.

Cider/Perry

Cider and Perry are slightly more popular among risky drinkers in deprived areas, with 57% of those drinkers reporting ever drinking those drinks at home; compared to 52% of those in the least deprived areas. 18% of drinkers in deprived areas say they drink cider once or several times a week, compared to 14% of those in the least deprived areas. Conversely; 5% of risky drinkers in the least deprived areas report drinking cider once a day or more frequently, compared to 0% of those in the most deprived areas.

Spirits

Risky drinkers in the least deprived areas are statistically more likely to report drinking **gin** at home (62% vs 52%). They are more likely to report drinking it once a week or more frequently (14% vs 8%) and once a month or more frequently (24% vs 19%).

When we look at **vodka**, then risky drinkers in the most deprived areas are more likely to report drinking it (50% vs 42%). They are also statistically significant differences between drinking it once a day or more frequently, with 3% of risky drinkers in the most deprived areas reporting this, compared to 0.5% in the least deprived areas.

There is little difference in the consumption of **single malt scotch** by deprivation, with 40% of risky drinkers in deprived areas, and 36% of risky drinkers in the least deprived areas saying they had a scotch. Risky drinkers in the least deprived areas are statistically significantly more likely to report drinking scotch once a week more frequently (7% vs 3%).

Alcopops

Risky drinkers in more deprived areas are more likely to drink alcopops. However, they are not a frequent choice. 25% of risky drinkers in more deprived areas report ever drinking alcopops, compared to 13% of drinkers in the least deprived areas. Only 3% of risky drinkers in deprived areas report drinking them weekly or more, compared to 2% in the least deprived ones.

How many drinks of a particular type do risky drinkers consume in a month?

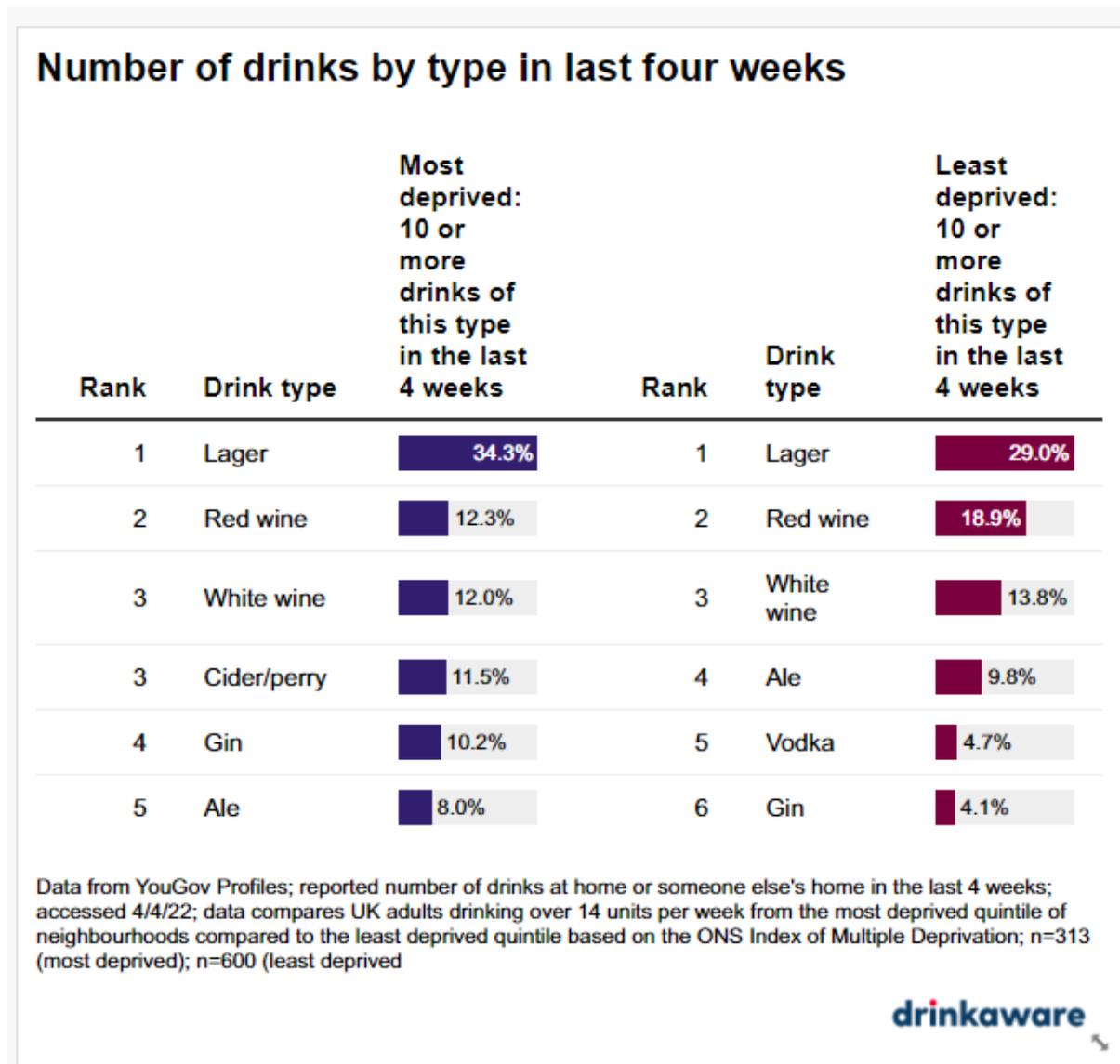
Another useful YouGov Profiles variable looks at the number of drinks consumed by type. Note that this question asks for the number of drinks, rather than the number of occasions they have consumed a particular drink. As above, it asks about drinking in the participants' home, or someone else's home. Different to the first variable, it only asks about the number of drinks consumed in the **four weeks preceding the survey**.

When reading this section, keep in mind that an individual's definition of one drink can vary, for example a small glass of wine would typically be 1.5 units, and a large would be 3 units, but each would count as one drink.

Summary

As with the first section of this report, analysis of this variable tells us that risky drinkers, regardless of where they live, consume a variety of drinks. It is clear that lager is a popular choice. There are some interesting differences between the preferred drinks of risky drinkers in the UK's most and least deprived neighbourhoods.

The data is summarised in the table below.



Beer

As with the previous section, lager is clearly the most frequently consumed drink among risky drinkers. Indeed, over a quarter (27%) of risky drinkers in the UK most deprived neighbourhoods reported they had more than 15 lagers at home in the last four weeks, as did 17% of those in the least deprived ones.

Ale is less popular, with over three quarters (77%) of risky drinkers in the UK most deprived neighbourhoods saying they hadn't drunk any ale in the last four weeks, compared to 63% of their more affluent counterparts.

Wine

Risky drinkers in the UK's least deprived areas were statistically significantly more likely to report drinking red wine in the last four weeks (60% vs 41%) and were also more likely to report drinking 15 or more glasses of it (11% vs 4%).

A similar pattern applies for white wine, with risky drinkers in more affluent areas more likely to report drinking it in the last four weeks (61% vs 33%). However, there were no statistically significant differences between those drinking 10 or more glasses over the last four weeks.

Cider

Risky drinkers in the most deprived neighbourhoods are slightly more likely to have drunk cider in the last four weeks (31% compared to 27%), however the difference is not statistically significant. There is a significant difference when you look at consumption of 10 or more ciders over the last four weeks. 12% of risky drinkers in deprived areas report drinking 10 or more ciders, compared to 4% of their more affluent counterparts.

Spirits

Drinkers in the least deprived areas are more likely to report drinking **gin** in the last four weeks (42% vs 26%). They are also statistically significantly more likely to report drinking between one and nine gins (38% vs 16%). This trend reverses when we look at the consumption of over 10 gin drinks in the last four weeks- with drinkers in more deprived areas being statistically significantly more likely to report this (10% vs 4%).

With regards to **vodka**, there were little differences between drinkers in the most and least deprived neighbourhoods. With just over a quarter of risky drinkers in the most deprived areas reporting having a vodka in the last four weeks, and just under a quarter reporting the same in the least deprived areas.

Drinkers in the least deprived neighbourhoods in the UK were statistically more likely to report having a **single malt scotch** in the last four weeks (19% vs 11%). However, similarly to gin, drinkers in more affluent areas were more likely to report drinking 1-9 scotches, and less likely to report drinking over 10. This trend is also followed for **blended scotch**.

Alcopops

Risky drinkers in deprived areas are far more likely to report drinking alcopops in the last four weeks (12% vs 2%). Most of these drinkers had between one and nine drinks (9%) with only 3% reporting drinking 10 or more alcopops in the last four weeks.

Looking across categories

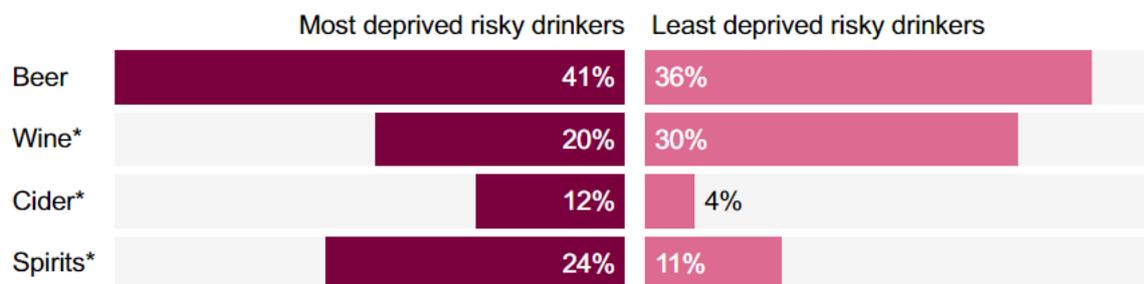
So far, the analysis in this paper has looked at types of drink individually, this next section combines the same data into categories of drink. The below analysis looks only at those reporting 10 or more drinks of a particular category, for example, a participant would be classified as having 10 or more

beers if they reported having 10 glasses of lager, but not if they reported having five glasses of ale and a further five glasses of lager.

Note that risky drinkers will often drink a variety of drinks, for example 31% of those who report having 10 or more beers in 4 weeks, also report having 10 or more spirits.

Looking at the data across categories, it is clear that beer is drunk frequently at home by risky drinkers in both the least and most deprived neighbourhoods in the UK. Wine is more likely to be drunk regularly in more affluent areas, and cider and spirits in less affluent ones.

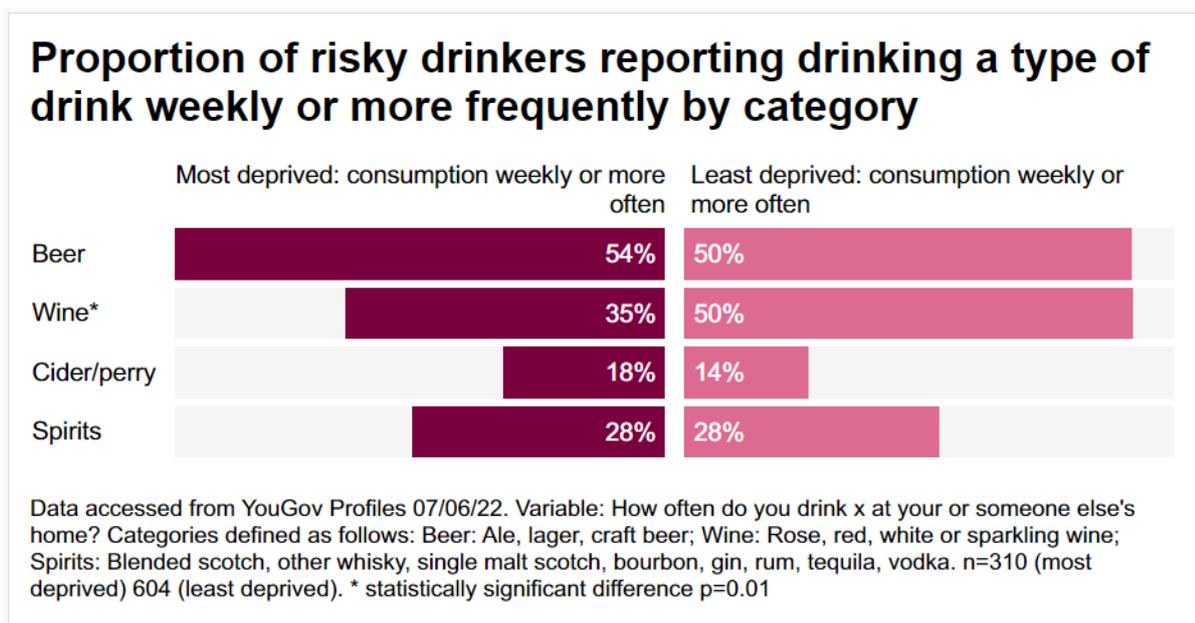
Proportion of risky drinkers reporting drinking 10 or more of a drink at home over 4 weeks by category



Data accessed from YouGov Profiles 29/4/22. Variable: Approximately how many times have you drunk x in the past 4 weeks at your or someone else's home? Categories defined as follows: Beer: Ale, lager, craft beer; Wine: Rose, red, white or sparkling wine; Spirits: Blended scotch, other whisky, single malt scotch, bourbon, rum, tequila, vodka. n=315 (most deprived) 600 (least deprived). * statistically significant difference p=0.01

When we look across categories for the variable examining frequency of consumption, less differences can be seen between risky drinkers in the most and least deprived neighbourhoods.

As the below chart shows, the only statistically significant difference can be seen in the consumption of wine, with risky drinkers in more affluent areas more likely to report drinking wine once a week or more.



Conclusion

From the data explored in this note, it is clear that risky drinkers choose a variety of drinks for off-trade consumption. Lager is a very popular choice among risky drinkers in both the UK's most and least deprived neighbourhoods. There are clear differences between the drinks preferences of drinkers by deprivation, with wine being preferred by those in more affluent neighbourhoods. Whilst spirits are a popular drink, they tend to be drunk less frequently than beers or wines. However, **drinkers in deprived neighbourhoods** are more likely to report drinking spirits and cider regularly, and those drinkers are at the most risk of experiencing alcohol related harm. In addition, there is evidence about people's tendency to pour less accurate measures when free pouring at home⁴.

It remains Drinkaware's position that alcohol harm can be caused by any alcoholic drink. It is not Drinkaware's view that some drinks are more harmful or less harmful than others. If consumers

⁴ Schultz, N. R., Kohn, C. S., Schmerbauch, M., & Correia, C. J. (2017). A systematic review of the free-pour assessment: Implications for research, assessment and intervention. *Experimental and Clinical Psychopharmacology*, 25(3), 125–140. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pha0000120>

swap from one type of drink to another there will only be benefit if they drink less total units of alcohol than previously.

However, the alcohol harm paradox means that alcohol harm is more likely to affect drinkers in the UK's most deprived neighbourhoods, and Drinkaware would like to reduce the levels of harm being experienced by drinkers in the UK's most deprived neighbourhoods. While Drinkaware would support policies and initiatives which aim to reduce overall unit consumption among all risky drinkers, in light of the alcohol harm paradox we would particularly welcome those that focus on the UK's most deprived neighbourhoods and would see this as an important contribution to the broader levelling up agenda.