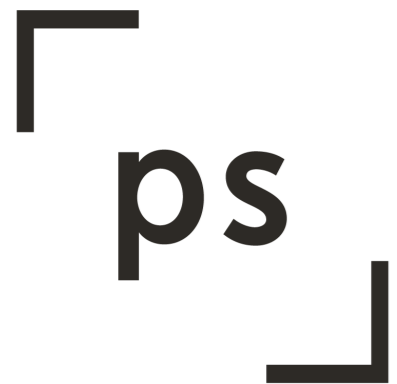


The impact of drinking on others

2022 Drinkaware Monitor

Research Report: November 2022



drinkaware

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Introducing the research

Monitor and qualitative research

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Introducing the report

Introducing the research

This report brings together two key research sources to look at drinking in the UK:

Monitor - a UK representative survey to find out who's drinking, how much and why

Qualitative research - individual conversations with 20 UK adults to gather impact stories

What does the report cover?

This report looks at the state of UK drinking, the impact that drinking has on other people and the impact of drinking on health and other risky behaviours.

What *doesn't* the report cover?

The [Drinkaware Monitor 2022 survey](#)¹ covers more topics than are covered in this report. For example, the survey asks questions to understand drinking expectancies, reasons for not drinking and drink spiking. The full data tables and an interactive library of historical Monitor data will be published on the Drinkaware website in Autumn 2022. Drinkaware welcomes secondary analysis of its data, please contact research@drinkaware.co.uk. The [technical report](#)², produced by YouGov, includes a copy of the questionnaire.

Acknowledgements

Drinkaware would like to thank YouGov for conducting the survey; PS Research for analysing the survey data, conducting and analysing the qualitative research, and for writing this report; and the participants of the qualitative research for giving their time and being so open and honest.

How to cite this report

Pearson A., & Slater, E. (2022, November). *The impact of drinking on others. Drinkaware Monitor 2022*. PS Research and Drinkaware.

Viewing the charts

Many of the analysis charts in this report are interactive.



Hover

Hover over bars or maps to display data and hover over legend labels to highlight one set



Select

Click on a legend label to select or de-select data in the chart you are viewing

Understanding the language

Throughout the report a number of technical terms are used to analyse the results of the Monitor. A [glossary](#) is included in the Appendix.

The most commonly used are:

We have used [the Cabinet Office's advice for writing about ethnicity](#). When analysing findings by ethnicity, we use the term 'ethnic minorities' to refer to all ethnic groups except any white categories, including white British.

[AUDIT and AUDIT-C](#) are methods of screening for excessive drinking developed by the World Health Organization³. AUDIT is a 10-question method of screening for excessive drinking and to assist in brief assessment.

The **Index of Multiple Deprivation** is a [measure of relative deprivation](#) for small areas (neighbourhoods) across the UK⁴. Throughout the report, analysis by deprivation refers to the 'least deprived' and 'most deprived' areas. These are based on Index of Multiple Deprivation quintiles, with the 'least deprived' being those living in areas in the lowest 20% of deprivation and 'most deprived' being those who live in areas in the highest 20% of deprivation.

Social Grades are reported using a classification system based on occupation (AB are managerial and professional occupations; DE are semi and unskilled manual workers)⁵

Where differences between sub-groups are discussed, only those differences that are statistically significant are reported (unless otherwise stated). These differences are statistically significant to a confidence level of 95%. Please also note that throughout the report we use rounded percentages. Figures may not always sum to 100% due to this rounding, but will remain within a percentage point.

Drinkaware Monitors



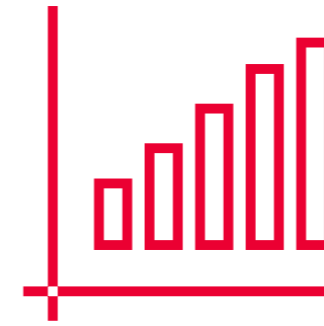
What is the Monitor?

Drinkaware is committed to ensure our work is informed by up-to-date evidence on UK drinking attitudes and behaviours.

Every year, Drinkaware commissions a representative survey to understand the UK's drinking behaviours and motivations. A core subset of questions are included in the questionnaire every year to understand changes in key variables over time. Other questions are developed to reflect that year's theme. The theme of the 2020 and 2021 Monitors was drinking during the coronavirus pandemic. The theme of the 2022 Monitor is the harm alcohol can do to others.

Since 2017, the Monitors have been conducted by YouGov on behalf of Drinkaware, and before that by Ipsos Mori (2009-14). Where appropriate, findings from the 2022 Monitor have been reported in the context of those from previous waves.

Drinkaware welcomes secondary analysis of its data, please contact the research team on research@drinkaware.co.uk to find out more.



Monitor Methodology

- UK wide sample of 6,318 adults aged 18 to 85 were interviewed, including 3,692 in England, 1,013 in Wales, 1,001 in Scotland and 612 in Northern Ireland
- The sample was drawn from the YouGov research panel, with responses collected between 29th April and 26th May 2022.
- Using data from the Office for National Statistics, the results were weighted to be representative of the UK adult population according to age, gender, social grade and region
- The sampling and weighting process is exactly consistent with that used in the 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 Drinkaware Monitors
- When compared to population-level sales data, self-reported surveys typically underestimate population alcohol consumption by between 30% and 60%.

More information on the Methodology can be found in the [technical report](#)².

Qualitative research



In early 2022, Drinkaware commissioned PS Research to conduct qualitative research to gather the stories of people who have been impacted by someone else's drinking.

Methodology: Individual in-depth conversations took place between 20th June and 18th July 2022. Conversations lasted between 45-60 minutes and were conducted either over an online video platform or over the telephone.

Participants were invited to tell their story of how they have been impacted the drinking of a partner, close friend or relative, with questioning and interruption kept to a minimum.






Participants: A total of **20 participants** took part in the research. Minimum quotas were set on gender, age, location and SEG to ensure a mix of participants. Seven males and 13 females took part, with five participants from each of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.


All participants had to be aged 18 or over and have a partner, close friend or relative who regularly drinks more than the recommended 14 units of alcohol per week and whose drinking has had a negative impact on their life. Minimum quotas were placed on the relationship of the person causing the impact and the type of impact experienced. The impact question from the 2022 Monitor was used to establish the type of impact experienced. More information on the methodology can be found in the Appendix.

What did we find in 2021?

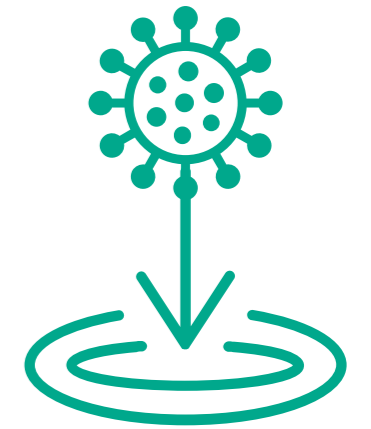
Key findings from Drinkaware's Monitor Report 2021⁶

 Whilst the number of low-risk drinkers and adults who don't drink was increasing, the **level of high-risk drinkers remained largely unchanged.**

 The **polarisation** between high risk and low risk drinkers observed throughout 2020 **continued.** 

 Adults in the **most deprived areas** were more likely to **not** drink alcohol and were more likely to report drinking less during the first lockdown (March-June 2020) than their usual amounts. Yet, drinkers in most deprived areas are more likely to be classified as **high-risk drinkers** (based on the full AUDIT screening tool) than those in the least deprived areas.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic:



- The **pandemic created or increased certain drinking behaviours**, such as **drinking alone** at home or in **public places**, and there are indications that these situations were **deemed more socially acceptable** during the pandemic.
- **High risk drinkers were the most likely to report drinking more, more often** and in different situations than usual compared to before the pandemic.
- Over one-third (36%) of **high risk drinkers reported that they intend to cut down** on drinking when pandemic restrictions ease, although 42% indicated the same in 2020.
- Drinkers reported that the pandemic, and particularly times of increased restrictions/lockdowns, caused periods of high stress, anxiety, isolation, and boredom, and that **some turned to alcohol as a coping mechanism.**
- While **parents with children aged 18 and under** at home were more likely to report drinking more than they usually would have during the first lockdown (March-June 2020), drinking levels in the last 30 days (May/June 2021) dropped and was **similar to those without children at home.**

Highlights

Summary of key findings

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2022: the story in a nutshell



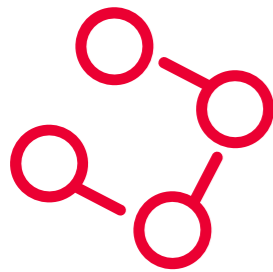
There has been no significant change in how often UK adults drink alcohol or the amount of alcohol being consumed in a typical day/week since 2021

- But the number of UK drinkers who are binge drinking is rising, particularly amongst younger adults
- Understanding of government low risk drinking guidelines is low, but those who understand the guidelines do not necessarily drink less alcohol



The drinking of other people is having a negative impact on many UK adults

- Three in ten UK adults are concerned about someone else's drinking
- The drinking of a partner, close friend or relative is most likely to have a negative impact when they regularly drink to excess



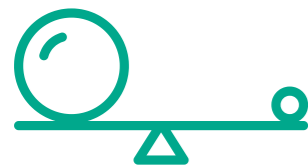
Drinking behaviours are interdependent with other factors

The research identified that lifestage, social life, people around you and demographics influence drinking habits and that drinking habits have an impact on health and life satisfaction, other risky behaviours and the people around you.

Overall drinking picture in 2022



There has been no significant change in how often UK adults drink alcohol over the last year



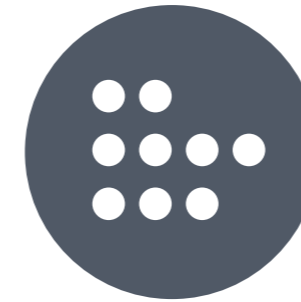
Looking back further, UK adults appear to be drinking less frequently or not drinking at all



But the number of UK drinkers who are binge drinking is rising, particularly amongst younger adults



And nearly a quarter of UK drinkers are drinking at home alone every week



The amount of alcohol being consumed in a typical day or week has not changed over the last year



Understanding of the drinking guidelines around units is low



And those who understand the guidelines do not drink less alcohol



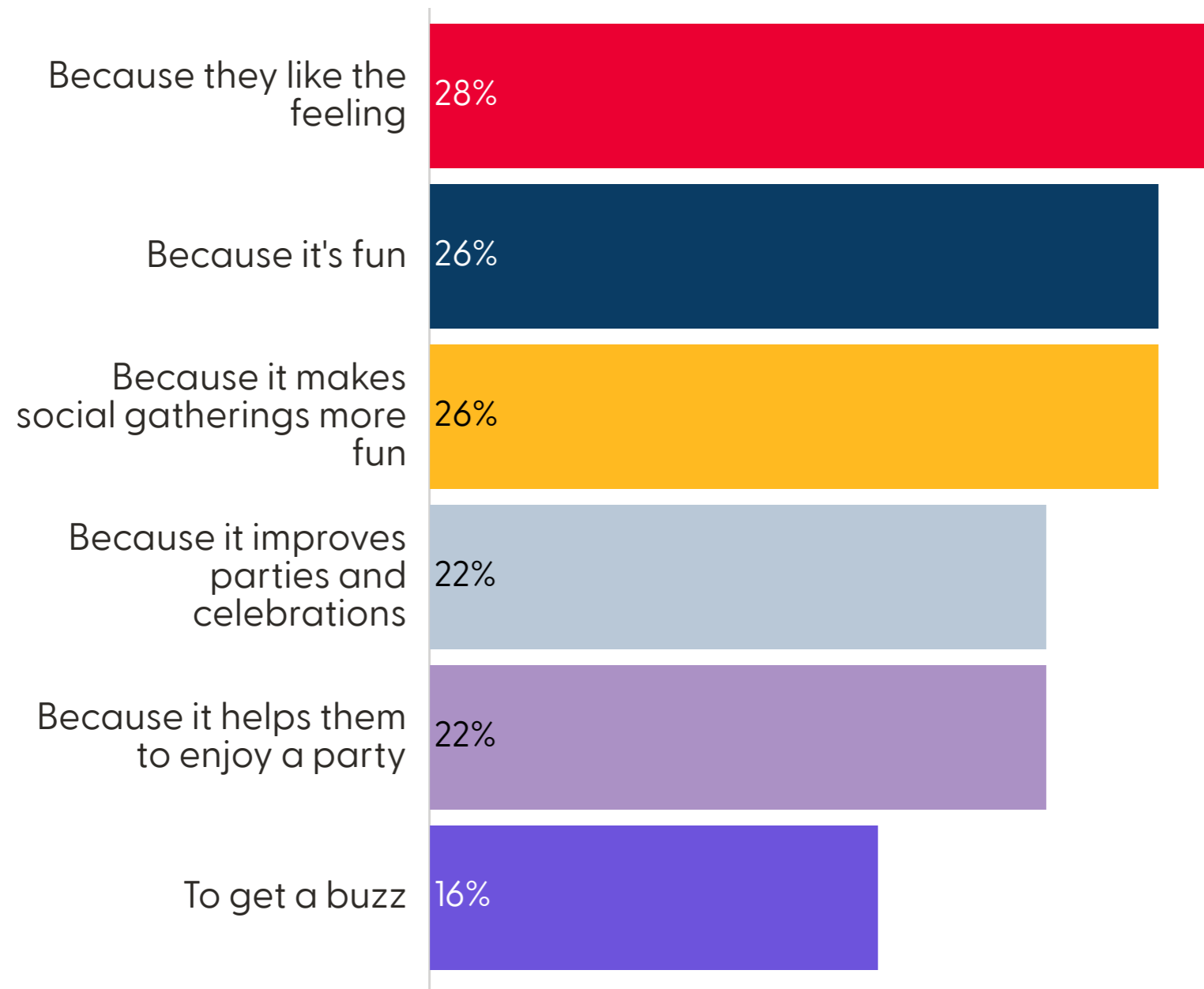
Half of the most frequent drinkers in the UK feel their drinking will impact on their future health

Why people drink



Many people drink for enhancement and social reasons

Top six reasons for drinking alcohol
(always/most of the time)



One in five UK drinkers consider alcohol to be important to their social life

And particularly those who drink more often



Drinkers who also take drugs are much more likely to identify enhancement reasons

Drinkers are 3x more likely to take drugs than non-drinkers (12% compared to 4%)



People who are not satisfied with their life are much more likely to drink to cope

22% of drinkers who are not satisfied with their life say they drink (most of the time or always) to forget about their problems and 20% say they drink (most of the time or always) because it helps them when they feel depressed / nervous; compared to 4% of those drinkers satisfied with their life

Impact of drinking on other people: Monitor



Three in ten people (29%) have been concerned about someone else's drinking in the last 12 months; in 2021, 16% were concerned during the pandemic (approximately the previous 15 months)



They are most likely to be concerned about a friend (34%), followed by a partner/ex-partner (21%) or a parent (13%)



41% of all UK adults have been negatively impacted by someone else's drinking in the last 12 months



This negative impact on people is highest amongst those living with housemates, 18 to 34 year olds and people who binge drink themselves

Top five ways drinking is impacting on others

% of all UK adults who have experienced following in last 12 months



Makes them feel uncomfortable or anxious at a social occasion / party (22%)



Kept awake due to noise or disruption (21%)



Let down after failing to do something they were counting on them for (15%)



Emotionally hurt or neglected (14%)



Had a serious argument, but not violent (13%)

Impact of drinking on other people: qualitative findings

What did we find about the impact that the drinking of a close friend/relative can have from the qualitative research?



The drinking of a partner, close friend or relative is most likely to have a negative impact when they **regularly drink to excess**, either through regular binge drinking or because they have an alcohol addiction or dependency.



People who drink to excess often have a **'tipping point'** (which they may not be aware of) where their behaviour changes and they become nasty, argumentative, aggressive and/or overly emotional.



Partners and close relatives of people with a possible alcohol dependency/addiction **experience frequent and on-going negative impacts**. These people spend a huge amount of time and energy (and sometimes money) worrying about and looking after their partners/relatives which has a significant impact on their lives.



However, people whose partners or close friends/relatives do not have a possible addiction to alcohol but who do drink to excess on a regular basis also **experience many negative impacts as a result of their drunken behaviour**, including being hurt both emotionally and physically.



Although not a focus of this research, participants also spoke of the negative impacts of close family or friends who regularly drink to excess can have **on children, on their work/studies and their own health**.

Drinking behaviours are interdependent with other factors

The research identified some specific factors that influence drinking habits including...



Lifestage



Social life and the people around you



Who you live with



Demographics



And that drinking habits have an impact on...



Health and life satisfaction



Other risky behaviours



The people around you (and even people around them)

These then influence circumstances and social life, which then influence drinking habits, and the cycle continues...

Drinking in the UK in 2022

Alcohol consumption and comparisons

Take me to...

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Drinking in the UK in 2022: **what to look out for**



At an overall level, **things have not changed that much since 2021**: amount of units of alcohol consumed daily or weekly and drinking frequency are all very similar



But the trend seen in 2020 of a **fall in the most frequent drinkers and a rise in non-drinkers continues** (in fact these are as low / as high as they have been since 2017)



As in 2021, **almost a quarter of drinkers drink at home alone on a weekly basis** and those that drink at home alone most often are more likely to be drinking more alcohol overall



Binge drinking has returned to pre-pandemic patterns, with a **drop in the proportion of UK adults who never binge drink**

How often do UK adults have a drink containing alcohol?

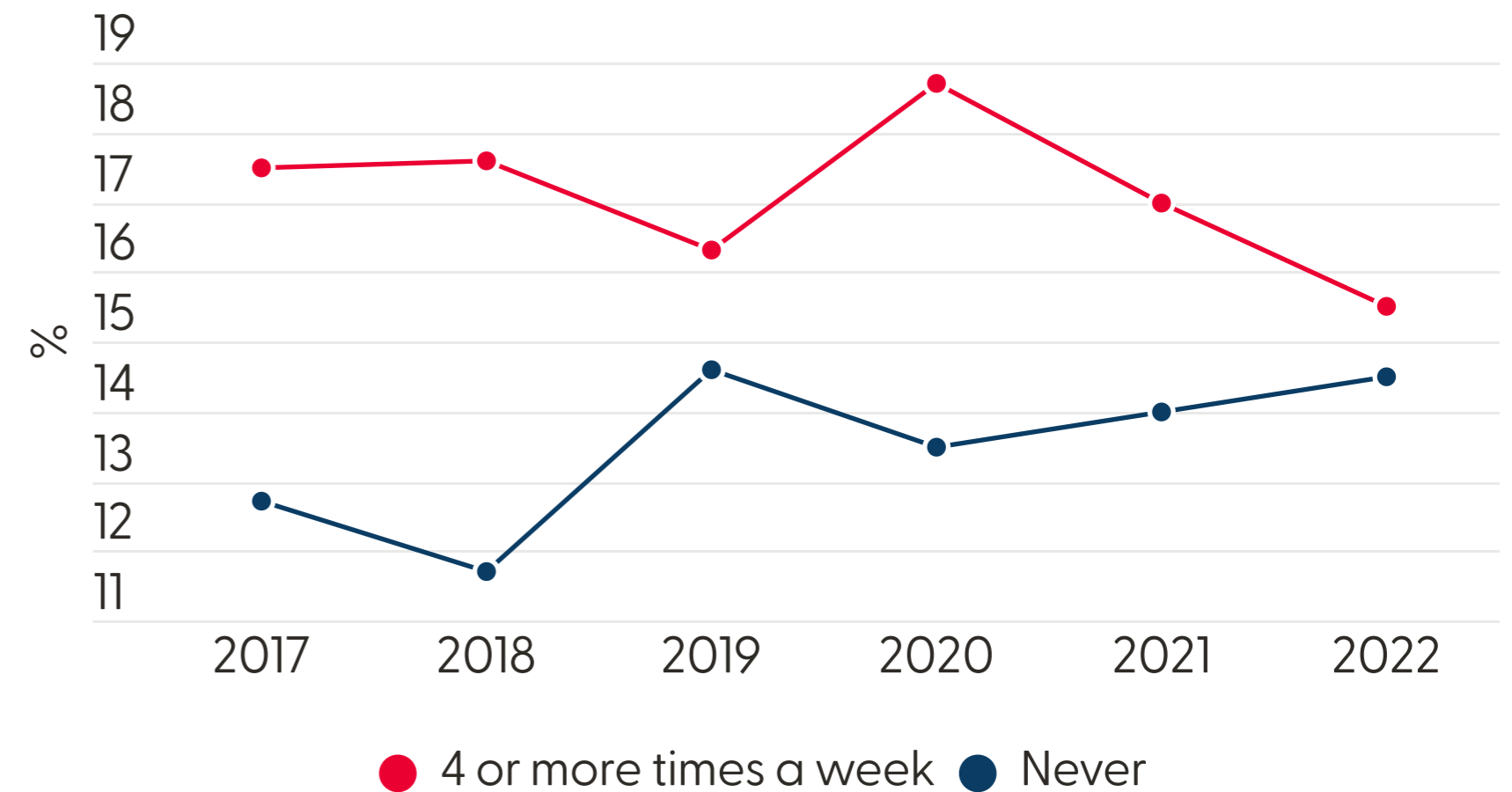
Drinking levels in 2022 are very similar to 2021

Previous Monitor reports²



- 4 or more times a week
- 2-3 times a week
- Once a week
- 1 to 3 times a month
- Less often than monthly
- Never

But looking over time, the gap between the most frequent drinkers and those who never drink has never been closer



Half (49%) of non-drinkers used to drink alcohol but have given up

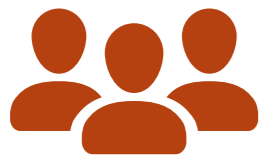
This has not changed significantly over the last year

Drinking frequency. Base: all UK adults, 2022 (n=6,318); 2021 (n=9,137); 2020 (n=9,046), 2019 (n= 2,145); 2018 (n=8,906); 2017 (6,174)

So which groups are drinking less frequently?



Drinking alcohol four or more times a week has fallen most since the pandemic amongst:



35 to 54 year olds

17% were drinking alcohol four or more times a week in 2020, falling to 12% in 2022 (and this is lower than it has ever been in the last six years)



Higher social grades

22% of UK adults in the ABC1 social grades were drinking alcohol four or more times a week in 2020, with this falling to 17% in 2022 (and again lower than it has ever been in the last six years)

People who drink alcohol four or more times a week are more likely to be...



55+

25% of UK adults aged 55+ drink alcohol four or more times a week, compared to 8% of those aged 18-34



Male

20% of males drink alcohol four or more times a week, compared to 12% of females



Living in more affluent areas

20% of UK adults living in the least deprived areas (9-10 IMD deciles) drink alcohol four or more times a week, compared to 11% in the most deprived areas (deciles 1-2)

And when we put these factors together...



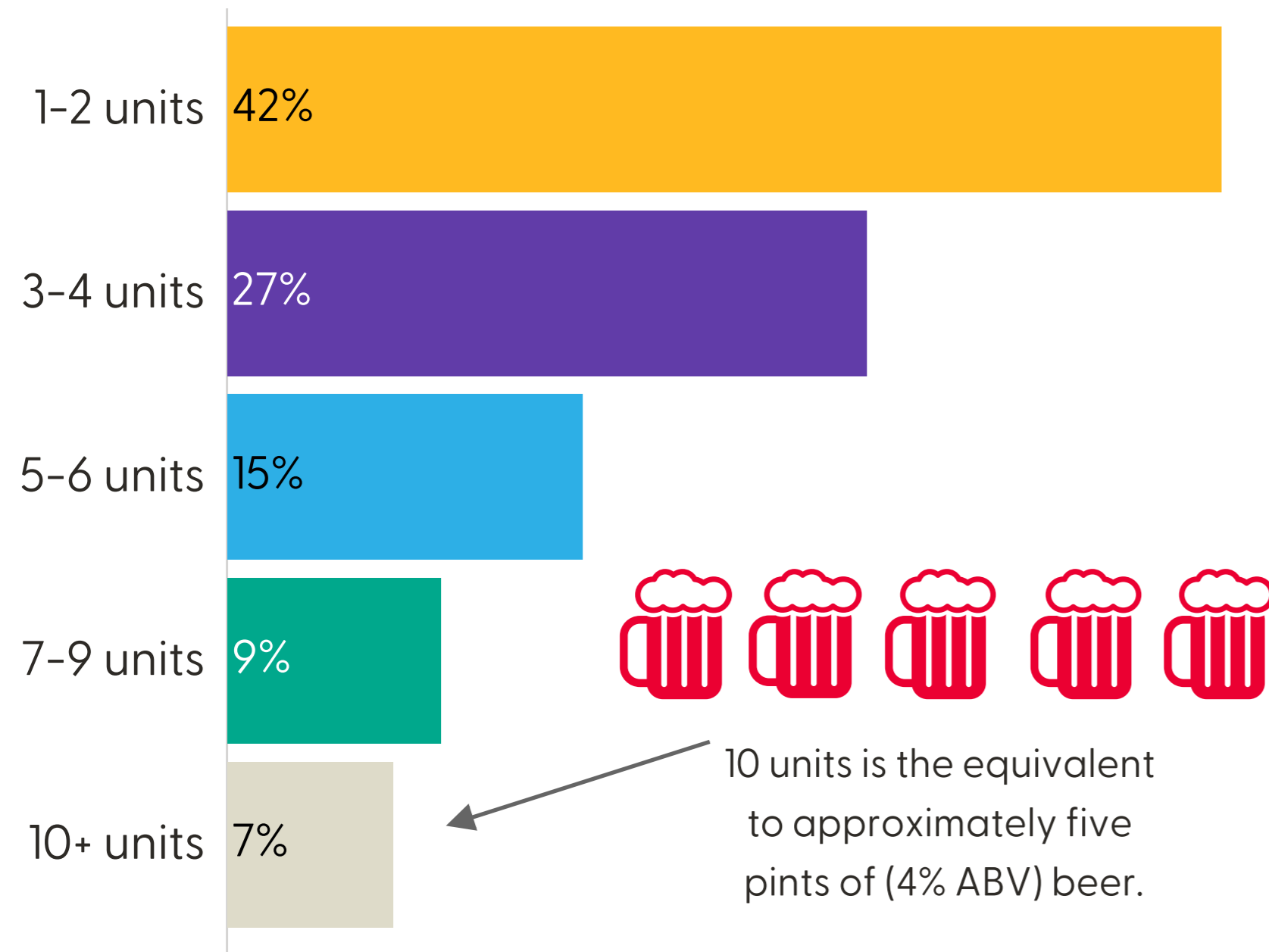
Two in five males aged 55+ living in more affluent areas drink alcohol four or more times a week

One in five drink alcohol six or more times a week

How many units of alcohol are drunk in a typical day when drinking?

Four in ten UK drinkers (42%) consume 1-2 units in a typical day when drinking; no change since 2021

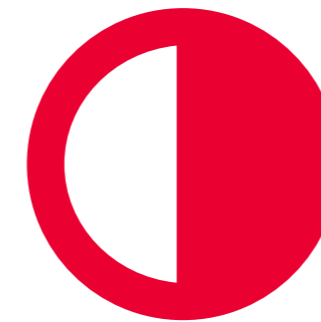
Breakdown of units in a typical day in 2022



 Units in a typical day. Base: all UK adults who drink alcohol (n=5,428)



Who is more likely to drink ten or more units in a typical drinking day?



Deprivation

One in ten drinkers in the most deprived areas drink ten or more units in a typical drinking day, compared to one in 20 of those in the least deprived areas

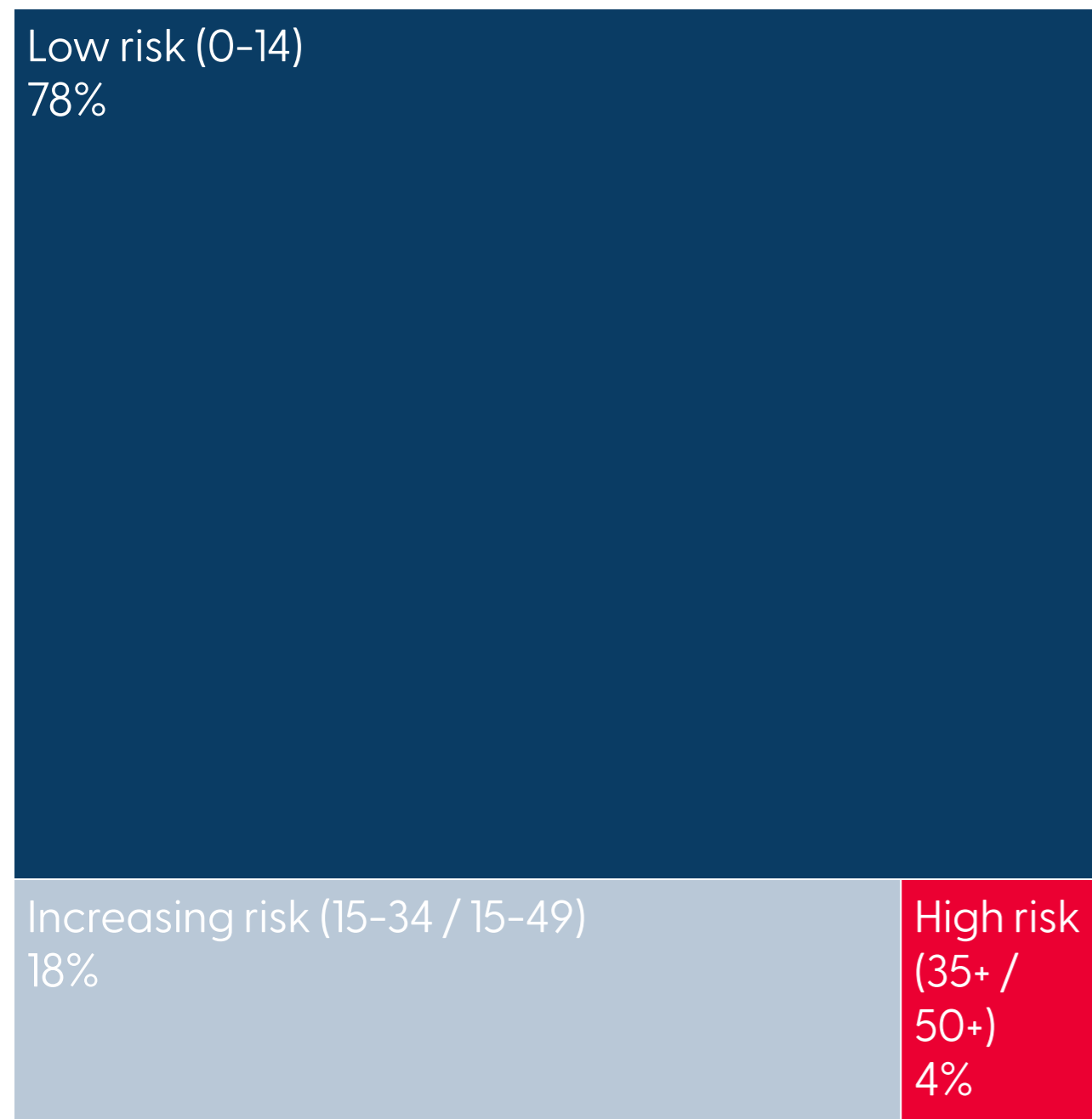


Scotland and Northern Ireland

11% of drinkers in these two nations drink ten or more units in a typical drinking day, compared to 7% in England and 8% in Wales

How many units do drinkers consume in a week?

Nearly four in five UK drinkers (78%) drink within the UK Chief Medical Officers' low risk drinking guidelines of 14 units per week⁸



The proportion of UK drinkers drinking within the UK Chief Medical Officer's low risk guidelines of 14 units of alcohol a week has risen from 70% in 2017, but is the same as it was in 2021 (78%)



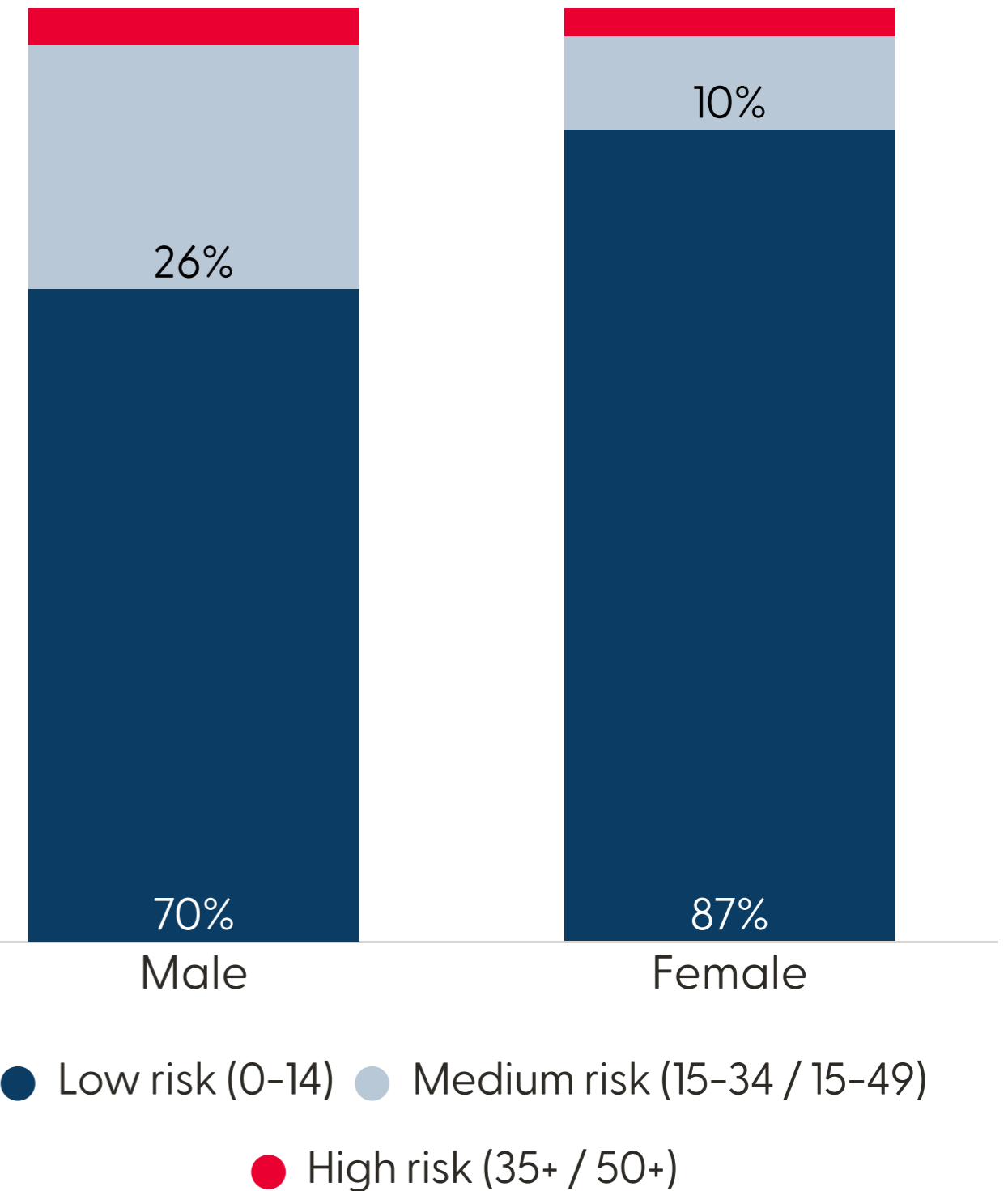
Useful to know

Weekly units of alcohol are grouped into three risk categories: low, increasing and high. Low risk is 0 to 14 units while increasing and high risk differs by gender:

- **Females** who drink between 15 and 34 units are increasing risk, 35+ are high risk
- **Males** who drink between 15 and 49 units are increasing risk, 50+ are high risk

'Risk' refers to risk of harm from alcohol

Male drinkers are consuming more units of alcohol in a week than females

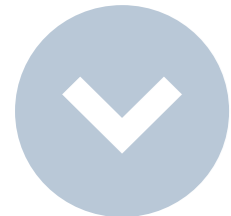


Weekly drinking guidelines overview



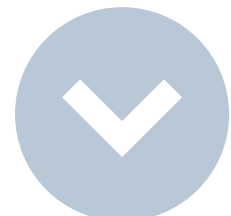
The Chief Medical Officers of the four UK nations developed new low risk drinking guidelines in 2016.¹¹ The main guidelines are that, in order to keep health risks from alcohol to a low level:

- it is safest for both men and women not to drink more than 14 units a week on a regular basis
- if regularly drinking as much as 14 units per week, it is best to spread your drinking over three or more days
- if you wish to cut down the amount you drink, a good way to achieve this is to have several drink-free days per week



The majority of people know there are drinking guidelines...

87% are aware that drinking guidelines exist. This is lower amongst 18-34s (78%), C2DE social grades (84%) and adults from ethnic minority backgrounds (69%).



...they just don't necessarily know what the guidelines are...

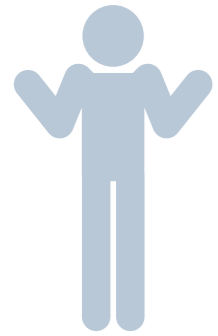
56% think it includes a daily limit, whilst 59% correctly think it is a weekly limit. 65% think there are different limits for men and women, whilst 7% correctly think the limit is the same for everyone.



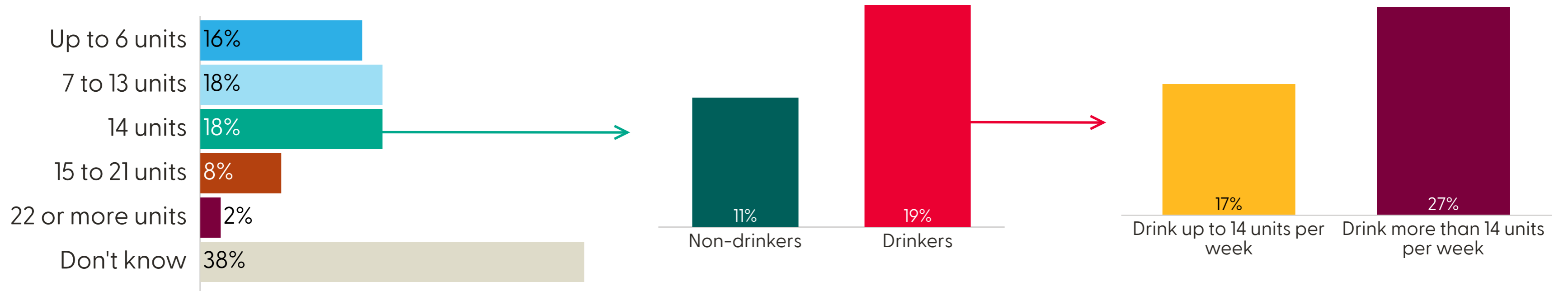
...and nearly half aren't confident that they know what the guidelines are.

One in five are confident in their knowledge of the guidelines; almost half (46%) are not confident.

Who is more likely to know the guidelines?



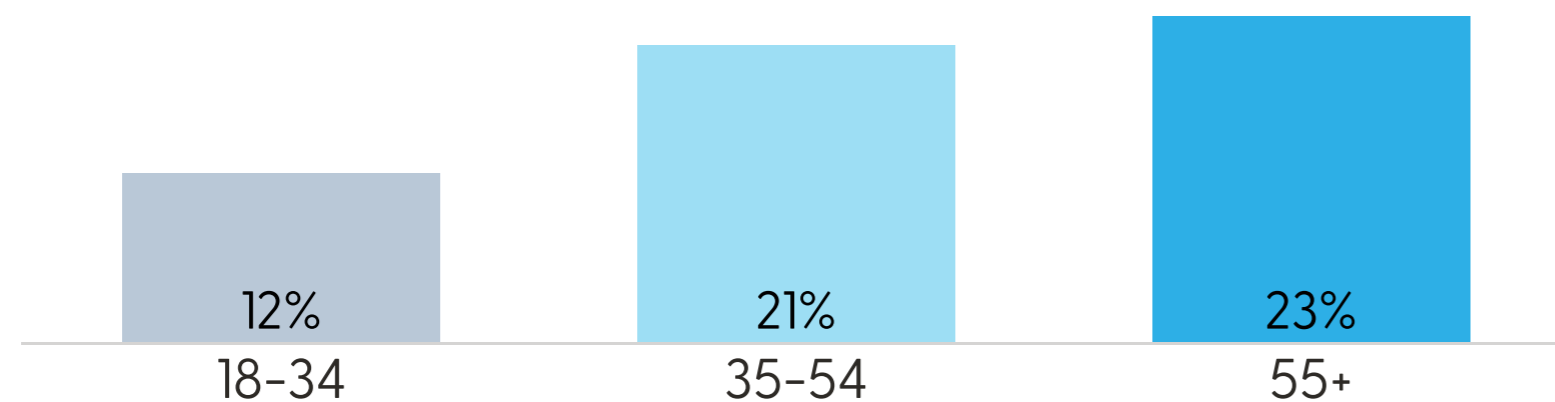
18% of UK adults correctly identified that the recommended maximum number of weekly units is 14, with this higher amongst drinkers, particularly those drinking more than 14 units per week



Knowledge of the drinking guidelines. Base: all UK adults (n=6,318)



The older the drinker, the more likely they were to correctly identify the drinking guidelines of 14 units per week



23% of **female drinkers** correctly identified 14 units, compared to 15% of male drinkers

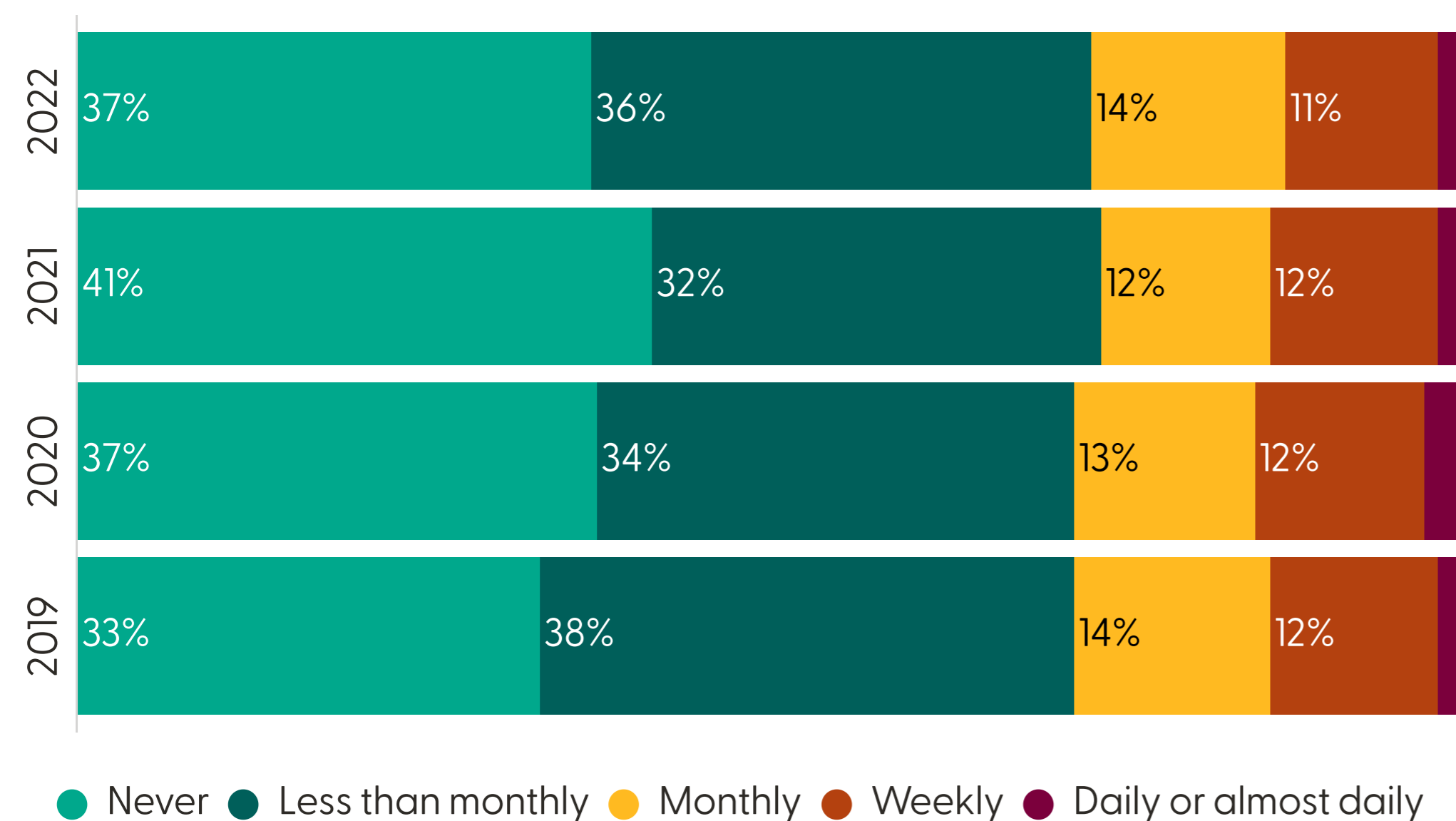


20% of **white** drinkers correctly identified 14 units, nearly double the 9% of drinkers from an ethnic minority background

How often do UK drinkers binge drink?

More drinkers are binge drinking (drinking more than 6/8 units* in a single occasion) in 2022 than in 2021

After a year-on-year rise in UK drinkers never binge drinking from 2019 to 2021, this has fallen from 41% to 37% over the last year

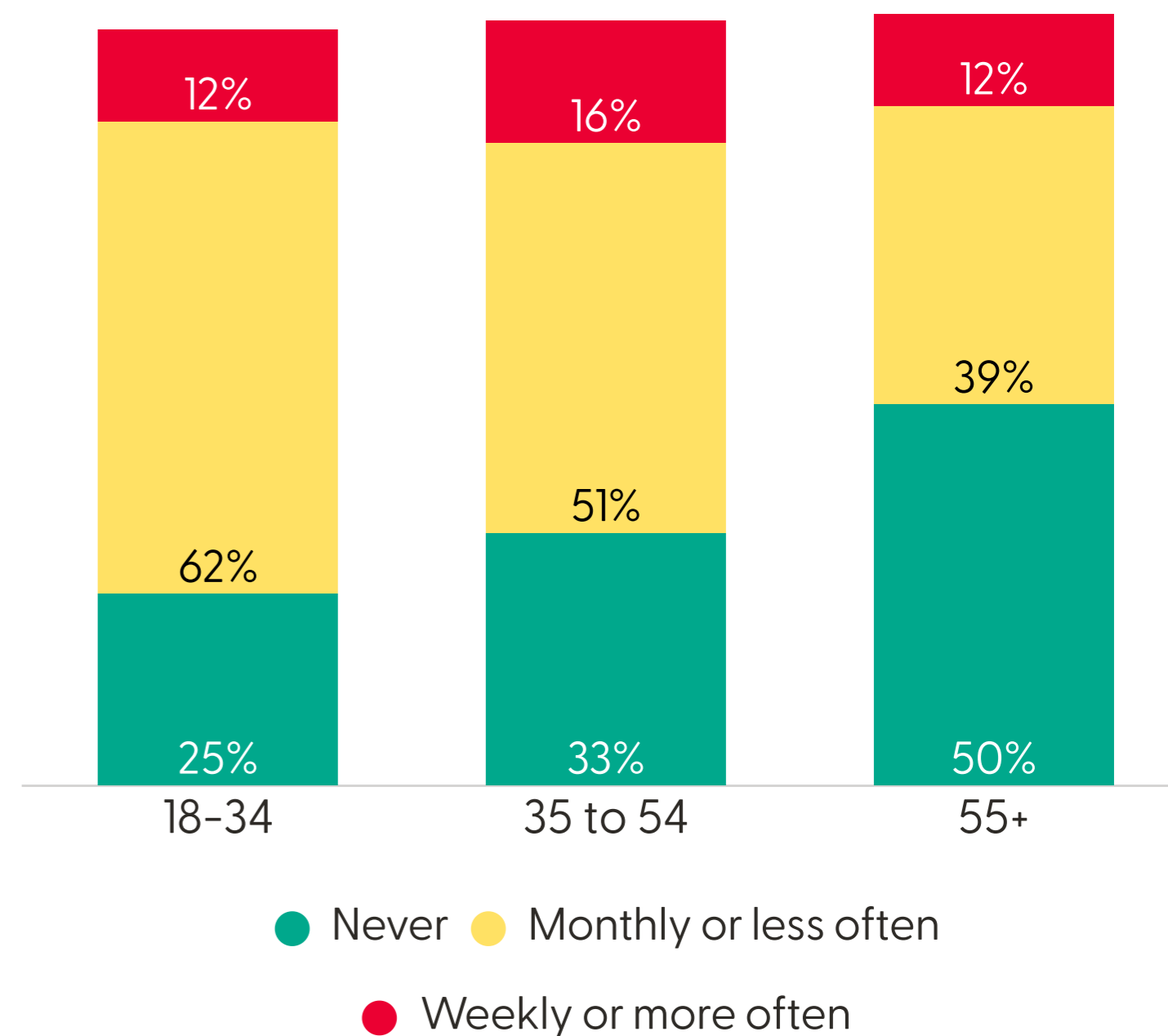


*6 units for females; 8 units for males

Frequency binge drinking. Base: all UK adults who drink alcohol, 2022 (n=5,428); 2021 (n=7,911); 2020 (n=7,834), 2019 (n=2,145)

Younger drinkers are more likely to binge drink than older age groups

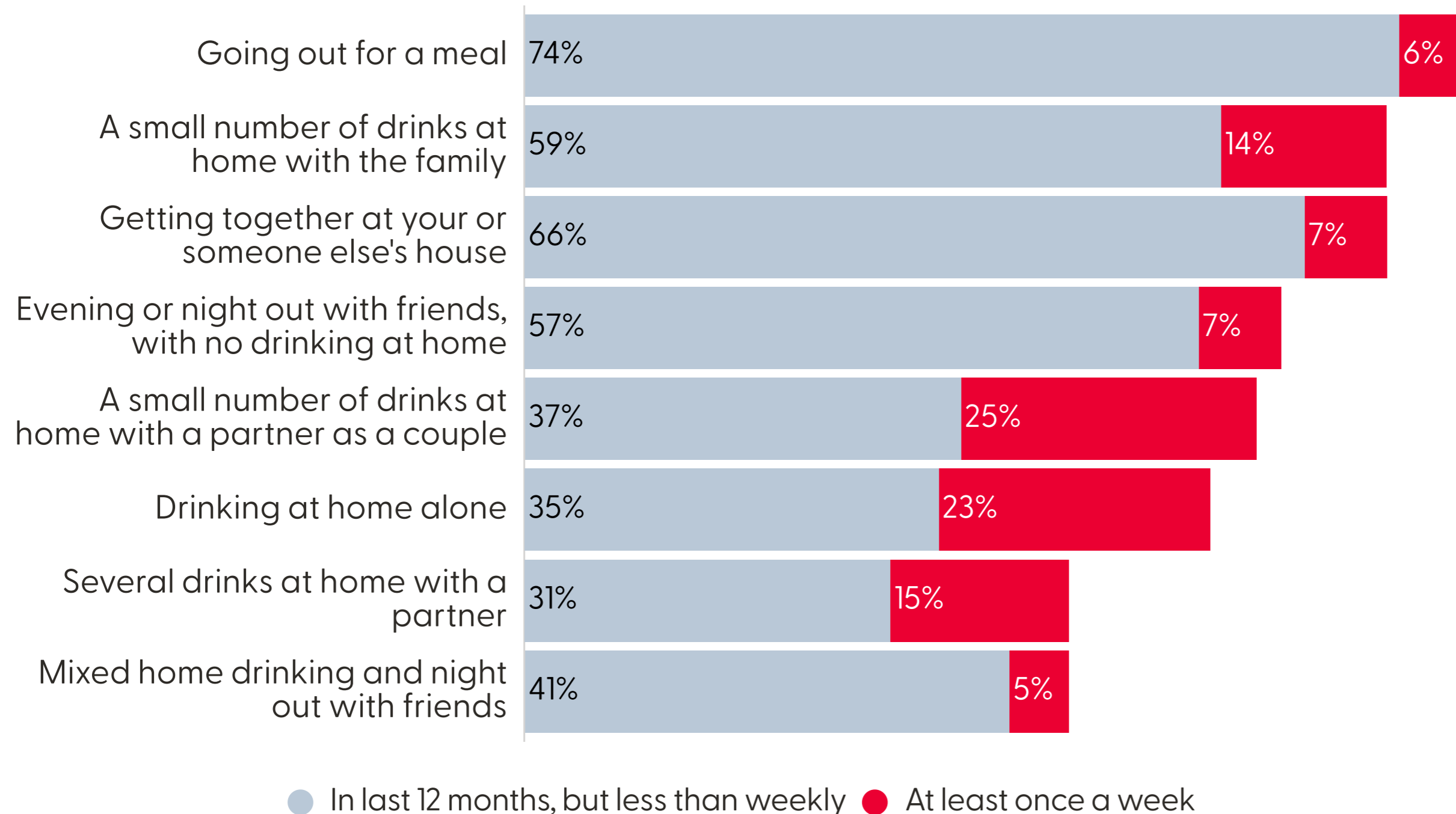
But younger drinkers are more likely to binge drink monthly or less often



Nearly a quarter of drinkers are drinking alone at home every week

Whilst drinkers were less likely to drink at home alone compared to other situations over the last 12 months, if they did drink at home alone they were much more likely to do this at least once a week

Chart displays % who have had alcohol on different occasions at some point in last 12 months and weekly



Those who drink at home alone most often are more likely to be drinking more alcohol overall

Of drinkers consuming 50+/35+ units a week, 35% are drinking at home alone five or more times a week, compared to:

- 14% having small number of drinks with a partner 5+ times a week
- 3% are going out with friends to drink 5+ times a week

Drinking occasions. Base: all UK adults who drink alcohol, n=5,428

Half of those drinking most often feel it will impact on their health

17% of UK drinkers feel it is likely they will have increased health problems in the future if they continue to drink at their current level

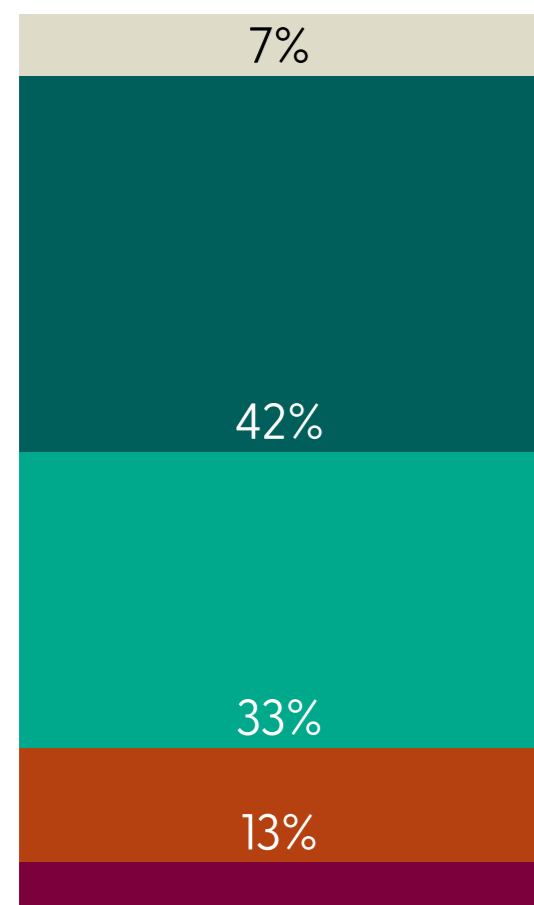
Likelihood of future health problems if they continue to drink at current level



A third (34%) of UK drinkers who **consider alcohol to be important to their social life** feel it is likely they will have increased health problems in the future



24% of **drinkers from ethnic minority backgrounds** feel like they will have increased health problems in the future due to alcohol



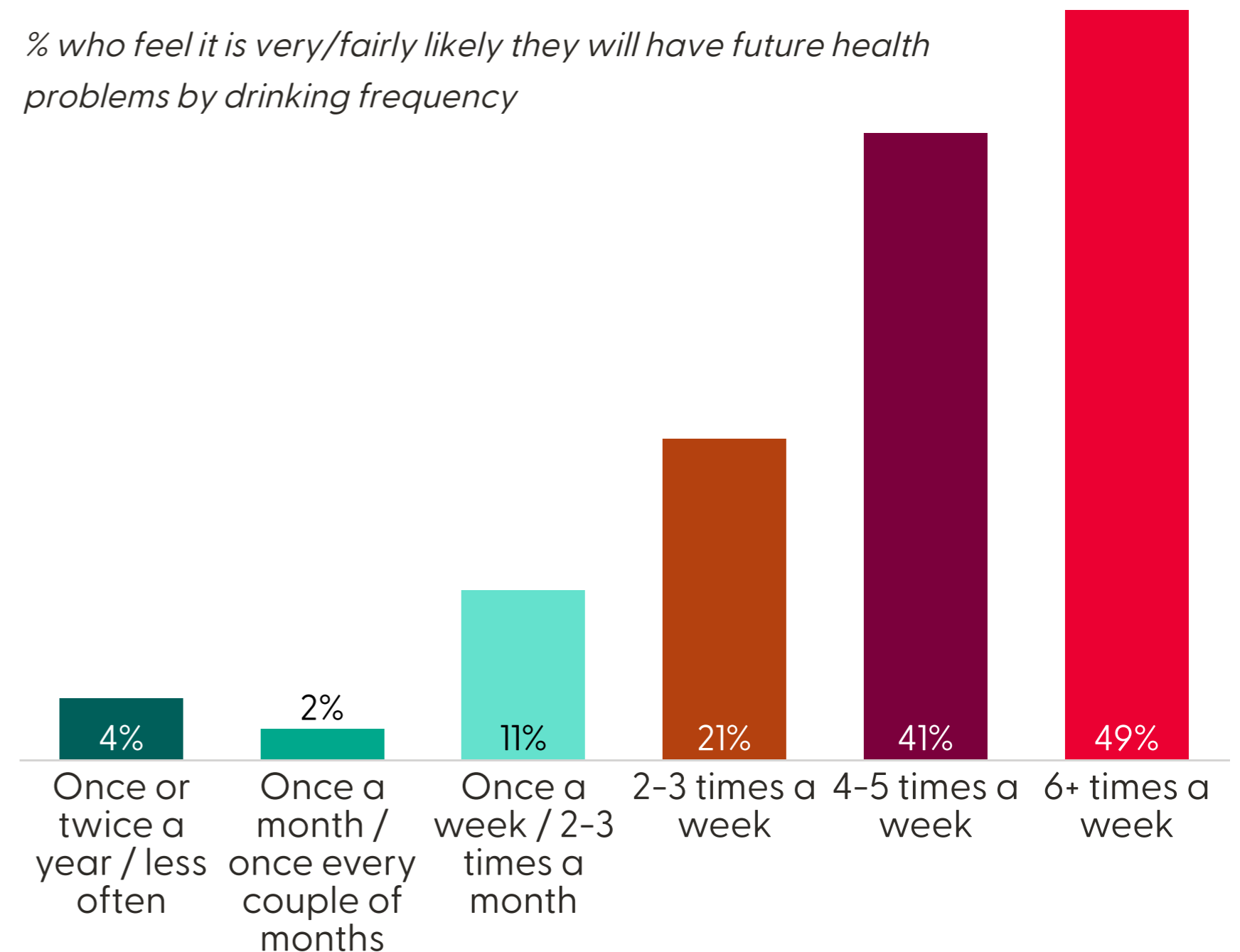
- Very likely ● Fairly likely
- Not very likely ● Not at all likely
- Don't know



Future health. Base: all UK adults who drink alcohol (n = 5428)

The more often people drink during a week, the more likely they are to feel they will have increased health problems in the future

% who feel it is very/fairly likely they will have future health problems by drinking frequency



Why do people drink?

Exploring reasons for drinking

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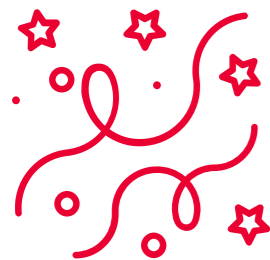
Why people drink: **what to look out for**



Drinkers are most likely to report that they **drink for enhancement (e.g. because they like the feeling or because it's fun) and/or social reasons**; drinking for social reasons is higher amongst younger drinkers and binge drinkers



Drinking for enhancement reasons: Drinkers who also take drugs are more likely to identify enhancement reasons



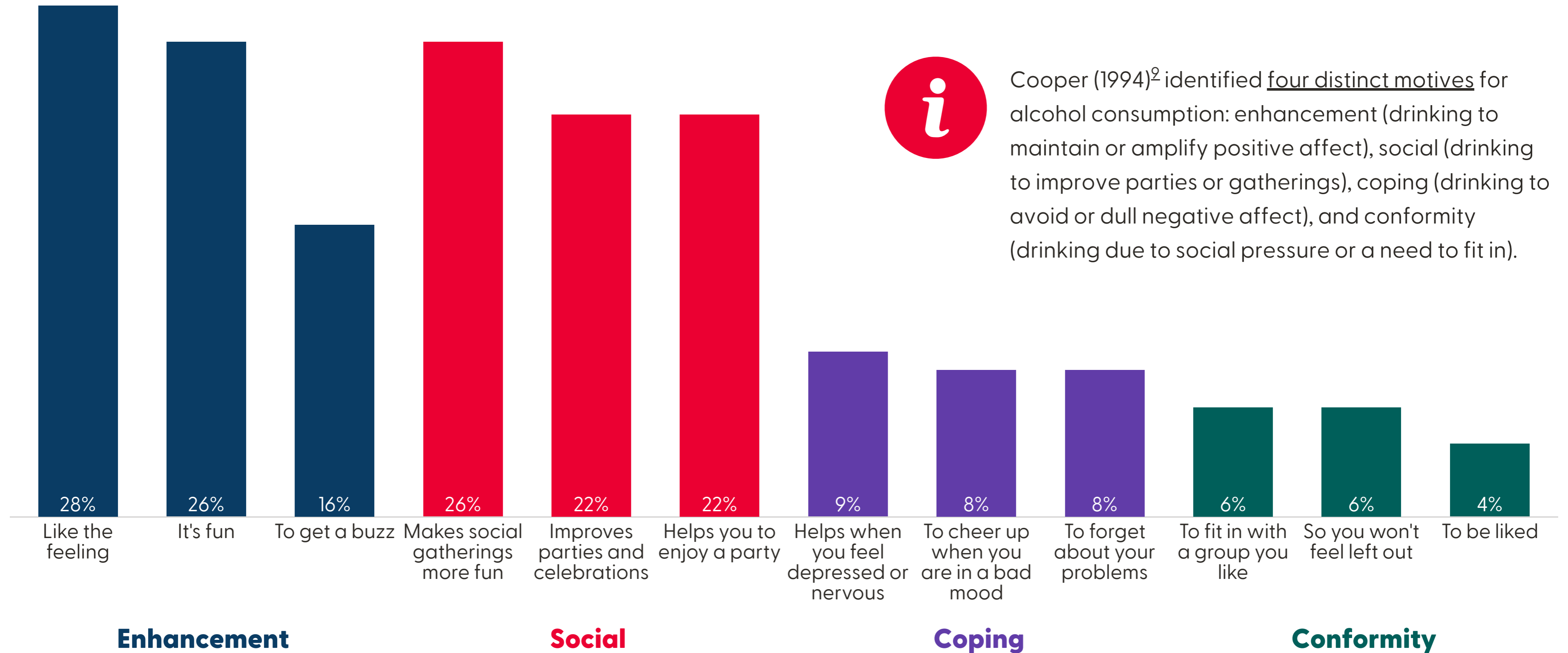
Drinking for social reasons: Younger drinkers and binge drinkers are more likely to drink for social reasons



Drinking for coping reasons: Drinkers who are not satisfied with their life and personal circumstances are more likely to drink alcohol to cope with depression or to forget about their problems

People are most likely to drink for enhancement and social reasons

Reasons people give for drinking alcohol (% who most of the time / always drink for the following reasons)

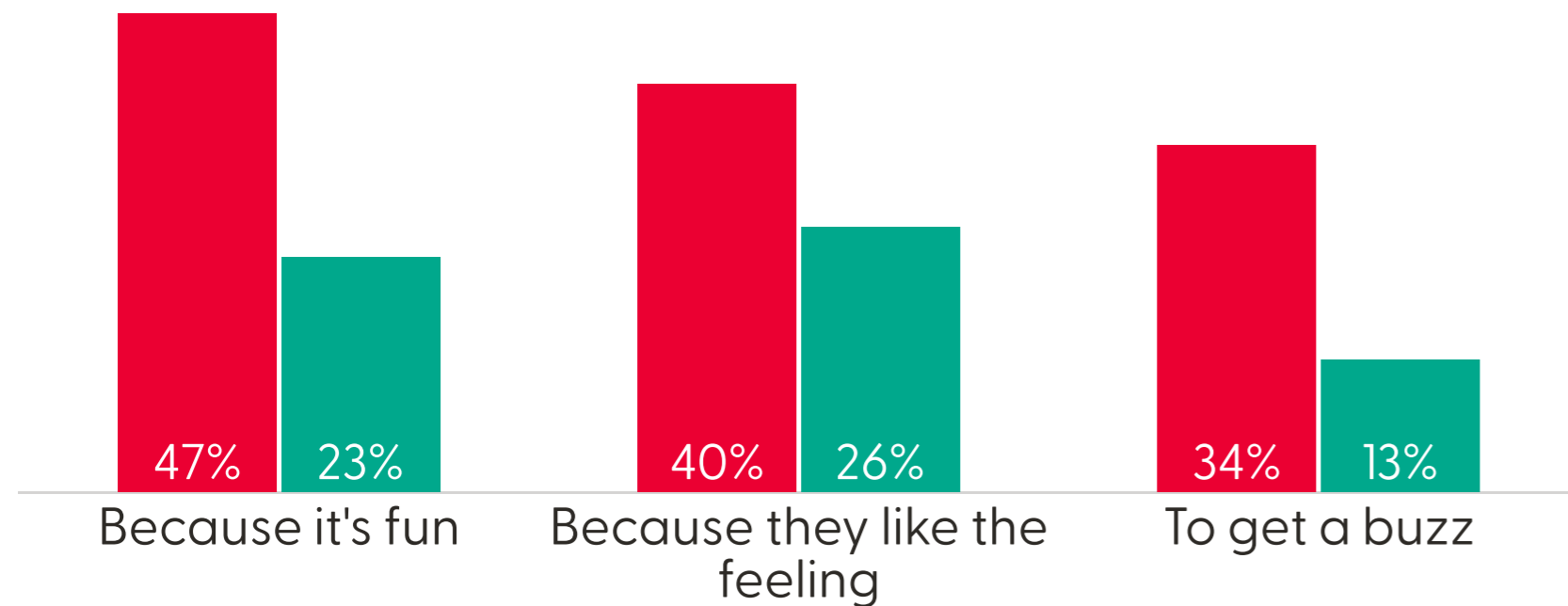


Drinking motivations. Base: all UK adults who drink alcohol (n=5428)

More on: Enhancement

Drinkers who also take drugs are more likely to identify enhancement motivations

% who drink for the following reasons most of the time / always



● Drinkers who also take drugs ● Drinkers who do not take drugs

Drinking enhancement motivations. Base: UK adults who drink alcohol and take drugs (n=630); UK adults who drink alcohol but don't take drugs (n=4,643)



Drinkers who also take drugs are also more likely to drink for social reasons

- Because it **makes social gatherings more fun** (43%)
- Because it **helps them enjoy a party** (38%)
- Because it **improves parties and celebrations** (37%)



One in ten adults take drugs other than alcohol at least sometimes; drinking appears to increase the likelihood of taking drugs

Drinkers are three times more likely to have taken drugs than non-drinkers (12% vs 4%)



16% of people who binge drink have also taken drugs

Rising to one in five who binge drink at least once a month



Two in five (39%) of drinkers who take drugs use more than one drug on the same occasion

It is higher amongst males (44% vs 32% females), 18-24s (52%) and drinkers from ethnic minority backgrounds (54%)

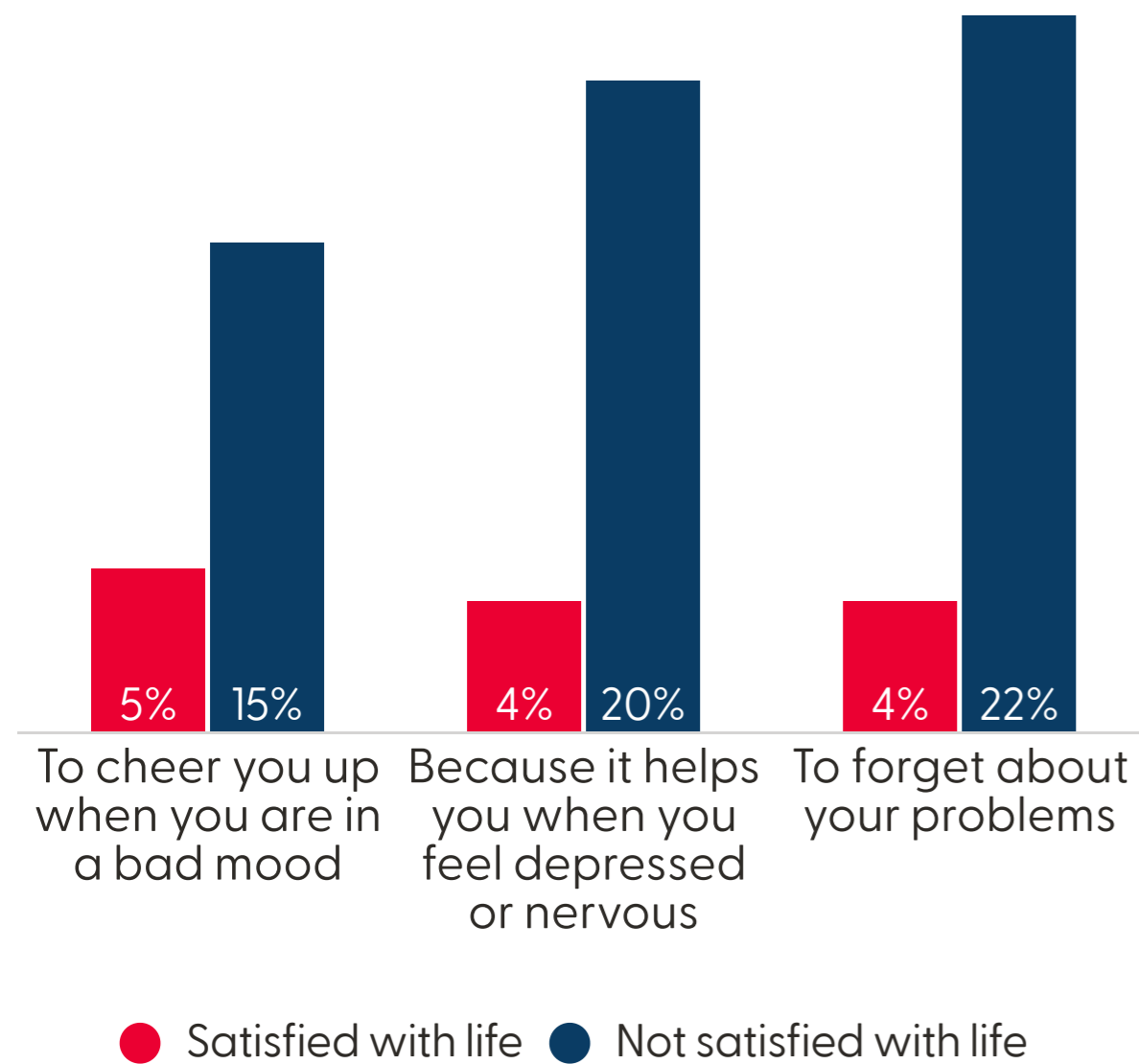


Three in ten drinkers who take drugs say someone else has been worried about their drinking

More on: Coping

People who are not satisfied with their life are more likely to drink alcohol to cope with depression and their problems

% who drink most of the time/always for the following reasons



12% of drinkers are not satisfied with their life and personal circumstances

On a scale of 0 to 10, 12% selected between 0 and 3; 55% are satisfied (7 to 10)



Those not satisfied are more likely to be in lower social grades

15% of drinkers in C2DE are not satisfied, compared to 9% in ABC1



19% of drinkers who are not satisfied with their life drink seven or more units in a typical drinking day

Compared to 14% of drinkers who are satisfied with their life



Three in ten drinkers not satisfied with their life drink at home alone at least once a week

Compared to two in ten drinkers who are satisfied with their life



Drinkers not satisfied with their life are twice as likely to feel like their alcohol consumption will lead to health problems in the future

28% feel it is very/fairly likely alcohol consumption will lead to health problems in future compared to 14% of those satisfied with their life



Drinking motivations (coping). Base: drinkers who are satisfied with life (n=630); drinkers not satisfied with life (n=3,086)

But drinking alcohol often doesn't actually help people to cope

Whilst people may feel that drinking helps them when they feel depressed or helps them to forget about their problems, when drinking excessively, the opposite often appears to be the case. Other people then have to deal with close friends/family becoming upset, depressed and frequently looking for someone to blame.



In the 2022 Monitor, almost one in ten of drinkers say they drink always/most of the time 'because it helps when you feel depressed or nervous' (9%) or 'to forget about your problems' (8%)

“ Things always seem to escalate when she's drunk. It's like she can't handle her emotions. I had to call the police recently because she was threatening to kill herself. She's only just forgiven me for ringing them, but I didn't know what else to do.

BUT...



Qualitative research suggests people's mood worsens when drinking to excess, sometimes leading to self-harm or suicide attempts

Several qualitative participants spoke of friends/family who drink to excess and who will regularly:

- Get very upset and are difficult to console
- Drag up unpleasant memories/situations from the past
- Threaten to harm themselves

“ When my father's drinking, he's not a nice person, he gets very morose and lives in the past... He's tried to commit suicide three times.

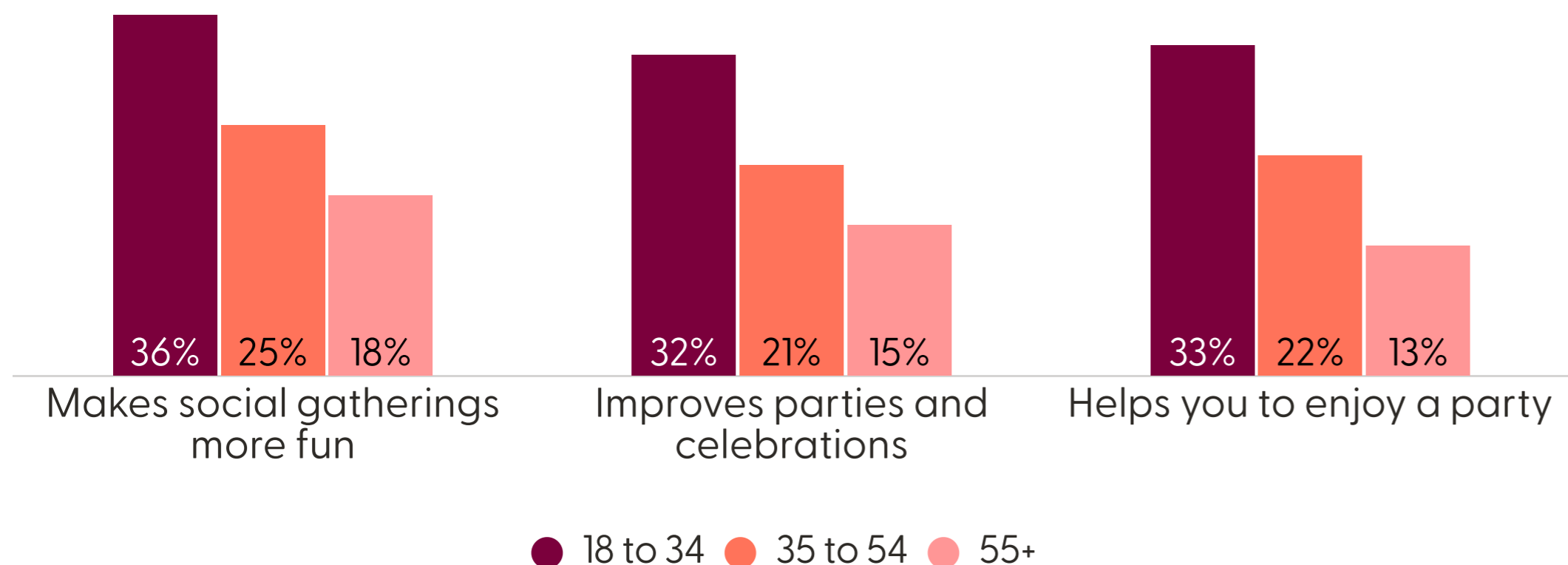
More on: Social

Younger drinkers and binge drinkers are more likely to drink for social reasons

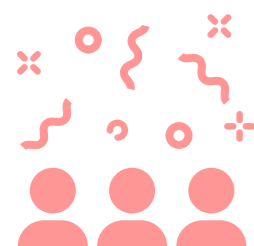


Social reasons by age

% who drink for the following reasons most of the time / always



Drinking motivations (social). Base: drinkers aged 18 to 34 (n=1,365); drinkers aged 35 to 54 (n=1,871); drinkers aged 55+ (n=2,192)



A third (34%) of binge drinkers drink because it makes social gatherings more fun most of the time or always

29% feel drinking improves parties and celebrations and helps them to enjoy a party



19% Of drinkers consider alcohol to be important to their social life

Who are more likely to feel this way?



Drink more often

33% of those who drink 4+ times a week, compared to 8% who drink monthly or less often



Live with friends or housemates

27% of drinkers who live with friends/housemates, compared to 17% who live alone



Smoke

25% of drinkers who smoke, compared to 16% who have never smoked

Drinking for social reasons may not always have the intended effect

There appears to be a gap between how drinkers perceive their behaviour when drinking in social situations and the impact their behaviour has on those around them



In the Monitor data, one in four drinkers say they drink always/most of the time 'because it makes social gatherings more fun'

BUT...



One in five adults say they have felt uncomfortable or anxious at a social occasion due to someone else's drinking in the past 12 months

“ It was my birthday recently and she planned a get together. But then she got upset over this boy and was crying and I just ended up leaving because I couldn't be bothered with her drunk mess.



The qualitative research suggests the behaviour of drunk people can ruin social gatherings for other people

Many qualitative participants spoke of friends/family who frequently drink to excess in social situations and whose behaviour can ruin the occasion for others. Some participants say they often either leave early or try to avoid being in these situations again in future.

“ I don't often see my friends who are still drinking and doing drugs. I have shown my face at some parties, just to keep in the loop, but it's the same shite all the time. Stories from ten years ago, the same arguments, the same problems with their partners.

Impact of drinking on others

Levels of concern and what impact it has

Take me to...

[Introducing the research](#) | [Highlights](#) | [Drinking in the UK in 2022](#) | [Why do people drink?](#) | [Impact of drinking on others](#) | [How people's drinking impacts on others](#) | [Impact of drinking on oneself](#) | [Final reflections](#) | [About Drinkaware](#); [About PS Research](#) | [Appendix](#)

Impact of drinking on others: **what to look out for**



Three in ten UK adults are **concerned about someone else's drinking** and they are more likely to be concerned if they drink themselves



People are most likely to be concerned about the **drinking of their friends, partner or parents**



41% of UK adults have felt a **negative impact from someone else's drinking** in the last 12 months

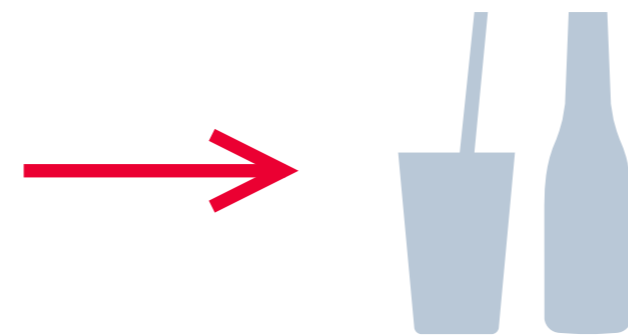
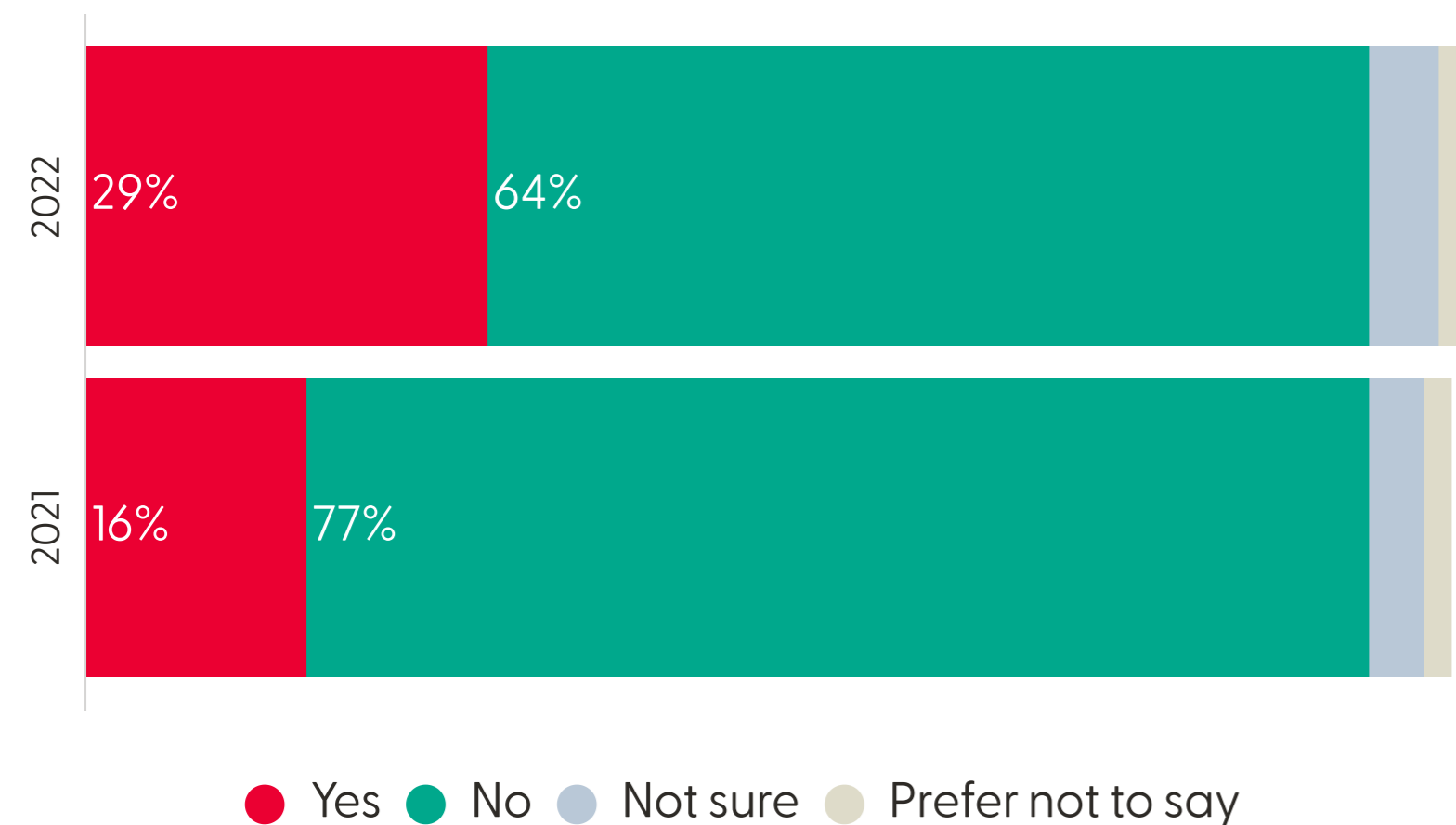


The qualitative research suggests some people **lives are impacted in many ways by someone else's drinking**

3 in 10 UK adults are concerned about someone else's drinking

'Someone else' could be family members, friends, work colleagues or other people you know

Concern about someone else's drinking appears to have risen significantly. When measured in 2021, 16% expressed a concern about someone else's drinking during the pandemic (approximately the previous 15 months). In 2022, 29% expressed a concern about someone else's drinking in the last 12 months.



Those who drink themselves were more likely to have been concerned about someone else's drinking than those who never drink (30% vs 18%), particularly those who binge drink (32%)



Aware of drinking guidelines

30% of people aware of the drinking guidelines are concerned about someone else's drinking, compared to 19% who are not aware of the guidelines



Females

33% of females are concerned about someone else's drinking, compared to 23% of males

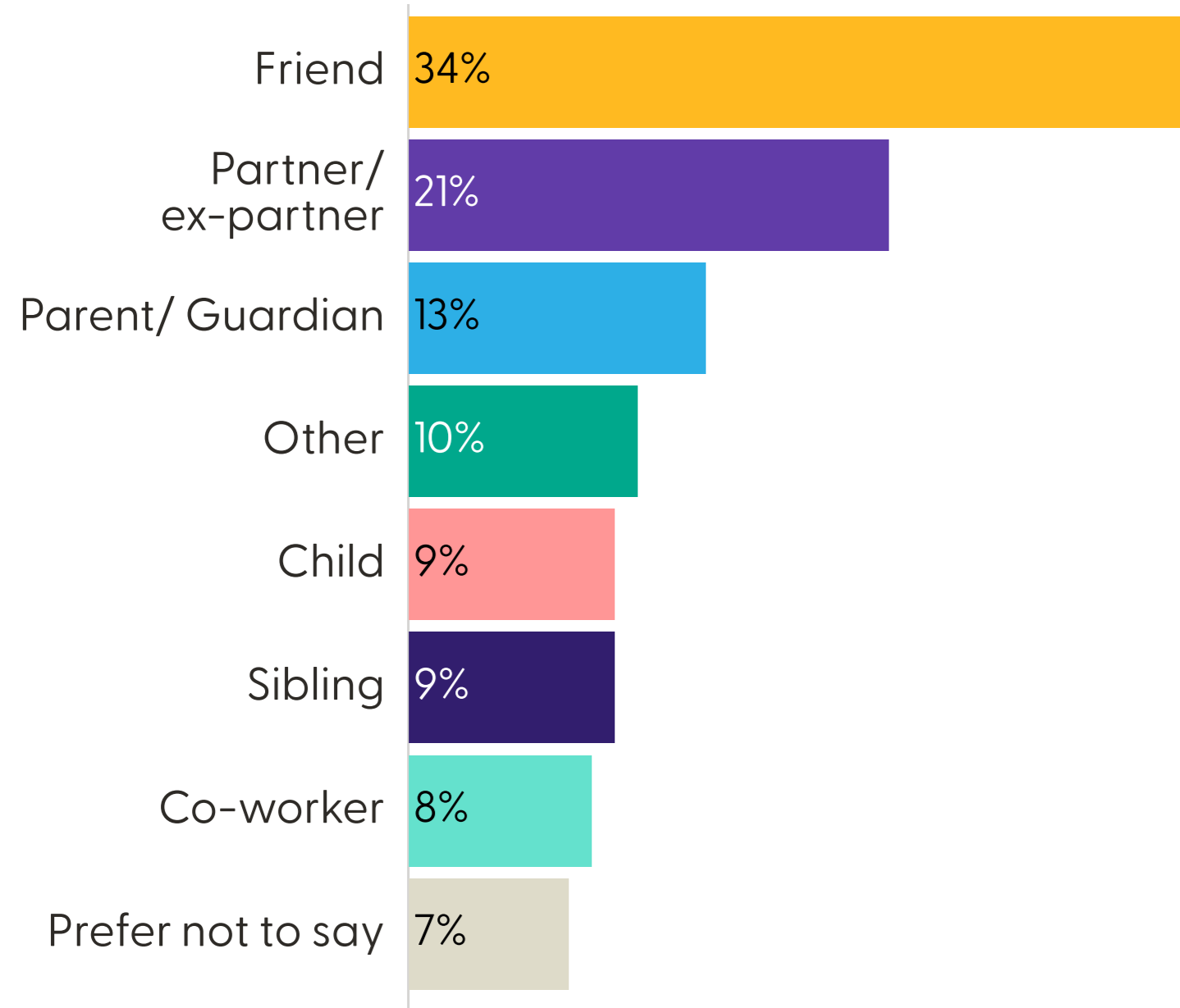


Concern for someone else's drinking in the last 12 months. Base: all UK adults (2022=6,318; 2021=9,137)
In 2021, the question wording included 'during the pandemic' compared to 'in the last 12 months' in 2022

Whose drinking are people concerned about?

People are most likely to be concerned about drinking of their friends, partner and parents

% of those concerned about someone else's drinking



Friends

- More likely to be reported by males (42% vs 29% female)
- Nearly half of 18-24s are concerned about friends (45%)
- 60% of those living with friends/housemates



Partner/ex-partner

- More likely to be reported by females (26% vs 15% male)
- Rises to 30% of those drinking 4+ times a week
- 29% of those living with child(ren) under 18



Parent/guardian:

- The younger they are, the more likely to be concerned about parents (29% of 18-34s vs 12% of 35-54s and 1% of 55+)



Whose drinking are you concerned about? Base: all UK adults who have been concerned about someone else's drinking in last 12 months (n=1,832)

UK adults are also feeling the impact of other people's drinking

41%

of all UK adults
have been negatively
impacted by someone
else's drinking in the
last 12 months*

which rises to...



63%

of UK adults living with friends
or housemates



55%

of 18 to 34 year olds



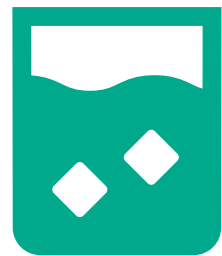
54%

of UK adults who binge drink at
least monthly

*Those reporting at least one negative impact (from a pre-defined list of 18 impacts) caused by someone else's drinking in the last 12 months (see p41 and p42 for more on this).

 Impact from someone else's drinking. Base: all UK adults n=6,318

Who is most impacted by other people's drinking?



People more likely to have been negatively impacted by someone else's drinking if they drink themselves

42% of UK drinkers compared to 35% of UK adults who do not drink alcohol

Adil's story

Adil* lives in shared accommodation at University. One of his **housemates**, a good friend, began regularly drinking to excess. His drinking caused many problems, including keeping other housemates awake and disrupting their studies, not taking on shared responsibilities (such as cleaning), causing serious arguments and impacting negatively on other friendships. The housemate was eventually asked to move out due to this behaviour.

“ We were like brothers, we spent so much time together, but he just got progressively worse as his drinking increased. We had to tell him to move out. I haven't spoken to him since then.

“ We were in the middle of exams and we would come home from the library and he had people over to drink with and the house would be a mess. And he was always making so much noise.

**Names have been changed to protect identity*

Age: 18-34

Region: Wales

SEG: DE

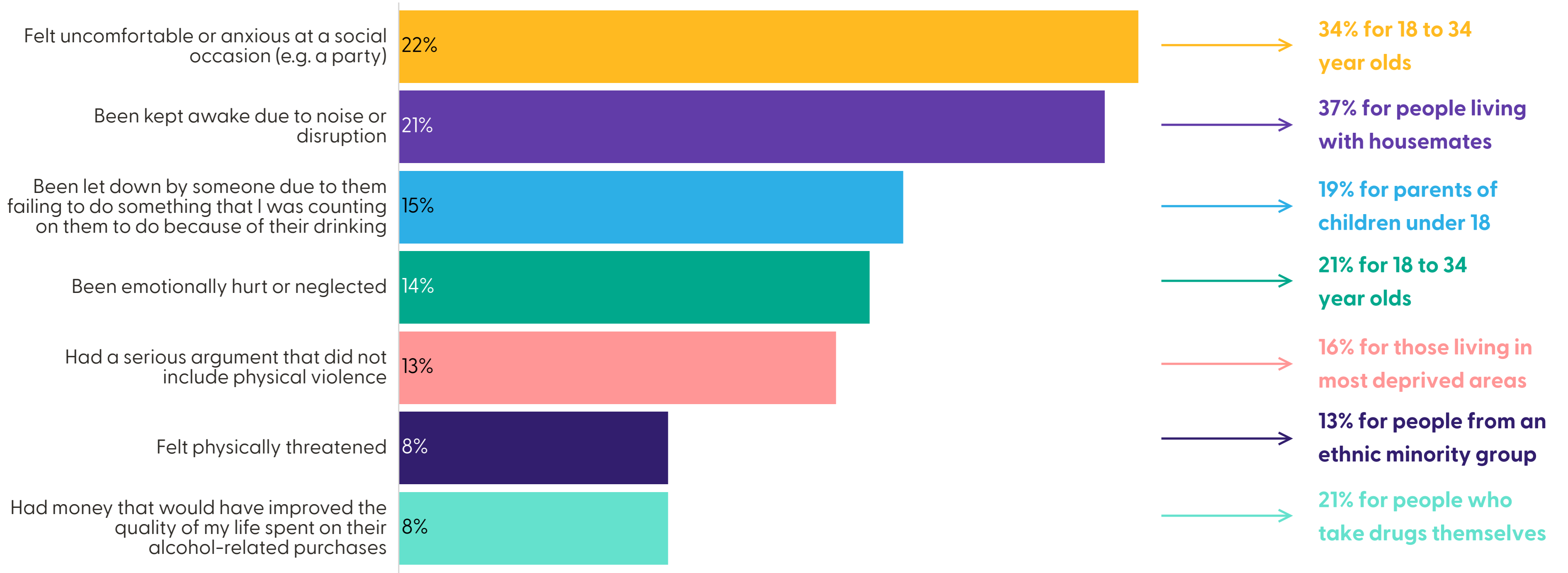
Persons causing impact:
Housemate

Most common ways in which other people's drinking has had an impact

People are most likely to report feeling uncomfortable or anxious at a social occasion due to someone else's drinking

Top ways that someone else's drinking has had an impact (% ever in last 12 months)

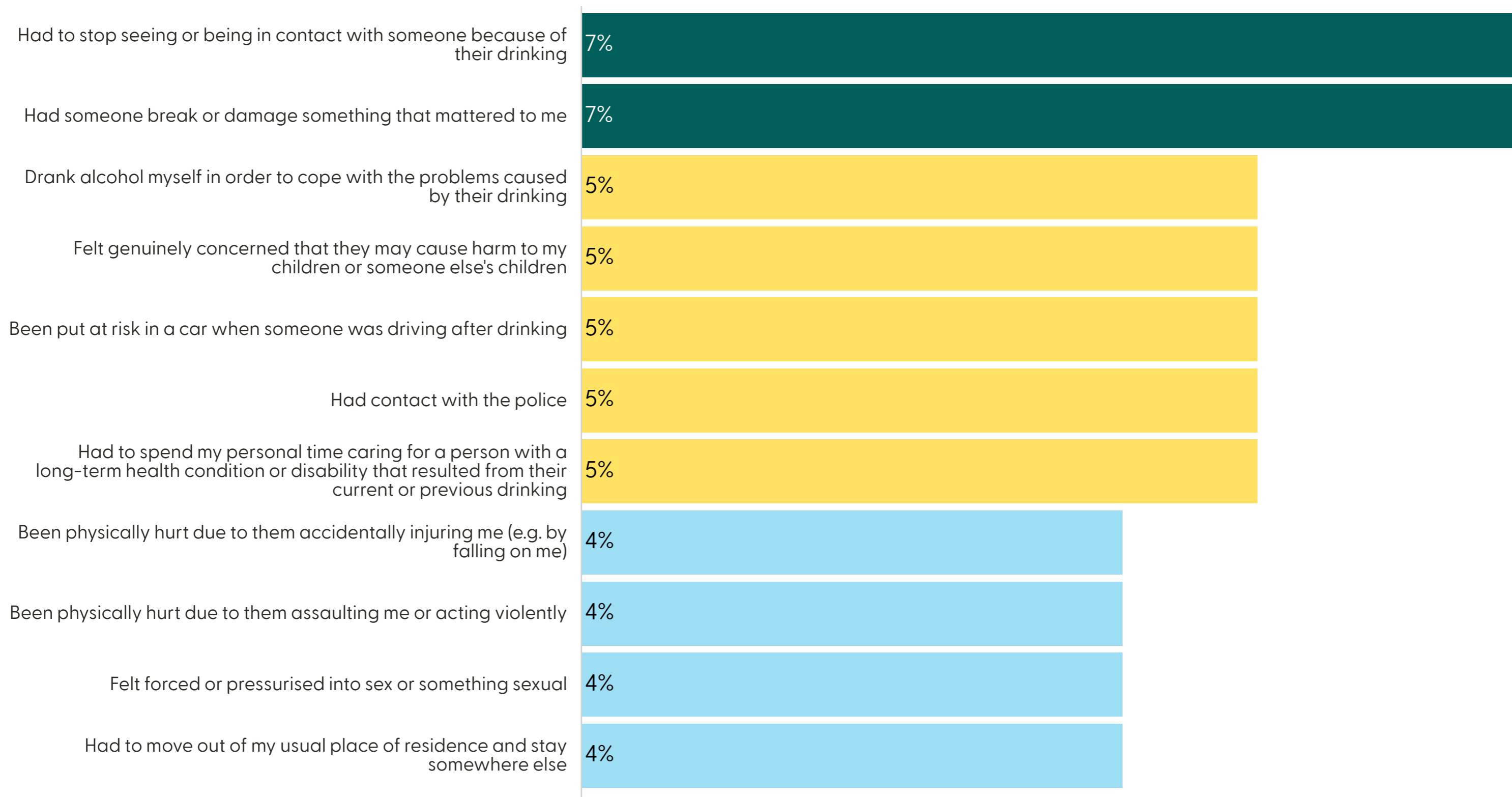
Significant differences...



Because of someone else's drinking, how often in the last 12 months have you ever...? Base: all UK adults (n=6,318)

What other ways have people been impacted by other people's drinking?

All other ways that someone else's drinking has had an impact (% ever in last 12 months)



These impacts due to other people's drinking were less frequently selected by UK adults than those highlighted on p41



Because of someone else's drinking, how often in the last 12 months have you ever...? Base: all UK adults (n=6,318)

Deprivation and the impact of other people's drinking

Deprivation levels do not affect whether someone is concerned about another's drinking. But those living in the most deprived areas are more likely to have felt the impact of someone else's drinking in the following ways:



Kept awake due to noise or disruption

10% of those in the most deprived areas have felt this at least once a month, compared to 4% in the least deprived areas



Let down by someone due to them failing to do something that they were counting on

19% of those in the most deprived areas have felt this at least once in the last 12 months, compared to 13% in the least deprived areas



Felt physically threatened

11% of those in the most deprived areas have felt this at least once in the last 12 months, compared to 7% in the least deprived areas



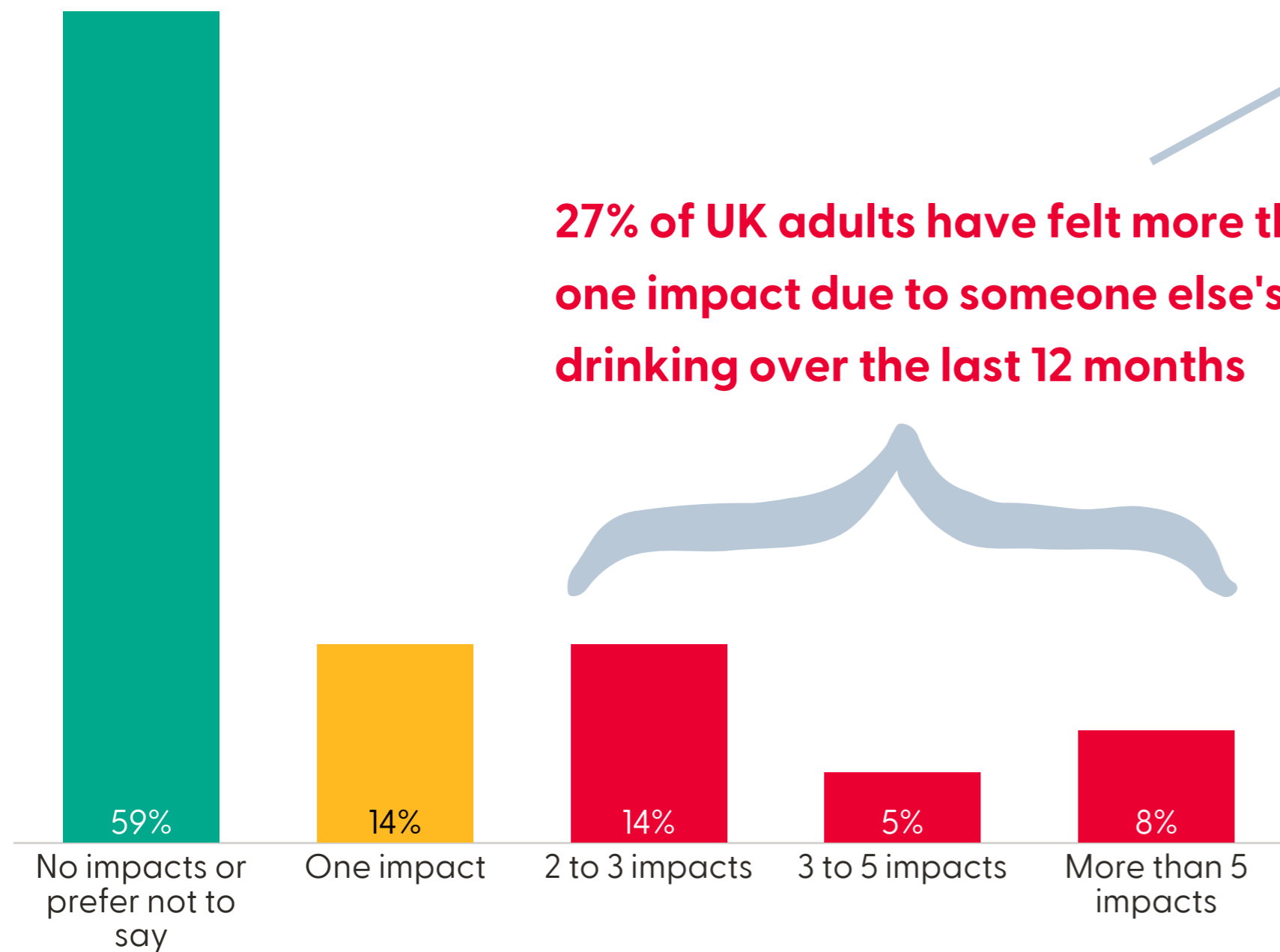
Had contact with the police

8% of those in the most deprived areas reported this at least once in the last 12 months, compared to 3% in the least deprived areas

Drinking can impact on other people in multiple ways

Two thirds of UK adults who have felt an impact due to someone else's drinking, identify multiple impacts

Number of impacts identified due to someone else's drinking (from a pre-defined list of 18 different impacts)



27% of UK adults have felt more than one impact due to someone else's drinking over the last 12 months



Who is more likely to have felt multiple impacts due to someone else's drinking?



Those concerned about someone else's drinking

Particularly if they are concerned about a partner/ex-partner (68% experienced multiple impacts) or a parent/guardian (64%)



Living with friends/housemates

49% of UK adults living with housemates have experienced multiple impacts, compared to 24% who live alone



18 to 34 year olds

40% of 18 to 34 year olds have experienced multiple impacts, compared to 16% of those aged 55+



Number of impacts of drinking on others. Base: all UK adults (n=6,318)

Qualitative research found that people's lives are often impacted in many different ways by someone else's drinking



Lisa's story

Age: 45-54

Region: Scotland

SEG: C1C2

Person causing impact:
Brother

Lisa* lives with her husband, her two older children and her brother. Her brother has an alcohol dependency/addiction and regularly goes on 'drinking benders' where he will go missing. Her brother has had to move in with Lisa so she can look after him.

Most significant impacts on Lisa:



Living with constant stress and worry



Impact on her husband and children



Time and money spent looking for him



Time and money spent looking after him

“ The worst thing for me is that I think I am just going to find him dead one day. The worry is absolutely terrible. You never know what the day is going to bring. It drains you. Physically and mentally, it can really really drain you.

“ If it gets to 11pm and he's not home, the worry starts. I don't sleep, I get up first thing, get the bus and start looking in all the pubs, start making phone calls. Sometimes we find him, sometimes we don't.

“ He wouldn't be able to cope [living in his own house]. I have to pay his bills. I don't really think about it, but I suppose I am having to run somebody else's life for them.

**Names have been changed to protect identity*



Living with constant stress or anxiety caused by others' drinking can be exhausting and impact on many aspects of life

The cumulative effect of living with the impact from other people's drinking can be very harmful which often goes unrecognised by those causing the harm.

Worry about what their mental and physical health

Several participants have had friends/relatives threaten to harm themselves or make suicide attempts when drunk. Others worry about the impact of their friend/relative's drinking on their physical health.

Difficult to concentrate on work/family

Stress caused by worrying about friends/relatives who drink excessively can make it difficult to focus on other aspects of life.

Never knowing what will happen and when

Participants of those with alcoholic relatives in particular spoke of the unpredictability of their relatives' behaviour and of feeling constantly 'on guard'.

“ The first time my dad tried to commit suicide I was a wee boy. Then he's tried it twice again when he was drunk.

“ When I was working, the stress of it all, trying to be the breadwinner and bring up a child plus having to deal with the fallout of an alcoholic husband..

“ You can never live in peace. Even when things are going great, you are thinking, till when. You could walk out the door to do your shopping on a normal day, and come back to a drunk.

How people's drinking impacts on others

Qualitative findings on impact

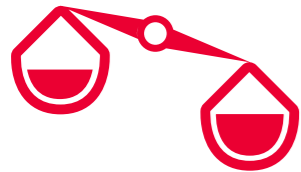
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How people's drinking impacts on others: **what to look out for**



When it comes to partners, close friends and family, any impact from **occasional drunken behaviour is usually accepted** (unless extreme); it is when someone else's drinking has a regular impact that it causes the most problems



When people are binge drinking, **there is often a 'tipping point'** where behaviour changes and people become unpleasant, emotional or aggressive



The qualitative research also **revealed some wider impacts** from the drinking of partners, close friends or family, including a negative impact on children, work/studies and own health

Occasional drunk anti-social behaviour is often accepted; it is when this has a regular impact that it causes most problems



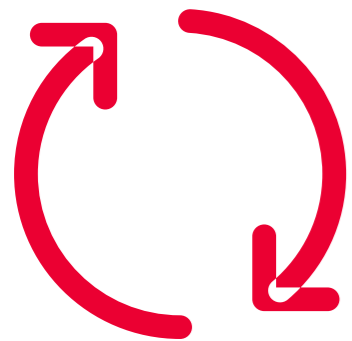
From the qualitative research, it appears that drinking in moderation does not often have a negative impact on others and the impact that is caused by occasional binge drinking is generally seen as acceptable/negligible. It is when other people are drinking to excess on a regular basis that the impact is most often felt.



The boundaries of social acceptability become blurred when people are drunk: many behaviours that would not be socially acceptable when sober are considered more acceptable when people are drunk

Drunken behaviours, such as arguments, needing to be looked after, breaking something etc. are often 'explained away' if they occur on an infrequent basis

“ You have to look after drunk friends quite a lot, but it's a two-way street. But if that happened continuously I would get annoyed but it's not that common an occurrence. I know they have done it for me.



It is only when drunken anti-social / unpleasant behaviour starts to impact on others on a frequent basis that it starts to be considered unacceptable

Qualitative research revealed that when people are binge drinking there is often a 'tipping point' where behaviour changes

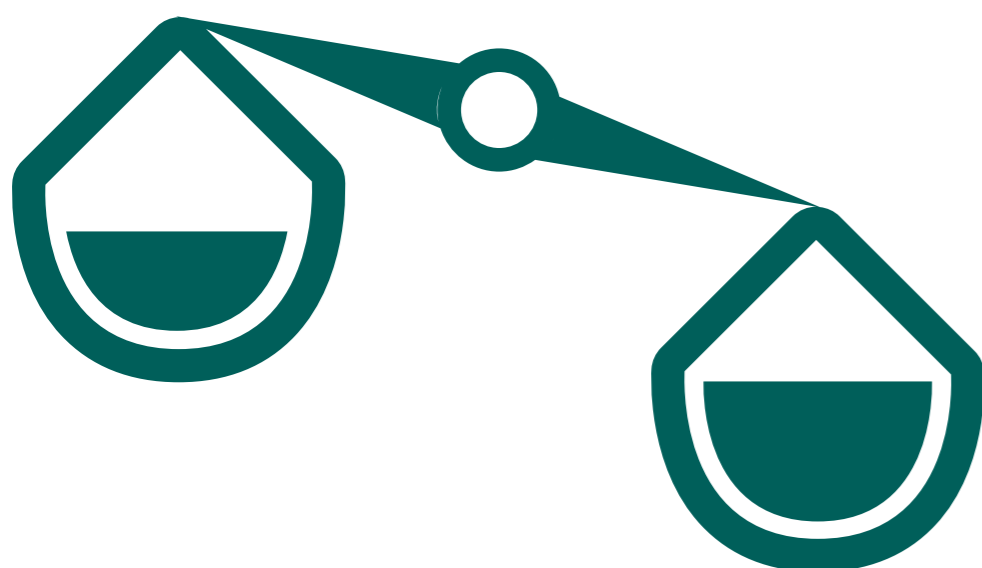


Although not everyone who drinks to excess goes on to have an impact on others, all qualitative participants who have experienced negative impacts from the drinking of friends/relatives described how their behaviour worsened once they had drunk too much.

Change in behaviour

Many qualitative participants spoke of friends/family whose behaviour starts to change when they drink to excess and they become:

- Aggressive, argumentative, nasty
- Morose, upset and emotional
- Self-centred
- Unable to listen or be reasoned with



“ My dad doesn't argue when he's been drinking, but he will start making snarky comments. It doesn't have to be a shouting match for you not to feel comfortable sitting next to him on the sofa.

“ My dad is really quite emotionally shut down when he's sober and he gets really emotional when he is drunk. He gets to a point then starts bringing up the past, the way he remembers stuff. He will either be feeling sorry for himself or be blaming me. Then half the time he forgets what he said and what I said and won't talk about it when he's sober. It's frustrating.

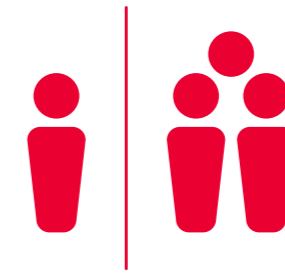
“ I don't think she realises how damaging the comments can be. When she's been drinking, it's like there is no filter. She will say things and it doesn't seem to matter what the consequences are.

It is not just when people are drunk; the impact continues with the hangover

The impact from drinking often extends to the next day, when people are described as being:



- Tired
- Lazy
- Inattentive
- Selfish
- Poor company
- Unwilling to accept/discuss their behaviour



When experienced on a regular basis, this can cause significant damage to relationships

“ My husband's never done much with the kids. He can't be bothered. I'm the one at the weekend taking them to the park when he's all grumpy with a hangover. It's not teaching the kids the right way to behave. Not just with the drinking but being grumpy and short-tempered the next day.

“ You always get people coming into work with a hangover saying, 'don't speak to me yet, I need a coffee, just give me an hour or two.

The range of repercussions from other people's drinking



Whilst some of the impact from other people's drinking can be one-off and obvious, such as a physical assault, other impacts may be less evident and more insidious and can impact on people on an on-going basis.

Mild/moderate impact

E.g. Cutting an evening short to take a friend home

Short-term

E.g. Missing work after having to take someone to A&E

Practical

E.g. Partner being unable to pick up children

Significant impact

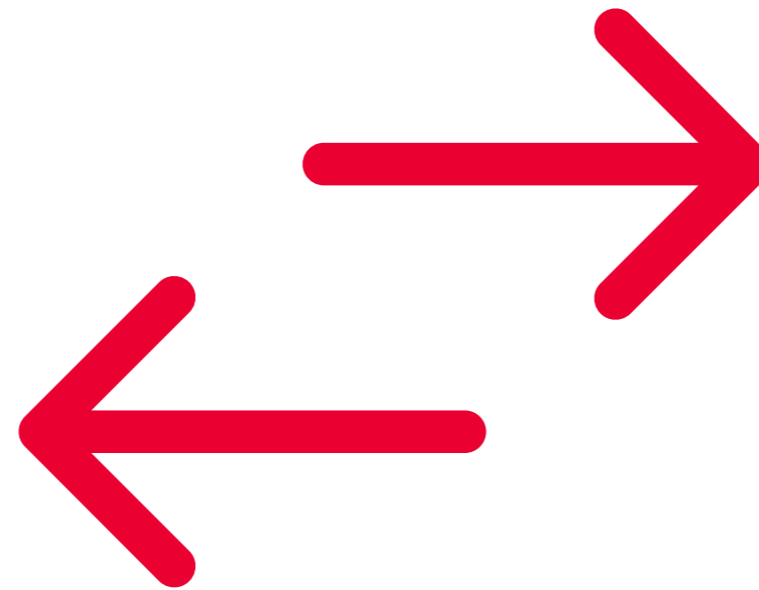
E.g. Having to give up work to care for alcoholic partner

Long-term

E.g. Exhaustion from never knowing what each day might bring

Emotional

E.g. Constant worry about whether someone is causing themselves harm through drinking



The impact of drinking on relationships can be significant and far reaching



Several participants said people's behaviour when drinking had led to a **complete breakdown of relationship** (partnerships and friendships)



It often **changes the nature of relationships**, i.e. from brother or friend to more of a parent/child relationship



Agreeing on how to deal with the behaviour of the person drinking to excess can cause **tension between wider family/friends**

A 'ripple effect': the impact of one person's drinking can reach many others

- Partner
- Parents
- Siblings
- Children
- Friends
- Extended family
- Friends/relatives of people most impacted
- Work colleagues



Focus on: Feeling uncomfortable/anxious at a social occasion



What more do we know from the Monitor data?

Certain groups are **more likely to have felt uncomfortable or anxious at a social occasion** in the last 12 months because of someone else's drinking:

- **Females** (23% compared to 20% of males)
- People who feel **alcohol is important to their social life** (27% compared to 19% of those who don't feel it alcohol is important to their social life)
- People who **both drink and take drugs** (47% compared to 18% of those that don't take drugs)
- People who say they are **not satisfied with their life** as a whole (26% compared to 18% of those satisfied)



Participants in the **qualitative research** identified common **behaviours** that cause them to feel uncomfortable when socialising:



Becoming loud or argumentative



Fighting / being aggressive



Becoming overly emotional



My extended family are really big drinkers and at every social occasion, their behaviour gets really rough. A punch will get thrown, people are slammed up against the wall, glasses smashing everywhere. I've stopped going to any functions they are going to.



My friend has massive arguments with her partner, and it's embarrassing. She shouldn't be acting like that in public. She overreacts to everything when she's drunk.



Every time my best friend drinks, it gets problematic. She gets confrontational or really emotional. I have had to stop seeing her for drinks in social situations as I just feel like I am babysitting.



Uncomfortable or anxious at a social occasion



Sarah's story

Sarah* lives alone and works as a teacher. She has a group of close friends who drink excessively when out socialising and whose behaviour then causes Sarah to feel anxious and uncomfortable.



Change in behaviour:
Argumentative

“ Every time they go out, someone seems to **fall out**, say things they then regret or have an **argument** with other people in the pub.



Immediate impact: Causes tensions and ruins the evening

“ **It ruins the night**, the **tension** is not nice, and even the next day, people are trying to get you to pick sides. The group chat can take a good four or five days to get going because no-one will be speaking.



Longer-term impact: Social anxiety and isolation

“ I get a terrible **social anxiety** before going out because I know that something's going to happen, and even if something doesn't happen, I'm worrying about it, waiting for that. And I sometimes worry parents from school might see me with them. There's been times that **I just won't go out** because I can't be bothered with any kind of hassle.

Age: 25-34

Region: Scotland

SEG: AB

Persons causing impact:
Close friends

*Names have been changed to protect identity

Focus on: Being kept awake due to noise or disruption



What more do we know from the Monitor data?

Certain groups are **more likely to have been kept awake due to noise or disruption** in the last 12 months from someone who has been drinking:

- **Adults in the most deprived areas** (27% of those in most deprived areas compared to 19% of those in the least deprived areas)
- People who both **drink and take drugs** (39% compared to 19% of those that don't take drugs)
- People who say they are **not satisfied with their life** as a whole (28% compared to 17% of those satisfied)



Common **situations** where people have been kept awake from the **qualitative research**:



Late night phone calls/messages



Having to go out to find/pick someone up



Staying up to look after someone



Snoring and/or coming to bed late



I've had lots of middle of the night calls – come and get me calls, suicide attempts, abusive calls, blind drunk, you effed off and left me, you did this to me, you caused this. It's absolutely exhausting.



I know when my sister's drinking because I get stupid WhatsApp messages at one o'clock in the morning. The phone will ping and I will pick it up thinking it is something urgent, but it's just some stupid video.



My husband will end up falling asleep on the sofa and I can hear him snoring from the bedroom. Then he'll stumble into bed at 3 or 4 in the morning and I don't get a good night's sleep.

Focus on: Being let down



What more do we know from the Monitor data?

Certain groups are **more likely to have been let down by someone** failing to do something because of their drinking in the last 12 months:

- **Females** (16% compared to 14% of males)
- **People who both drink and take drugs** (37% compared to 12% of those that don't take drugs)
- **People who say they are not satisfied with their life as a whole** (21% compared to 12% of those satisfied)

Several **qualitative** participants reported someone had often let them down either by:

- not keeping promises made when drunk
- not fulfilling commitments due to drinking or hangovers

Linda's story

Linda's* husband drinks excessively and this has led to a breakdown in their relationship. While reflecting on the impact of her husband's drinking over the years, she could recall many instances when her husband's drinking led him to let both her and their children down, either because he was drinking or because he was hungover.

“ One of our children needed someone to be home when they came home from school. When I was at work, my husband would sometimes go out drinking instead. I couldn't rely on him to be there. I ended up leaving my job.

“ He would always be letting the kids down. He would promise to do the referring at our son's football but wouldn't turn up, or say he would pick the girls up from dancing and just not turn up.

**Names have been changed to protect identity*

Age: 55 +

Region: Northern Ireland

SEG: DE

Persons causing impact:
Spouse

Focus on: Been emotionally hurt or neglected



What more do we know from the Monitor data?

Certain groups are **more likely to have been emotionally hurt or neglected** in the last 12 months because of someone else's drinking:

- **Females** (15% compared to 12% of males)
- People who both **drink and take drugs** (36% compared to 11% of those that don't take drugs)
- People who say they are **not satisfied with their life** as a whole (19% compared to 11% of those satisfied)



Almost all **qualitative** participants had been emotionally hurt or neglected due to the drinking of a partner, close friend or relative, e.g.:



Feeling hurt



Feeling ignored or lonely



Having to tolerate unfair treatment



Feeling guilty/to blame



My sister, when she has been drinking, she'll drag things up that happened when we were children that I don't want to discuss. And she'll come out with a really nasty comment, something deeply personal, or something really vindictive.



I felt lonely in my partner's company [...] You can't have a deep relationship with someone who is always drinking.



Sometimes I blame myself you know, maybe for not standing up to my dad more and say to him that he really needs to stop drinking.

Qualitative research also revealed some wider impacts from other people's drinking



The drinking of close friends/relatives can also have a significant impact on...



Children



Work/studies



Own health and drinking

Participants say that when strangers are drunk, they can be more likely to make...



Racist remarks



Homophobic remarks



Unwanted sexual/sexist remarks

Regular heavy drinking of parents/close relatives impacts on children in many different ways



Although not a key focus of the qualitative research, several participants mentioned the many and varied negative impacts that the drinking of a close relative, and particularly that of a parent, has on children



Participants spoke of how children living with a parent(s) who drinks heavily can often be:

- living in an environment where there are constant arguments
- seeing/experiencing abusive behaviour
- ignored
- living with unpredictable behaviour
- constantly worried for parent(s)
- unable to rely on parent(s)
- unwilling/unable to have friends over
- embarrassed by / teased over parent's behaviour
- going without extras due to a lack of money
- asked to take sides / keep secrets

“ He went to court and fought for access to his kids, but when he has them, he just takes them to the pub buys them some crisps and a soft drink and gives them a tablet to play on.

“ I remember as a wee boy, my dad would come home from work and start drinking. We would end up lined up being interrogated. 'What did your mum or grandma say when you saw her? Don't tell them I did this, said that.'

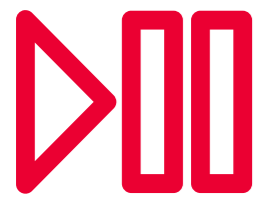
“ My father was a big drinker, and I remember my mum was always on at him. He would be falling asleep on the settee or on the floor. He was never available for us. He would never be able to give us a lift somewhere.

“ The impact on my daughter's mental health has been awful. Growing up in a family with an alcohol addiction, the constant need to be on your guard, never being able to relax. She's a teenager now and she just can't bear it anymore. She just wants a normal dad, like you see in photos.

Impact on work/studies



Many participants have had their work or studies impacted by another person's drinking. This may be a short-term or one-off impact, or could have an ongoing or longer-term impact.



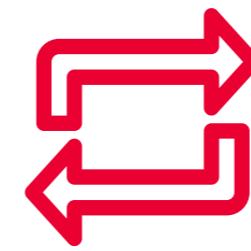
One-off/short term impact

Examples include:

- Missing work after looking after a drunk friend all night
- Covering for a hungover colleague
- Having to leave work to deal with an incident
- Disturbed sleep impacting work/studies the next day
- Losing time trying to organise support/contacting authorities
- Taking time off due to accidental injuries caused by a drunk friend

“ It mostly affected my studies because we wasted a lot of time speaking to uni and trying to sort him out.

“ There have been people at my work who I know for a fact have a hangover and I've carried them, like when they have nearly fallen asleep at work.



Longer-term impact

Examples include:

- Unable to concentrate on work/studies due to stress and anxiety
- Having to reduce hours/give up work to cover childcare as partner cannot be relied on
- Having to give up work altogether to care for someone due to their drinking
- Feeling pressurised to drink yourself to 'fit in'
- Lost customers due to behaviour of hungover staff

“ I was in business with my dad. Any small issue will be blown out of proportion and in front of customers. He wouldn't necessarily be drunk, but he would be rushing and wishing away the time so he could get home to drink. So anything that was in his way would be a big deal. The staff couldn't stand working with him and it was detrimental to the business.

Impact on own health and drinking behaviour

Several qualitative participants feel that the drinking of a partner, close friend or relative has had a negative impact on their own health and drinking behaviours



In the 2022 Monitor, **5%** of all UK adults say they have **drank alcohol themselves in order to cope with the problems caused by someone else's drinking** in the last 12 months

The qualitative research found that another person's drinking has impacted participants' health in other ways, including:

- Negatively impacting their mental health
- Over-eating or smoking more to cope with stress
- Eating less healthily if their partner is drinking
- More likely to drink alcohol, not necessarily to cope with the situation, but because the other person is drinking



Whilst some participants in the **qualitative** research did say they have drunk themselves to cope, others said the opposite is true and that they have been put off drinking alcohol after seeing the impact it has had.

“ I'll have been saying to myself all day that I am not going to have a drink, but it's difficult when he sits there opening cans.[...] We're both overweight but once you've had a drink all healthy plans go out of the window. My husband will be like 'let's just get a takeaway'.

“ When my brother's missing on a bender, I will be up and down to my front door, smoking constantly.

Participants say they are more likely to hear offensive remarks when in situations where people have been drinking



Racist remarks

“ I’m in a big minority here being mixed race. If I’m out on the town, you will get some guys who are drunk shouting abusive, racist comments. You just put it down to ignorance and them being drunk.

“ When I am out drinking, I get quite a lot of racial slurs, it definitely happens more when I am in drunk settings. And people have tried to approach me for fights too, yeah, we get a lot of shit.

Homophobic remarks

“ My friend and I are both gay and the last time we went out, some guys nearby were talking about us and said a homophobic remark in passing conversation. My friend, he got very, very annoyed and went up to them; we ended up being asked to leave.

Unwanted sexual/sexist remarks

“ Some young lads made some crude comments to one of our young female barstaff the other day and she was upset, she didn’t know how to deal with it. It offended her.

“ In a student community, everyone knows everyone, and we would hear stories about our housemate being creepy, getting weird towards girls when he was drunk. And it would reflect badly on us because we lived with him.

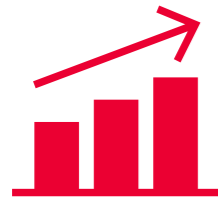
Impact of drinking on oneself

High risk drinking and other risky behaviours

Take me to...

[Introducing the research](#) | [Highlights](#) | [Drinking in the UK in 2022](#) | [Why do people drink?](#) | [Impact of drinking on others](#) | [How people's drinking impacts on others](#) | [Impact of drinking on oneself](#) | [Final reflections](#) | [About Drinkaware](#); [About PS Research](#) | [Appendix](#)

Impact of drinking on oneself: **what to look out for**



High risk drinking is rising based on the full AUDIT alcohol harm assessment



High risk drinking is more likely in certain demographics and circumstances: this includes males, drinkers in the north of England, areas of deprivation, younger people aged 18 to 34 and adults from ethnic minority groups



Many of these high risk drinkers are also more likely to report that they **struggle to stop drinking once they start** and feel guilt or remorse after drinking



High risk drinkers are more likely than other drinkers and non-drinkers to **take drugs, smoke and gamble**

Introducing the alcohol risk AUDIT screening test

The Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT)³ is a series of questions used to understand someone's alcohol use.

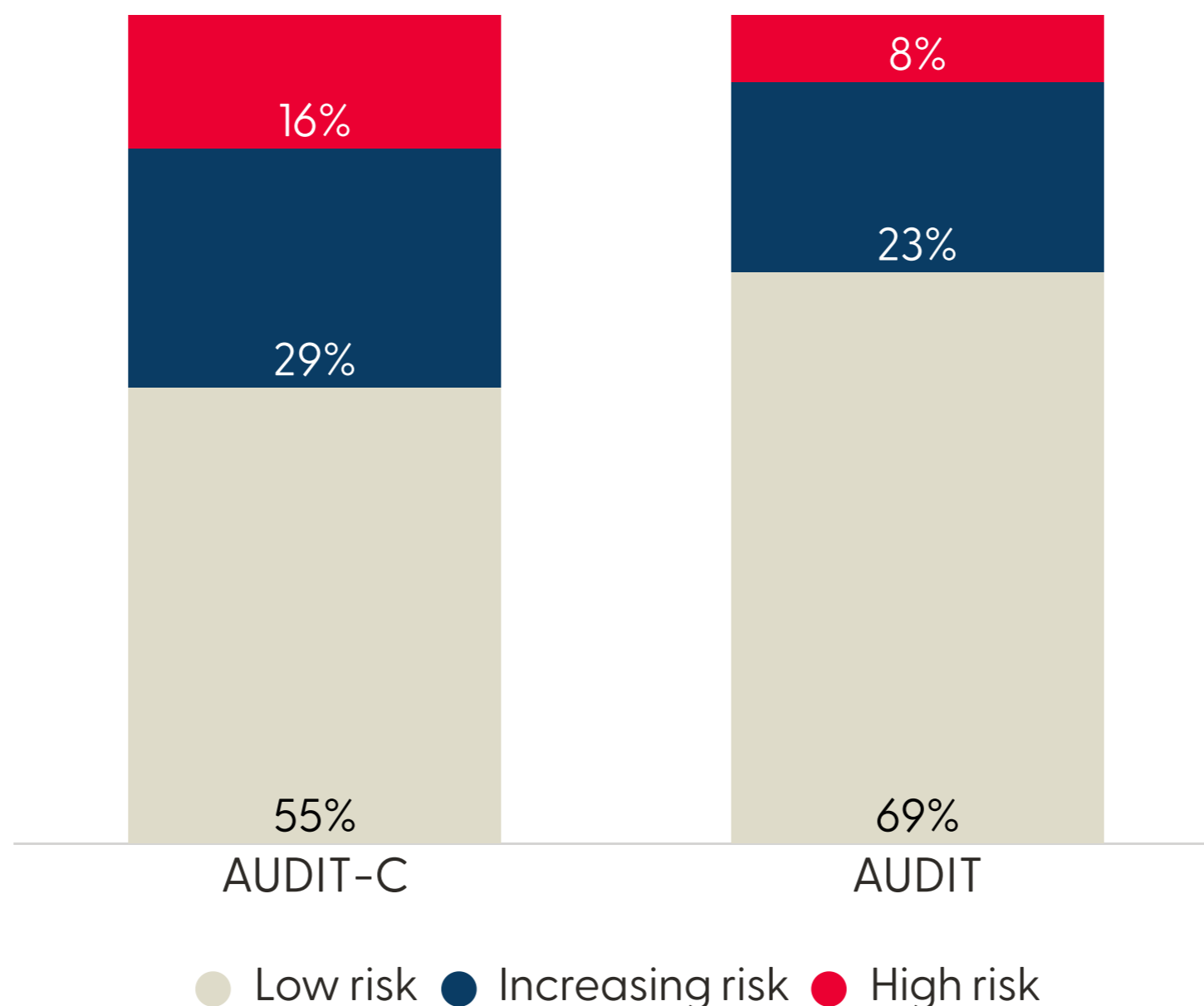
The AUDIT was developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a simple, 10-question method of screening for excessive drinking and to assist in brief assessment.

The AUDIT assesses three domains: alcohol intake, dependence, and adverse consequences. Each item receives a score of 0–4, with a total possible score of 40.

A score of 0–7 indicates low risk, 8–15 indicates increasing risk, 16–19 indicates higher risk and a score of 20 or more indicates possible dependence.

The **AUDIT-C** is a shortened version of the 10-item AUDIT and asks the three consumption-related questions only. A score of 0 to 4 indicates low risk; 5 to 7 indicates increasing risk; 8 to 10 indicates higher risk; and 11 to 12 indicates possible dependence.

How levels of risk amongst drinkers compare between AUDIT-C screening and the full AUDIT assessment



● Low risk ● Increasing risk ● High risk

Base: all UK adults who drink alcohol (n=5428)



AUDIT Risk Classifications

Low risk

Low risk of causing future harm to themselves

Increasing risk

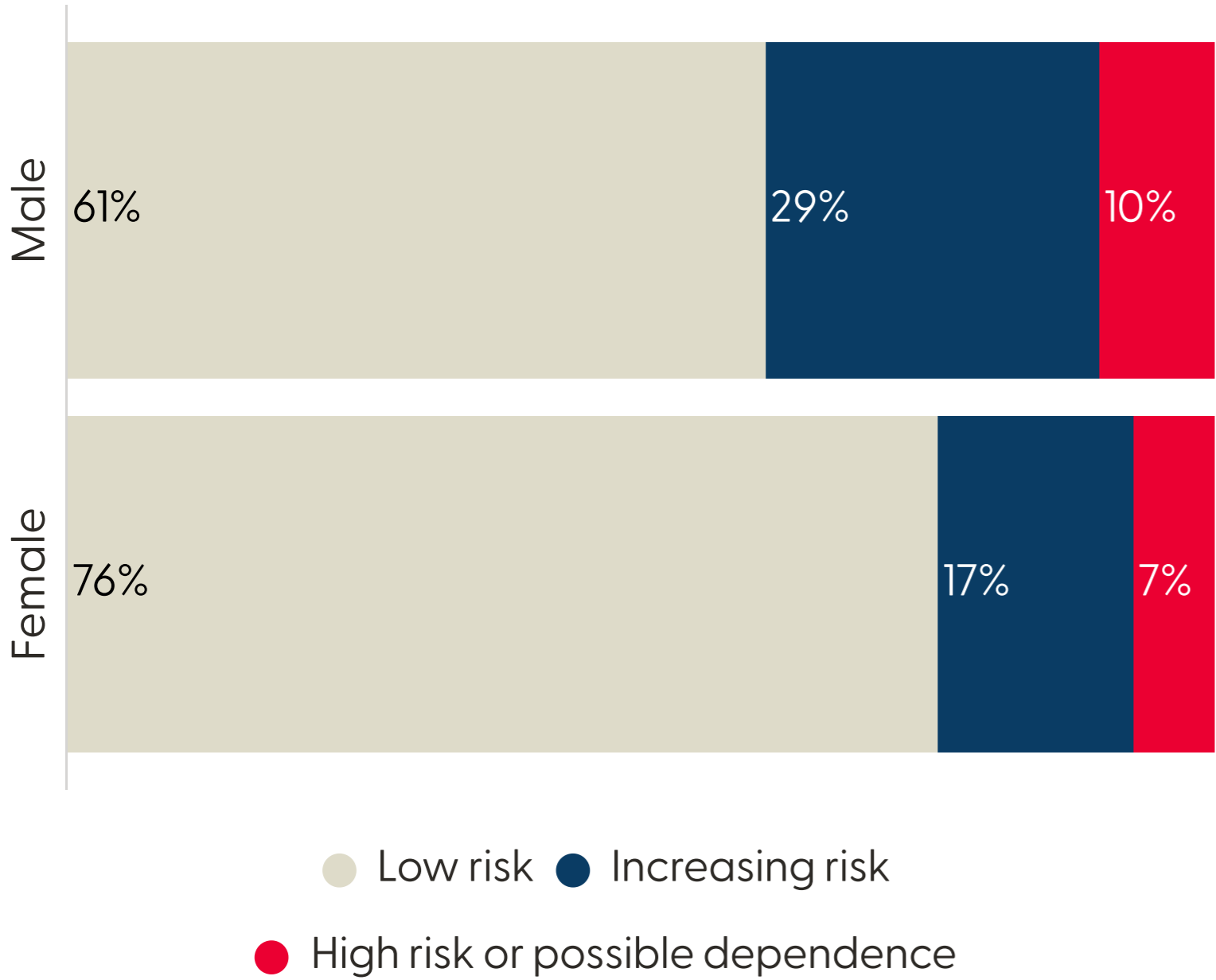
Drinking at a level that increases the risk of damaging their health and could lead to serious medical conditions

High risk (or possible dependence)

This level of drinking has the greatest risk of health problems

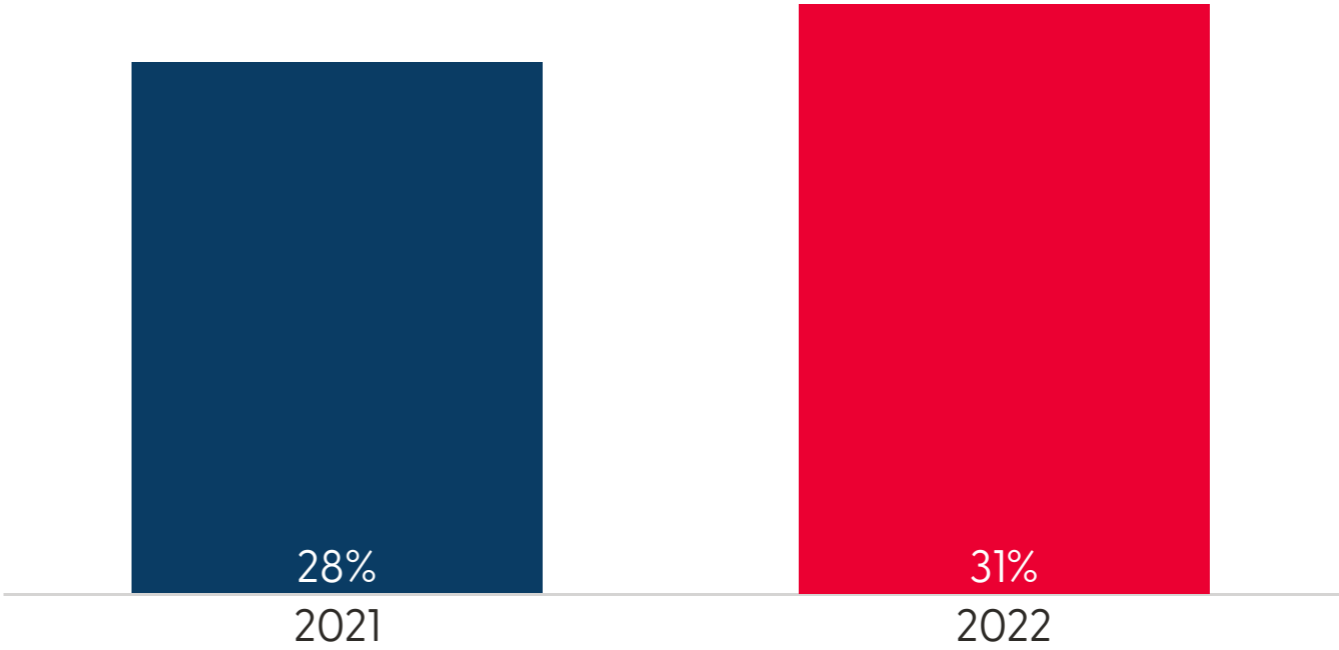
Male drinkers are more likely to be drinking to risky levels

Male drinkers are more likely to be high or increasing risk on the full AUDIT than female drinkers



The proportion of drinkers who are drinking to increasing or high risk levels has increased over the last year

% of UK drinkers who are increasing risk, high risk or possible dependence (based on the full AUDIT assessment)



And the biggest increase in high risk drinkers over the last year has been the 18 to 34 age group

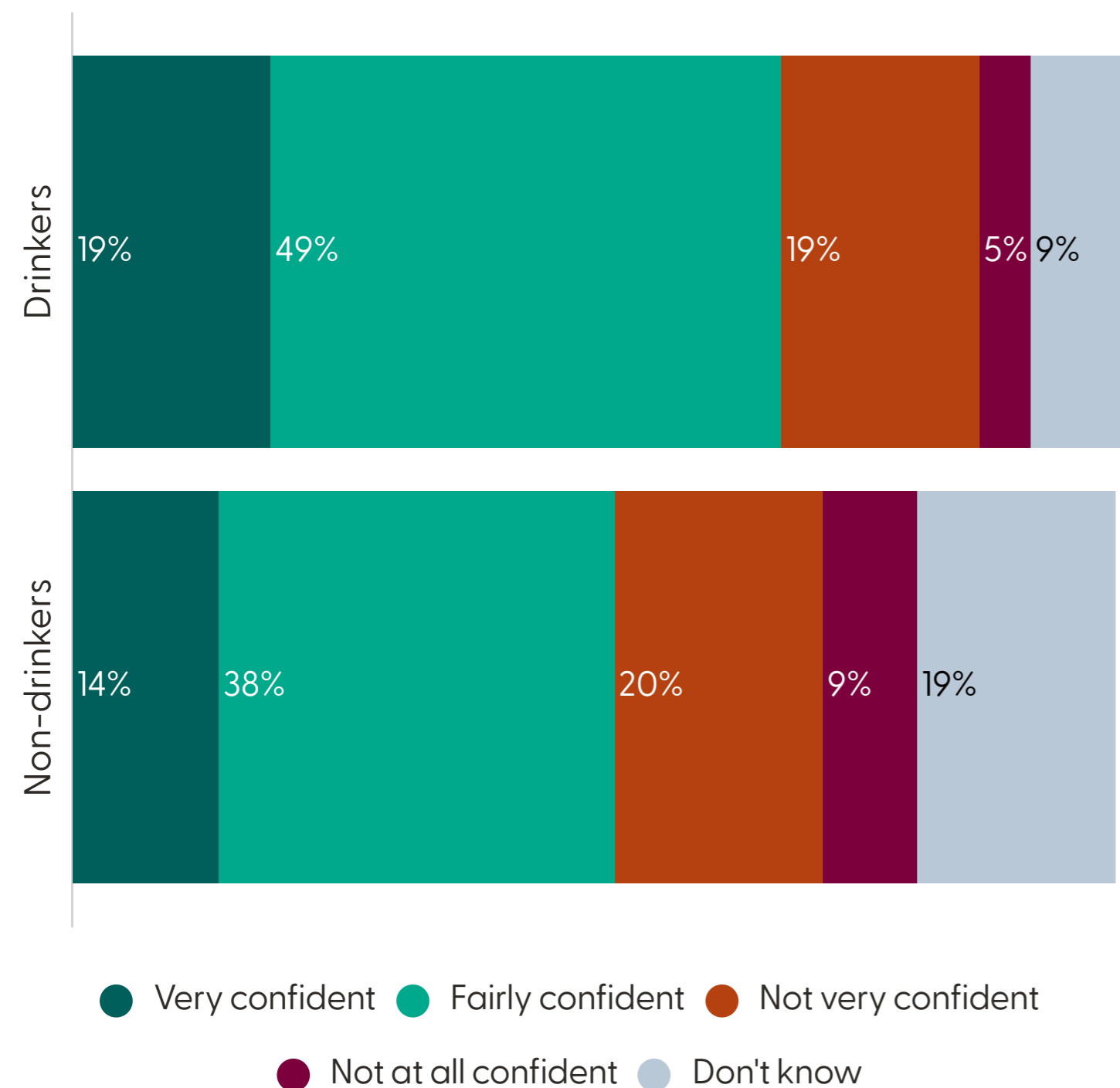
14% of 18-34 year old drinkers are high risk or possibly dependent drinkers, up from 10% in 2021



AUDIT. Base: all UK adults who drink alcohol, Males (n=2640); Females (n=2788)

But males are less likely to access services if they need support

Drinkers are more confident that they would know how to access help and advice than non-drinkers



Who are drinkers most and least likely to go to for support or advice about alcohol?



Most likely to go to...

% very or fairly likely

- General Practitioner (GP): 57%
- Alcohol charity or organisation: 55%
- Another health professional: 54%



Least likely to go to...

% not very or not at all likely

- Online community support (39%)
- App/digital service (38%)
- In-person support group (36%)
- Counsellor/therapist (36%)



Male drinkers are less likely to go to a number of different services for support or advice about alcohol

- 42% not very or not at all likely to use **online community support** compared to 36% of females
- 29% not very or not at all likely to go to **an alcohol charity/organisation** compared to 21% of females

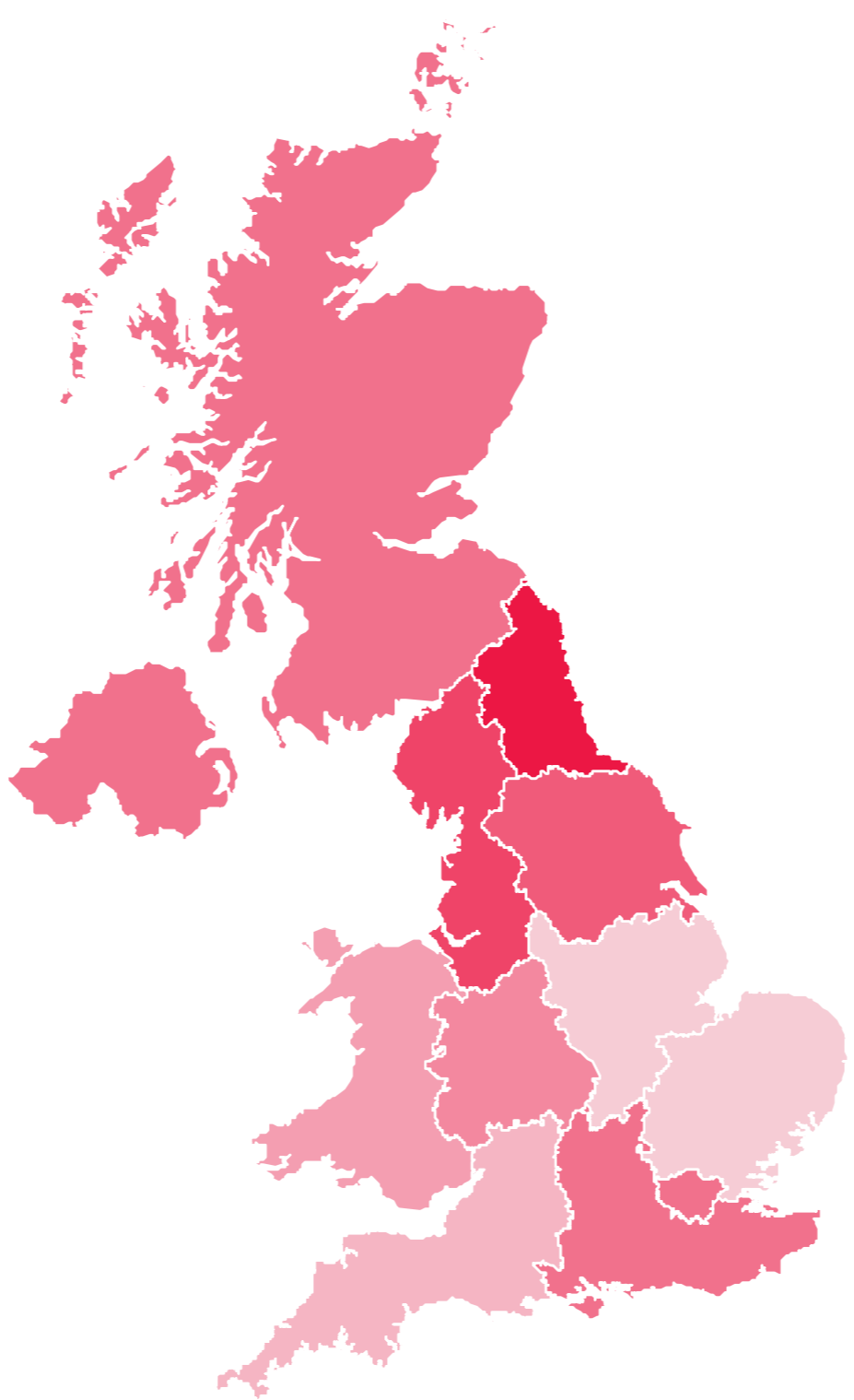
If you or somebody close to you (for example a friend or member of your family) was experiencing problems with alcohol use, how confident are you that you would know how to find and contact services or organisations providing help and advice?. Base: all UK adults (n = 6318)

Where in the UK is alcohol risk highest?

Map of UK regions showing the proportion of adult drinkers categorised as increasing, high risk or possibly dependent using the full AUDIT



31% of drinkers across England are increasing, high risk or possibly dependent based on the full AUDIT assessment, up from 28% in 2021



Risky drinking appears higher in the north of England

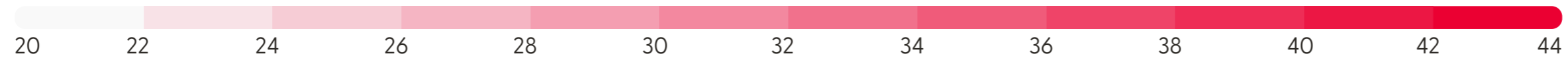
Increasing, high risk or possibly dependent drinking based on the full AUDIT assessment is highest in the north of England: 41% of drinkers in the North East and 36% in the North West compared to 25% in the East Midlands and East of England.

A third of drinkers (33%) in Northern Ireland and Scotland are increasing, high risk or possibly dependent based on the full AUDIT assessment.



Hover

Hover over a region to display data



Who appears most likely to be a high risk drinker?



Males

10% of male drinkers are high risk or possibly dependent, compared to 6% of female drinkers



18 to 34 year olds

14% of 18 to 34 year olds who drink alcohol are high risk or possibly dependent, compared to 4% of drinkers aged 55+



Ethnic minority groups

12% of drinkers from an ethnic minority background are high risk or possibly dependent, compared to 8% of white drinkers



Have a limiting health problem or disability

16% of drinkers with a health problem or disability that limits them a lot are high risk or possibly dependent, compared to 6% with no limiting health problems or disability



Live with friends or housemates

14% of drinkers who live with friends / housemates are high risk or possibly dependent, compared to 10% who live alone and 6% who live with a spouse or partner



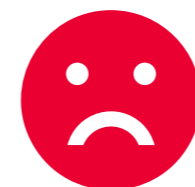
Alcohol is important to their social life

17% of drinkers who consider alcohol important to their social life are high risk or possibly dependent, compared to 5% who feel it is unimportant



Not aware of the drinking guidelines

18% of drinkers who are not aware of the drinking guidelines are high risk or possibly dependent, compared to 7% who are aware



Lower levels of satisfaction with their life

15% of drinkers who are not satisfied with their life are high risk or possibly dependent, compared to 5% of drinkers who are satisfied with their life



Smoke or take drugs

20% of drinkers who also smoke are high risk or possibly dependent, compared to 4% of drinkers who have never smoked; 30% of drinkers who also take drugs are high risk or possibly dependent, compared to 5% of drinkers who do not take drugs



All data based on the full AUDIT assessment - high risk includes possible dependence

Who is more likely to struggle to stop drinking once they start?

More than four in five (82%) UK drinkers have never found themselves unable to stop drinking once they have started

How often drinkers were unable to stop drinking after they started over the last year



Who are more likely to not be able to stop drinking once they start?

Percentages refer to proportion of UK drinkers who selected monthly or more often



18 to 34 year olds

14% compared to 4% of drinkers aged 55 or over



Live in the most deprived areas

13% of those who live in one of the most deprived areas of the UK (IMD deciles 1-2) compared to 7% who live in the least deprived areas (IMD deciles 9-10)

- Never
- Less than monthly
- Monthly or more often

 How often during the last year have you found that you were not able to stop drinking once you had started? Base: all UK adults who drink alcohol (n = 5428)

Life stages and the impact on drinking habits

We see significant differences by age across a wide range of drinking habits in this report



18 to 34

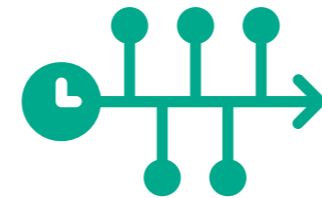
Younger age groups are more likely to drink the **least often** or **not at all**

BUT

They are more likely to **binge drink**, particularly monthly or less often

They are also more likely to identify **social reasons** as a motivation for drinking

And they are more likely to say they are **not able to stop drinking** once started



35 to 54

They **drink more often than younger adults**, although not as much as the older age group

BUT

The proportion **drinking four or more times a week has fallen** to the lowest it has ever been

And 35-44s are the age group most likely to be **concerned about someone else's drinking**



55 and over

This is the age group that drinks the **most often**, drinking on more days than anyone else

BUT

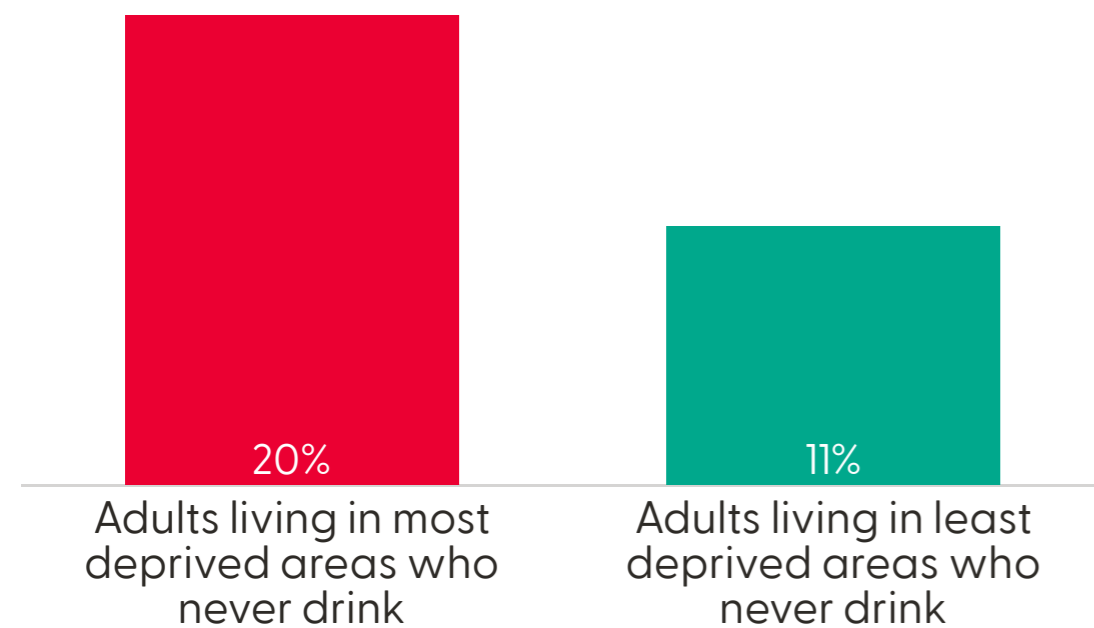
When they do drink, **they drink less**

They are also more likely to set themselves a **drinking limit** to help moderate their drinking, compared to those aged 18-34

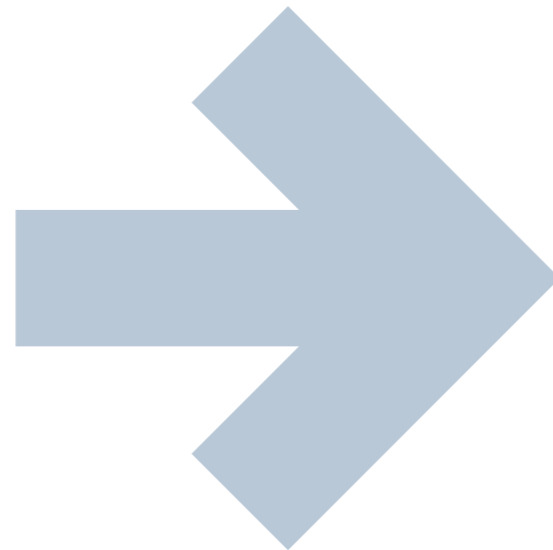
There is also a link between deprivation and high risk drinking

Findings from the 2022 Monitor support the Alcohol Harm Paradox, as they did in 2021

Adults in the most deprived areas are more likely to not drink alcohol

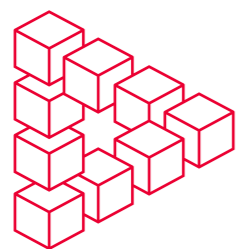
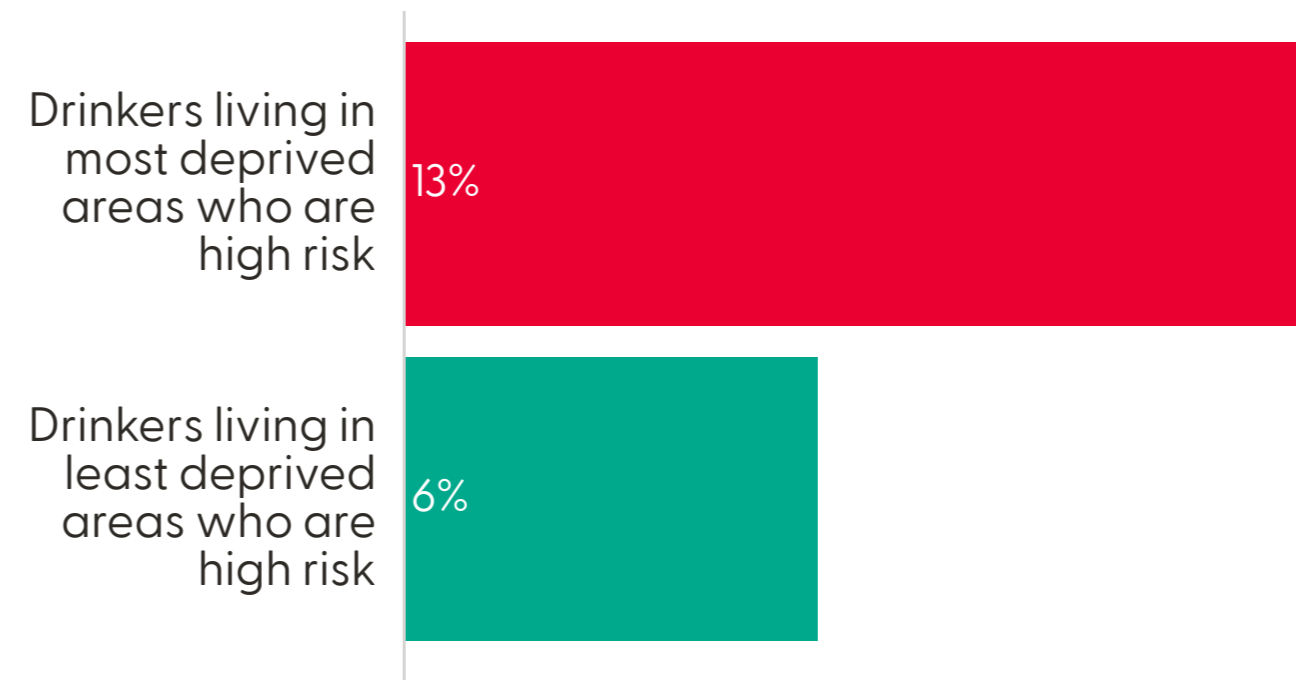


BUT...



Those that do drink are more likely to be high risk

Based on the full AUDIT assessment - high risk or possible dependence



The Alcohol Harm Paradox

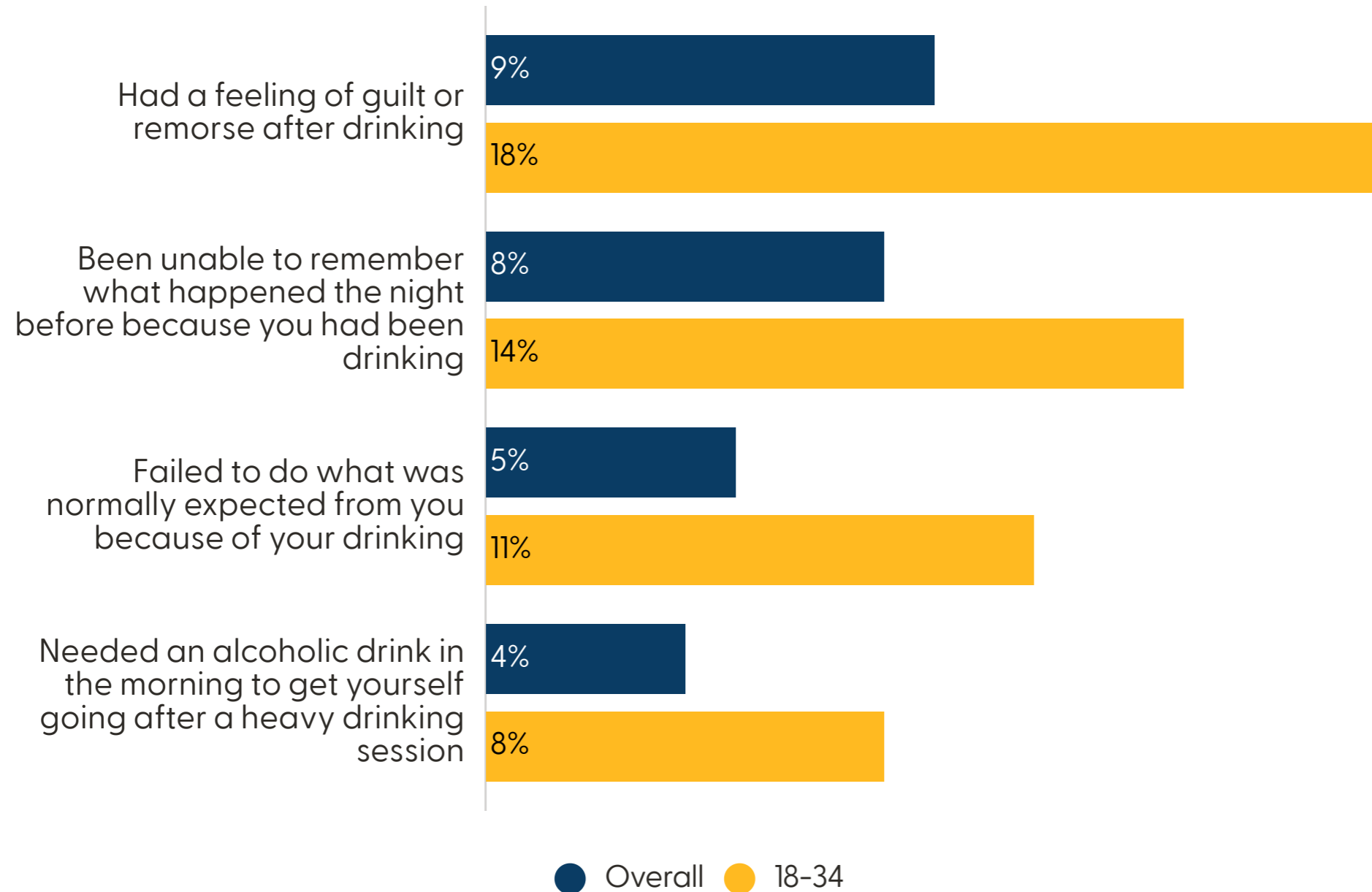
The alcohol harm paradox is the finding that people from lower socio economic groups, or more deprived neighbourhoods, suffer more harm from alcohol than those from higher socio economic groups, despite consuming the same or less alcohol.

Possible reasons given for this paradox are the combination of drinking with other unhealthy behaviours (such as smoking), differences in drinking patterns, and access to health-care resources. More information on the alcohol harm paradox can be found on [Drinkaware's website](#)¹⁰.

Feeling guilty after drinking is higher amongst younger age groups

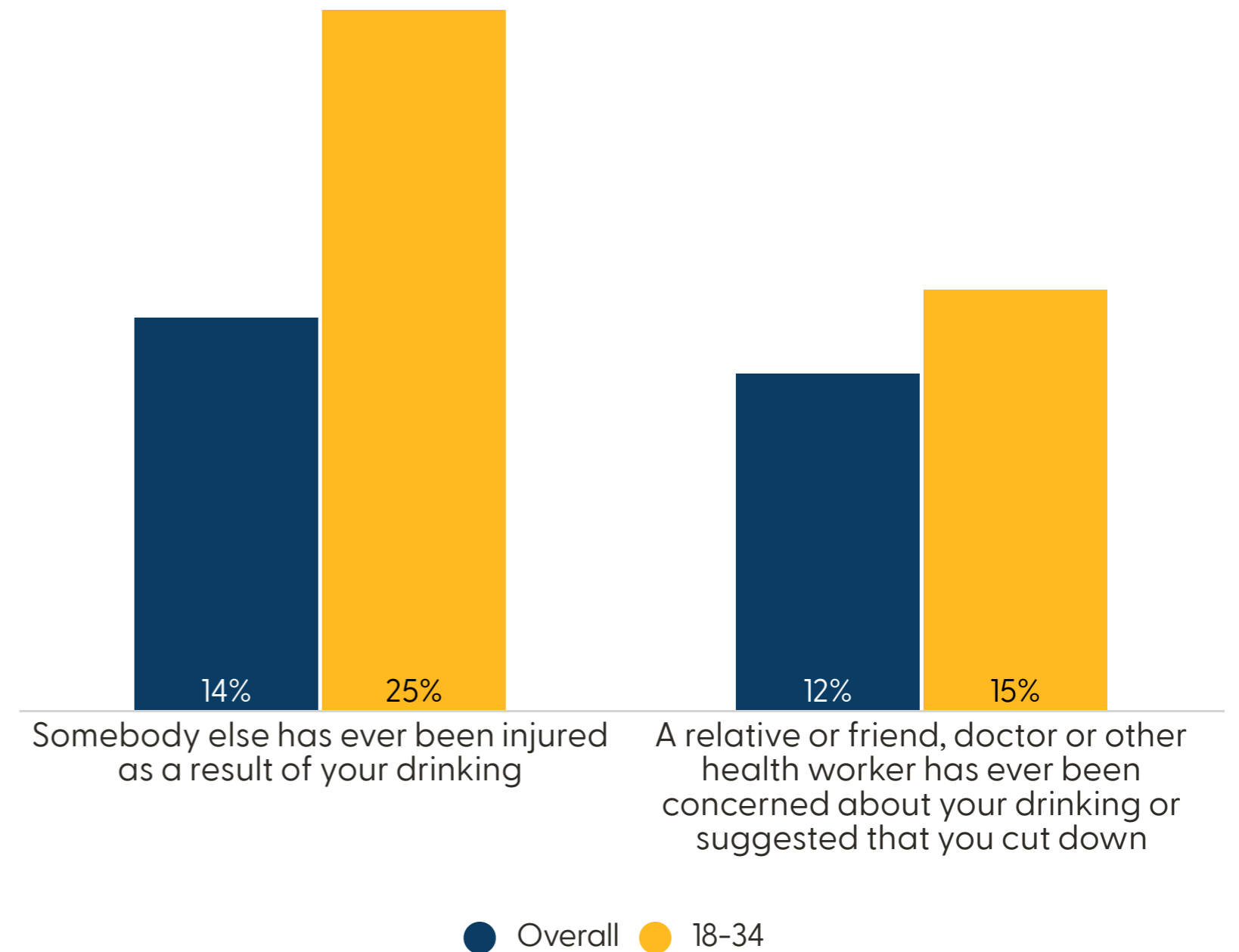
Nearly one in five drinkers aged 18 to 34 has felt guilty after drinking over the last 12 months

Questions from full AUDIT assessment (% monthly or more often over the last 12 months)



One in four drinkers aged 18 to 34 revealed somebody else has been injured as a result of their drinking

Questions from full AUDIT assessment (% ever)



AUDIT assessment questions T1-T7. Base: all UK adults who drink alcohol (n = 5,428); 18-34 drinkers (n=1,365)

High risk drinkers are more likely to drink for coping reasons

Why do they drink?

% who almost always or always drink for the following reasons (high risk or possibly dependent drinkers based on full AUDIT assessment)



Because it helps when you feel depressed or nervous

14% of high risk drinkers, compared to 1% of low risk drinkers



To forget about your problems

14% of high risk drinkers, compared to 1% of low risk drinkers



Because you like the feeling

16% of high risk drinkers, compared to 5% of low risk drinkers



65% of high risk drinkers feel it is very or fairly likely that they will have future health problems if they keep drinking to the same level

It is just 5% for low risk drinkers

Where do they drink?

% who drink in the following situations 5+ times a week (high risk or possibly dependent drinkers based on full AUDIT assessment)



Home alone

19% of high risk drinkers, compared to 2% of low risk drinkers



Several drinks at home with a partner

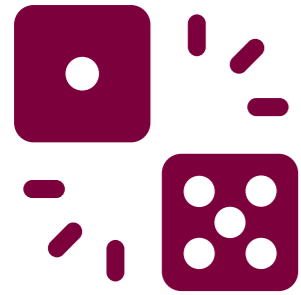
7% of high risk drinkers, compared to 1% of low risk drinkers



Getting together at yours or someone else's house

5% of high risk drinkers, compared to 0% of low risk drinkers

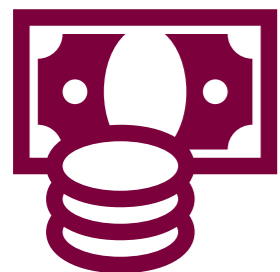
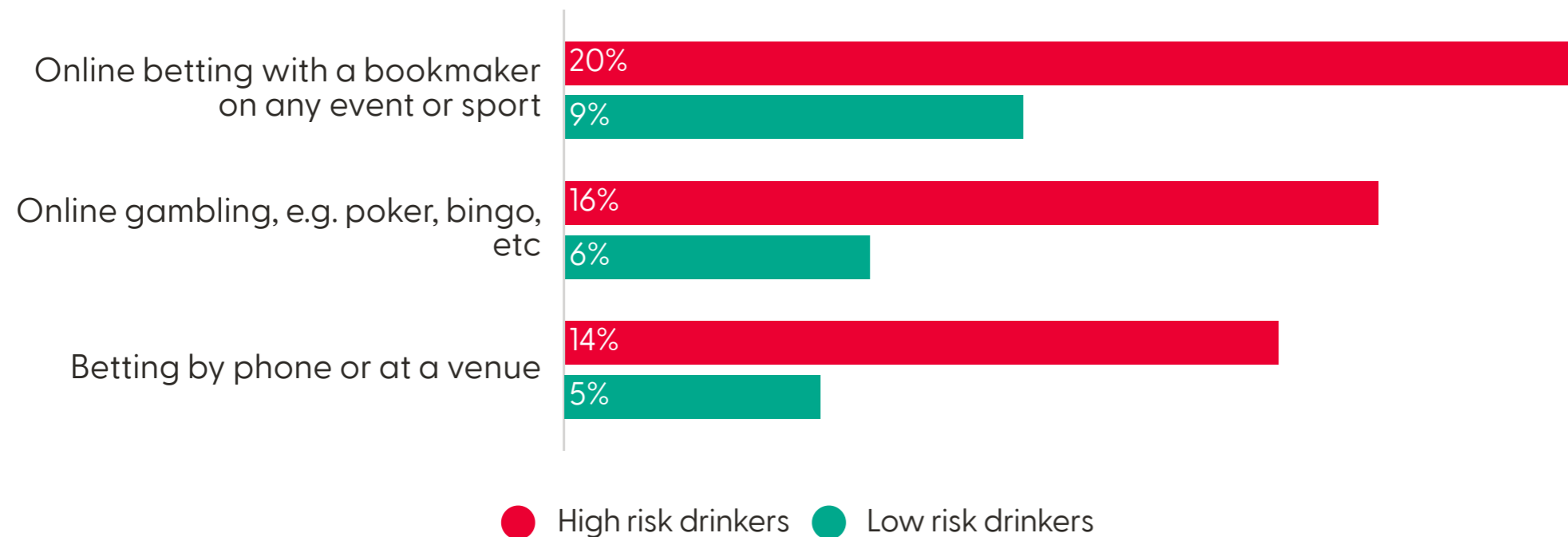
High risk drinkers are more likely to gamble



55% of drinkers have gambled in the last 12 months, significantly higher than 36% of non-drinkers

68% of high risk drinkers have gambled in the last 12 months (based on the full AUDIT assessment)

High risk drinkers are more than twice as likely as low risk drinkers to spend money on online betting with a bookmaker



26% of high risk drinkers have bet more than they could really afford to lose most of the time or always in the last 12 months Compared to 1% of low risk drinkers

All data based on the full AUDIT assessment - high risk includes possible dependence

There also appears to be a relationship between high risk drinking, smoking and drugs



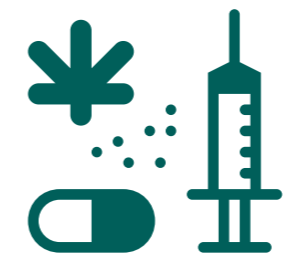
One in five (20%) drinkers who also smoke are high risk or possibly dependent drinkers

4% of drinkers who have never smoked are high risk or possibly dependent drinkers



And UK adults who drink more often are more likely to smoke, particularly binge drinkers

20% of people who drink 4+ times a week also smoke and 24% who binge drink monthly or more often, compared to 12% who never drink



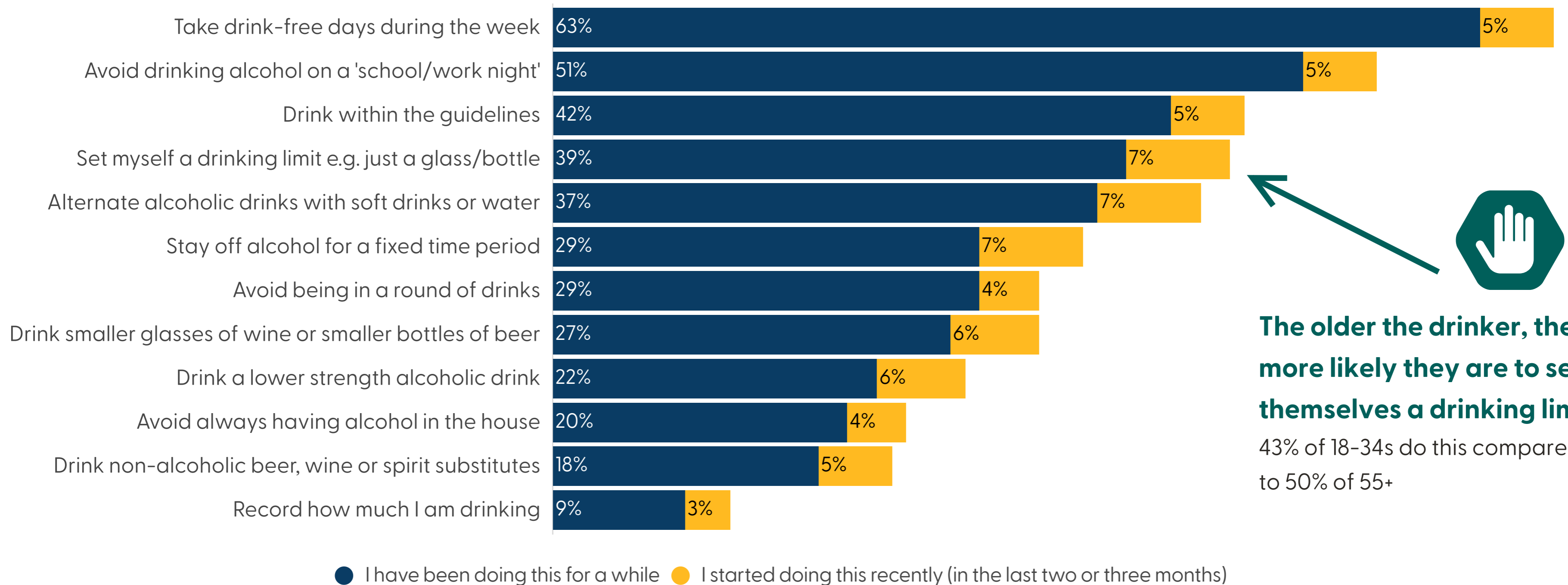
Three in ten drinkers who also take drugs are high risk or possibly dependent drinkers

5% of drinkers who do not take drugs are high risk or possibly dependent drinkers

So how do UK drinkers try to moderate their alcohol consumption?

Drinkers are most likely to take drink-free days during the week to moderate their drinking

% of drinkers who have been doing the following moderation techniques for a while or started recently



The older the drinker, the more likely they are to set themselves a drinking limit
 43% of 18-34s do this compared to 50% of 55+



Moderation. Base: all UK adults who drink alcohol (n = 5428)

Final reflections

And how to find out more

Take me to...

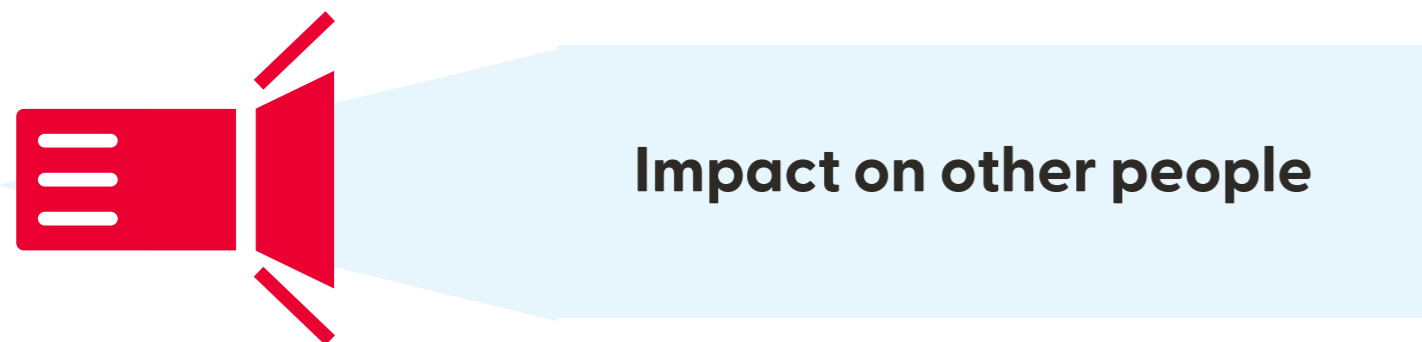
[Introducing the research](#) | [Highlights](#) | [Drinking in the UK in 2022](#) | [Why do people drink?](#) | [Impact of drinking on others](#) | [How people's drinking impacts on others](#) | [Impact of drinking on oneself](#) | [Final reflections](#) | [About Drinkaware](#); [About PS Research](#) | [Appendix](#)

Reflections on the research

The findings from this research highlight the many impacts that drinking alcohol to excess can have on an individual and the people around these individuals



- There has been no significant change in how often UK adults drink alcohol, and over time it appears we are drinking less frequently (or not at all).
- But at the same time, binge drinking has gone up and there are more high risk drinkers, particularly amongst younger adults aged 18 to 34.
- Half of UK adults drinking most frequently are concerned about their future health.



- Three in ten UK adults are concerned about someone else's drinking and two-fifths of UK adults report that they have been impacted by someone else's drinking in the last 12 months.
- Impact from a partner, close friend or relative who drinks to excess is often on-going for many years. There are both emotional and practical impacts and repercussions can reach a wide range of people within someone's familial and social circle.

Interested to find out more?



More on Drinkaware



About Drinkaware

Drinkaware is an independent charity which aims to reduce alcohol-related harm.

<https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/about-us>



More Drinkaware research



Research and Impact | Drinkaware

Drinkaware ensures our work is founded in research and evidence to further promote how to reduce alcohol misuse and harm in the UK.

<https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/research>



Advice and support



Advice and support

We can help you learn about the impact of alcohol on you, your family or friends. Here we'll support you with advice, information and strategies to help reduce alcohol consumption and improve your health.

<https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/advice>

About PS Research

Introducing PS Research

We're Adam and Emma: two experienced research specialists based in the North of England.

Adam specialises in quantitative research. He spent almost a decade working in local authorities and delivering research projects across the public sector. Adam is a Certified Member of the MRS (Market Research Society) and was named the UK's New Freelancer of the Year in 2019 by IPSE (the Association of Independent Professionals and the Self-Employed).

Emma specialises in qualitative research. She spent several years working agency-side for a couple of large, international market research agencies. Emma is a member of the AQR (Association of Qualitative Research).



PS Research is an accredited Market Research Society Company Partner, demonstrating our commitment to quality research and compliance, working to the MRS Code of Conduct.

Appendix

Take me to...

[Introducing the research](#) | [Highlights](#) | [Drinking in the UK in 2022](#) | [Why do people drink?](#) | [Impact of drinking on others](#) | [How people's drinking impacts on others](#) | [Impact of drinking on oneself](#) | [Final reflections](#) | [About Drinkaware](#); [About PS Research](#) | [Appendix](#)

References

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- 2: <https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/research/drinkaware-monitors/drinkaware-monitor-2021>
- 3: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/audit-the-alcohol-use-disorders-identification-test-guidelines-for-use-in-primary-health-care>
- 4: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>
- 5: <http://www.nrs.co.uk/nrs-print/lifestyle-and-classification-data/social-grade/>
- 6: <https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/research/drinkaware-monitors/drinkaware-monitor-2021>
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- 9: [Cooper, M. L. \(1994\). Motivations for Alcohol Use Among Adolescents: Development and Validation of a Four-Factor Model. Psychological Assessment, 6 \(2\), 117-128.](#)
- 10: <https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/research/research-and-evaluation-reports/understanding-the-alcohol-harm-paradox>
- 11: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/545937/UK_CMOs__report.pdf

Glossary

Alcohol dependence: This is a medical definition. Alcohol dependence is defined as behavioural, cognitive and physiological factors that typically include a strong desire to drink alcohol and difficulties in controlling its use. Someone who is alcohol-dependent may persist in drinking, despite harmful physical and mental health consequences.

AUDIT: The Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT) was developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a simple, 10-question method of screening for excessive drinking and to assist in brief assessment. It provides a framework for intervention to help hazardous and harmful drinkers to reduce their drinking, or to stop drinking. AUDIT is designed to help health practitioners in particular identify hazardous drinking, harmful drinking and possible dependence. Drinkaware's Alcohol Self-Assessment is based on the AUDIT screening questionnaire.

AUDIT-C: This refers to the three consumption-related questions on the AUDIT questionnaire that relate to drinking frequency, units consumed on a typical occasion and frequency of drinking six units or more (for women) or eight units or more (for men) at a single session. A score of 0 to 4 indicates low risk; 5 to 7 indicates increasing risk; 8 to 10 indicates higher risk; and 11 to 12 indicates possible dependence.

Binge drinking: This term has a medical definition. Binge drinking is defined by the NHS for men as drinking more than eight units of alcohol in a single session, and more than six units for women.

Harmful drinking: 'Harmful drinking' means drinking in a way that is likely to cause or has already caused harm, i.e. a strong likelihood that damage to health – physical or mental – has already been caused.

Hazardous drinking: 'Hazardous drinking' means drinking in a way that may put your mental and/or physical health at serious risk; depending on patterns of drinking and other factors, this can include social consequences.

Increasing and high risk: These terms have specific meanings in relation to an AUDIT-C score. A score of 0 to 4 indicates low risk; 5 to 7 indicates increasing risk; 8 to 10 indicates higher risk; and 11 to 12 indicates possible dependence. Note these scores are indicative as a screening tool and not diagnostic.

Qualitative approach: recruitment criteria (1)



Quotas set and achieved:

Minimum quotas were set on the following to ensure a range of demographics and experiences were represented:

Self-identified gender:

	Minimum quota	Number of participants
Male	5	7
Female	5	13

Age:

	Minimum quota	Number of participants
18-34	5	7
35-54	5	9
55 +	5	4*

Parents:

	Minimum quota	Number of participants
Parent with under 18s in the household	5	5

Region:

	Minimum quota	Number of participants
England	4	5
Scotland	4	5
Wales	4	5
N. Ireland	4	5

SEG:

	Minimum quota	Number of participants
AB	5	7
C1C2	5	8
DE	5	5

Primary person whose drinking has had a negative impact:

	Minimum quota	Number of participants
Partner/spouse	5	6
Other household member	3	3
Family member, not in household	3	7
Close friends	3	4

*This slight shortfall was accepted.

Qualitative approach: recruitment criteria (2)



Type of impact experienced: To ensure a range of impacts experienced because of someone else's drinking were represented, a recruitment grid was designed based on the Impact question in the 2022 Monitor survey. A minimum quota was set of three in each group, however most participants had experienced multiple impacts and could qualify in two or three groups. Through the recruitment process eight participants classified as Group 1, eight as Group 2 and 14 as Group 3.

Group 1:

Participants had to have experienced one of these impacts in the last 12 months:

- Had a serious argument that did not include physical violence
- Felt physically threatened
- Been physically hurt due to them assaulting me or acting violently
- Been physically hurt due to them accidentally injuring me
- Had to stop seeing or being in contact with someone because of their drinking
- Had to move out of my usual place of residence and stay somewhere else

Group 2:

Participants had to have experienced one of these impacts in the last 12 months, plus one other impact:

- Felt genuinely concerned that they may cause harm to my children or someone else's children
- Felt forced or pressurised into sex or something similar
- Had to contact the police

OR had to have experienced one of these impacts at least twice in the last 12 months, plus one other impact:

- Had to spend my personal time caring for a person with a long-term health condition or disability that resulted from their current or previous drinking
- Been emotionally hurt or neglected
- Been out at risk in a car when someone was driving after drinking

Group 3:

Participants had to have experienced one of these impacts at least twice in the last 12 months, plus one other impact:

- Had someone break or damage something that mattered to me

OR had to have experienced one of these impacts more than three times in the last 12 months, plus one other impact:

- Felt uncomfortable at a social occasion
- Had money that would have improved the quality of my life spent on their alcohol-related purchases
- Been let down by someone due to them failing to do something that I was counting on them to do because of their drinking
- Been kept awake due to noise or disruption
- Drank alcohol myself in order to cope with the problems caused by their drinking