

drinkaware

UK Drinking in 2026: Moderation and the moments that matter

Conducted annually by YouGov, the Drinkaware Monitor is the only nationally representative survey of UK adults' drinking habits and behaviour.

The Drinkaware Monitor is based on a sample of 7,210 adults in 2026 (of which 6,080 drink alcohol).
All differences highlighted in the report are statistically significant.



ps research

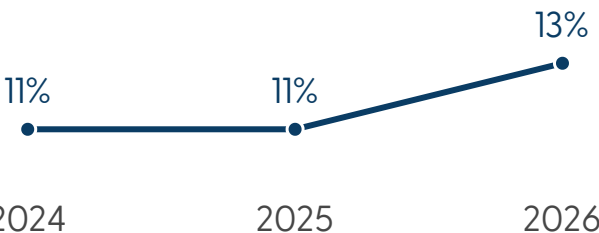
Drinking behaviours in 2026: what's the story?



UK drinkers are drinking more when they drink

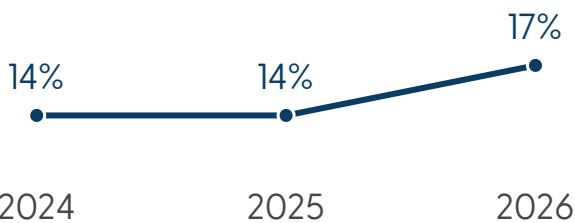
Binge drinking is up

% of UK drinkers binge drinking weekly or more often



Units on a typical drinking day are up

% drinking 7+ units on a typical day when drinking



Drinking within the low risk drinking guidelines has fallen

78%, down from 82% in 2025 and 81% in 2024



Drinking varies across different moments and contexts

With drinkers highlighting that they drink more in moments that include...

- Being out with friends
- Being on holiday
- When the weather is nice
- Having no responsibilities or plans the next day



Sunny May Bank Holiday

Drinkers were less likely to drink within the low risk weekly guidelines over the week including the bank holiday



At the same time, more drinkers are trying to manage their drinking



91%

Moderate their drinking

With use of at least one moderation technique up from 87% in 2025



39%

Have tried to cut down

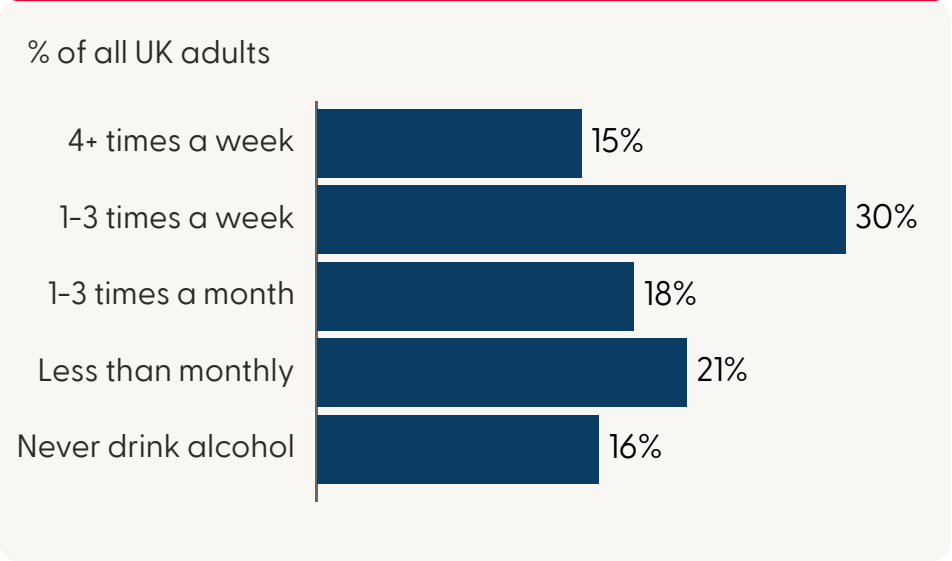
And this has increased from 36% in 2025



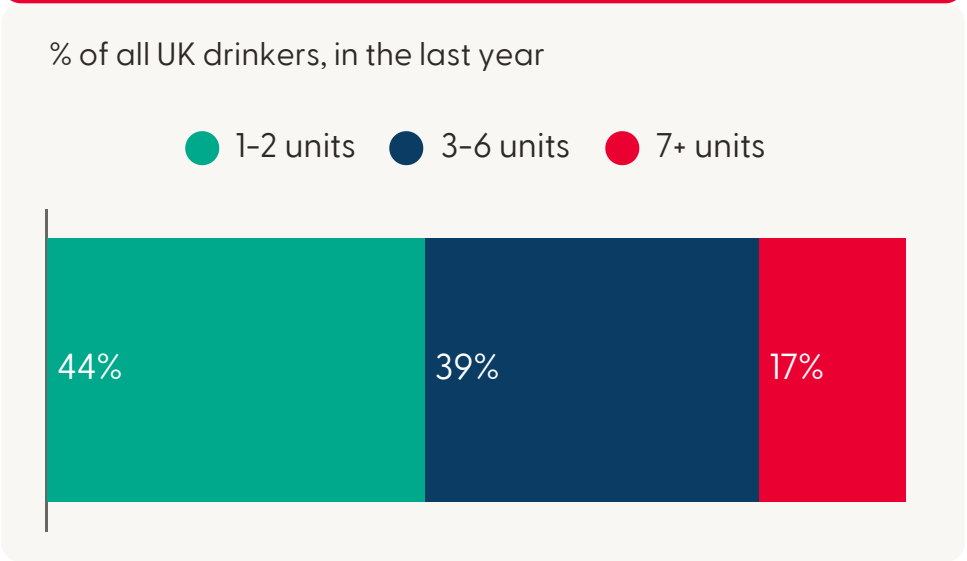
Throughout this report we share our reflections on different findings and what these mean for UK drinking habits.

UK drinking in 2026: a snapshot

How often do UK adults drink?



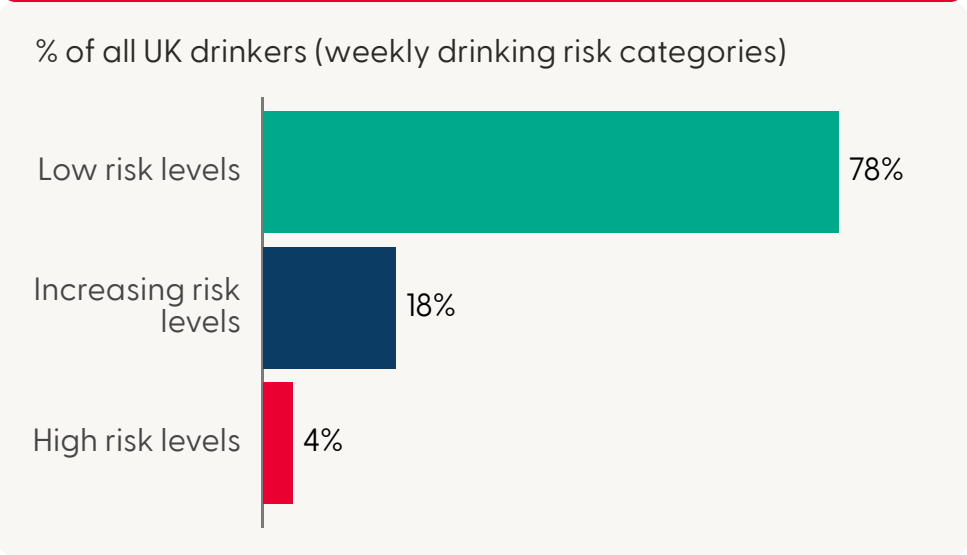
How many units are drunk in a typical drinking day?



How often do drinkers binge drink? *



How many units did drinkers consume in the last week?



What's a unit?

-  Single 25ml spirit measure (40% ABV)
-  Small 125ml glass of wine (12% ABV) = 1.5 units
-  Pint of beer (4% ABV) = 2.3 units

* Binge drinking

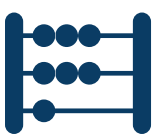
Drinking 6 or more units for women, or 8 or more units for men, on one drinking occasion

Weekly drinking risk categories

Based on reported units consumed in the last week and the UK Chief Medical Officers' low risk drinking guidelines:

- **Low risk** - drinking within the low risk guidelines of 14 units per week
- **Increasing risk** - between 15 and 34 units per week for women, and between 15 and 49 units for men
- **High risk** - 35+ units per week for women, and 50+ units for men

UK drinkers are drinking more when they drink

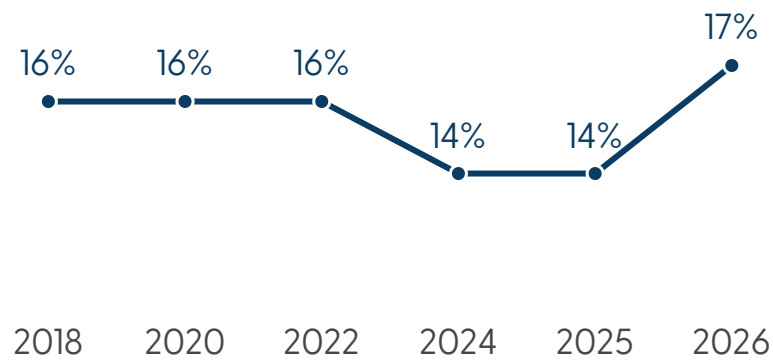


Those drinking no more than 4 units on a typical drinking day has fallen over recent years...



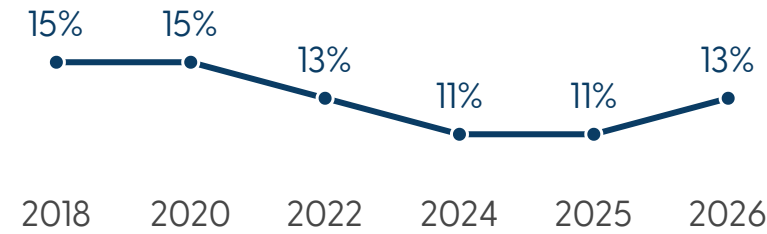
...And, going back to 2018, more drinkers than ever are drinking 7+ units on a typical drinking day

— % who drink 7+ units on a typical drinking day

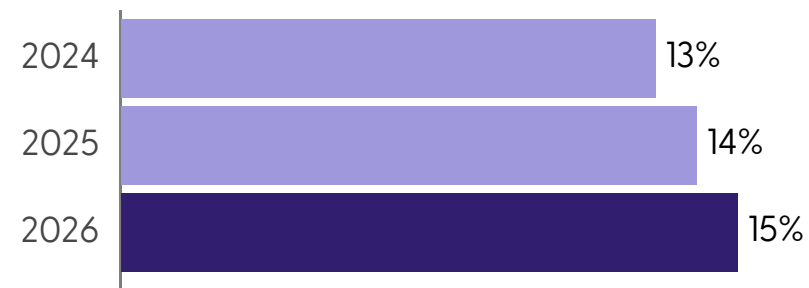


Weekly binge drinking has increased following a drop

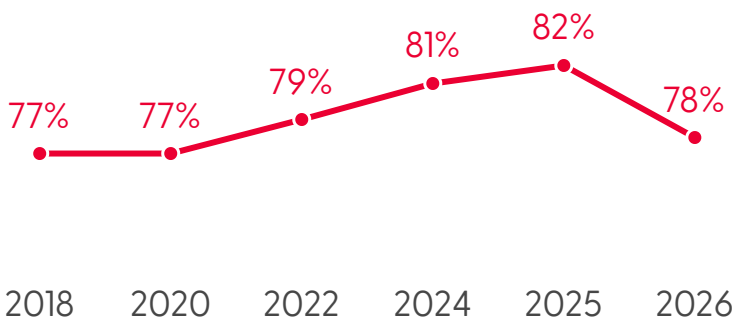
— % who drink binge drink weekly or more often



There has been an increase in UK adults who drink 4+ times a week



And drinking within the low risk drinking guidelines* has fallen since 2025



*Based on units consumed in the last week



But non-drinking remains at record levels (since 2018), with 16% of UK adults never drinking alcohol



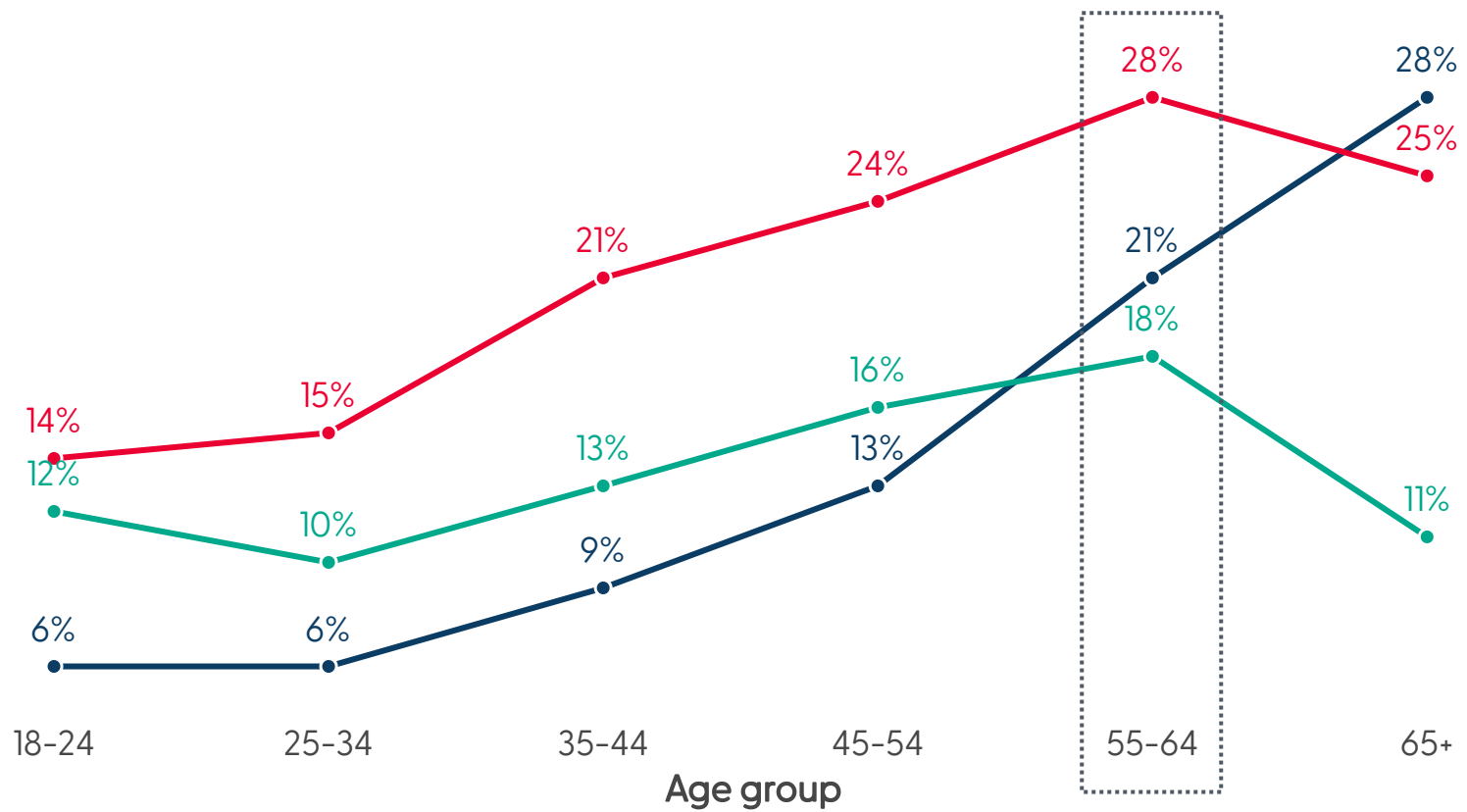
Some drinkers are drinking more often, but many are drinking more when they do choose to drink.

And these increases are primarily driven by 55-64 year olds



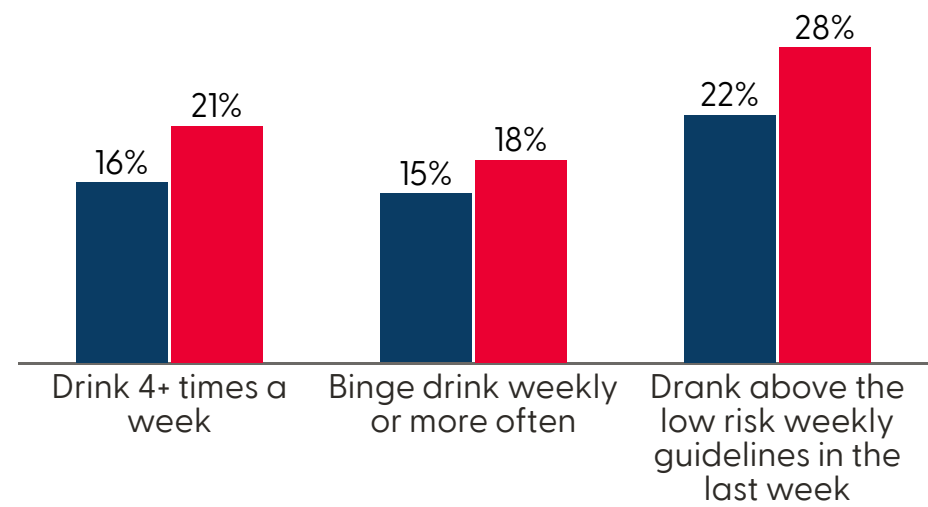
Adults aged 55-64 show high levels of several risky drinking indicators

— Drink 4+ times a week — Drank above the low risk weekly guidelines in the last week
— Binge drink weekly or more often



55-64 year olds have seen the biggest rises in drinking over the last 12 months

● 2025 ● 2026

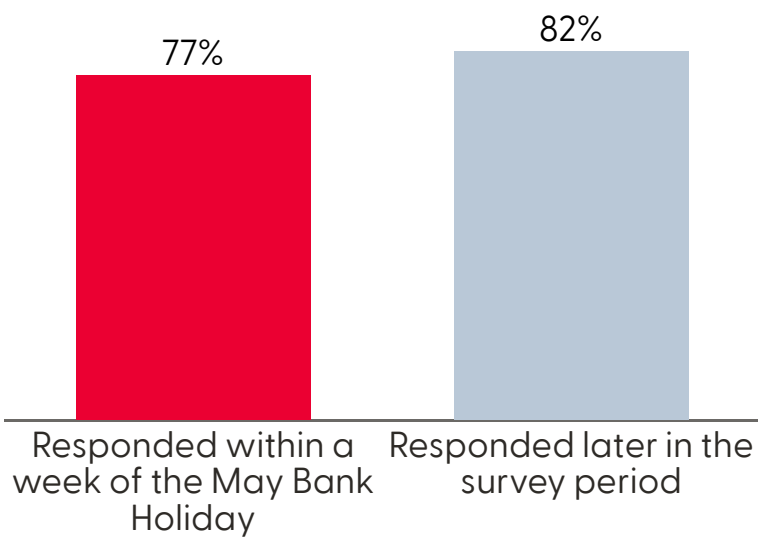


Drinking levels were already among the highest in this age group and have increased further over the last 12 months.

Drinkers drink more heavily in certain situations

Drinkers surveyed around the May Bank Holiday were less likely to report drinking within the low-risk weekly guidelines

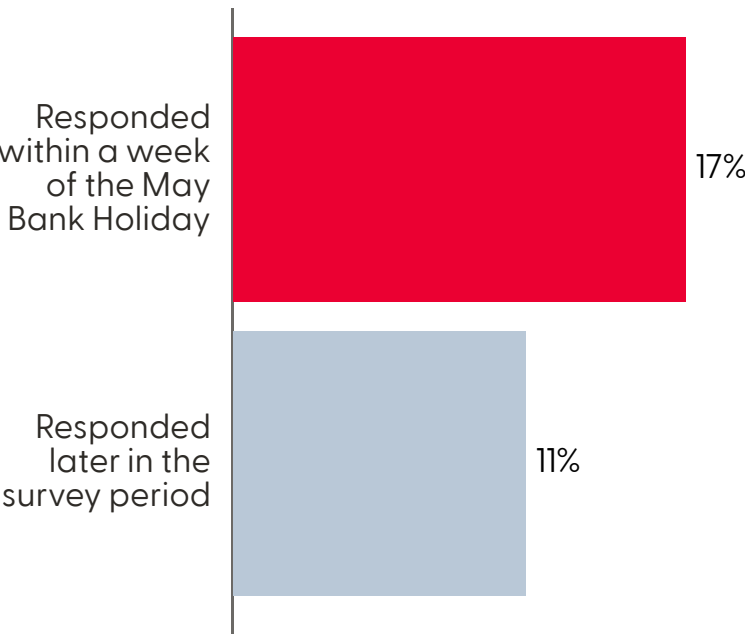
% of drinkers who drank within the low risk weekly guidelines



 This difference in drinking within the low risk weekly guidelines was seen amongst younger (18-34 year olds) and older (aged 55+) drinkers, but not amongst 35-54 year olds

And they were also more likely to drink on more days and to drink at home

% of drinkers who drank on five or more days in the last week



People drink more than they typically would in certain moments

% of drinkers who drink more than they typically would when...



They're out with friends (56%)



They're on holiday (51%)



The weather is nice (20%)



They have no responsibilities the next day (18%)



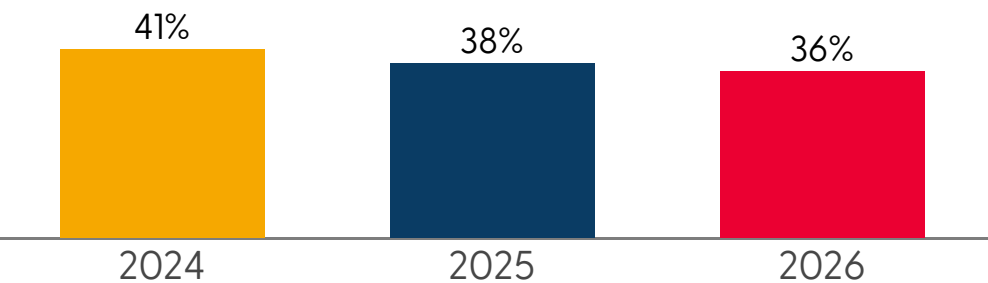
Drinking behaviours are not fixed. People report drinking more in certain situations, with differences around the Bank Holiday suggesting that timing and context matter.

Despite a rise in drinking levels, regular home drinking is down



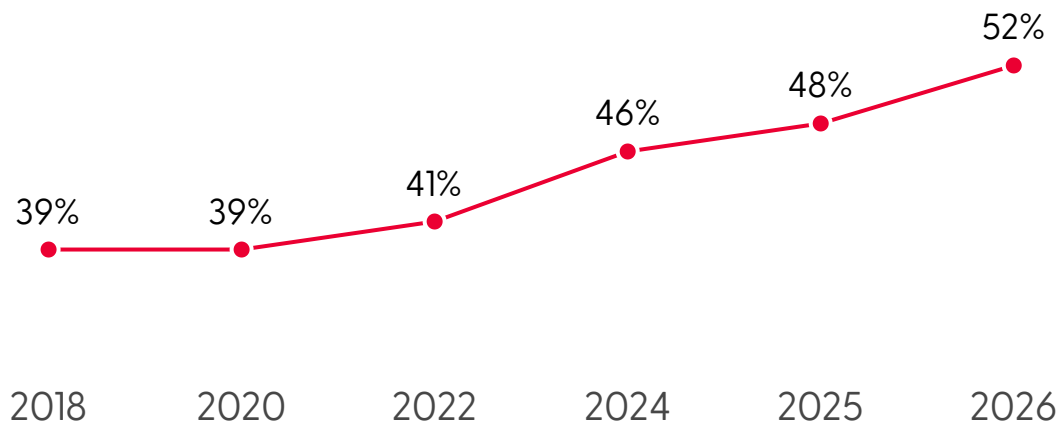
Regular drinking at home has fallen over the last three years

% of drinkers drinking at home weekly or more often:
(either alone or with people in their household)



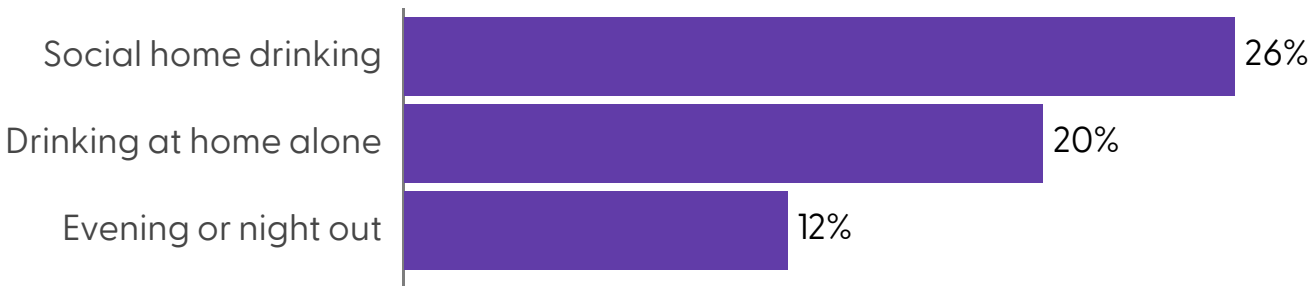
Never drinking at home alone is at its highest level since 2018

% of UK drinkers who never drink alcohol at home alone



Drinkers still drink at home more regularly than on a night out

% of drinkers who drink on the following occasions weekly or more often:



But many drink their largest amount on a night out

Of those drinkers who drink in more than one situation:



typically drink the largest amount of alcohol when on an evening or night out with friends

8% typically drink most when drinking at home alone



People drink at home most often, but many consume the most on nights out. When understanding overall consumption, frequency and amount both matter.

Most drinkers report using techniques to moderate their drinking



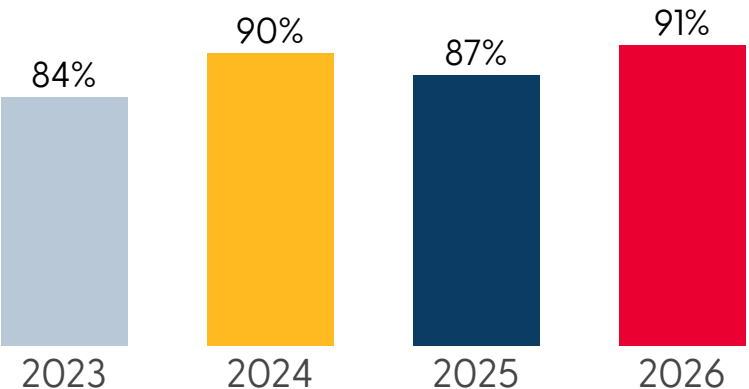
More drinkers are moderating



But risky drinking and moderation can coexist

% of UK drinkers who use at least one moderation technique who...

% of UK drinkers who moderate their drinking (using at least one moderation technique)



13% also binge drink weekly or more often

17% also drink 7+ units on a typical drinking day

22% drank above the low risk weekly guidelines in the last week



Moderation and higher consumption can coexist. The increase in moderation suggests more drinkers may be managing their drinking, but does not necessarily mean they are drinking less overall.

The use of almost all moderation techniques has increased since 2025

Taking drink-free days is still most common (71% currently do this; 66% in 2025)



Drinkers are increasingly choosing low or no alcohol to help moderate their drinking

34%

Drink zero alcohol drinks to moderate their drinking



Up from 31% in 2025

25%

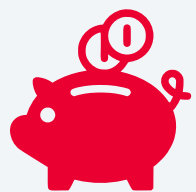
Are drinking low/no alcohol in pubs and restaurants more often than they did 12 months ago

More drinkers have been trying to reduce their drinking

39%

Two in five have tried to cut back

of drinkers have tried to reduce their drinking in the last 12 months, up from 36% in 2025



Finances are a key aspect of cutting back

51%

of those who have cut back over the last 12 months say they spend less money on alcohol

Increased cost of living is the most common reason given for people to think about reducing their drinking

16% report that the cost of living has made them think about reducing their drinking over the past 12 months



I have cut down, but it's harder in some circumstances. If it's lovely weather or we're just enjoying each other's company, then we might think shall we just have one more?



It can be harder when I meet old friends. All we have in common is that we like to go for a drink, so I will drink a lot more when I'm with them.

Quotes taken from 2025 qualitative research into moderation



More drinkers are trying to cut back, with cost prompting some people to reflect on their drinking. However, this may be hard to stick to in some situations.

Reflections from our Chief Executive



Karen Tyrell
Drinkaware CEO



The 2026 Monitor presents a more mixed picture of UK drinking than we have seen in recent years. For several years, many trends had been moving in a positive direction, but the most recent findings suggest some hard-won gains may be at risk. More drinkers are using moderation techniques and trying to cut back, yet heavier drinking has increased and fewer people reported drinking within the weekly guidelines in the last week. While one year of data does not establish a longer-term trend, it is a timely reminder that progress cannot be taken for granted.

The findings also show that drinking behaviour is not fixed. People may be trying to moderate overall while still drinking more on holidays, in good weather, or when socialising with friends and family. These are important opportunities to relax and connect, but they can also make it more difficult to keep track of how much we drink.

For Drinkaware, this reinforces the importance of prevention and helping people find their balance with alcohol across a range of settings and occasions. We will continue to provide practical, evidence-led tools and advice, while working with partners to make moderation more visible, normal and achievable. Anyone who wants to better understand their drinking can take Drinkaware's free [Drinking Check](#) and receive personalised advice and support.



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