



Drinking behaviour and peer pressure in relation to alcohol

Drinkaware Monitor 2019

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1 Executive summary

Drinkaware works to reduce alcohol-related harm in the UK. To inform decisions over where and how to focus its work for maximum impact, Drinkaware utilises a range of research and evidence. This report is intended to contribute to Drinkaware's evidence base.

This report sets out findings from research conducted by YouGov in summer 2019 into UK adults' behaviour and attitudes in relation to alcohol. It also explores the issue of peer pressure to drink alcohol or to drink more than intended.

1.1 Summary of approach

YouGov interviewed three representative samples of: 2,145 UK adults aged 18 to 85; 1,019 Scotland adults aged 18 to 85; 1,018 Wales adults aged 18 to 85. The surveys were conducted online between 11th and 18th July 2019. Data have been weighted to be representative of the UK / Scotland / Wales adult populations (aged 18 to 85) according to gender, age, social grade, and region.

Previously, similar research has been conducted for Drinkaware by YouGov (in 2018 and 2017) and by Ipsos MORI (since 2009), and this report builds on the existing evidence base provided by these previous surveys. Where appropriate, findings from 2019 are compared with those from 2018.

In line with previous iterations of the Drinkaware Monitor, and other research relating to alcohol consumption, the short Alcohol Use Disorder Identification Test (AUDIT-C) was used in the survey and is reported as an overall measure of drinking risk levels.

1.2 Key findings

Consumption patterns

The vast majority of UK adults drink alcohol, with 81% stating that they do so at least once a year, and 15% saying that they never drink alcohol. However, this represents a statistically significant decrease in drinking from the 2018 Drinkaware Monitor, when 84% reported drinking at least once a year, and 12% stated that they never drank. Around half (52%) drink at least once a week. Drinking frequency is higher among men, older age groups and higher social grades.

For the purposes of this report, drinking six or more units for women, or eight or more units for men, in a single occasion has been defined as 'binge' drinking. Among all UK adults aged 18 to 85, close to three-fifths (57%) reported that they ever drink at these levels, and 12% say that they typically do so weekly or more often. Men were much more likely to report 'binge' drinking than women (64% ever do so compared with 50% of women) and although young people drink less frequently overall than older people, they are more likely to 'binge' drink.

Three fifths (60%) of the total UK adult population (i.e. including non-drinkers) fall under the 'low risk' category (scoring 0-4) according to the AUDIT-C measure. Approximately a quarter (26%) fall into the 'increasing risk' category (scoring 5-7), and 14% of the population score 8-12 points in the AUDIT-C measure, defining them as 'higher risk'. Within this category, two percent of the population scored 11-12, which is defined as 'possible dependence'.

Men are significantly more likely to exhibit risky drinking behaviours than women: 49% were classified as increasing or higher risk, compared with 31% of women. Older adults (aged 55 and over) are the most likely (63%) to be in the low risk category, and middle-aged adults are the group most likely to fall into the higher risk category (19%). Younger adults (aged 18 to 34) are indicatively more likely to be low risk drinkers compared with the 2018 Drinkaware Monitor (61% compared with 56%); however this difference is not statistically significant.

Peer pressure and drinking more than intended

It is common for social situations to lead to higher consumption than intended or desired. Around a third of drinkers report drinking more than initially expected due to being 'in a round' (37%), because they were encouraged by others (35%), or because they didn't want to be impolite and refuse a drink someone had offered (34%). These experiences are generally more common among men, younger people, higher social grades, and those drinking at increasing and higher risk levels. The most common sources of pressure to drink, or drink more than intended, are friends followed by co-workers.

When thinking about ways in which they may have influenced others to drink more, one in five drinkers reported that they ever encourage someone to drink more alcohol after they said they didn't want to, or give someone an alcoholic drink or top up their glass without asking first. The same groups that are most likely to experience various type of pressure (men, younger people, higher social grades, increasing/higher risk drinkers) are also more likely to have influenced others in these ways.

Drinkers take a range of measure to avoid or mitigate pressure to drink alcohol. Most commonly these involve taking measures while in a social setting, rather than avoiding gatherings entirely or affecting friendships. Over a third of drinkers (37%) report having 'nursed' their drink to avoid pressure to have another, and one in five have made an excuse to avoid drinking an alcoholic drink instead of saying 'no'. A third (32%) of drinkers have spoken out for themselves when they have been under pressure to drink alcohol and three in ten (28%) have spoken out on behalf of someone else when they have been under pressure to drink alcohol.

Generally, drinkers recognise that peer pressure exists and that it can have negative consequences: a majority (57%) say they would like there to be less pressure in this area. Slightly over a third of drinkers say that pressure to drink alcohol is common in their age group (rising to 75% of those aged 18-24). Among working adults (who drink), two-fifths (43%) agree that there is too much pressure to drink when socialising with work colleagues.

Perceptions that pressure is excessive are more common among women and among those drinking at lower risk levels. Middle-aged adults appear to be more accepting of pressure than either younger or older adults

2 Key findings by UK nation

Key findings: England

Consumption patterns

The majority of adults in England drink alcohol with 85% reporting ever drinking (88% last year). Half (53%) reported drinking at least once a week, consistent with last year's study. The proportions of people who ever binge drink is also consistent with the 2018 study with 56% of adults in England reporting doing so.

Using the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT-C) scoring system, three in five (61%) of adults in England are classified as low risk (scoring 0-4) and 14% as higher risk (scoring 8-12 points).

Peer pressure and drinking more than intended

Overall, behaviours in England are in line with the UK in general.

Around a third of drinkers in England report drinking more than initially expected due to being 'in a round' (35%), because they were encouraged by others (34%) or because they didn't want to be impolite and refuse a drink someone had offered (34%). The most common sources of pressure to drink, or drink more than intended, are friends followed by co-workers.

When thinking about ways in which they may have influenced others to drink more, one in five drinkers reported that they ever encourage someone to drink more alcohol after they said they didn't want to (20%), or give someone an alcoholic drink or top up their glass without asking first (19%).

Most commonly measures to avoid or mitigate pressure to drink alcohol are taken in the social setting. Over a third of drinkers (36%) report having 'nursed' their drink to avoid pressure to have another, and one in five (20%) have made an excuse to avoid drinking an alcoholic drink instead of saying 'no'. A third (32%) of drinkers have spoken out for themselves when they have been under pressure to drink alcohol and over a quarter (27%) have spoken out on behalf of someone else when they have been under pressure to drink alcohol.

A majority (57%) say they would like there to be less pressure to drink alcohol. Slightly over a third of drinkers say that pressure to drink alcohol is common in their age group (35%). Among working adults (who drink), two-fifths (42%) agree that there is too much pressure to drink when socialising with work colleagues.

Key findings: Scotland

Consumption patterns

The majority of adults in Scotland drink alcohol with 85% reporting ever drinking (89% last year). Just under half (49%) reported drinking at least once a week, consistent with last year's study. The proportions of people who ever binge drink is also consistent with the 2018 study with three in five (60%) Scottish adults reporting doing so and is highest among the devolved nations (compared to 56% of UK adults).

Using the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT-C) scoring system, 57% of adults in Scotland are classified as low risk (scoring 0-4) and 13% as higher risk (scoring 8-12 points).

Peer pressure and drinking more than intended

In Scotland, the most common reason for drinking more than intended is being 'in a round' (39%), higher than levels seen in both England (35%) and Wales (34%). The proportions attributing drinking more than intended to because they were encouraged by others (32%) or because they didn't want to be impolite and refuse a drink someone had offered (31%) are lower than those of the UK overall (35% and 34% respectively). In line with the rest of the UK, the most common sources of pressure to drink, or drink more than intended, are friends followed by co-workers.

When thinking about ways in which they may have influenced others to drink more, one in five drinkers reported that they ever encourage someone to drink more alcohol after they said they didn't want to (19%), and slightly fewer give someone an alcoholic drink or top up their glass without asking first (17%).

To avoid or mitigate pressure to drink alcohol, drinkers in Scotland are significantly more likely than those in the UK to report having 'nursed' their drink to avoid pressure to have another (42% compared to 37%). In addition, one in five (22%) have made an excuse to avoid drinking an alcoholic drink instead of saying 'no' (compared to 20% in UK overall). This suggests higher confidence to take action in a social setting.

Further, Scottish adults who drink are significantly more likely than drinkers in the UK to have spoken out for themselves when they have been under pressure to drink alcohol (41% compared to 32%) or to have spoken out on behalf of someone else when they have been under pressure to drink alcohol (35% compared to 28%).

A greater proportion of drinkers in Scotland say they would like there to be less pressure to drink alcohol (63% compared to 57%). In line with the UK slightly over a third of drinkers say that pressure to drink alcohol is common in their age group (36%) and among working adults (who drink), two-fifths (43%) agree that there is too much pressure to drink when socialising with work colleagues.

Key findings: Wales

Consumption patterns

Drinking consumption remains consistent in Wales with 86% of adults reporting ever drinking alcohol and just under half (48%) reported drinking at least once a week. The proportions of people who ever binge drink is also consistent with the 2018 study with 57% of Welsh adults reporting doing so.

Using the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT-C) scoring system, three in five (59%) adults in Wales are classified as low risk (scoring 0-4) and 15% as higher risk (scoring 8-12 points).

Peer pressure and drinking more than intended

By contrast to the UK overall, the most commonly reported reason for drinking more than intended is because they didn't want to be impolite and refuse a drink someone had offered (37% compared to 34% in UK overall). This is followed by around a third reporting that they were encouraged by others (35%) and because they were 'in a round' (34%). The most common sources of pressure to drink, or drink more than intended, are friends followed by co-workers.

When thinking about ways in which they may have influenced others to drink more, less than one in five drinkers reported that they ever encourage someone to drink more alcohol after they said they didn't want to (17%), or give someone an alcoholic drink or top up their glass without asking first (17%).

The frequency of measures taken to avoid or mitigate pressure to drink more alcohol is in line with the UK overall but are at significantly higher levels. Two in five Welsh drinkers report having 'nursed' their drink to avoid pressure to have another (42% compared to 37%), and a quarter (24%) have made an excuse to avoid drinking an alcoholic drink instead of saying 'no' (compared to 20% in UK overall).

Welsh adults are also more confident to speak out when under pressure to drink alcohol. A third of Welsh adults who drink have spoken out for themselves when they have been under pressure to drink alcohol (36% compared to 32%) and have spoken out on behalf of someone else when they have been under pressure to drink alcohol (33% compared to 28%).

Two in five (59%) say they would like there to be less pressure to drink alcohol. Over a third of drinkers say that pressure to drink alcohol is common in their age group (36%). Among working adults (who drink), two-fifths (45%) agree that there is too much pressure to drink when socialising with work colleagues.

3 Introduction

3.1 Background

Drinkaware is a charity providing impartial, evidence-based information, advice and practical resources to help people make better choices about their drinking. To support its work in this area, it is important for Drinkaware to utilise research and evidence to understand the prevalence of different drinking behaviours within the population, as well as the experiences and attitudes of drinkers. This evidence will inform Drinkaware's work to reduce alcohol-related harm, and help the charity to determine how and where to focus its efforts.

This report sets out findings from research conducted by YouGov in June 2019 into UK adults' behaviour and attitudes in relation to alcohol and peer pressure in relation to drinking. Previously, similar research has been conducted for Drinkaware by YouGov (in 2018 and 2017) and by Ipsos MORI (2009-2014). Where appropriate, findings from 2019 are reported in the context of those from previous waves of the research.

3.2 Objectives

The main objectives of this research were to:

- Provide an overview of adults' drinking behaviour in the UK, including how frequently and how much they are drinking
- Explore attitudes to, and experiences of, peer pressure (i.e. pressure from others) to drink alcohol, or to drink more than initially intended

4 Methodology

YouGov conducted three surveys in July 2019, as follows:

- A representative sample of 2,145 UK adults aged 18 to 85 online, between 11th and 12th July 2019. Data has been weighted to be representative of the UK adult population (aged 18 to 85) according to gender, age, social grade, and region.
- A representative sample of 1,019 Scotland adults aged 18 to 85 online, between 16th and 18th July 2019. Data has been weighted to be representative of the adult population of Scotland (aged 18 to 85) according to gender, age, social grade, and Scottish region.
- A representative sample of 1,018 Wales adults aged 18 to 85 online, between 15th and 18th July 2019. Data has been weighted to be representative of the adult population of Wales (aged 18 to 85) according to gender, age, social grade, and Welsh region.

Fieldwork was conducted via YouGov's UK Omnibus, Scotland Omnibus and Wales Omnibus surveys. The survey was identical for each nation. The purpose of the three separate surveys was to gain robust coverage of Scotland and Wales individually while avoiding the need for a very large UK sample.

4.1 Standardised tools

The following standardised tools and/or definitions were included in the survey and analysis process:

Alcohol Use Disorder Identification Test – Consumption (AUDIT-C)

The Alcohol Use Disorder Identification Test – Consumption provides a composite measure of alcohol consumption levels, incorporating: frequency of drinking, units consumed on a typical occasion, and frequency of drinking 6 units or more (for women) or 8 units or more (for men). These three questions each carry a score of 0-4, depending on the answer given. This gives each individual an AUDIT-C score between 0 and 12. Scores for this tool have been grouped as shown in the table below.

Table 1: AUDIT-C categories

Category	AUDIT-C score
Low risk	0-4
Increasing risk	5-7
Higher risk	8-12

4.2 Interpreting the data

As described above, the survey data have been weighted by gender, age, social grade and region, to ensure they are representative of the UK/Scotland/Wales adult population.

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% where appropriate due to this rounding, but will remain within a percentage point.

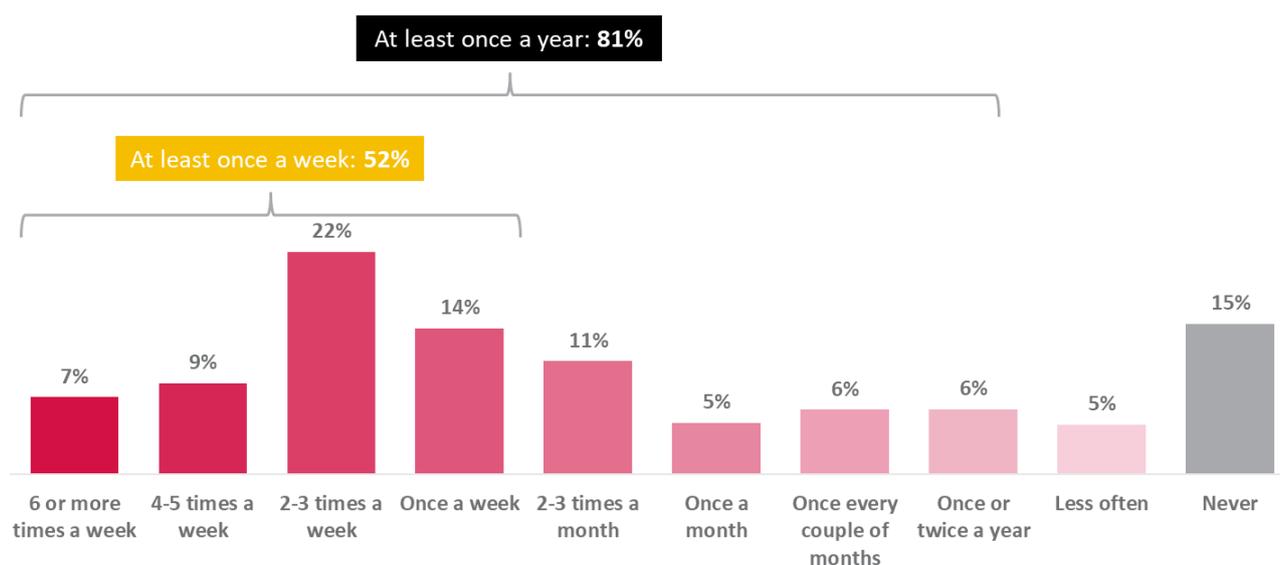
5 Alcohol consumption patterns among adults in the UK

This chapter provides an overview of alcohol consumption patterns among adults (aged 18 to 85) in the UK, including frequency of drinking and frequency of 'binge' drinking.

5.1 Drinking frequency

The vast majority of UK adults drink alcohol, with 81% stating that they do so at least once a year, and 15% saying that they never drink alcohol. This is, however, a significant decrease since the 2018 Drinkaware Monitor, when 84% of adults reported drinking at least once a year (and 12% stated that they never drank). Consistent with last year, around half (52%) drink at least once a week. Most commonly, people drink two to three times a week, with this category accounting for a fifth (22%) of the population. One in six (16%) drink four or more times per week.

Figure 1: Frequency of drinking alcohol among UK adults



Base: all UK adults aged 18 to 85 (n=2,145)

The frequency of drinking varies among different demographic groups. As seen in previous waves of the Drinkaware Monitor, men are more likely than women to drink on a regular basis. Fifty-nine percent of men reported drinking weekly or more often, compared with 45% of women, and a fifth (21%) stated that they drink four times a week or more, compared with just 12% of women. These proportions are consistent with last year's findings.

As might be expected, age has an impact on the frequency of drinking. Among 18-34 year olds, under half (44%) report drinking weekly or more often; this proportion rises with age to 52% of 35-54s and 58% of those aged 55+. The impact of age on the likelihood of ever drinking is smaller: 85% of 18 to 34s ever drink, along with 84% of 35-54s and 87% of those aged 55+. Again, these proportions, and the overall pattern, are consistent with the 2018 Drinkaware Monitor.

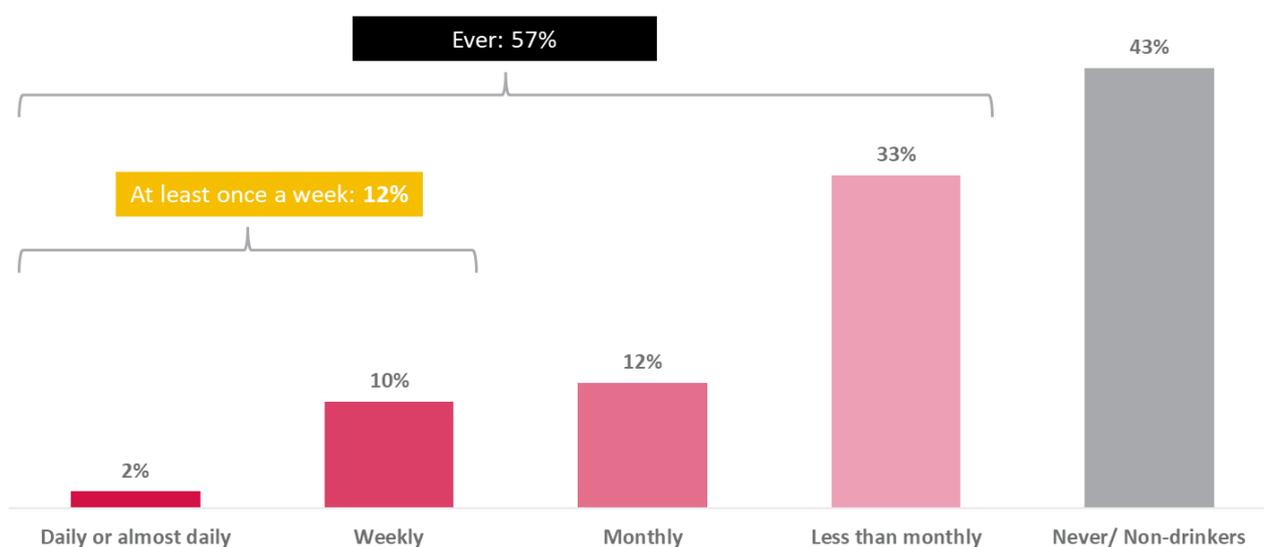
Socio-economic grade also has an impact on drinking levels: 88% of those in social grades ABC1 ever drink, compared with 82% of those in social grades, and 59% of ABC1s drink weekly or more often, compared with 45% of C2DEs. These differences may in part be due to variations by age within the social grades with older people more likely to be in ABC1 and younger people more likely to be in C2DE.

Among the devolved nations, the incidence of ever drinking was similar: 85% of adults in Scotland and England and 86% in Wales reporting ever drinking (89%, 88% and 86% respectively last year). This suggests that the overall decline in drinking, described earlier in this chapter, has affected both England and Scotland to a greater extent than Wales. The frequency of drinking was highest in England where just over half (53%) reported drinking weekly or more often, compared with just under half in Scotland (49%) and Wales (48%); these results remain consistent with last year's study.

5.2 Frequency of 'binge' drinking

For the purposes of this report and in line with the definition used by the Office for National Statistics¹, drinking six or more units for women, or eight or more units for men, in a single occasion has been defined as 'binge' drinking. Since the last wave of the Drinkaware Monitor there has been no significant change in this behaviour, with 57% of all UK adults reporting that they ever drink at 'binge' levels and one in eight (12%) reporting that they typically do so at least once a week.

Figure 2: Frequency of drinking 6+ units (for women) / 8+ units (for men) in a single occasion



Base: all UK adults aged 18 to 85 (n=2,145)

¹ Office for National Statistics (2017). Adult drinking habits in Great Britain: 2017 ([link](#)).

Half of women report binge drinking (50%) while men are significantly more likely to report this (64%). Further, men are twice as likely as women to report doing so at least once a week (16% compared with 8%). These results are consistent with the 2018 study.

Younger adults are more likely to binge drink than other ages groups: two-thirds (67%) of 18-34s reported ever doing so, along with three in five (61%) of 35-54s and 45% of adults aged 55 and over. However, whilst the younger age group are more likely to ever binge drink, the middle age group report doing so more frequently, with twice as many binge drinking at least weekly as both the younger and older age groups (18% of 35-54s compared with 9% of both 18-34s and 55+).

Those in higher social grades (ABC1) are more likely to report ever binge drinking (63%) than those in C2DE (50%). However, this difference is driven by a higher proportion (50%) of ABC1s reporting binge drinking monthly or less than C2DEs (39%). There is little difference between the groups when comparing those who report a higher frequency (at least weekly) of binge drinking (13% ABC1 compared with 11% C2DE).

Among the devolved nations, the proportion of people who ever binge drink was highest in Scotland (60%) with lower proportions in Wales and England (57% and 56% respectively) These proportions remain consistent with those seen in the 2018 study.

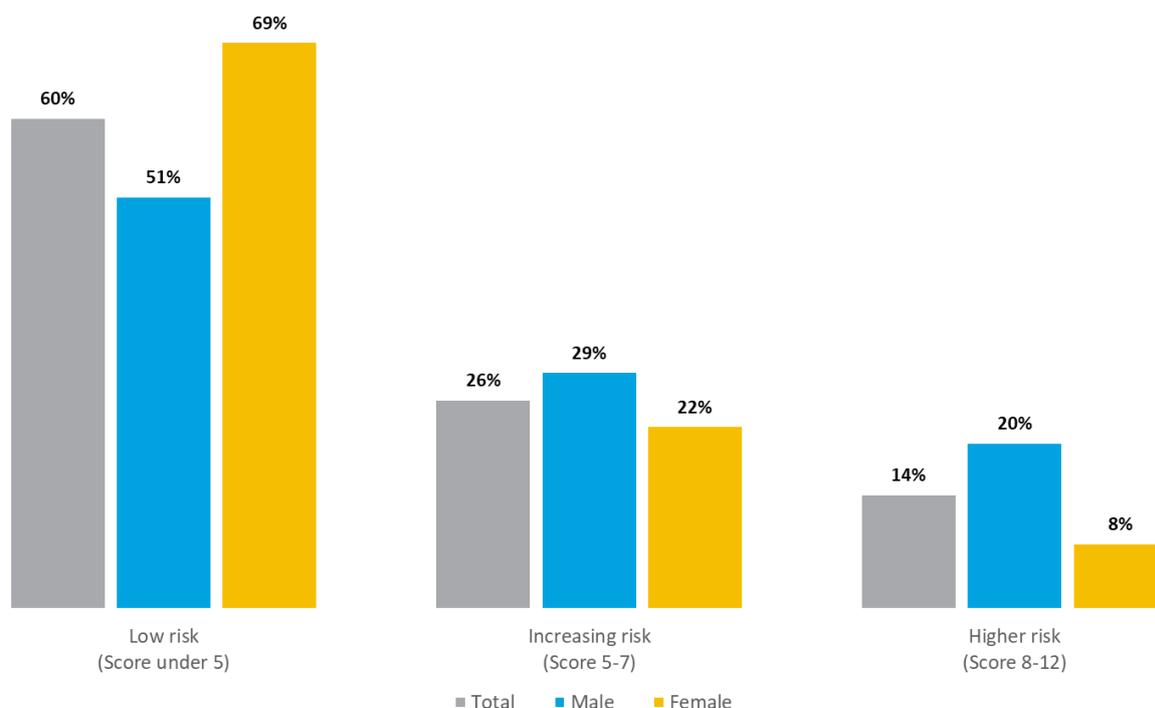
5.3 Prevalence of harmful drinking

In our analysis, we define harmful drinking using the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT-C) scoring system, as described in the introductory chapter. A risk score is determined by the following brackets: 'low risk' (scoring 0-4 through the AUDIT-C questionnaire); 'increasing risk' drinkers scoring 5-7, and 'higher risk' drinkers scoring 8-12. Within the higher risk category we also look at the subset scoring 11-12, defined as 'possible dependence'.

At a total level, there have been no changes in the prevalence of harmful drinking since the 2018 Drinkaware Monitor. Three fifths (60%) of the total UK adult population (i.e. including non-drinkers) fall into the 'low-risk' category and a quarter (26%) into the 'increasing risk' category. One in seven (14%) are defined as 'higher risk' drinkers and within this, two percent are defined as 'possible dependence'. In 2018 the equivalent figures were: low risk 59%; increasing risk 27%, and higher risk 15%.

As seen previously, women are much more likely to be categorised as low risk (69%) than men (51%). Half (49%) of men are classified as either increasing or higher risk drinking, compared with 31% of women. Most notably, one in five (20%) men exhibit higher risk drinking behaviour, more than twice that of women (8%), and the small proportion of people classed as 'possible dependence' are also predominantly men: three percent of men fall into this category, compared with one percent of women.

Figure 3: AUDIT-C categories for UK adults by gender



Base: all UK adults aged 18-85: Total (n=2,145); Male (n=983); Female (n=1,162)

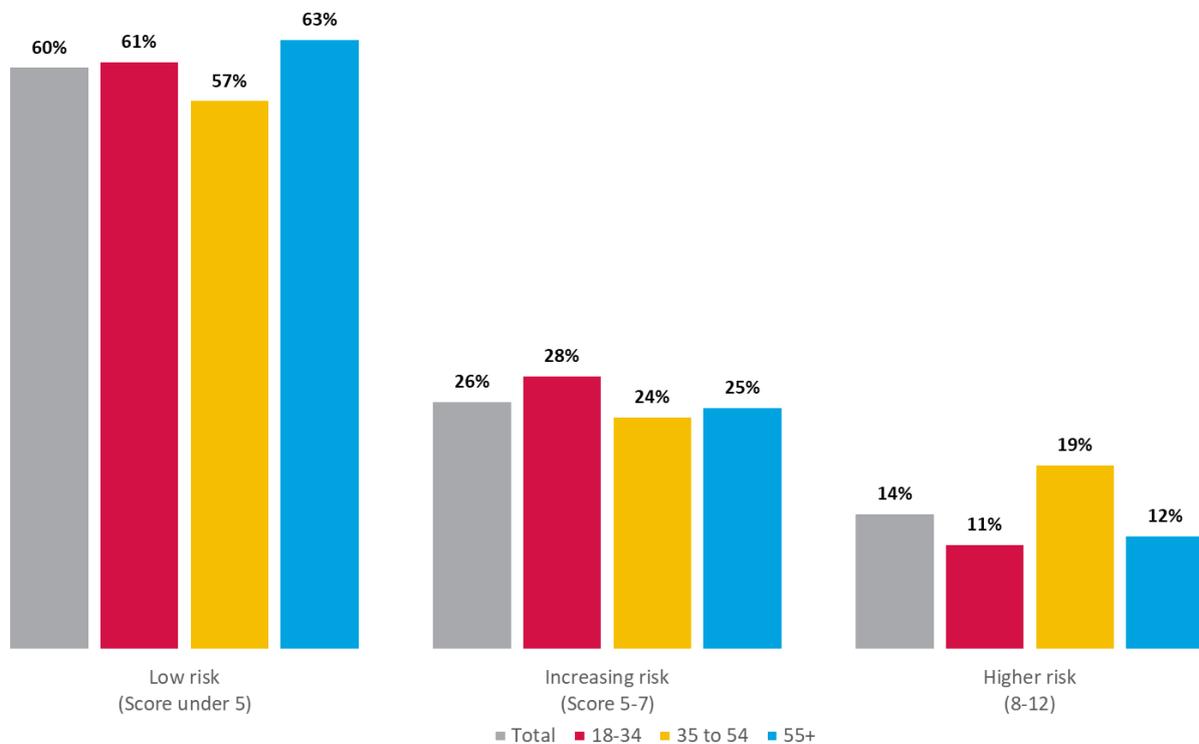
Harmful drinking behaviour differs with age. Middle-aged adults (35-54) are more likely to be in the increasing or higher risk categories (43%) than those aged 55+ (37%), with 18-34s broadly in line with the older age group (39%). This is in slight contrast to the 2018 study, where the younger and middle-aged groups were at similar levels (44% and 43% respectively), indicating a possible decrease in risky drinking behaviours among 18-34s (we note, however, that the difference is not statistically significant).

Compared with the 2018 Drinkaware Monitor, 18-34s are indicatively more likely to be low risk drinkers (61% compared with 56%) and show signs of reduction at both increasing risk (28% compared with 30%) and higher risk (11% compared with 14%). Again, these differences are not statistically significant. It will be interesting to monitor this in future years and see whether a trend becomes apparent.

Among the middle age group over half (57%) are in the low risk category and a quarter (24%) are in the increasing risk category. One in five (19%) are in the higher risk category, significantly higher than both the younger age group (11%) and the older age group (12%). This age group is also more likely than the younger age group to be categorised as possible dependence (three percent of 35-54s compared with one percent of 18-34s).

Older adults (aged 55+) remain the most likely to be in the low risk category (63%). A quarter (25%) are categorised as increasing risk and 12% at higher risk levels. These results are consistent with the 2018 study.

Figure 4: AUDIT-C categories for UK adults across age groups



Base: all UK adults aged 18-85: Total (n=2,145); 18-34 (n=431); 35-54 (n=711); 55+ (n=1,003)

Close to half (45%) of ABC1 adults are categorised as increasing or higher risk, significantly more than those in lower social grades (34%).

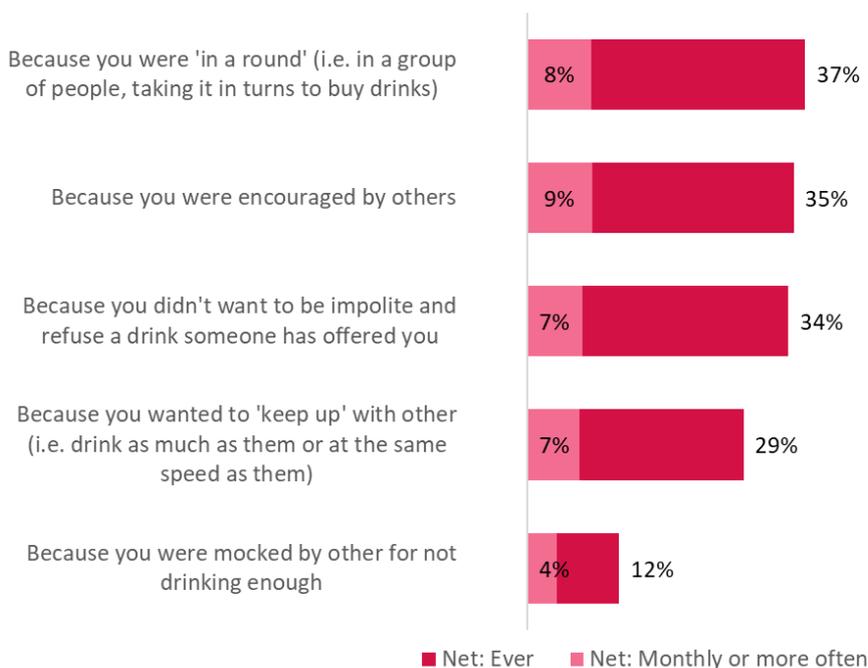
There is minimal variation among the devolved nations, with 61% of adults in England classified as low risk, along with 59% of adults in Wales and 57% in Scotland.

6 Pressure to drink alcohol

6.1 Drinking more alcohol than intended

Among those who drink, the most common way in which people report drinking more than initially expected is because they were 'in a round': 37% ever experience this and one in twelve (8%) report this happening monthly or more often. Over a third (35%) ever drink more alcohol than they initially expected to because they were encouraged by others, and for one in ten (9%) this happens at least once a month. A third (34%) also report drinking more alcohol than they initially expected because they didn't want to be impolite and refuse a drink someone had offered, with seven percent reporting that this happens at least monthly. Three in ten (29%) report drinking more to 'keep up' with others and seven percent report doing so monthly or more often. Fewer (12%) report ever drinking more because they were mocked by others for not drinking enough, suggesting that it is implied pressure rather than overt pressure which leads to higher than intended alcohol consumption.

Figure 5: Frequency of drinking more than initially expected for each reason

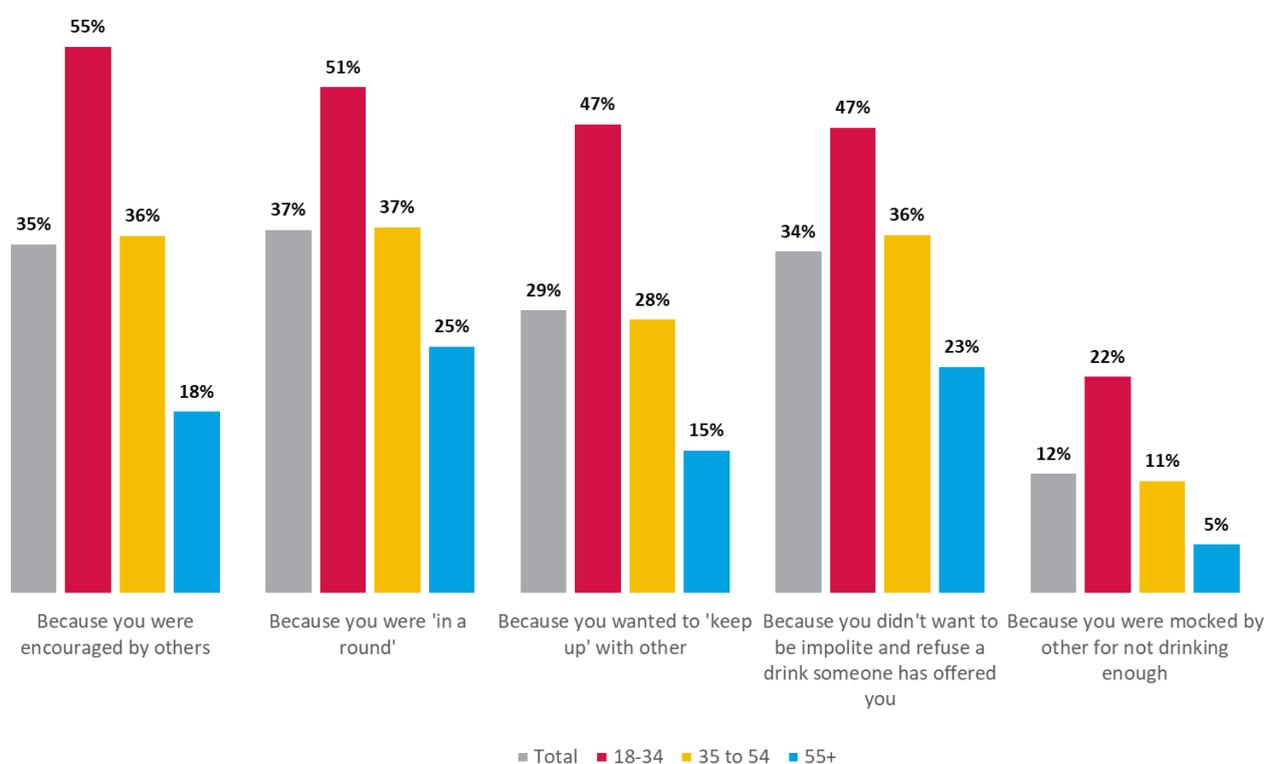


Base: All UK adults who drink alcohol (n=1860)

Across most of these reasons, men are significantly more likely than women to ever drink more and also more likely to report doing so at least monthly. The same pattern is apparent for social grade with those in ABC1 more likely to report drinking more for these reasons than those in C2DE.

Age has a strong effect on experiences of pressure to drink. Across all reasons for drinking more than initially expected, the younger age group (18-34) are much more likely to report drinking more than both the middle and older age groups. In particular, over half (55%) of 18-34s report drinking more because they were encouraged by others, compared with just over a third (36%) of 35-54s and less than one in five (18%) of those aged 55 or over. Around half of 18-34s also report drinking more because they were 'in a round' (51%), they didn't want to be impolite and refuse a drink someone has offered (47%) and they wanted to 'keep up' with others (47%). One in five (22%) of the younger age group report drinking more because they were mocked by others for not drinking enough compared with one in ten (11%) 35-54s and just five percent of those aged 55 or over.

Figure 6: Drinking more than initially expected (ever experience each reason) – by age group



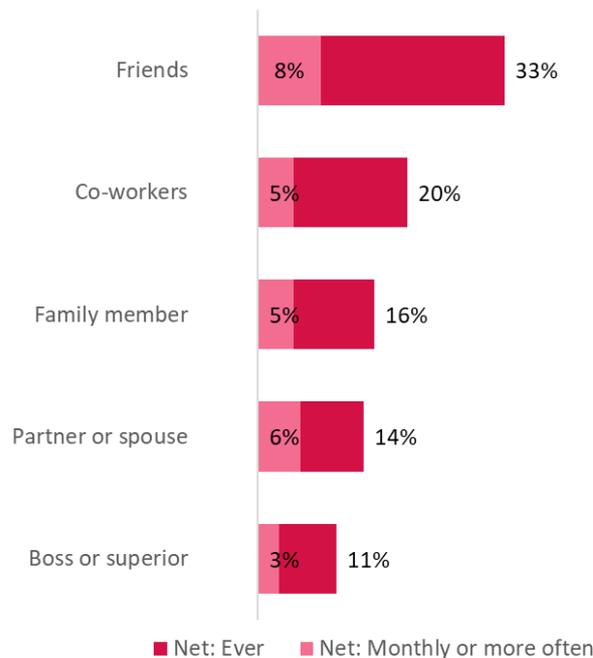
Base: All UK adults who drink: Total (n=1,860); Aged 18-34 (n=370); Aged 35-54 (n=615); Aged 55+ (n=875)

Among the devolved nations the proportions are largely similar, however there are a few differences. Those in Wales are significantly more likely than those in Scotland to drink more than initially expected because they didn't want to be impolite and refuse a drink (37% compared with 31%), with those in England falling between the two (34%). Those in Wales are also more likely than those in England to report that they ever drink more because of being mocked by others for not drinking enough (15% compared with 12%). By contrast, those in Scotland are significantly more likely than both those in England and Wales to report having ever drunk more than initially expected because they were 'in a round' (39% compared with 35% and 34% respectively).

As might be expected, increasing risk and higher risk drinkers are more likely to report these experiences than those in the low risk category. For example, 20% of low risk drinkers report drinking more than initially expected to 'keep up' with others, which rises to 38% of increasing/higher risk drinkers.

Most commonly, drinkers have experienced pressure to drink more from their friends, with a third (33%) of adults saying they ever experience pressure from friends and eight percent experiencing pressure from friends monthly or more often. One in five workers (20%) experience pressure from co-workers.

Figure 7: Frequency of pressure to consume more alcohol from each person/group



Base: All UK adults who drink (n=1,860); all in a relationship who drink (n=1,257); all workers who drink (n=1,040); all employees (with a boss) who drink (n=889)

Men are significantly more likely to have experienced pressure from friends than women (36% compared with 30%). Male workers are also more likely to experience pressure in the workplace. Among those that are employed (with a boss or superior), men are also more likely than women to have experienced pressure from their boss or superior (13% compared with 8%).

The younger age group are more likely to report experiencing pressure from all parties. In particular half (50%) of 18-34s experience pressure from friends compared with three in ten (31%) 35-54s and one in five (21%) aged 55 or over. Similarly, 32% of working 18-34s report pressure from their co-workers, compared with 17% of 35-54s and just 8% of workers aged 55 or over

Those in higher social grades (ABC1) are also more likely than those in lower social grades (C2DE) to have experienced pressure from any of the people listed. Among the devolved nations, there are no significant differences in these experiences.

6.2 Influencing others to drink more

When thinking about ways in which they may have influenced others to drink more, one in five adults who drink reported that they ever encourage someone to drink more alcohol after they said they didn't want to (21%) or give someone an alcoholic drink or top up their glass without asking first (19%).

Men are more likely than women to report having encouraged someone to drink more alcohol after they said they didn't want to (25% compared with 17%) and to do so at least monthly (seven percent compared with two percent). Men are also more likely than women to report having given someone an alcoholic drink or topped up their glass without asking first (21% compared with 16%).

Again an effect of age is seen, with those in the younger age group significantly more likely to report both encouraging someone to drink more alcohol after they said they didn't want to (36% compared with 22% of 35-54s and 7% of 55+), and giving someone an alcoholic drink or topping up their glass without asking first (30% compared with 20% of 35-54s and 8% of 55+).

There are differences between social grades with those in higher social grades (ABC1) more likely to report having done these behaviours than those in lower social grades (C2DE). A quarter (24%) of ABC1s report having encouraged someone to drink more alcohol after they said they didn't want to, compared with 17% of C2DEs. Additionally, more than one in five (22%) report having given someone an alcoholic drink or topped up their glass without asking first (compared with 14% of C2DEs). Those in ABC1 are also more likely to report doing so at least monthly (seven percent compared with two percent).

There are no significant differences between the devolved nations in these behaviours.

Again, increasing risk and higher risk drinkers are more likely to have engaged in these behaviours. For example, just 11% of low risk drinkers report having encouraged someone to drink more alcohol after they said they didn't want to, which rises to 27% of increasing risk drinkers and 40% of higher risk drinkers.

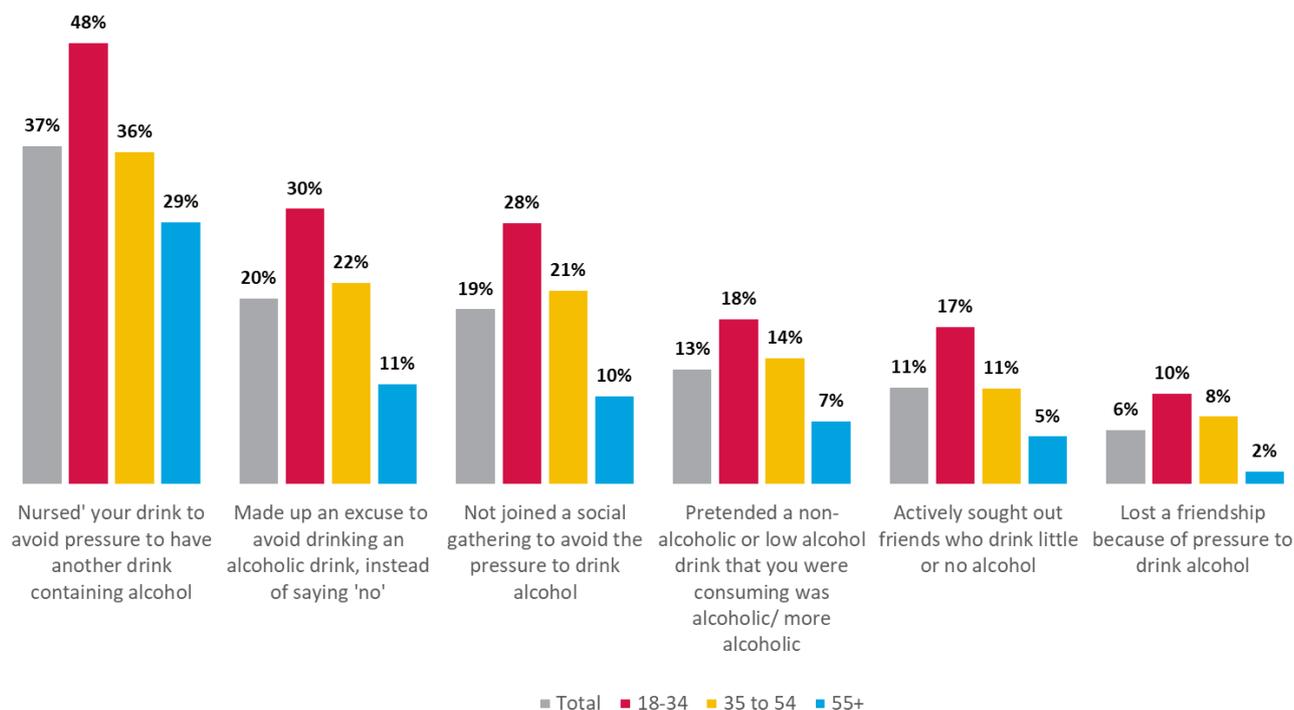
6.3 Measures to avoid pressure to drink alcohol

It is more common for drinkers to take measures to avoid or mitigate pressure to drink alcohol when in a social setting, rather than avoiding gatherings entirely or affecting friendships. Over a third of drinkers (37%) report having 'nursed' their drink to avoid pressure to have another drink, with one in twelve (8%) reporting doing so at least monthly. One in five (20%) have made an excuse to avoid drinking an alcoholic drink instead of saying 'no', and less frequently drinkers report having pretended that their non-alcoholic or low alcohol drink was alcoholic or more alcoholic (13%). By contrast, one in five (19%) report not joining a social gathering to avoid pressure to drink alcohol. For a smaller proportion, alcohol influences friendships with one in ten reporting that they have actively sought out friends who drink little or no alcohol (11%) and some (6%) reporting that they have lost a friendship because of pressure to drink alcohol.

Across all measures, there are no significant differences between men and women in whether they have ever taken each measure to avoid pressure to drink alcohol. However, men report taking some measure more frequently than women (at least monthly). These include: not joining a social gathering to avoid pressure to drink alcohol (six percent vs. three percent); actively seeking out friends who drink little or no alcohol (six percent vs. two percent); pretending that their non-alcoholic or low alcohol drink was alcoholic or more alcoholic (four percent vs. two percent), and losing a friendship because of pressure to drink alcohol (four percent vs. two percent).

Along with the greater likelihood of experiencing pressure to consume alcohol (as seen in section 5.1) the younger age group are more likely to take measures to avoid pressure to drink. There is a linear relationship with age across all measures, with the younger age group highest across all, the middle age group lower than the younger age group and the older age group lowest.

Figure 8: Frequency of taking measures to avoid pressure to drink alcohol (ever take) – by age group



Base: All UK adults who drink: Total (n=1,860); Aged 18-34 (n=370); Aged 35-54 (n=615); Aged 55+ (n=875)

Between higher and lower social grades there are no differences in how pressure to drink alcohol impacts socialising and friendships (statements regarding not joining a social gathering, actively seeking friends who drink little or no alcohol and losing a friendship) but there are differences around how they treat drinking once in the setting. Those in higher social grades (ABC1) are more likely than those in lower social grades (C2DE) to 'nurse' their drink to avoid getting another (42% compared with 31%) or to pretend that their non-alcoholic or low alcohol drink was more alcoholic (14% compared with 10%). This group are also more likely to make up an excuse to avoid drinking an alcoholic drink instead of saying 'no' (22% of ABC1s compared with 18% of C2DE).

Those drinking at increasing and higher risk levels are more likely to have taken certain measures to avoid drinking more: 23% of increasing/higher risk drinkers report not attending a social gathering in order to avoid drinking, compared with 16% of low risk drinkers, and 42% report 'nursing' their drink (compared with 32%). However some measures show a different pattern: 12% of low risk drinkers have actively sought out friends who drink little/no alcohol, compared with seven percent of higher risk drinkers.

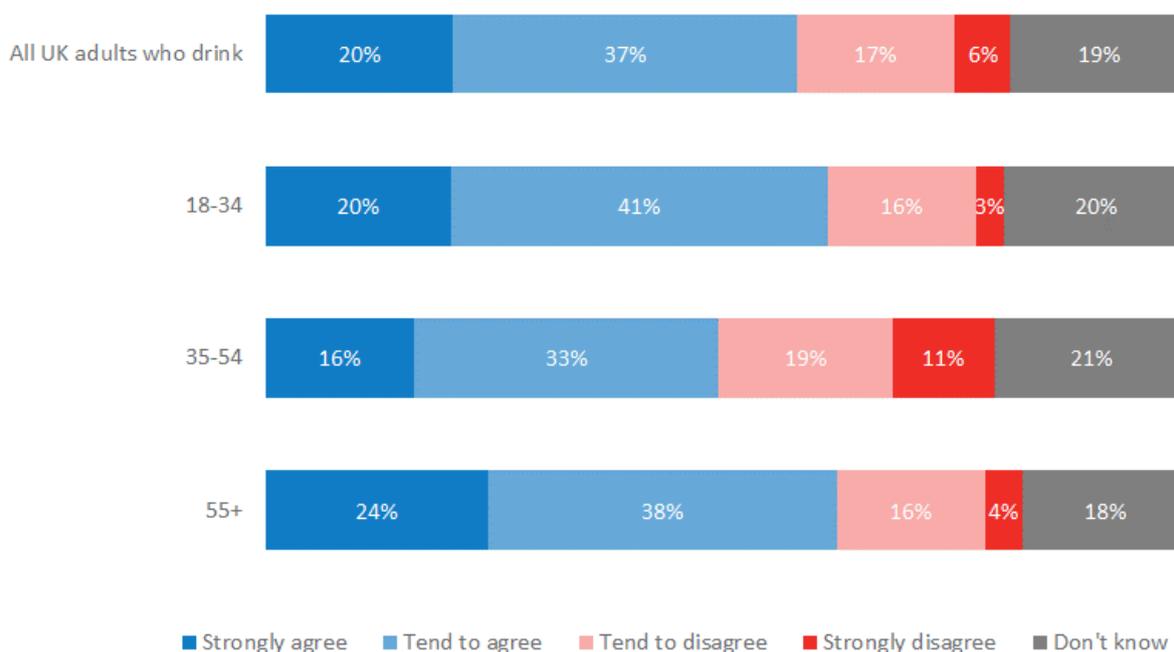
Whilst measures are taken by some to avoid pressure to drink more, some have also spoken out when under pressure from others. A third (32%) of adults who drink alcohol have spoken out for themselves when they have been under pressure to drink alcohol and three in ten (28%) have spoken out on behalf of someone else when they have been under pressure to drink alcohol. Half (51%) haven't done either.

There are no differences between male and females or between social grades but there are some differences by age. The middle age group are less likely to have spoken out for themselves when they have been pressured to drink alcohol (28% of 35-54s compared with 34% of both 18-34s and 55+). Whilst the younger age group are more likely to have been pressured by others, they are more likely than both the middle age and older groups to have spoken out on behalf of someone else who has been under pressure to drink more alcohol (35% of 18-34s compared with 25% of both 35-54s and 55+).

6.4 Attitudes to pressure to drink alcohol

Generally, drinkers recognise that peer pressure exists and that it can have negative consequences: a majority (57%) of drinkers agree with the statement “*Generally I would like there to be less pressure to drink alcohol*”. Female drinkers are significantly more likely to agree with this statement than male drinkers (61% vs 53%). Interestingly, both younger (18-34) and older (55+) drinkers were more likely to agree with the statement (61% and 62% respectively), compared with those in the middle age years (49%).

Figure 9: Agreement with: “Generally I would like there to be less pressure to drink alcohol” – by age group



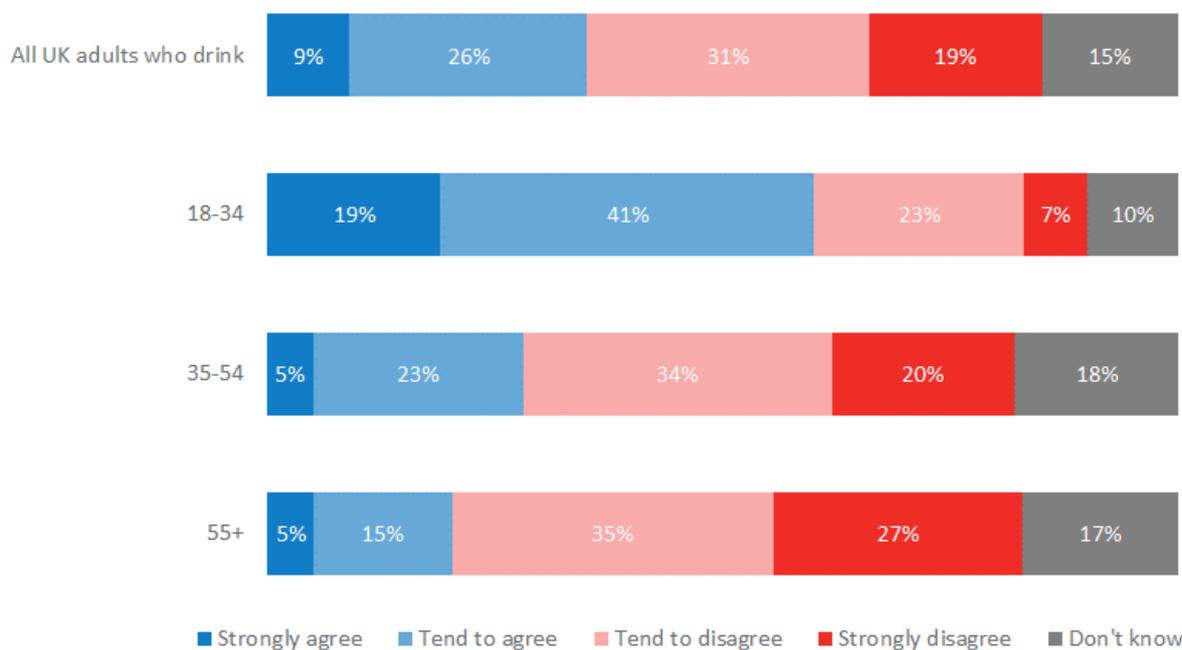
Base: all UK adults who drink alcohol (n=1,860); 18-34 (n=370); 35-54 (n=615); 55+ (n=875)

Consumption patterns also have a big impact on perceptions in this area. Two-thirds (66%) of low risk drinkers agree that they would like there to be less pressure to drink, falling to 54% of increasing risk drinkers, and just over a third of higher risk drinkers (35%).

Among the devolved nations, 57% of drinkers in England, 63% in Scotland and 59% in Wales agree that they would like to see less pressure in relation to drinking.

Slightly over a third (35%) of drinkers say that pressure to drink alcohol is common in their age group specifically. As might be expected, age has a dramatic impact on this perception: three-quarters (75%) of 18-24 year olds believe that pressure to drink is common among their peers; this falls to 50% of 25-34s, 29% of 35-54s and just 20% of those aged 55+. This perception was similar among men and women (33% of men; 36% of women) and among the devolved nations (35% in England, 36% in Scotland and Wales).

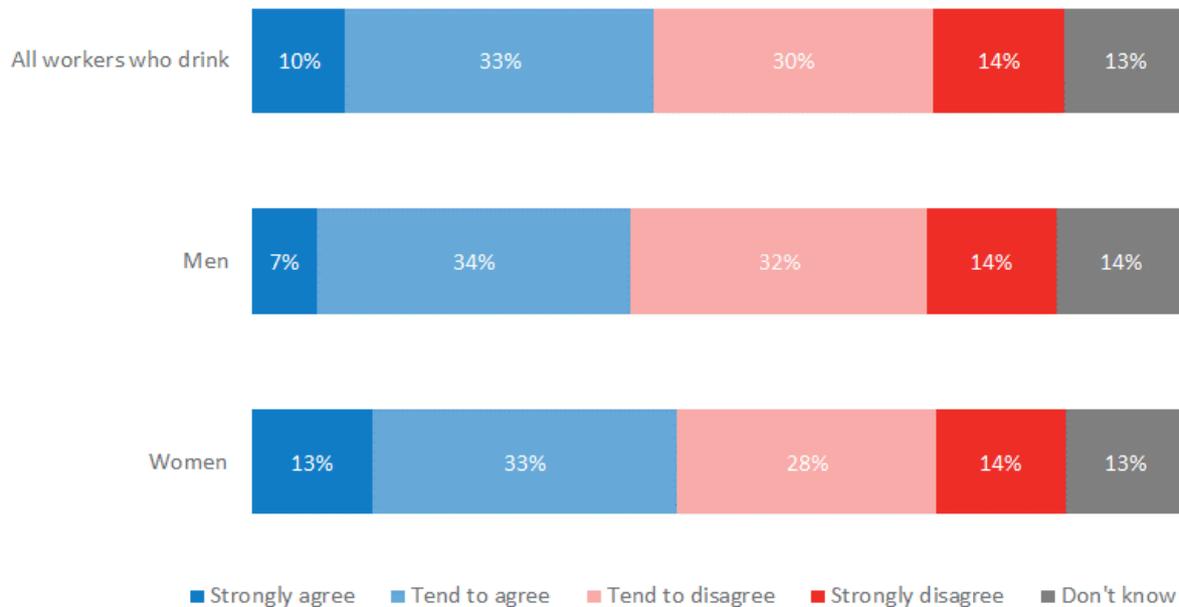
Figure 10: Agreement with: “I think pressure to drink alcohol among people my age is common” – by age group



Base: all UK adults who drink alcohol (n=1,860); 18-34 (n=370); 35-54 (n=615); 55+ (n=875)

As discussed in section 5.1, co-workers are one of the more common sources of pressure to drink alcohol. This is reinforced by the attitudinal statement shown in Figure 11: two-fifths (43%) of working adults (who drink alcohol) agree that there is too much pressure to drink when socialising with work colleagues. While women were only slightly more likely to agree overall with this view than men were (46% compared with 40%), they were almost twice as likely to *strongly* agree (13% vs 7%).

Figure 11: Agreement with “I think there is too much pressure to drink alcohol when socialising with work colleagues” – by gender



Base: all UK workers who drink alcohol (n=1,040); men (n=494); women (n=546)

There is limited variation by age group in the perception that work socialising brings excessive pressure to drink. Younger (18-34) and older (55+) workers were equally likely to agree with the statement (both 46%), while among the middle age group agreement appears slightly lower (40%), however this difference is not statistically significant.

There is also limited variation among the devolved nations: 42% of drinkers in England, 43% in Scotland and 45% in Wales agree with this statement.

In common with the findings discussed earlier in this section, there is a relationship between respondents' own drinking levels and the perception that there is excessive pressure to drink. Forty-seven percent of low risk drinkers, and 45% of increasing risk drinkers, agree that there is too much pressure to drink alcohol when socialising with colleagues, along with just 30% of higher risk drinkers.