

Festive Drinking Patterns

December 2024

ABOUT DRINKAWARE

Drinkaware is the UK's leading alcohol charity, providing advice, information and tools to UK adults to reduce the harm that alcohol can cause. We were set up in 2006 by the UK, devolved governments and representatives of the alcohol industry.

We work in partnership with others to reduce alcohol harm across the UK, deliver public-facing campaigns and digital services and use our expertise to give governments, industry, communities, and individuals the knowledge and support to make informed decisions about alcohol and how to reduce the harm it can cause. We gather valuable data on the impact of alcohol consumption and harm among the population and groups within society through our sector-leading annual Monitor report of drinking habits and trends, as well as discrete research on harm experience in particular populations and groups.

This online survey of 2,300 UK Adults (nationally representative on the basis of age, gender, and region) was commissioned by Drinkaware and conducted by market research company OnePoll, in accordance with the Market Research Society's code of conduct. Data was collected between 11th and 18th November 2024. All participants double opted-in to take part in research and were paid an amount depending on the length and complexity of the survey. This survey was overseen and edited by the OnePoll research team. OnePoll are MRS Company Partners, corporate membership of ESOMAR and Members of the British Polling Council.

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DATA

The survey was conducted online between the 11th and 18th November and is representative of all adults in the UK (aged 18+). Quotas based on the 2022 UK mid-year population estimates were used to achieve a nationally representative sample. The total sample size was 2,300 adults including 2,028 drinkers. The festive period was defined as December 1st to January 1st. Any differences reported between groups in this report are statistically significant to at least a confidence level of 95% (i.e. p less than 0.05) unless otherwise stated.

Women make up just over half (51%) of the sample while 49% are men. The largest age group is comprised of adults aged 55 and over (40%), followed by adults aged between 35 and 54 (33%) with 18 to 34 year olds making up the smallest age group (27%). Most of the sample are drinkers (88%) while 12% are non-drinkers, and most (96%) of the sample celebrate Christmas with 91% of drinkers intending to drink at least one alcoholic drink on Christmas day.

Table 1. Sample characteristics

Category	Proportion	Base (n)
Male	49%	1121
Female	51%	1173
18 to 34	27%	628
35 to 54	33%	754
55+	40%	918
Drinker	88%	2028
Non-drinker	12%	272
Celebrate Christmas	96%	2206
Do not celebrate Christmas	4%	94

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The festive period is often regarded as a time for celebration, as well as over-indulgence in food and drink, including alcohol. Drinkaware would like to raise awareness of the over-indulgence in alcohol and uncover the UK's drinking behaviours during the festive period. With this aim, Drinkaware commissioned a survey with OnePoll in November 2024, the results of which are presented below.

- Overall, the festive season appears to be a time for increased alcohol consumption with almost two-thirds (64%) of drinkers intending to drink more, in this period, than they usually do throughout the year. This may partly be because just over half of drinkers intend to have more spontaneous drinks over this period and 45% intend to have fewer drink-free days.
- More than half (57%) of UK drinkers are likely to binge drink on Christmas day, rising to 75% among 18- to 34-year-olds. Wine appears to be the most popular choice on December 25th with three-quarters (75%) of drinkers consuming at least one medium-sized glass (175ml), followed by single measures of spirits (56%) and pints of beer (43%).
- More than half (60%) of employees will be having a festive work party in 2024. Two in five (41%) employees say their festive work party will include alcohol while 19% say it won't. Most (78%) of these parties will involve a pub, bar or restaurant and over three in five (62%) employees having a party with alcohol say they believe alcohol will have a positive effect on their party.
- Colleagues are a significant source of increased pressure to drink over the festive period with almost one in five (18%) UK employees always or often experiencing more pressure to drink from this group than they typically do. The next most common cause for increased pressure to drink during the festive period among all UK adults is friends (16%) which rises to 31% among 18 to 34 year olds. One in 10 UK adults

experience more pressure to drink alcohol from family (10%) and partners (10%) respectively.

- Just over half (56%) of UK drinkers intend to reduce their drinking in 2025. Taking drink free days is the most popular way UK drinkers intend to reduce their drinking (19%), followed by going out less socially (16%), staying off alcohol for a fixed time period (15%), avoiding alcohol on a school or work night (15%) and setting a drinking limit (15%).
- Young adults (aged 18 to 34) appear to be particularly more likely to drink more alcohol over the festive period compared to all UK adults. Not only are they more likely to binge drink on Christmas day, they are also more likely to intend to drink more over the festive period compared to their typical consumption which may be down to having more unplanned drinks and less drink free days during the week. Despite this, young adults do seem to be aware of their increased consumption as they are also more likely to consume more alcohol-free and lower strength products during this period than they typically drink compared to all UK drinkers and are also more likely to want to moderate their drinking in the New Year compared to all UK drinkers.

INTRODUCTION

The festive period is often regarded as a time for celebration, as well as over-indulgence in food and drink, including alcohol. The association between increased alcohol use and atypical events such as birthdays and weddings or seasonal events such as Christmas is well-established.¹ This association has been used to explain discrepancies in alcohol consumption observed in prevalence surveys and population sales data.²

In November 2024, Drinkaware commissioned a survey with OnePoll to investigate the UK's drinking behaviours during the festive period with the aim of raising awareness around the over-indulgence of alcohol during this time. The survey explores topics such as consumption patterns on Christmas day, drinking intentions over the festive period as well as the experience of pressure to drink over the festive period. The survey also includes findings on moderation, particularly around the consumption of alcohol-free and lower strength products, and intentions to cut down on drinking in the New Year (2025). The results from the survey are presented below.

CHRISTMAS DAY CONSUMPTION

Binge drinking

Over half (57%) of UK drinkers typically binge drink on Christmas day (6 or more units for women; 8 or more units for men).

- Gender: Male drinkers are more likely to binge drink on Christmas day compared to female drinkers (61% vs 53%).
- Age: 18- to 34-year-olds are more likely, compared to all UK drinkers, to binge drink on Christmas day (75% vs 57%).

10+ Units

Over one third (39%) of drinkers consume at least 10 units on Christmas day.

- Gender: Male drinkers are more likely to consume at least 10 units on Christmas day compared to female drinkers (52% vs 26%).
- Age: 18- to 34-year-old drinkers are more likely to consume at least 10 units on Christmas day compared to all UK drinkers (64% vs 39%).

Table 2. Proportion of UK drinkers who binge drink or consume 10+ units on Christmas day

	All drinkers	Gender		Age		
		Men	Women	18 to 34	35 to 54	55+
Binge drink	57%	61%	53%	75%	60%	42%
10+ units	39%	52%	26%	64%	40%	21%
Base (n)	2028	1001	1022	542	684	802

Beer or cider (Pint 568ml)

Two-fifths (43%) of UK drinkers consume at least one pint of beer or cider on Christmas day.

- Gender: Male drinkers are more likely to consume at least one pint of beer or cider on Christmas day, compared to female drinkers (60% vs 27%).
- Age: 18- to 34-year-old drinkers (71%) are more likely to consume at least one pint of beer or cider on Christmas day, compared to all UK drinkers (71% vs 43%).

Beer or cider (Bottle 330ml)

Two-fifths (42%) of UK drinkers consume at least one bottle of beer or cider on Christmas day.

- Gender: Male drinkers are more likely to consume at least one bottle of beer or cider on Christmas day, compared to female drinkers (56% vs 29%).
- Age: 18- to 34-year-olds are more likely to drink at least one bottle of beer or cider on Christmas day, compared to all UK drinkers (73% vs 42%).

Wine (Medium glass 175ml)

Three-quarters (75%) of drinkers consume at least one medium glass of wine on Christmas day.

- Gender: Female drinkers are more likely to consume at least one medium glass of wine on Christmas day, compared to male drinkers (78% vs 72%).
- Age: Neither age group is significantly more or less likely to consume at least one medium glass of wine on Christmas day, compared to all UK drinkers (75%).

Spirits (Single measure 25ml)

Over half (56%) of UK drinkers consume at least one single measure of spirits on Christmas day.

- Gender: Male drinkers are more likely to consume at least one single measures of spirits on Christmas day, compared to female drinkers (58% vs 53%).

- **Age:** 18- to 34-year-old drinkers are more likely to consume at least one single measure of spirits on Christmas day, compared to all UK drinkers (72% vs 56%).

Table 3. Proportion of UK drinkers who drink at least one of each drink type on Christmas day

	All drinkers	Gender		Age		
		Men	Women	18 to 34	35 to 54	55+
Pint of beer or cider (568ml)	43%	60%	27%	71%	46%	22%
Bottle of beer or cider (330ml)	42%	56%	29%	73%	42%	22%
Medium glass of wine (175ml)	75%	72%	78%	77%	74%	74%
Single measure of spirit (25ml)	56%	58%	53%	72%	58%	43%
Base (n)	2028	1001	1022	542	684	802

FESTIVE SEASON INTENTIONS

Drink more alcohol

Almost two-thirds (64%) of UK drinkers intend to drink more alcohol over the festive period than they typically consume throughout the year.

- **Gender:** Neither male (63%) or female (65%) drinkers are significantly more or less likely to drink more alcohol over the festive period than they typically consume throughout the year.
- **Age:** 18- to 34-year-old drinkers are more likely to intend to drink more alcohol over the festive period than they typically consume throughout the year, compared to all UK drinkers (75% vs 64%).

Fewer drink free days throughout the week

Almost half (45%) of UK drinkers intend to have fewer alcohol-free days per week over the festive period than they typically have throughout the year.

- **Gender:** Neither male (46%) or female (44%) drinkers are significantly more or less likely to have fewer alcohol-free days throughout the week over the festive period than they typically have throughout the year.
- **Age:** 18- to 34-year-olds are more likely, compared to all UK drinkers, to have fewer alcohol-free days over the festive period than they typically have throughout the year (57% vs 45%).

Drink more alcohol-free products

Almost one-third (32%) of UK drinkers intend to drink more alcohol-free products over the festive period than they typically consume throughout the year.

- **Gender:** Male drinkers are more likely to drink more alcohol-free products over the festive period than they typically consume throughout the year compared to female drinkers (36% vs 27%).
- **Age:** 18 to 34 year old drinkers are more likely than all UK drinkers to drink more alcohol-free products over the festive period than they typically consume throughout the year (54% vs 32%).

Drink more lower strength products

Almost three in ten (29%) of UK drinkers intend to drink more low alcohol products over the festive period than they typically consume throughout the year.

- **Gender:** Male drinkers are slightly more likely than female drinkers to drink more low alcohol products over the festive period than they typically consume throughout the year (33% vs 25%).
- **Age:** 18- to 34-year-old drinkers are more likely than all UK drinkers to drink more low alcohol drinks over the festive period than they typically consume throughout the year (54% vs 29%).

More unplanned drinking

Just over half (55%) of UK drinkers intend to have more unplanned drinks over the festive period than they typically have throughout the year.

- **Gender:** Neither male (55%) or female (55%) drinkers are significantly more or less likely to have more unplanned drinks over the festive period than they typically have throughout the year.
- **Age:** 18- to 34-year-old drinkers are more likely to have more unplanned drinks over the festive period than they typically have throughout the year, compared to all UK drinkers (69% vs 55%).

Table 4. Proportion of UK drinkers with the following intentions over the festive period

	All drinkers	Gender		Age		
		Men	Women	18 to 34	35 to 54	55+
Drink more alcoholic drinks	64%	63%	65%	75%	69%	52%
Have fewer drink free days	45%	46%	44%	57%	50%	33%
Drink more alcohol-free drinks	32%	36%	27%	54%	33%	15%

Drink more lower strength drinks	29%	33%	25%	54%	30%	11%
Have more unplanned drinking sessions	55%	55%	55%	69%	61%	41%
Base (n)	2028	1001	1022	542	684	802

FESTIVE WORK PARTIES

Festive work party with alcohol

Two in five (41%) UK employees are having a workplace festive work event this year which will involve alcohol while 19% are having a festive work event that won't involve alcohol.

- **Gender:** Neither male (42%) or female (40%) employees are significantly more or less likely to be having a festive work event this year which will involve alcohol.
- **Age:** 35- to 54-year-old employees are more likely than all UK employees to be having a festive work event this year which will involve alcohol (48% vs 41%)

Table 5. Proportion of UK employees having a festive work event in 2024

	All employees	Gender		Age		
		Men	Women	18 to 34	35 to 54	55+
Festive work event w/ alcohol	41%	42%	40%	40%	48%	30%
Festive work event w/out alcohol	19%	20%	17%	31%	14%	8%
No festive work event	24%	23%	25%	15%	22%	39%
Not sure	17%	16%	19%	15%	16%	24%
Base (n)	1588	831	753	574	658	356

Festive work party location

Most (78%) adults having a festive work party this year say it will take place in a pub, bar or restaurant.

- **Gender:** Neither men (78%) or women (79%) having a festive work party are significantly more or less likely to say it will take place in a pub, bar or restaurant.
- **Age:** Neither age group having a festive work party are significantly more or less likely to say it will take place in a pub, bar or restaurant compared to all UK employees having a festive work party (78%).

Table 6. Proportion of UK employees having a festive work party in each location in 2024

	All employees	Gender		Age		
		Men	Women	18 to 34	35 to 54	55+
Office	31%	39%	22%	37%	29%	18%
Pub	34%	35%	32%	41%	30%	24%
Bar	30%	35%	25%	32%	34%	11%
Restaurant	50%	48%	52%	48%	50%	58%
Online	14%	18%	10%	20%	12%	5%
NET: Pub, Bar or Restaurant	78%	78%	79%	76%	80%	79%
Base (n)	942	515	424	402	408	132

Impact of alcohol on party

Almost two-thirds (62%) of employees having a festive work party involving alcohol believe alcohol will have a positive impact on their party.

- Gender: Men having a festive work party involving alcohol are more likely than women to believe alcohol will have a positive impact on their party (70% vs 52%).
- Age: Employees aged 55+ having a festive work party involving alcohol are less likely, compared to all UK employees, to believe alcohol will have a positive impact on their party (48% vs 62%).

Table 7. Proportion of UK employees with a festive work party involving alcohol who think alcohol will have a positive/negative impact

	All employees	Gender		Age		
		Men	Women	18 to 34	35 to 54	55+
Positive	62%	70%	52%	65%	64%	48%
Negative	6%	4%	8%	8%	4%	8%
Base (n)	647	347	298	227	315	105

FESTIVE PRESSURE TO DRINK

One-quarter (25%) of UK adults say they always or often experience more pressure to drink alcohol over the festive period than they typically do from either friends, family, partners or colleagues.

- Gender: Men are more likely than women to always or often experience more pressure than they typically do to drink alcohol over the festive period from either friends, family, partners or colleagues (30% vs 21%).

- **Age:** 18- to 34-year-olds are more likely, compared to all UK adults, to always or often experience more pressure than they typically do to drink alcohol over the festive period from either friends, family, partners or colleagues (47% vs 25%).

Table 8. Proportion of UK adults who always or often experience more pressure than they typically do to drink alcohol over the festive period

		Gender		Age		
	All adults	Men	Women	18 to 34	35 to 54	55+
More pressure	25%	30%	21%	47%	28%	9%
Base (n)	2300	1121	1173	628	754	918

Friends

Around one in six (16%) say they always or often experience more pressure than they typically do to drink alcohol over the festive period from friends.

- **Gender:** Men are more likely than women to always or often experience more pressure than they typically do to drink alcohol over the festive period from friends (20% vs 13%).
- **Age:** 18- to 34-year-olds are more likely compared to all UK adults to always or often experience more pressure than they typically do to drink alcohol over the festive period from friends (31% vs 16%).

Family

One in ten (10%) UK adults say they always or often experience more pressure than they typically do to drink alcohol over the festive period from their family.

- **Gender:** Men are more likely than women to say they always or often experience more pressure than they typically do to drink alcohol over the festive period from their family (12% vs 8%).
- **Age:** 18- to 34-year-olds are more likely compared to all UK adults to always or often experience more pressure than they typically do to drink alcohol over the festive period from their family (16% vs 10%).

Partner

One in ten (10%) UK adults say they always or often experience more pressure than they typically do to drink alcohol over the festive period from their partner.

- **Gender:** Men are more likely than women to always or often experience more pressure than they typically do to drink alcohol over the festive period from their partner (12% vs 7%).
- **Age:** 18- to 34-year-olds are more likely to say they always or often experience more pressure than they typically do to drink alcohol over the festive period from their partner compared to all UK adults (17% vs 10%).

Colleagues

Almost one in five (18%) UK employees always or often experience more pressure than they typically do to drink alcohol over the festive period from colleagues.

- **Gender:** Male employees are more likely than female employees to say they always or often experience more pressure than they typically do to drink alcohol over the festive period from colleagues (21% vs 14%).
- **Age:** 18- to 34-year-old employees are more likely to say they always or often experience more pressure than they typically do to drink alcohol over the festive period from colleagues compared to all UK employees (27% vs 18%).

Table 9. Proportion of UK adults who always or often experience more pressure than they typically do to drink alcohol over the festive period from each group

	All adults	Gender		Age		
		Men	Women	18 to 34	35 to 54	55+
Friends	16%	20%	13%	31%	17%	6%
Family	10%	12%	8%	16%	13%	4%
Partner	10%	12%	7%	17%	12%	3%
Colleagues ¹	18%	21%	14%	27%	17%	5%
Base (n)	2300	1121	1173	628	754	918

NEW YEAR MODERATION INTENTIONS

Moderation intentions

More than half (56%) of UK drinkers intend to moderate their drinking in the New Year while 34% do not intend to moderate their drinking.

- **Gender:** Neither male (58%) or female (53%) drinkers are significantly more likely to intend to moderate their drinking in the New Year.
- **Age:** 18- to 34-year-old drinkers are more likely to intend to moderate their drinking in the New Year compared to all UK drinkers (77% vs 56%).

Table 10. Proportion of UK drinkers who intend to moderate their drinking in the New Year

	All drinkers	Gender		Age		
		Men	Women	18 to 34	35 to 54	55+
Moderate	56%	58%	53%	77%	59%	39%
Not moderating	34%	33%	35%	16%	32%	49%
Base (n)	2028	1001	1022	542	684	802

¹ This question was only asked to UK adults in employment

Moderation techniques

Taking drink free days is the most popular way UK drinkers intend to moderate their drinking (19%), followed by going out less socially (16%).

- **Gender:** Male drinkers are more likely, compared to female drinkers, to intend to moderate their drinking in the New Year by going out less socially (19% vs 14%); setting a drinking limit (17% vs 12%); drinking smaller amounts (14% vs 11%); avoid having alcohol in the house (13% vs 9%); drinking within the CMOs guidelines (12% vs 8%); and recording how much they are drinking (10% vs 5%).
- **Age:** 18- to 34-year-old drinkers are more likely, compared to all UK drinkers, to intend to moderate their drinking in the New Year by staying off alcohol for a fixed time period (19% vs 15%); recording how much they are drinking (14% vs 7%); drinking alcohol-free or lower strength drinks (24% vs 13%); avoiding always having alcohol in the house (20% vs 11%); setting a drinking limit (26% vs 15%); avoiding alcohol on a school or work night (22% vs 15%); drinking within the Chief Medical Officers' (CMOs) guidelines (17% vs 10%) and drinking smaller amounts (22% vs 13%).

Table 11. Proportion of UK drinkers who intend to moderate their drinking in the New Year in each way

	All drinkers	Gender		Age		
		Men	Women	18 to 34	35 to 54	55+
Stay off alcohol for a fixed time period	15%	15%	14%	19%	19%	9%
Go out less socially	16%	19%	14%	19%	20%	11%
Record how much you are drinking	7%	10%	5%	14%	8%	2%
Take drink free days during the week	19%	19%	19%	22%	20%	16%
Drink alcohol-free or lower strength drinks	13%	14%	12%	24%	14%	6%
Avoid having alcohol in the house	11%	13%	9%	20%	13%	4%

Set a drinking limit	15%	17%	12%	26%	16%	6%
Avoid on a school or work night	15%	16%	14%	22%	18%	7%
Drink within the CMOs guidelines	10%	12%	8%	17%	11%	4%
Drink smaller amounts	13%	14%	11%	22%	14%	5%
Base (n)	2028	1001	1022	542	684	802

CONCLUSION

The data presented in this report suggests that the festive period is a time of increased alcohol use for a significant proportion of adults in the UK. For instance, almost two-thirds (64%) of all UK drinkers intend to drink more alcohol over the festive period compared to their typical consumption throughout the year and over half (57%) of UK drinkers say they usually binge drink on Christmas day.

Young adults (aged 18 to 34) appear to be particularly more likely to drink more alcohol over the festive period compared to all UK adults. Not only are they more likely to binge drink on Christmas day, they are also more likely to intend to drink more over the festive period compared to their typical consumption which may be down to having more unplanned drinks and less drink free days during the week. Despite this, young adults do seem to be aware of their increased consumption as they are also more likely to consume more alcohol-free and lower strength products during this period than they typically drink compared to all UK drinkers and are also more likely to want to moderate their drinking in the New Year.

While it is important to relax, unwind and have fun over the festive period, it is also important to keep the health risks from increased alcohol consumption to a minimum. If you are choosing to drink always keep an eye on the overall amount you're drinking as it can easily add up. The Chief Medical Officers' low risk drinking guidelines recommends not to drink

more than 14 units over a week. This equates to around six standard glasses of wine or six pints, spread evenly over the week with several drink free days.

A good way to find out how your drinking is affecting your health is to take the [Drinkaware Drinking Check](#), you can also reduce your overall consumption by swapping out conventional strength alcoholic drinks with a lower strength or alcohol-free alternatives. For other tips and advice to ensure you don't get carried away over the festive season visit www.drinkaware.co.uk.

REFERENCES

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