

drinkaware

Drinking in 2026: Northern Ireland

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 UK adults in 2026 (of which 6,080 drink alcohol) and 506 adults in Northern Ireland (of which 439 drink alcohol).

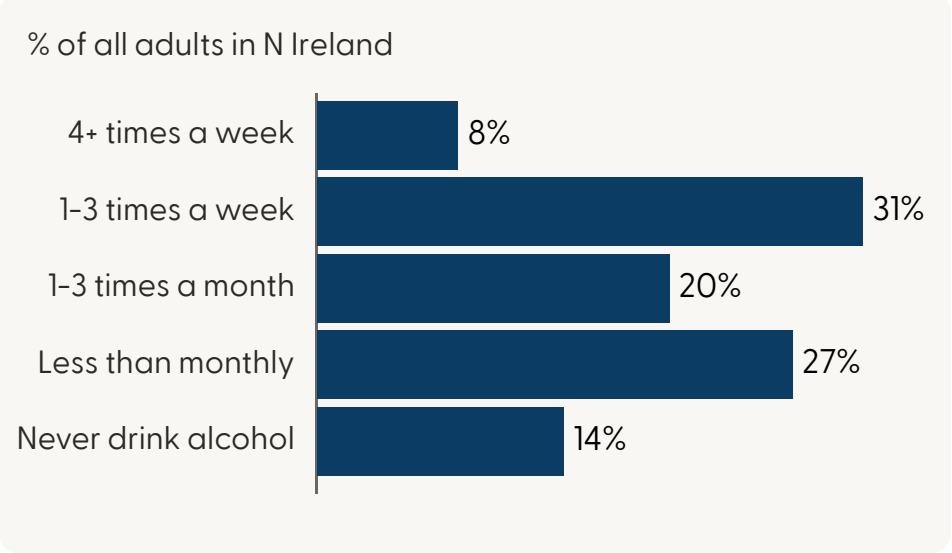
All differences highlighted in the report are statistically significant.



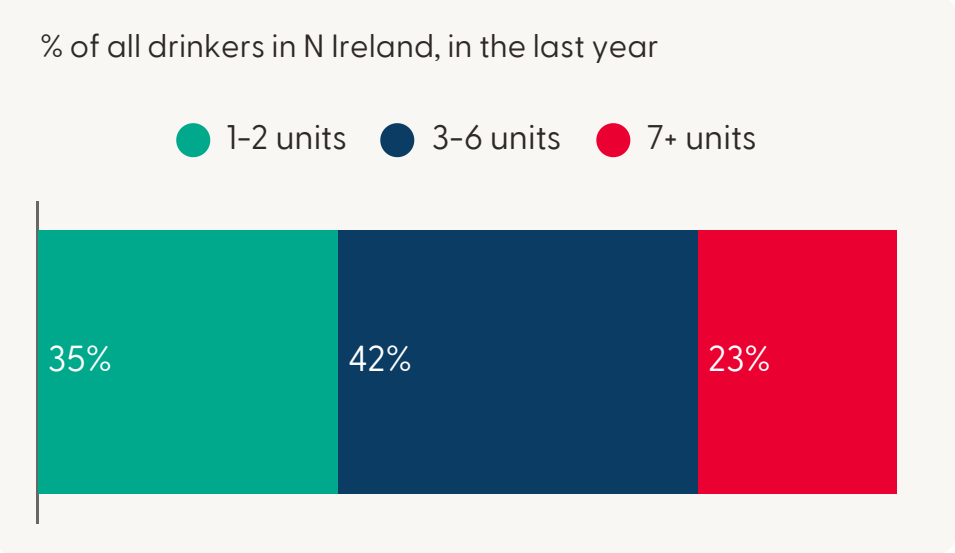
ps research

Drinking in 2026: a snapshot of Northern Ireland

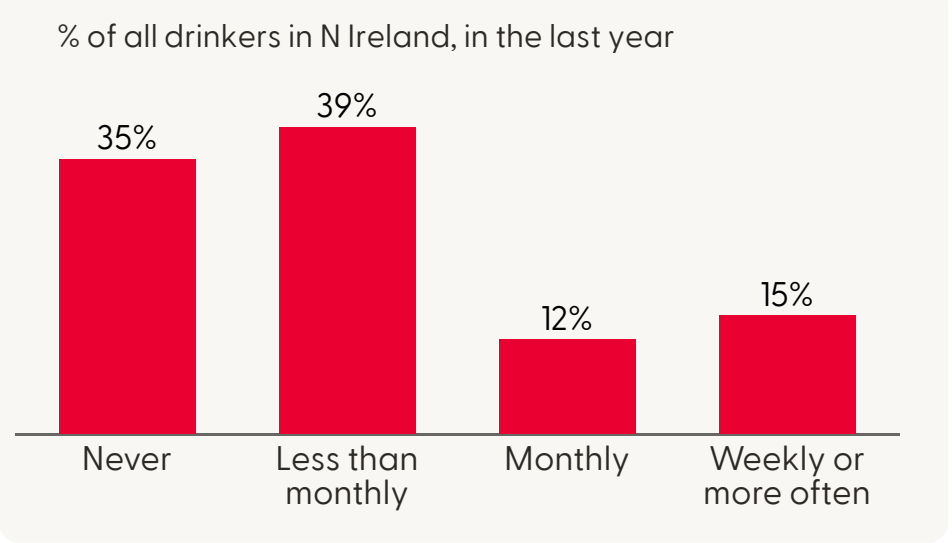
How often do adults in N Ireland drink?



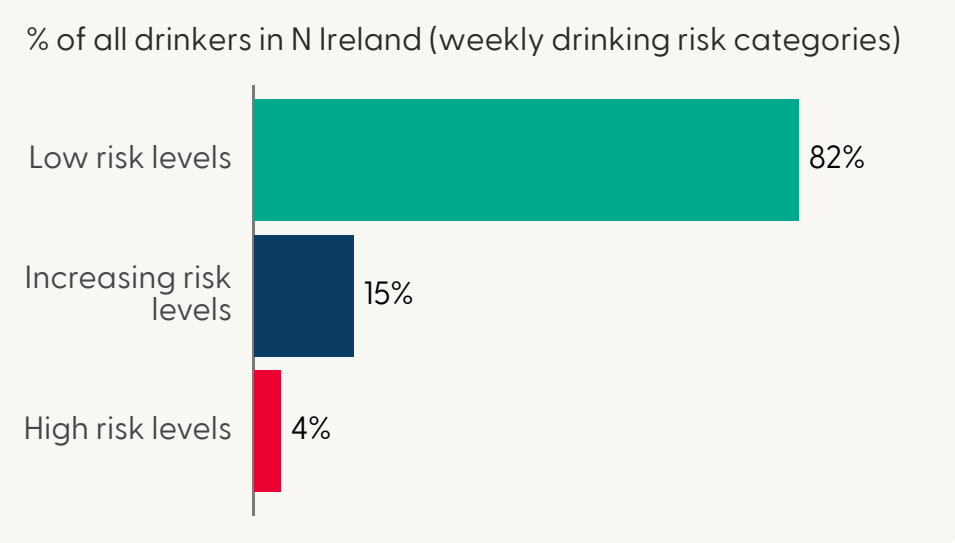
How many units are drunk in a typical drinking day?



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

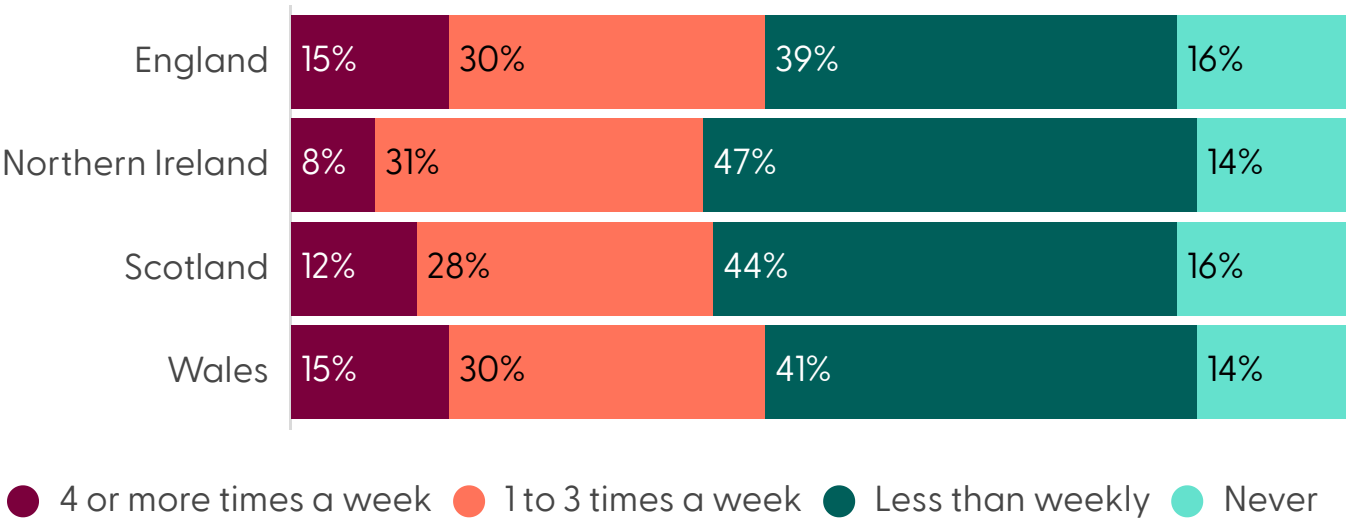
Weekly drinking risk categories

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

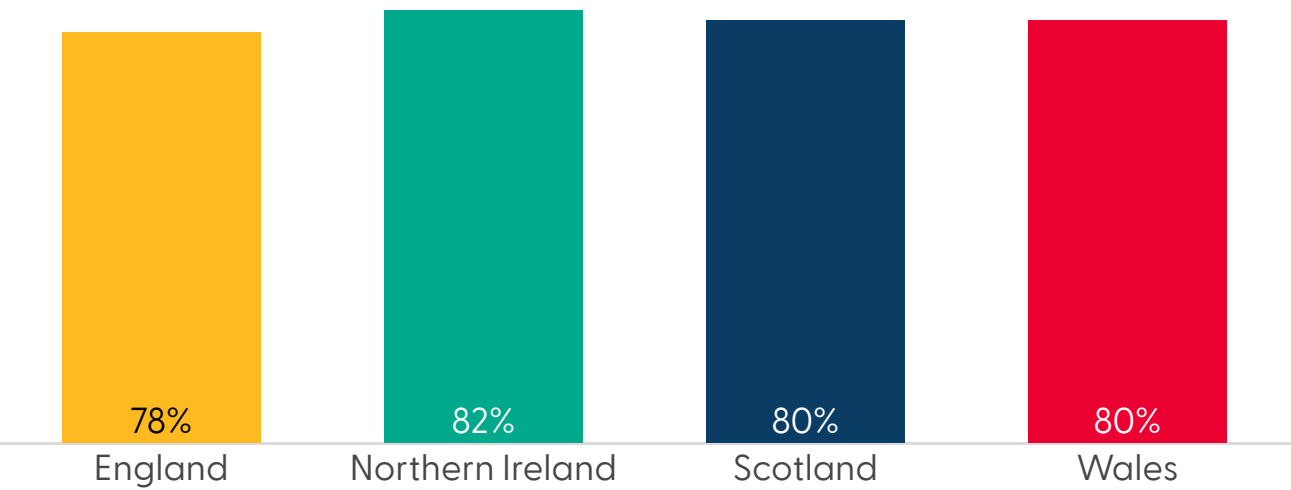
- **Low risk** - drinking within the low risk guidelines of 14 units per week
- **Increasing risk** - between 15 and 34 units per week for women, and between 15 and 49 units for men
- **High risk** - 35+ units per week for women, and 50+ units for men

How do drinking behaviours look across UK countries?

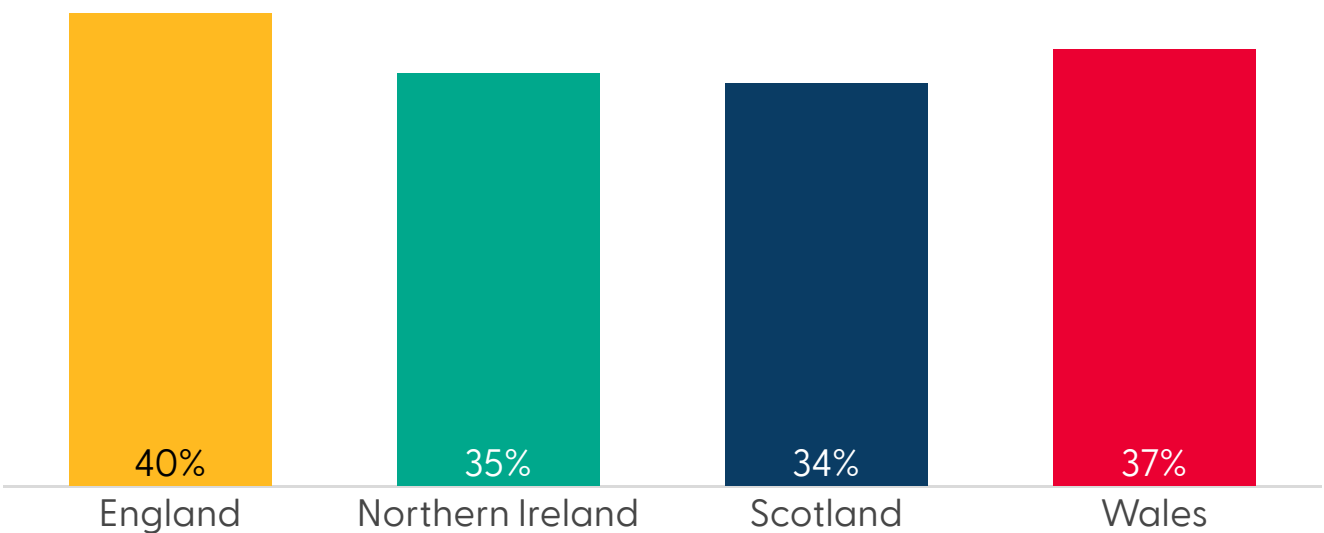
How frequently all adults drink alcohol



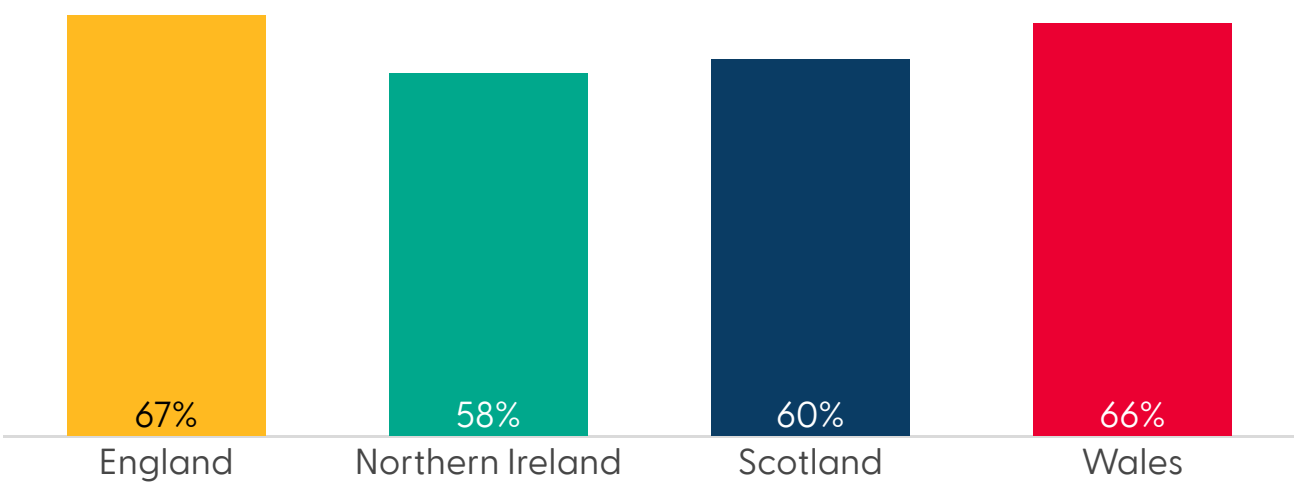
% of drinkers who drank within the low risk weekly guidelines in the last week



% of drinkers who never binge drink

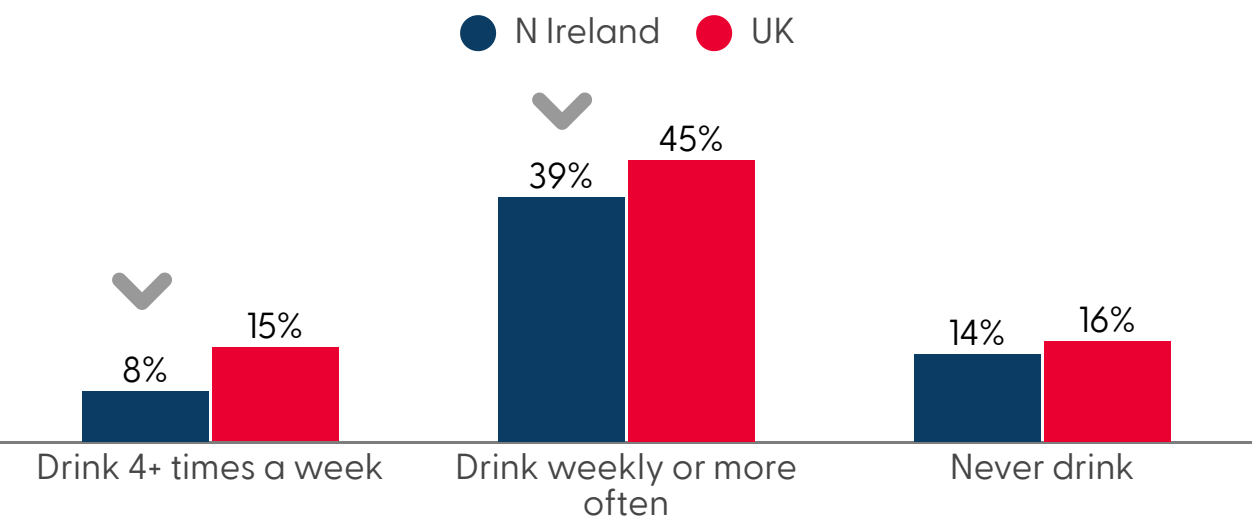


% of drinkers who drink up to 4 units in a typical drinking day

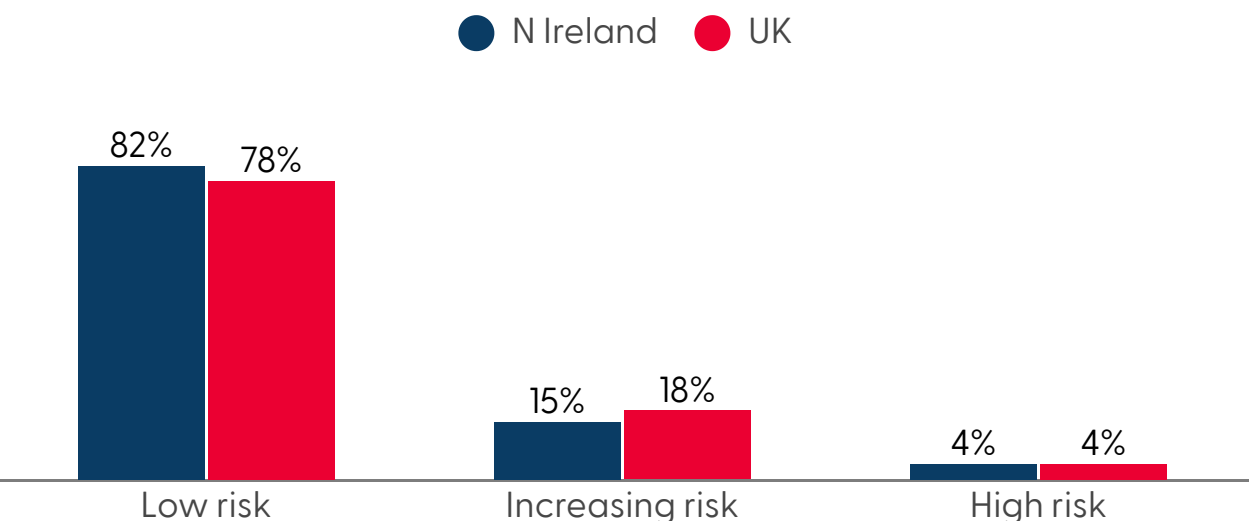


Comparing Northern Ireland to the UK in 2026

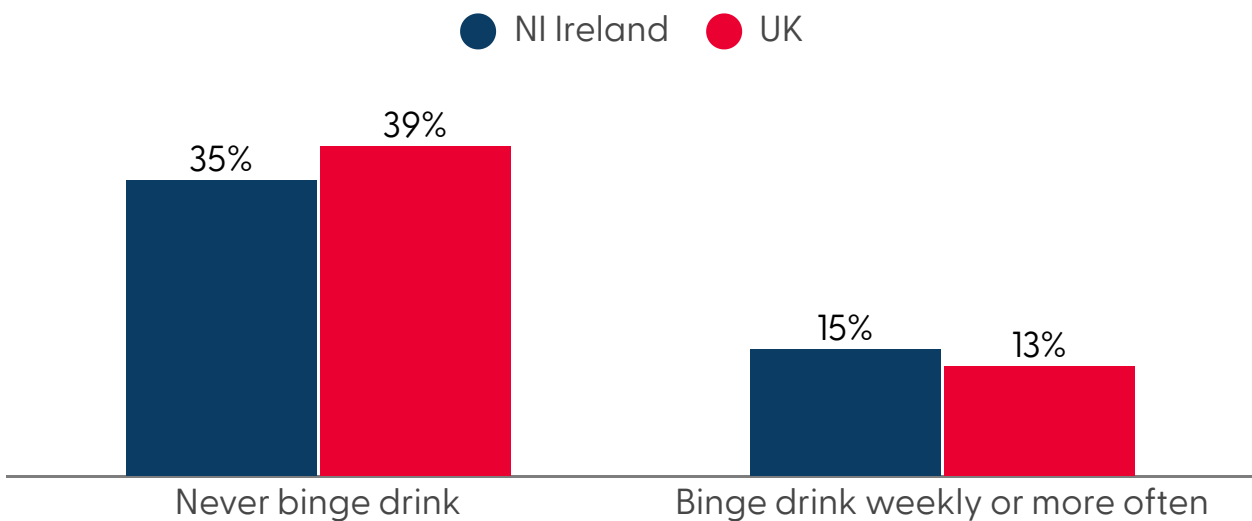
How frequently all adults drink alcohol



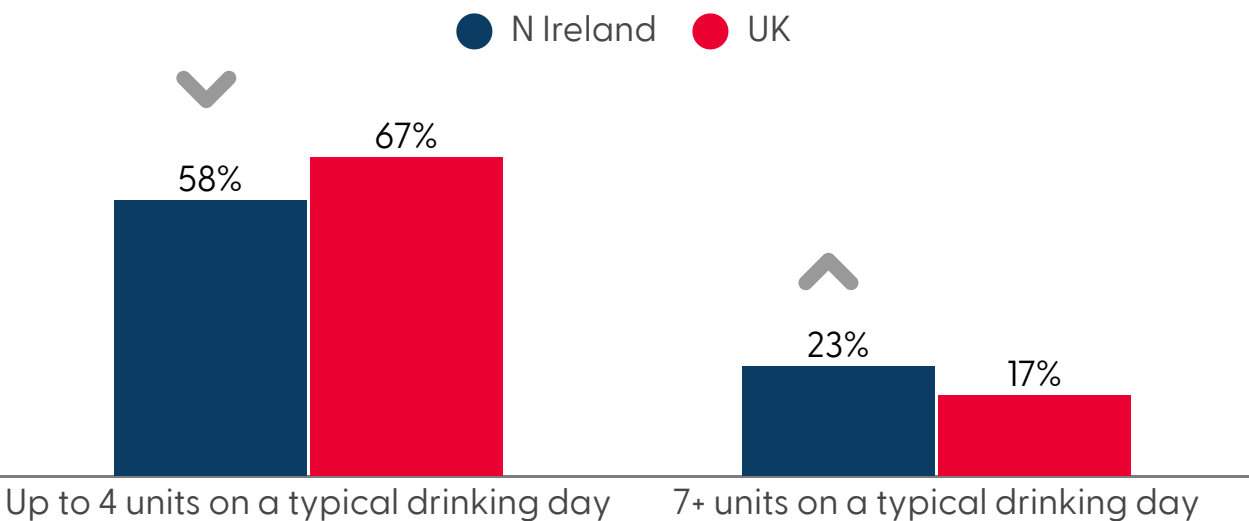
Drank within the low risk weekly guidelines in the last week



Binge drinking frequency in the last year



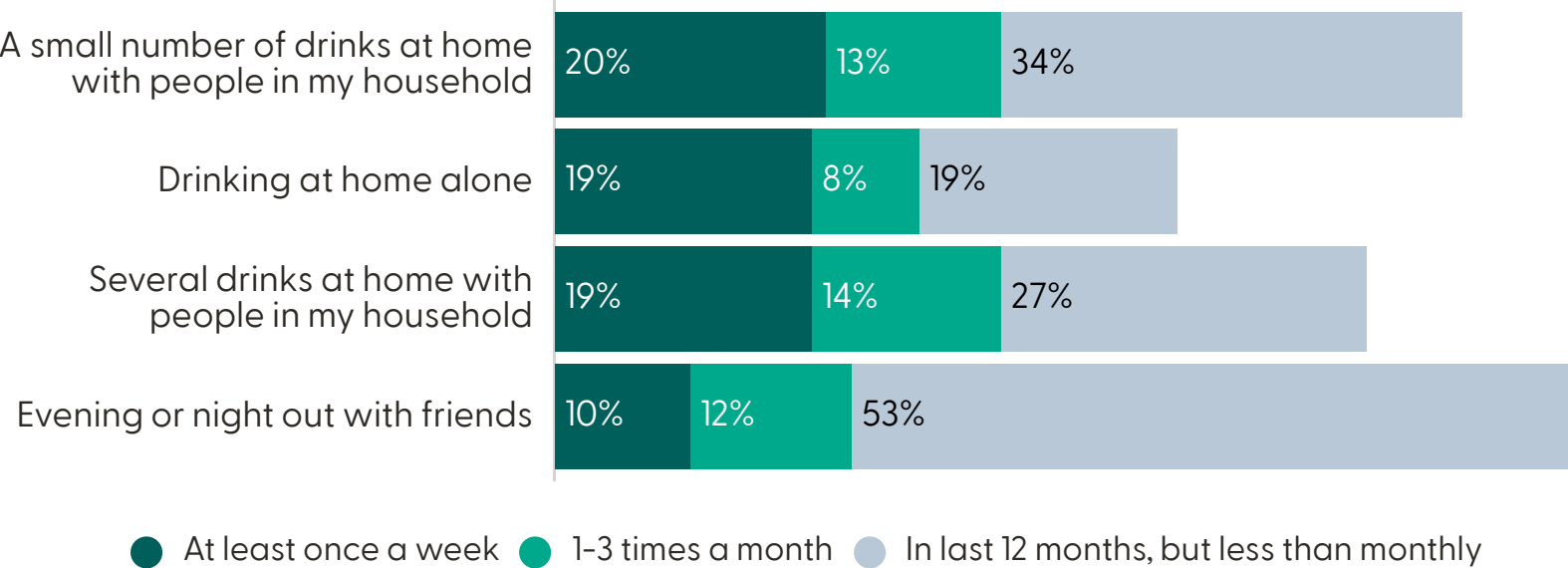
Drinking on a typical drinking day



Drinking occasions

How often do drinkers in Northern Ireland drink on different occasions?

% who have had alcohol on different occasions at some point in last 12 months



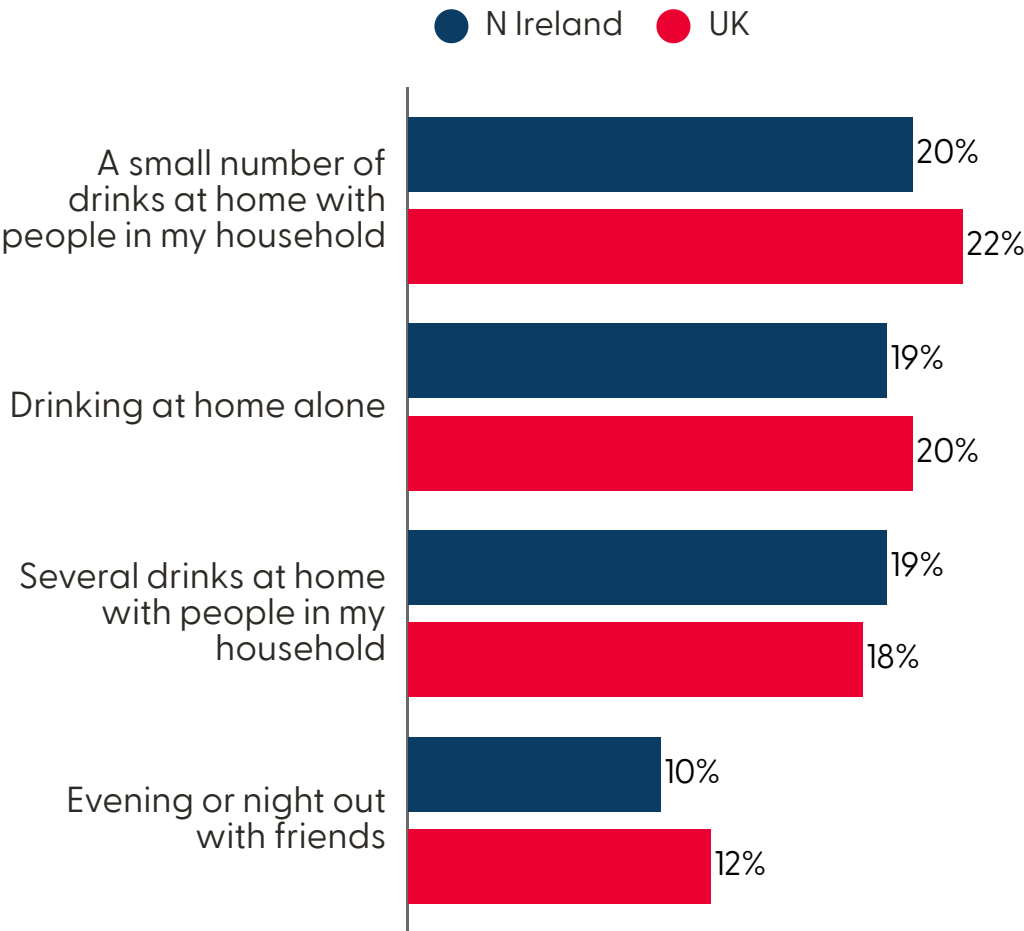
Drinkers in Northern Ireland, like all UK drinkers, drink more than they typically would in certain moments

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



There are no statistically significant differences in drinking on these occasions at least once a week in Northern Ireland compared to the UK

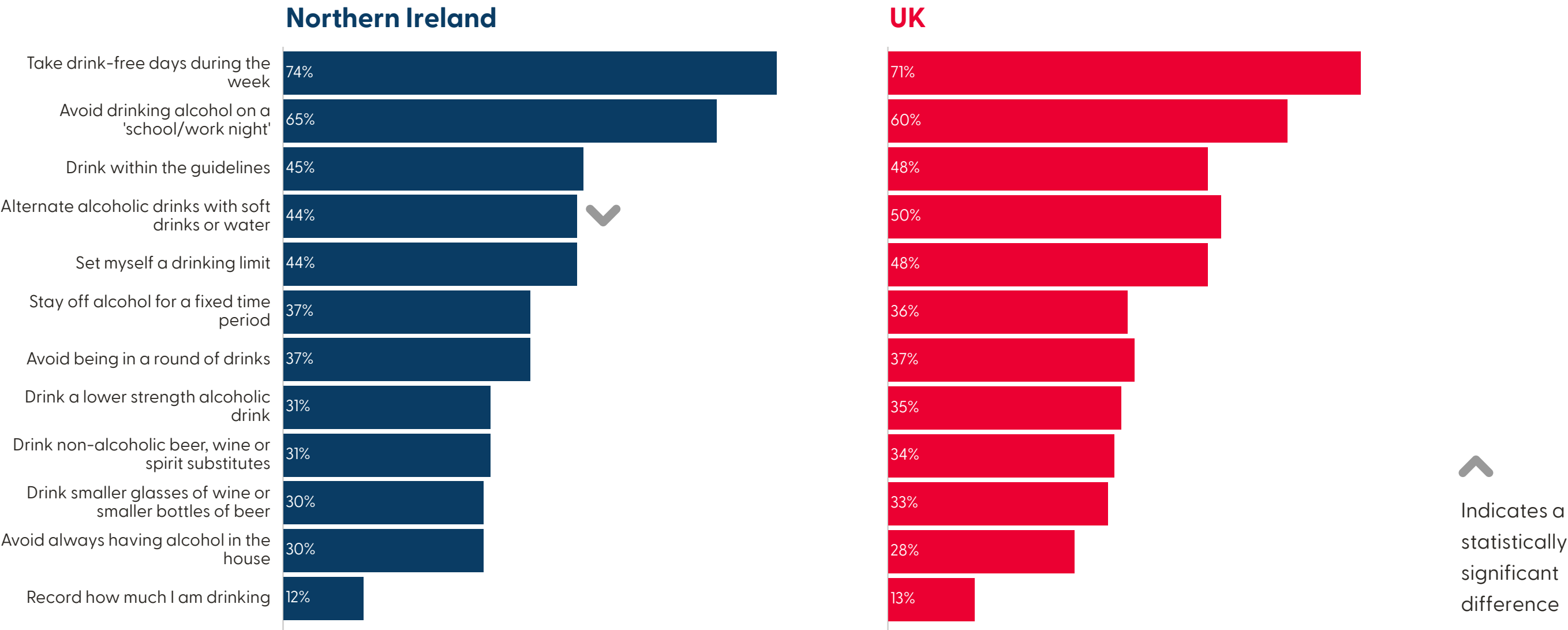
% who had alcohol on different occasions at least once a week



Moderation techniques

91% of drinkers in Northern Ireland used at least one moderation technique in 2026, the same as all UK drinkers (91%)

% of drinkers in N Ireland and all UK currently using the following moderation techniques



Trying to reduce their drinking



41% of drinkers in Northern Ireland have tried to reduce their drinking in the last 12 months

This is similar to 39% of UK drinkers



Finances are a key aspect of cutting back



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

This is similar to all UK drinkers (51%) who reduced their alcohol consumption over that period



The most common reason given for people in N Ireland to think about reducing their drinking are not significantly different to all UK drinkers

Top reasons for thinking about reducing their drinking over the last 12 months:
(No statistically significant differences compared to UK)



of drinkers in N Ireland indicated that nothing made them think about reducing their drinking in the last 12 months

Similar to all UK drinkers (34%)

Drinking in Northern Ireland: a recap



Adults in N Ireland drink less often, but on the days they do drink they tend to drink more units

Fewer adults in N Ireland drink 4+ times a week and weekly or more often compared to all UK adults, but those who drink are more likely to drink 7+ units on a typical drinking day



Four in five (82%) drinkers in N Ireland drank within the low risk weekly guidelines of 14 units in the last week

Similar to the UK overall (78%)



Nine in ten drinkers (91%) in N Ireland use at least one moderation technique (same as all UK drinkers)

Drinkers in N Ireland are less likely to alternate alcoholic drinks with soft drinks or water compared to all UK



Two in five (41%) drinkers in N Ireland have tried to reduce their drinking in the last 12 months (similar to all UK; 39%)

Like the rest of the UK, they are most likely to cite finances as a key aspect of cutting back

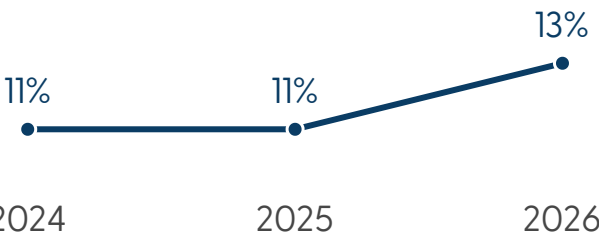
The UK story: drinking behaviours in 2026



UK drinkers are drinking more when they drink

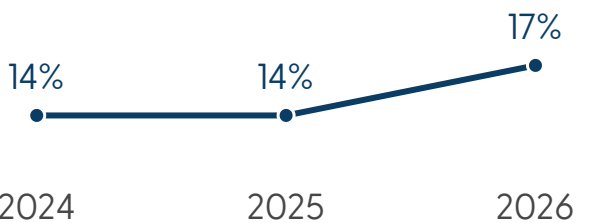
Binge drinking is up

% 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



Read our [2026 UK trends report](#)

Find out more



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