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# **Drinkaware Monitor 2014: Young people's and their parents' drinking behaviour and attitudes in the UK**

An Ipsos MORI report for Drinkaware

## **Executive summary**

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# Drinkaware Monitor 2014: Young people's and their parents' drinking behaviour and attitudes in the UK: executive summary of key findings

## Introduction

Drinkaware works to reduce alcohol misuse and harm in the UK. In order to determine where and how best to focus its work for maximum effect, Drinkaware draws upon a wide base of research and evidence; which this report contributes to.

Ipsos MORI was commissioned by Drinkaware to undertake a survey of young people aged 10-17 in the UK, to provide a picture of their drinking behaviour; looking at the prevalence of drinking among young people, their motivations for drinking, drunkenness, harmful drinking behaviour and their awareness of the risks associated with excessive drinking, and how they seek information about alcohol and drinking. The research was conducted alongside a survey of adults aged 18-75, and parents with at least one child aged 10-17. Many of the parents surveyed had children who completed the young people's survey. It is therefore possible to draw links between young people's drinking behaviours and attitudes and the behaviours and attitudes of their parents.

## Summary of approach

A nationally representative sample of 754 young people aged 10-17 living in the UK were surveyed online between 17<sup>th</sup> November and 10<sup>th</sup> December 2014. In addition, 527 parents of these young people were surveyed online in the same period.

Ipsos MORI has conducted similar research for Drinkaware on an annual basis since 2009. The face-to-face methodology used in 2009-11 was changed to an online methodology for 2012-14. Prior to 2012, the research focused on young people aged 11-17 only; this was expanded to include 10 year olds from 2012 onwards. A number of questionnaire changes have been made over time. This year some standardised research tools were included in the survey, including the CRAFFT harm identification tool, the

Alcohol Use Disorder Identification Test (AUDIT) and Drinking Motive Questionnaire (DMQ-R SF) among others.

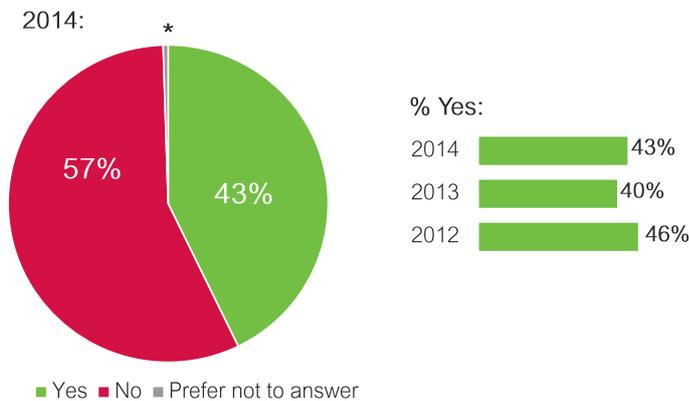
## Key findings

### Consumption patterns

Two in five UK 10-17 year-olds have had a whole alcoholic drink (43%). This remains in line with findings from Ipsos MORI's research in 2013 and 2012, and also with wider research – for example HSCIC's Smoking, Drinking and Drugs report shows that 39% of 11-15 year-olds have had an alcoholic drink (with 37% of 11-15 year-olds surveyed as part of the Drinkaware Monitor having had an alcoholic drink).

Figure 1 – Prevalence of drinking:

QC4. Have you ever had an alcoholic drink, not just a sip?



Base: All young people aged 10-17 (754 each year)

Source: Ipsos MORI

As may be expected, age is a major factor in whether young people have had a drink; almost seven in ten (68%) 16-17 year-olds have had a drink, compared to 25% of 10-13 year-olds.

Drinking remains a relatively uncommon event for most young people. Among those who have had a drink, 45% drink no more than once or twice a year. However, one in five (19%) say they drink once a week or more often.

Among those who have had an alcoholic drink, the mean age at which young people report having done so for the first time is 13.23, with two in five (38%) having had their first drink aged 13 or younger. This represents a slightly earlier introduction to drinking when compared to figures from 2013, though remains in line with 2012 findings. Among those who have had an alcoholic drink unsupervised by adults, the mean age at which they first did so is 13.75.

Three in five young people (60%) say they were with at least one relative when they had their first alcoholic drink, while half (52%) were with at least one parent.

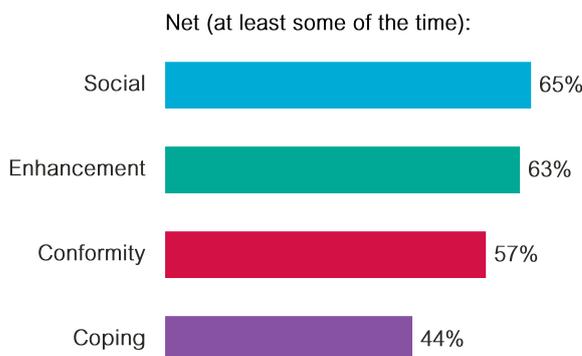
### Motivations for drinking

One in three young people (32%) say they have felt encouraged by others to drink alcohol. The majority of this encouragement came from friends; two in five (18%) said they were encouraged by a friend their own age or younger, while one in eight (12%) had encouragement from an older friend. Seven per cent say they were encouraged by a parent or another relative.

The main motivations behind young people's drinking are social, with two thirds (65%) drinking to improve parties and social occasions at least some of the time. A similar proportion (63%) drink for one or more enhancement reasons – i.e. for 'fun', or enjoyment of the feeling it gives them - at least some of the time. However, there are significant proportions who drink to conform (e.g. to be liked) (57%) or to cope with negative feelings (e.g. to improve a bad mood) (44%) at least some of the time. Meanwhile just over one in four (27%) of young people who have had an alcoholic drink agree with the statement; 'drinking gives me the confidence I need to meet people and make new friends'.

### Figure 2 – Overall motivations for drinking:

QC28. How often would you say you drink for the following reasons?



Base: All young people aged 10-17 who have had an alcoholic drink (323)

Source: Ipsos MORI

Drinking for coping reasons is linked to potentially harmful drinking patterns on a number of measures. For example, two in five (40%) of those who drink for coping reasons say they drink once a week or more often, compared to 18% of young people overall. Linked to this, one in four (25%) young people with poorer mental wellbeing<sup>1</sup> drink at least once a week, compared to 10%

<sup>1</sup> As defined by a score of 27 or lower on the WEMWBS tool – see full report for more detail.

of those with better mental wellbeing<sup>2</sup>. Additionally, those who drink to cope are more likely to have been drunk; 68% of this group have done so, compared to 39% of all young people who have had an alcoholic drink. There is also a strong link between drinking to feel more confident when meeting new people, and getting drunk; 55% of those who have been drunk agree with the statement 'drinking gives me the confidence I need to meet people and make new friends', compared to seven per cent of those who have never been drunk.

### Drunkenness

Among those who have had an alcoholic drink, two in five young people (39%) say they have experienced being drunk at least once. As with drinking in general, older participants are more likely to have been drunk before. Among those who have been drunk, one in three (33%) did so for the first time aged 15 or 16; the average age of being drunk for the first time is 13.86.

Four in five (80%) say they drink with the intention of getting drunk at least some of the time when they drink.

### Harmful drinking

Exposure to harm was measured using the CRAFFT score, a tool developed to screen young people for significant problems associated with alcohol or other substances. A score of 2 or more indicates potentially harmful behaviour. Almost one in twelve (eight per cent) of all respondents score above this threshold, with 92% not exposed to significant harm. Among those who have had an alcoholic drink, around one in six (18%) scored 2 or higher.

When asked about specific harms experienced as a result of drinking alcohol, one in four (25%) of those young people who have had an alcoholic drink say they have experienced one or more harmful consequences in the last 12 months. One in eight (12%) have experienced three or more consequences in the last 12 months.

From the list of consequences of drinking presented in the questionnaire, vomiting is the most commonly experienced; one in five (19%) of those who have drunk alcohol say this has happened to them in the last 12 months. One in nine young people have done something which put them in a risky situation, or missed a day of school or college (11% have experienced each of these consequences). One in ten have lost a valued possession, been made to look bad on social media, or had a fight (10% have experienced each of these consequences) in the last 12 months due to drinking.

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<sup>2</sup> As defined by a score of 28 or higher on the WEMWBS tool – see full report for more detail.

Among respondents aged 13 and over who have had an alcoholic drink, one in ten (10%) say they have engaged in sexual activity as a result of drinking alcohol. Seven per cent have been in trouble with the police or been a victim of crime, and the same proportion have been taken to hospital. Overall, 12% have experienced a serious harm in the last 12 months as a result of drinking (been in trouble with the police, being a victim of crime, been taken to hospital or been in a fight).

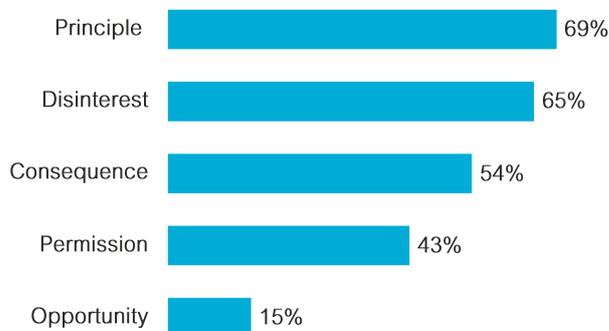
### Risk awareness and moderation

When asked to name possible negative consequences of drinking alcohol, young people tend to focus on more immediate risks such as getting into trouble with the police (mentioned by 67%), having an accident or getting injured (61%) or being involved in violence (57%); longer-term health impacts are less frequently identified.

Among non-drinkers, the main reasons for refraining from drinking pertain to matters of 'principle' and 'disinterest'; two thirds (64%) feel they are too young to drink, while 55% say they are simply not interested in drinking alcohol.

### Figure 3 – Overall reasons for refraining from drinking:

QC21. *You said you have never had an alcoholic drink, why is that?*



Base: All young people aged 10-17 who have never had an alcoholic drink (429)

Source: Ipsos MORI

### Seeking information about alcohol

Young people are most likely to turn to their parents for information and advice about alcohol. Three in four (73%) say their parents have spoken to them about alcohol, while three in five (58%) have asked their parents questions about alcohol. Around half (52%) have talked to their friends about alcohol, 16% have spoken to a teacher about it and 13% have sought information from the internet, a magazine or a book.

Young people who have had an alcoholic drink, those who have had an alcoholic drink unsupervised by adults, and those who have been drunk are more likely to seek information and advice. Furthermore, those who drink harmfully and, linked to this, those with poorer mental wellbeing are more likely to report having sought information and advice.

### Alcohol, young people and parental attitudes

Clear links can be seen between behaviours such as drinking, drunkenness and harmful drinking in young people and factors such as parental attitudes, parental behaviours and parental supervision.

#### Parental attitudes

Parental attitudes have a major influence on underage drinking. In particular, the age at which young people have their first alcoholic drink closely reflects the age parents feel is acceptable for a young person to have their first alcoholic drink. Over half of young people (56%) whose parents think 15 or younger is an acceptable age for a first alcoholic drink, have had a drink; this compares to 32% of young people whose parents think they should not try alcohol until the age of 16 or 17. In addition to this, young people whose parents think it is acceptable to have a first alcoholic drink at a younger age are more likely to have felt encouraged to drink by their parents; 10% of those whose parents think it is acceptable to have an alcoholic drink aged 15 or younger say they have felt encouraged to drink by their mum or dad, compared to two per cent whose parents think young people should not drink alcohol until the age of 16 or 17.

#### Parental behaviours

Parental drinking was measured in two ways: weekly unit consumption, giving categories of lower-risk, increasing risk and higher risk; and AUDIT, giving categories of Low risk (Zone 1), Hazardous (Zone 2), Harmful (Zone 3) and Dependent (Zone 4). The survey reveals a number of links between young people's drinking and their parents' drinking risk levels. For example, while one in three (34%) children of low-risk parents have had an alcoholic drink, this rises to almost half (48%) among children of increasing/high risk drinkers. Similarly, just over a third (35%) of children of AUDIT zone 1 drinkers have had a drink, rising to 50% of children whose parents' drinking habits put them in AUDIT zones 2, 3 or 4.

In addition to this, parents who drink above guidelines or who score highly on AUDIT are more likely to think it is acceptable for young people to drink alcohol for the first time aged 13 or younger; 15% of those in AUDIT zones 2-4 think this, compared to nine per cent of those in zone 1. This in turn means that their children are more likely to have their first alcoholic drink at a younger age.

## Parental supervision

Who young people were with, and in particular whether or not they were with parents and/or relatives for their first alcoholic drink, has an important influence upon their drinking behaviour and attitudes.

While almost two thirds (62%) of young people who had their first drink without a relative present have experienced being drunk, just one in four (25%) of those who had their first drink in the presence of a relative have been drunk.

Young people who have had an alcoholic drink without an adult present are much more likely to have experienced one or more harmful consequences as a result of drinking; 39% have done so in the past 12 months, compared to eight per cent of those who have not had an alcoholic drink unsupervised by an adult. Those who have had a drink unsupervised are also more likely to agree with the statement 'drinking gives me the confidence I need to meet people and make new friends'; 44% do so compared to 11% of those who have not had an unsupervised drink.

Please refer to Ipsos MORI & Drinkaware's full report, *Drinkaware Monitor 2014: Young people's and their parents' drinking behaviour and attitudes in the UK*, for detailed analysis of the survey findings. Refer to the separate report, *Drinkaware Monitor 2014: Adults' drinking behaviour and attitudes in the UK* for detailed analysis of the findings from the survey of UK adults.

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