

27 June 2001

Coverage

Great Britain

Theme

Health and Care

Drinking: adults' behaviour and knowledge in 2000

Eighty per cent of all respondents said that they had heard of measuring alcohol consumption in units. This was higher than the 75 per cent who were aware of units in 1998, according to a survey report* published today by National Statistics.

Knowledge of alcohol units among women increased between 1998 and 2000: for example, the proportion of women who knew that a unit of beer is half a pint increased from 42 per cent in 1998 to 50 per cent in 2000. Among men, awareness of the alcohol content of different drinks did not increase significantly over the time period.

There was an increase in the proportion who had heard of daily benchmarks, from 54 per cent in 1997 to 58 per cent in 1998 and 64 per cent in 2000.

This report presents the results of a survey carried out in 2000, as part of the ONS Omnibus Survey, on patterns of drinking behaviour and their knowledge of units of alcohol. Two earlier surveys were conducted in 1997 and 1998.

Other key findings from the survey include:

What people drink

Almost three fifths of all alcohol drunk was beer – 42 per cent was normal strength beer and a further 13 per cent was strong beer (defined as being 6 per cent or more alcohol by volume). This was similar to the 1998 figures.

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****Drinking: adults' behaviour and knowledge in 2000***
Series OS no.15. ONS £10. ISBN 1 85774 443 8.



Patterns of drinking

Sixty-five per cent of men and 48 per cent of women had drunk alcohol in the previous seven days. These were lower proportions than in both 1997 and 1998. Seventeen per cent of men and 11 per cent of women had had a drink on five or more days.

Twenty per cent of all men had drunk more than 8 units on at least one day in the previous week. The proportion who had done so ranged from 6 per cent of men aged 65 and over to 38 per cent of men aged 16-24.

Women were much less likely than men to have drunk heavily – only 8 per cent had had drunk more than 6 units on at least one day in the previous week.

Knowledge of units

Fifty per cent of those who had drunk beer in the last year knew that a unit of beer is half a pint but one in five gave an amount that was wrong.

Drinkers who had heard of units were asked whether they kept a check on the number of units they drank: 13 per cent said that they had (similar to the 1998 figure of 12 per cent).

The proportion keeping a daily check was higher among men in 2000 than in 1998 (5 per cent compared with 3 per cent), but among women there was no significant change.

About one male drinker in ten had discussed drinking in the last year with their GP or someone else at the surgery, or a doctor or other medical person elsewhere. Women were less likely to have had discussions (only 6 per cent had done so).

Places where people buy alcohol

The outlets where people were most likely to have bought alcohol in the last year were supermarkets (72 per cent), licensed bars (70 per cent), and restaurants (60 per cent). These proportions were very similar to those found in 1998.



Men were more than twice as likely as women to have bought alcohol from a bar in the past week either for themselves or others to drink (37 per cent compared with 16 per cent) and twice as likely to have bought alcohol from an off-licence (8 per cent compared with 4 per cent),

There was very little change between 1998 and 2000 in the proportions of people who had bought alcohol from different outlets in the previous week.

There was no difference overall in the proportions of men and women who had bought alcohol at a supermarket in the previous week: a quarter of both men and women had done so. This was slightly higher than in 1998 when 22 per cent of both men and women had bought alcohol from a supermarket in the previous week.

Awareness of unit labelling

Nearly a quarter (23 per cent) of those who had heard of units, had seen unit labelling on alcohol.

The most frequently mentioned outlet where unit labelling had been seen was a supermarket or shop (77 per cent). Off-licences and pubs were mentioned by about one in six, 4 per cent mentioned restaurants and 3 per cent nightclubs.

Where people drank last week

The most frequently mentioned place where people who regularly drank alcohol was at home – 44 per cent of men and 51 per cent of women had drunk alcohol in their own home in the previous week.

Who people drank with last week

Among men, 10 per cent had drunk alone and 31 per cent had been with one other person. Women were slightly more likely to have been drinking with one other person than men (37 per cent).

Among men, over half (55 per cent) had drunk with their friends, and 42 per cent had been with a spouse or partner. Conversely, women were more likely to have been drinking with a spouse or partner, 49 per cent, than with friends (42 per cent).



An electronic version of the publication is available from the National Statistics website:

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/products/p6990.asp>

BACKGROUND NOTES

1. The Omnibus Survey is a multi-purpose survey carried out by the ONS each month on behalf of a range of government departments and other public and non-profit making bodies.
2. A unit of alcohol is approximately equivalent to a half pint of beer, a small glass of wine and a single measure of spirits.
3. Current government advice on drinking is that for men, consistently drinking 4 or more units a day is not recommended; for women the equivalent amount is 3 units a day. These recommended maximum number of alcohol units that people should drink in a day are referred to as daily benchmarks.
4. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available from the press office.
5. National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference. © Crown copyright 2001.