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**Coverage**  
Great Britain  
**Theme**  
Health and Care

## Men drink twice as much alcohol as women

### *Smoking and drinking among adults 2006 and Drinking: adults' behaviour and knowledge in 2007*

Men are drinking twice as much alcohol as women according to new figures from the Office for National Statistics - 18.7 units a week, on average, compared with 9.0 units.

A report on smoking and drinking among adults, which uses data from the 2006 General Household Survey (GHS), found that men were more likely than women to have drunk alcohol on at least one day in the previous week: 71 per cent of men and 56 per cent of women had done so. Men also drank on more days of the week than women. More than one in five men (21 per cent) compared with just over one in ten women (11 per cent) had drunk on at least five of the previous seven days.

Further key findings on drinking from the Smoking and drinking among adults 2006 report include:

- Alcohol consumption in 2006 was higher in England and in Wales than in Scotland: 13.7 and 13.5 units a week, on average, respectively, compared with 11.6 units.
- Men and women in households classified as 'routine and manual' drank less (11.6 units a week), on average, than those in other types of household. Those in 'managerial and professional' households drank the most (15.1 units a week).

Methods for calculating alcohol consumption have been updated to reflect the trend towards larger measures and stronger alcoholic drinks, especially wine. It should be noted, however, that changing the way in which alcohol consumption estimates are derived does not in itself reflect a real change in drinking among the adult population.

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2006 is the first year that the new methodology has been applied to GHS data and for this reason it is not possible to compare like-with-like figures from previous years. However, estimates from the last ten years using the 'old' methodology suggest that the trend in alcohol consumption may be downward. The proportion of men drinking more than 21 units a week on average fell from 29 per cent in 2000 to 23 per cent in 2006. There was also a fall in the proportion of women drinking more than 14 units a week (from 17 per cent in 2000 to 12 per cent in 2006).

### **Key findings from the Drinking: adults' behaviour and knowledge in 2007 report**

The ONS Omnibus survey, *Drinking: adults' behaviour and knowledge in 2007*, also published today, shows that 85 per cent of adults had heard of measuring alcohol consumption in units in 2007, compared with 79 per cent ten years earlier.

Furthermore, 38 per cent of those who had heard of units, reported having seen unit labelling on alcohol, up from 32 per cent a year ago and 23 per cent in 2000. The most frequently mentioned place where unit labelling had been seen was a supermarket or shop (81 per cent).

The Omnibus survey also reports on pub-goers' response to the bans on smoking in public places, introduced in Scotland in 2006 and in Wales and England in 2007.

About four-fifths of drinkers who said they visited pubs said that the change would not affect, or had not affected how often they did so. Of those who said their behaviour was likely to change, 15 per cent said they were likely to go more often, compared with six per cent who said they would go less often.

While 33 per cent of men and 22 per cent of women drank in a pub or bar in the previous week, 50 per cent of men and 52 per cent of women had drunk an alcoholic drink in their own home. Among those who had drunk alcohol in the previous week, the most common drinking companions for men and women were spouse or partner (41 per cent and 40 per cent respectively) and friends (45 per cent of male drinkers and 38 per cent of female drinkers).



## Key findings on smoking from the Smoking and drinking among adults 2006 report

The overall prevalence of cigarette smoking among the adult population (persons aged 16 years and over) fell to 22 per cent in 2006, its lowest recorded level. This downturn follows a period of little change since the second half of the 1990s, when prevalence levelled out at about 27 per cent before resuming a slow decline in the early 2000s.

Since 1974, when the GHS started monitoring cigarette smoking, prevalence has always been higher among men than women. In 2006, 23 per cent of men and 21 per cent of women were smokers.

As in previous years, men also smoked more cigarettes a day on average than women: in 2006, men smoked on average 15 cigarettes a day, compared with 13 a day for women.

Just over two thirds (68 per cent) of cigarette smokers in Great Britain said that they wanted to give up, but 59 per cent of smokers said that it would be difficult to go without smoking for a whole day.

In 2006, 16 per cent of smokers had their first cigarette within five minutes of waking up. Men were more likely than women to say they had their first cigarette within five minutes of waking – 18 per cent of men compared with 15 per cent of women.

## BACKGROUND NOTES

1. Today ONS publishes new data on drinking and smoking from the 2006 General Household Survey (GHS). It also publishes an Omnibus survey report on drinking in 2007. Both reports are available free on the National Statistics website:

**Smoking and drinking among adults 2006:**

[http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme\\_compendia/GHS06/Smokinganddrinkingamongadults2006.pdf](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_compendia/GHS06/Smokinganddrinkingamongadults2006.pdf)

**Drinking: adults' behaviour and knowledge in 2007:**

[http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme\\_health/Drinking\\_2007.pdf](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_health/Drinking_2007.pdf)



2. Methods for calculating alcohol consumption were recently updated to reflect the trend towards larger measures and stronger alcoholic drinks, especially wine. The changes in conversion factors are discussed in detail in a paper in the National Statistics Methodology series - Goddard E *Estimating alcohol consumption from survey data: updated method of converting volumes to units* National Statistics Methodology Series NSM 37 (ONS 2007), also available at [http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme\\_compendia/drinkingmethodologyfinal.pdf](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_compendia/drinkingmethodologyfinal.pdf)
3. For the GHS using the 'old' method, one unit of alcohol is defined as obtained from half a pint of normal strength beer, lager or cider, a single measure of spirits, one glass of wine, or one small glass of port, sherry or other fortified wine. For the 'updated' method, a glass of wine is two units.
4. In July 2004 the Government set a new target to reduce the overall proportion of cigarette smokers in England from 26 per cent in 2002 to 21 per cent or less by 2010.
5. The NHS *Cancer Plan* sets a target to reduce smoking prevalence among manual occupation groups in England to 26 per cent in 2010.
6. *Drinking: adults' behaviour and knowledge in 2007* is the seventh report presenting results from questions about drinking included in the ONS Omnibus survey at the request of the Department of Health. The questions were asked of 2,229 adults aged 16 and over in February and March 2007.
7. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available from the press office.
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