



Drinking in Great Britain

IAS Factsheet

Produced by the Institute of Alcohol Studies,
1 The Quay,
St Ives,
Cambs.,
PE27 5AR

Tel: 01480 466766
Fax: 01480 497583
Email: info@ias.org.uk
Website: <http://www.ias.org.uk>

CONTENTS

Trends in UK consumption	3
Increasing strength of wine	8
Where alcohol is drunk	9
Drinking above daily recommendations	10
Average consumption – types of drink	18

**UK Estimated Alcohol Consumption
(Litres of Alcohol per person aged over 14):1956-2004**

Year	Beer	Spirits	Wine	Cider	Total
1956	3.86	0.82	0.29	0.10	5.07
1957	3.88	0.82	0.31	0.11	5.12
1958	3.76	0.84	0.32	0.10	5.02
1959	3.94	0.90	0.34	0.11	5.29
1960	4.09	0.96	0.42	0.10	5.57
1961	4.28	1.01	0.45	0.10	5.84
1962	4.23	1.02	0.46	0.09	5.80
1963	4.22	1.07	0.50	0.09	5.88
1964	4.40	1.15	0.57	0.09	6.21
1965	4.42	1.07	0.54	0.10	6.13
1966	4.48	1.08	0.59	0.11	6.25
1967	4.57	1.08	0.63	0.12	6.40
1968	4.63	1.13	0.67	0.13	6.56
1969	4.82	1.05	0.65	0.14	6.66
1970	4.96	1.21	0.67	0.15	7.00
1971	5.13	1.28	0.78	0.15	7.35
1972	5.24	1.47	0.89	0.15	7.75
1973	5.45	1.84	1.09	0.17	8.54
1974	5.52	2.01	1.14	0.17	8.84
1975	5.64	1.90	1.07	0.19	8.80
1976	5.68	2.14	1.19	0.23	9.23
1977	5.59	1.82	1.12	0.21	8.75
1978	5.72	2.18	1.31	0.21	9.42
1979	5.71	2.39	1.38	0.22	9.70
1980	5.45	2.24	1.35	0.21	9.25
1981	5.15	2.11	1.41	0.23	8.90
1982	5.06	1.98	1.39	0.27	8.70

continued over page

continued from Page 1

Year	Beer	Spirits	Wine	Cider	Total
1983	5.10	2.03	1.49	0.30	8.92
1984	5.05	2.01	1.61	0.30	8.98
1985	4.98	2.13	1.66	0.29	9.05
1986	4.93	2.10	1.66	0.30	8.99
1987	4.97	2.13	1.75	0.29	9.13
1988	5.05	2.23	1.80	0.28	9.36
1989	5.04	2.16	1.83	0.30	9.32
1990	5.02	2.10	1.83	0.33	9.28
1991	5.09	1.99	1.81	0.38	9.27
1992	4.95	1.84	1.84	0.43	9.06
1993	4.80	1.87	1.93	0.45	9.05
1994	4.89	1.94	1.98	0.50	9.31
1995	5.10	1.67	1.97	0.58	9.32
1996	5.16	1.72	2.14	0.59	9.61
1997	5.26	1.77	2.23	0.57	9.83
1998	5.10	1.66	2.31	0.57	9.64
1999	5.05	1.91	2.48	0.64	10.08
2000	4.95	1.93	2.69	0.61	10.18
2001	5.09	2.03	2.94	0.63	10.69
2002	5.18	2.34	2.98	0.63	11.13
2003	5.22	2.46	3.06	0.60	11.34
2004	5.14	2.52	3.33	0.60	11.59
2005 ¹	4.85	2.50	3.41	0.65	11.4
2006 ¹	4.69	2.28	3.27	0.76	11.0
2007 ¹	4.48	2.40	3.52	0.81	11.2

Notes: the figures for 1991 onwards are not strictly comparable to those for previous years²

It is suggested that unrecorded consumption could add another 2 litres of pure alcohol per capita for the years after 1995.³

Drink (pure alcohol) released, per adult, 1986/87 to 2007/08⁴

Litre of pure alcohol per adult

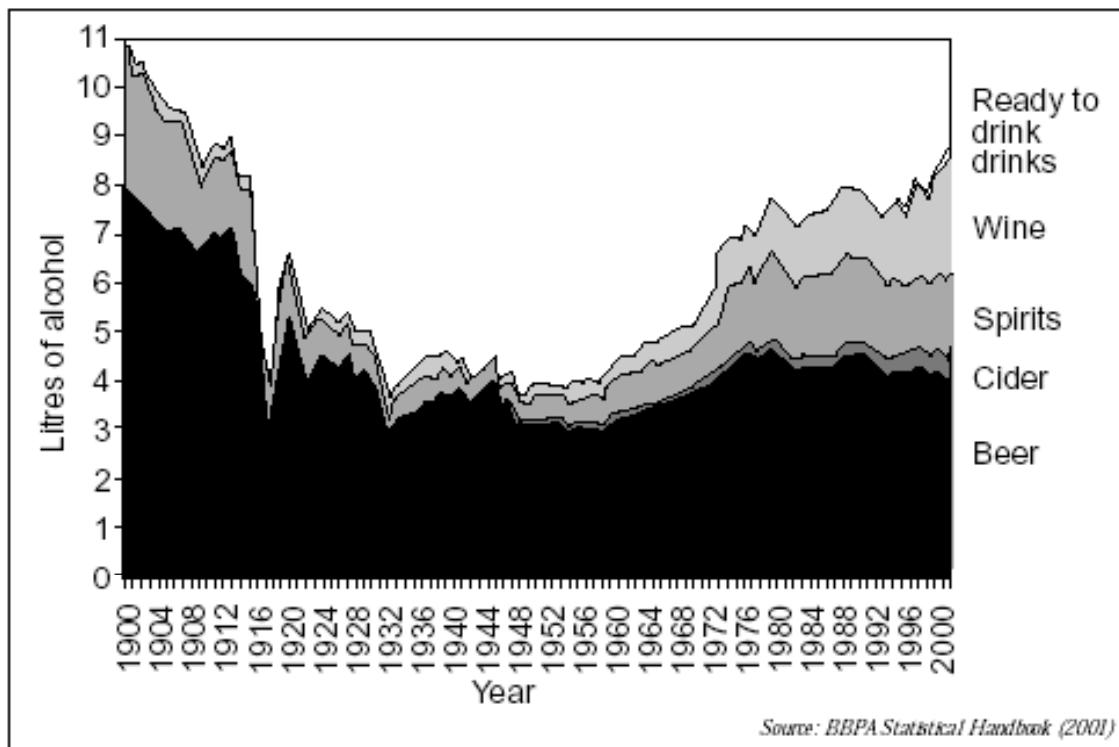
	Beer	Wine	Spirits	Cider	Total Alcohol
1986/87	5.49	1.65	2.01	0.38	9.53
1987/88	5.65	1.72	2.20	0.37	9.94
1988/89	5.68	1.78	2.18	0.35	9.99
1989/90	5.62	1.80	2.16	0.38	9.96
1990/91	5.62	1.81	2.15	0.43	10.01
1991/92	5.47	1.81	1.93	0.44	9.65
1992/93	5.24	1.87	1.87	0.47	9.45
1993/94	5.09	1.96	1.84	0.52	9.41
1994/95	5.21	2.03	1.91	0.55	9.70
1995/96	5.29	2.09	1.75	0.62	9.75
1996/97	5.27	2.29	1.78	0.63	9.97
1997/98	5.37	2.40	1.75	0.62	10.14
1998/99	5.25	2.48	1.81	0.62	10.16
1999/00	5.31	2.80	1.98	0.69	10.78
2000/01	5.01	2.91	2.00	0.64	10.56
2001/02	5.17	3.23	2.07	0.62	11.09
2002/03	5.24	3.16	2.44	0.62	11.46
2003/04	5.31	3.23	2.53	0.63	11.70
2004/05	5.13	3.49	2.52	0.64	11.78
2005/06	4.93	3.53	2.41	0.67	11.54
2006/07	4.75	3.48	2.35	0.81	11.39
2007/08	4.49	3.80	2.40	0.84	11.53

In terms of units of alcohol consumed, the increase since 1950 is shown below. The figures are calculated from UK alcohol clearances. A unit is 8g of pure alcohol and roughly equivalent to a standard serving.

Units of Alcohol Consumed 1950-2001⁵

Financial year	Beer	Wine	Spirits	Cider & Perry	Total Alcohol
1950-51	337	13	103	----	452
1960-61	344	22	109	----	475
1970-71	411	39	125	----	575
1980-81	465	103	176	20	764
1990-91	451	145	172	34	803
2000-01	400	228	159	51	837

Alcohol consumption in the UK: 1900-2000. Per capita consumption of 100% alcohol total population⁶



Increasing strength

Average strength of beer and wine is increasing⁷

- The average estimated strength of table wine increased from 11.40% in 1994/95 to 11.85% in 2003/04
- The average estimated strength of beer increased from 4.06% in 1994/95 to 4.19% in 2003/04

In 2008, HM Revenue and Customs reviewed the way they calculated the strength of table wine (the average strength of beer is not needed to calculate the amount of alcohol consumed in beer, since excise duty charged is directly proportional to strength, unlike wine). The previous review had been conducted in 1996 and since then, estimated strengths were simply increased by 0.05% each year. The 2008 review⁸ used trade data to recalculate strengths dating back to 1996. The revised estimates are higher than the previous estimates, increasing from no difference in 1996 to approximately 1% difference in 2007. The effects on the total alcohol released for UK consumption are shown in the following tables.

Pure alcohol clearances from wine			million hectolitre of pure alcohol	
Year	Original	Revised	Difference	Percentage difference
1996-97	1.06	1.06	-	0.0%
1997-98	1.11	1.11	0.00	0.2%
1998-99	1.15	1.15	0.01	0.5%
1999-00	1.29	1.31	0.02	1.2%
2000-01	1.34	1.37	0.03	1.9%
2001-02	1.49	1.53	0.04	2.4%
2002-03	1.45	1.50	0.05	3.4%
2003-04	1.48	1.54	0.06	3.9%
2004-05	1.62	1.68	0.06	4.0%
2005-06	1.65	1.71	0.07	4.2%
2006-07	1.63	1.71	0.08	4.8%

Total pure alcohol clearances			million hectolitre of pure alcohol	
Year	Original	Revised	Difference	Percentage difference
1996-97	4.61	4.61	-	0.0%
1997-98	4.68	4.69	0.00	0.1%
1998-99	4.71	4.72	0.01	0.1%
1999-00	5.01	5.03	0.02	0.3%
2000-01	4.93	4.96	0.03	0.5%
2001-02	5.21	5.24	0.04	0.7%
2002-03	5.40	5.45	0.05	0.9%
2003-04	5.53	5.59	0.06	1.0%
2004-05	5.61	5.68	0.06	1.2%
2005-06	5.54	5.61	0.07	1.2%
2006-07	5.51	5.59	0.08	1.4%

Where alcohol is drunk

One of the major trends of recent years has been the growth of home consumption relative to consumption on licensed premises. Government figures suggest that, overall, less alcohol is now consumed on licensed premises than in the home.

Household consumption of alcoholic drinks, 1992 to 2006⁹

United Kingdom		ml per person per week					
	All alcoholic drinks	Beer	Cider & perry	Wine	Spirits	Alcopops	Other
Consumption within the home							
1992	527	298	47	152	30	0	-
1993	536	297	44	164	32	0	-
1994	552	311	52	162	28	0	-
1995	627	338	77	180	32	0	-
1996	656	351	82	188	34	0	-
1997	653	365	58	196	32	2	-
1998	645	340	61	212	30	1	-
1999	640	329	60	213	35	4	-
2000	725	388	58	232	37	10	-
2001/2	735	386	55	236	39	18	-
2002/3	726	380	50	239	39	18	-
2003/4	792	416	64	251	41	19	-
2004/5	763	395	55	261	38	14	-
2005/6	739	377	52	262	38	11	-
2006	760	393	59	255	41	12	-
Consumption outside the home							
2001/2	733	623	21	20	21	34	15
2002/3	704	592	20	20	21	36	15
2003/4	664	557	20	21	22	25	21
2004/5	616	515	18	22	20	20	22
2005/6	597	499	16	22	20	15	25
2006	561	459	24	23	18	11	25

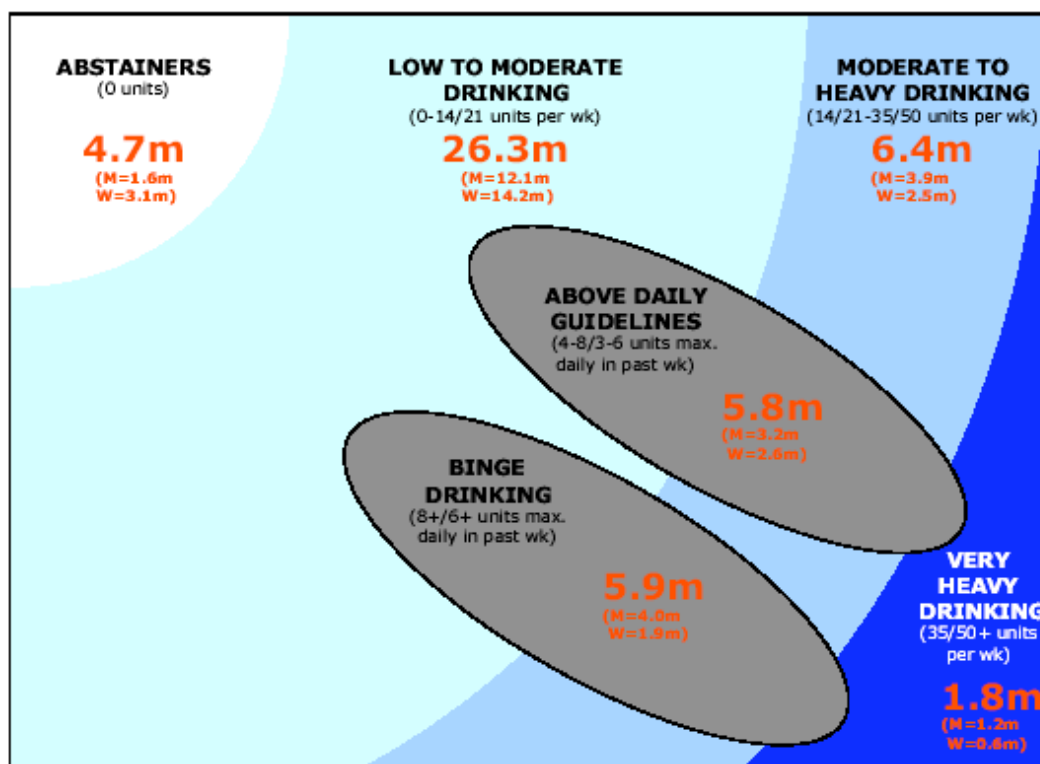
Source: Expenditure & Food Survey, DEFRA, historic trend data can be accessed on the internet via the DEFRA website, available at:

<http://statistics.defra.gov.uk/esg/publications/efs/default.asp>

The Family Expenditure Survey¹⁰ shows that in 2005/6, of the average weekly household expenditure on alcoholic drink of £14.80, £8.50 was spent in on-licensed premises and £6.30 in off licenses, including supermarkets.

In 2005, of the total household expenditure on alcoholic drink of £40,642 million, £28,339 million (69.7%) was spent in on-licensed premises.¹⁰ This approximate split of two-thirds/one third in terms of expenditure in favour of on-licenses exaggerates the difference in relation to volume of alcohol because the alcohol purchased from off-licensed premises tends to be significantly cheaper than that purchased from on-licenses so the money spent in supermarkets etc. buys more alcohol than the same amount spent in pubs and restaurants.

HOW THE POPULATION DRINKS



Source: ONS General Household Survey (2001); Note: Categories above are based on government guidelines for weekly (1992) and daily (1995) drinking limits. Graphic is illustrative and not to scale.

- Over half the adult population drinks less than 14/21 units per week, and within this group 4.7m drink nothing at all.
- However: 6.4m people drink up to 35/50 units per week; and a further 1.8m people drink over 35/50 units per week.
- Within these, and overlapping, are groups who drink heavily on single occasions: 5.9m people drink more than twice the recommended daily guidelines on some occasions.¹¹

Alcohol consumption (units per week) among adults, by gender, 1992 to 2006⁹

Unweighted	1992					1994					1996					1998					Weighted					2006 original method	2006 improved method
	1992	1994	1996	1998	1998	2000	2001	2002	2005	1998	2000	2001	2002	2005	1998	2000	2001	2002	2005								
Men																											
Non-drinker	7	7	7	7	7	9	9	9	11	7	9	9	9	11	7	9	9	9	11	11	11						
Under 1 unit	10	9	8	8	7	8	11	8	8	7	8	11	8	8	7	8	11	8	8	8	7						
1-10 units	36	35	35	37	36	34	31	33	36	36	34	31	33	36	36	34	31	33	36	36	30						
11-21 units	21	22	23	22	22	22	22	22	21	22	22	22	22	21	22	22	22	22	21	22	21						
22-35 units	13	14	15	14	14	14	14	14	12	14	14	14	14	12	14	14	14	14	12	12	15						
36-50 units	7	6	7	6	7	7	6	6	6	7	7	6	6	6	7	7	6	6	6	6	7						
51 units and over	6	6	6	6	7	7	7	7	6	7	7	7	7	6	7	7	7	7	6	5	9						
More than 21 units	26	27	27	27	28	28	27	27	24	28	28	27	27	24	28	28	27	27	24	23	31						
Mean weekly units	15.7	15.4	16.1	16.4	17.2	17.1	16.9	17.0	15.8	17.2	17.1	16.9	17.0	15.8	17.2	17.1	16.9	17.0	15.8	14.9	18.9						
Women																											
Non-drinker	12	14	13	14	14	14	15	15	18	14	14	15	15	18	14	14	15	15	18	17	17						
Under 1 unit	22	21	20	19	19	17	22	16	17	19	17	22	16	17	19	17	22	16	17	18	15						
1-7 units	39	37	37	37	37	36	32	37	37	37	36	32	37	37	37	36	32	37	37	39	33						
8-14 units	15	15	16	16	16	16	15	15	14	16	16	15	15	14	16	16	15	15	14	14	15						
15-25 units	8	9	9	10	10	11	9	10	8	10	11	9	10	8	10	11	9	10	8	8	10						
26-35 units	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	5						
36 units and over	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	2	2	6						
More than 14 units	12	13	14	15	15	17	15	17	13	15	17	15	17	13	15	17	15	17	13	13	20						
Mean weekly units	5.5	5.6	6.3	6.4	6.5	7.1	7.5	7.6	6.5	6.5	7.1	7.5	7.6	6.5	6.5	7.1	7.5	7.6	6.5	6.3	9.2						
Weighted bases																											
Men	..	..	..	..	16,541	17,594	17,192	16,781	16,704	16,541	17,594	17,192	16,781	16,704	16,541	17,594	17,192	16,781	16,704	17,189			
Women	..	..	..	..	18,518	18,912	18,847	19,160	19,131	18,518	18,912	18,847	19,160	19,131	18,518	18,912	18,847	19,160	19,131	19,468			
Unweighted bases																											
Men	7,265	6,603	6,145	5,621	5,621	5,704	6,124	5,906	7,158	7,265	6,603	6,145	5,621	5,621	5,704	6,124	5,906	7,158	7,158	6,607							
Women	8,364	7,832	7,227	6,661	6,661	6,442	7,157	6,889	8,261	8,364	7,832	7,227	6,661	6,661	6,442	7,157	6,889	8,261	8,261	7,699							

Source: General Household Survey, 2006. Office for National Statistics (ONS)

Weekly alcohol consumption by sex and age, 1998 to 2005, Great Britain¹²

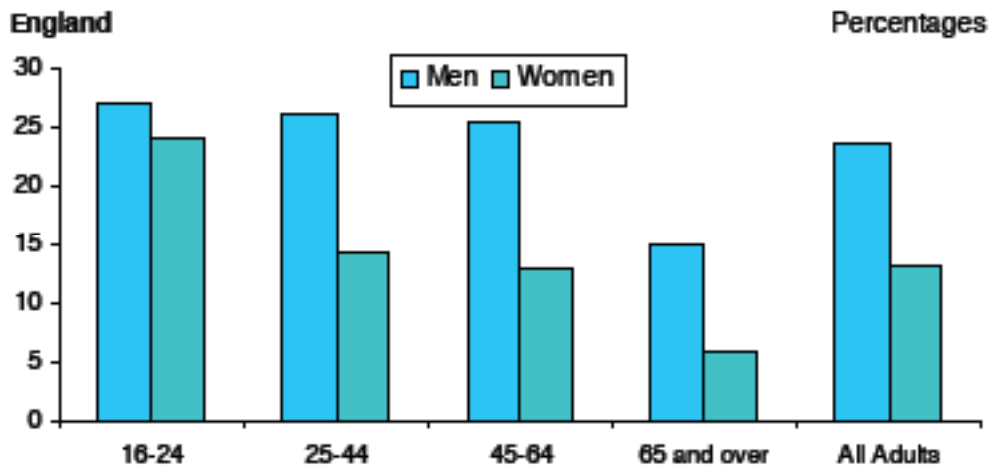
Average weekly alcohol consumption (units)

AGE	1998	2000	2001	2002	2005
MEN					
16-24	25.5	25.9	24.8	21.5	18.2
25-44	17.1	17.7	18.4	18.7	16.2
45-64	17.4	16.8	16.1	17.5	17.7
65+	10.6	11.0	10.8	10.7	10.4
Total	17.1	17.4	17.2	17.2	15.8
WOMEN					
16-24	11.0	12.6	14.1	14.1	10.9
25-44	7.1	8.1	8.3	8.4	7.1
45-64	6.4	6.2	6.8	6.7	6.3
65+	3.2	3.5	3.6	3.8	3.5
Total	6.5	7.1	7.5	7.6	6.5
ALL PERSONS					
16-24	18.0	19.3	19.4	17.6	14.3
25-44	12.0	12.9	13.3	13.3	11.3
45-64	11.7	11.4	11.3	11.9	11.7
65+	6.3	6.7	6.6	6.8	6.5
Total	11.5	12.0	12.1	12.1	10.8

Average weekly alcohol consumption, by sex and Government Office Region¹²

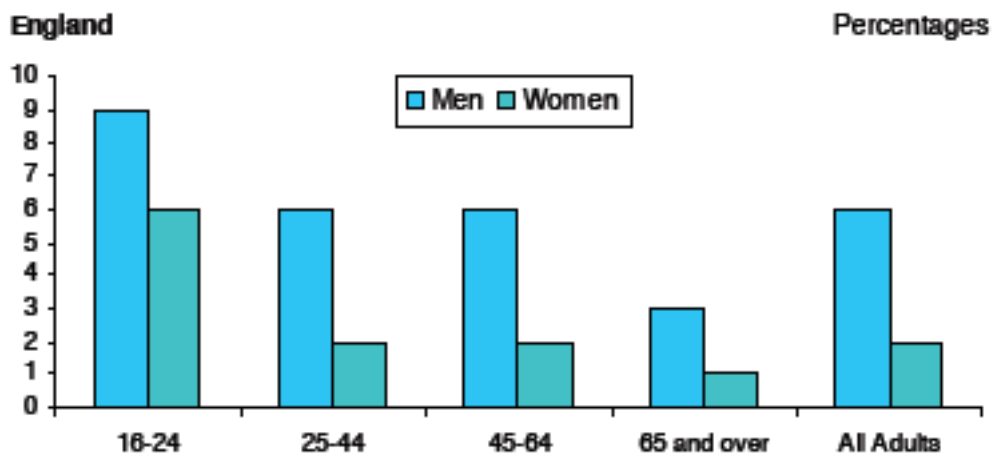
Government Office Region	Persons aged 16 and over		Great Britain; 2005	
	Men	Women	All persons	
North East		17.6	6.6	11.5
North West		18	7.4	12.2
Yorkshire and the Humber		18.4	7.6	12.8
East Midlands		14.8	6	10.2
West Midlands		14.6	6.7	10.5
East of England		17.3	6	11.3
London		13.6	4.9	8.9
South East		14.2	6.7	10.2
South West		15.9	7.1	11.2
England		15.8	6.5	10.9
Wales		14.7	6.2	10
Scotland		15.9	6.1	10.5
Great Britain		15.8	6.5	10.8

Adults whose average weekly consumption was over 21 units (men) or 14 units (women) 2005¹³



Source: General Household Survey, 2005. Office for National Statistics

Adults whose average weekly consumption was over 50 units (men) or 35 units (women) 2005¹³



Source: General Household Survey 2005, Office for National Statistics

Drinking above the daily recommendations on at least one day, by Government Office Region and gender, 1998 to 2005¹³

England														Percentages		
Government Office Region	1998	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	1998	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Weighted base 2005 (000's)	Unweighted sample 2005
	Drank more than 4 units on at least one day last week							Drank more than 8 units on at least one day last week								
Men																
England	39	38	39	37	40	39	34	22	21	22	21	23	22	18	16,798	8,646
North East	46	44	47	49	47	48	42	24	25	29	29	25	29	21	843	426
North West	46	45	49	42	45	46	42	28	24	29	24	28	28	24	2,269	1,186
Yorkshire and the Humber	41	42	44	44	47	47	42	25	23	27	26	28	30	25	1,733	898
East Midlands	42	43	43	41	45	39	36	21	22	22	22	27	23	19	1,593	839
West Midlands	42	35	34	36	42	39	31	26	17	18	18	23	22	16	1,657	879
East of England	35	31	34	31	35	35	33	15	18	20	15	20	18	17	1,857	994
London	33	31	36	32	32	32	26	19	17	20	19	18	18	12	2,261	1,013
South East	37	39	34	33	35	36	31	20	22	18	17	18	20	15	2,851	1,486
South West	37	35	38	37	38	37	33	20	20	20	21	22	21	19	1,734	925
	Drank more than 3 units on at least one day last week							Drank more than 6 units on at least one day last week								
Women																
England	21	22	22	22	22	22	20	8	9	10	10	9	10	8	19,070	9,932
North East	23	25	29	32	26	25	25	8	13	15	17	9	11	9	1,048	538
North West	26	28	28	27	26	28	26	11	13	13	11	13	14	11	2,627	1,403
Yorkshire and the Humber	19	23	25	26	26	32	27	7	10	12	14	13	15	13	1,992	1,026
East Midlands	21	23	27	18	25	26	19	8	8	12	8	9	11	7	1,714	918
West Midlands	21	19	17	19	21	19	17	9	7	7	8	9	7	6	1,822	981
East of England	18	20	20	19	17	15	18	7	8	8	6	6	6	7	2,082	1,129
London	17	19	18	18	15	15	13	7	7	8	8	5	6	5	2,641	1,188
South East	20	22	21	22	23	22	18	7	10	7	8	9	9	6	3,165	1,677
South West	21	21	23	23	24	24	22	8	9	9	9	9	9	8	1,980	1,072

1. Adults aged 16 and over

2. 2005 data includes last quarter of 2004/05 data due to survey change from financial year to calendar year

Source: General Household Survey 2005, Office for National Statistics

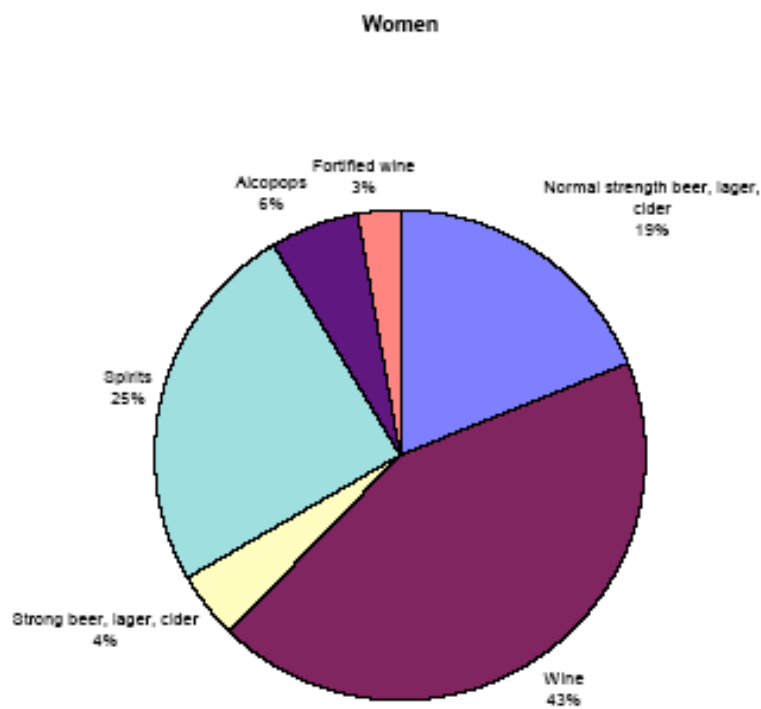
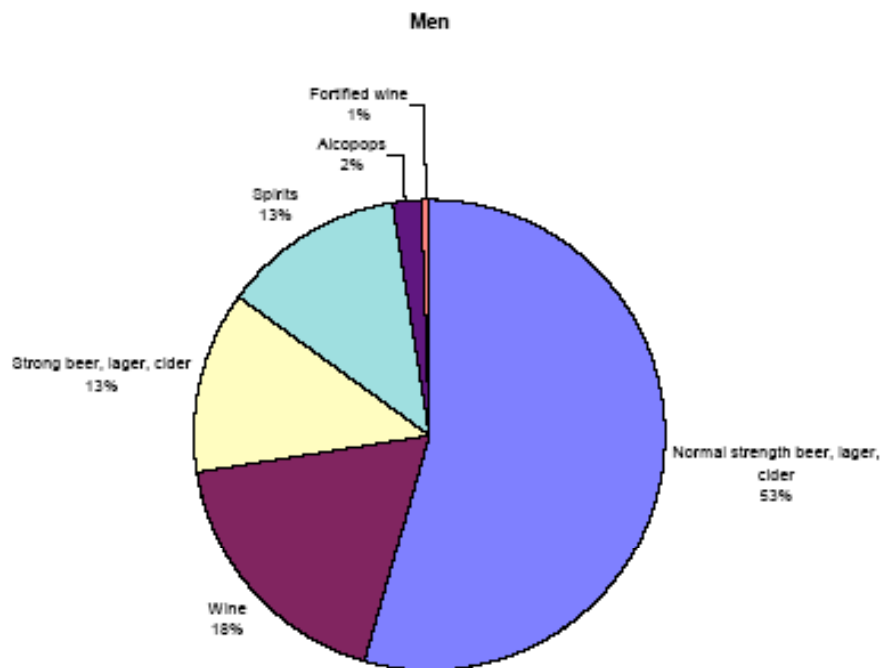
Weekly alcohol consumption level: exceeding specified amounts by sex and age: 1998-2005¹²

Persons aged 16 and over

Great Britain; 2005

Age	1998	2000	2001	2002	2005
Men	Percentage of men who drank more than 21 units				
16-24	38	41	40	37	27
25-44	28	30	30	29	26
45-64	30	28	26	28	25
65 and over	16	17	15	15	14
Total	28	29	28	27	24
Men	Percentage of men who drank more than 50 units				
16-24	14	14	15	12	9
25-44	6	7	7	8	5
45-64	7	6	5	6	6
65 and over	3	3	2	3	3
Total	7	7	7	7	6
Women	Percentage of women who drank more than 14 units				
16-24	25	33	32	33	24
25-44	16	19	17	19	14
45-64	15	14	14	14	13
65 and over	6	7	6	7	5
Total	15	17	15	17	13
Women	Percentage of women who drank more than 35 units				
16-24	7	9	10	10	6
25-44	2	3	3	3	2
45-64	2	2	2	2	2
65 and over	1	1	1	1	1
Total	2	3	3	3	2

Average weekly alcohol consumption of different types of drink, by sex, 2006



Compared with men, women drink less beer but more wine, spirits and alcopops.

Institute of Alcohol Studies
10 November 2008

References:

- ¹ British Beer and Pub Association Statistical Handbook 2008
- ² Various. For later years World Advertising Research Center
- ³ Alcohol per capita consumption, patterns of drinking and abstention worldwide after 1995. Appendix 2, European Addiction Research, 2001, 7(3): 155-157
- ⁴ HM Revenue and Customs. Alcohol Factsheet. July 2008
<http://www.uktradeinfo.com/index.cfm?task=factalcohol>
- ⁵ Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs clearances of pure alcohol; Office for National Statistics mid-year population estimates – Parliamentary question 20 December 2005
- ⁶ Calling Time: The Nations's drinking as a major health issue. A report from the Academy of Medical Sciences, March 2004
- ⁷ Alcohol Statistics Scotland 2005. NHS National Services Scotland. Edinburgh 2005
- ⁸ Ambler, R. (2008) Review of wine strengths used in estimating pure alcohol clearances. HM Revenue and Customs. <http://edm.ais.co.uk/document/DEP2008-1155>
- ⁹ Statistics on Alcohol: England, 2006. The Information Centre for health and social care
- ¹⁰ Family Spending – 2006 edition: Office for National Statistics
- ¹¹ Tobacco, alcohol and drug use and mental health, Office for National Statistics. 2002
- ¹² Office for National Statistics (2006) Smoking and drinking among adults. General Household Survey 2005. <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ghs>
- ¹³ Statistics on Alcohol, England, 2007. The Information Centre for Health & Social Care, 2007