

Understanding trends in alcohol use and harms

Health and Enforcement Alcohol Forum
16 April 2014



Overview

- Trends in consumption
- Costs
- Health-related alcohol harms
- Crime-related alcohol harms
- Understanding downwards and upwards pressures on alcohol use and harms

Population level alcohol consumption



- **Alcohol consumption has generally been falling** since a peak in 2005.

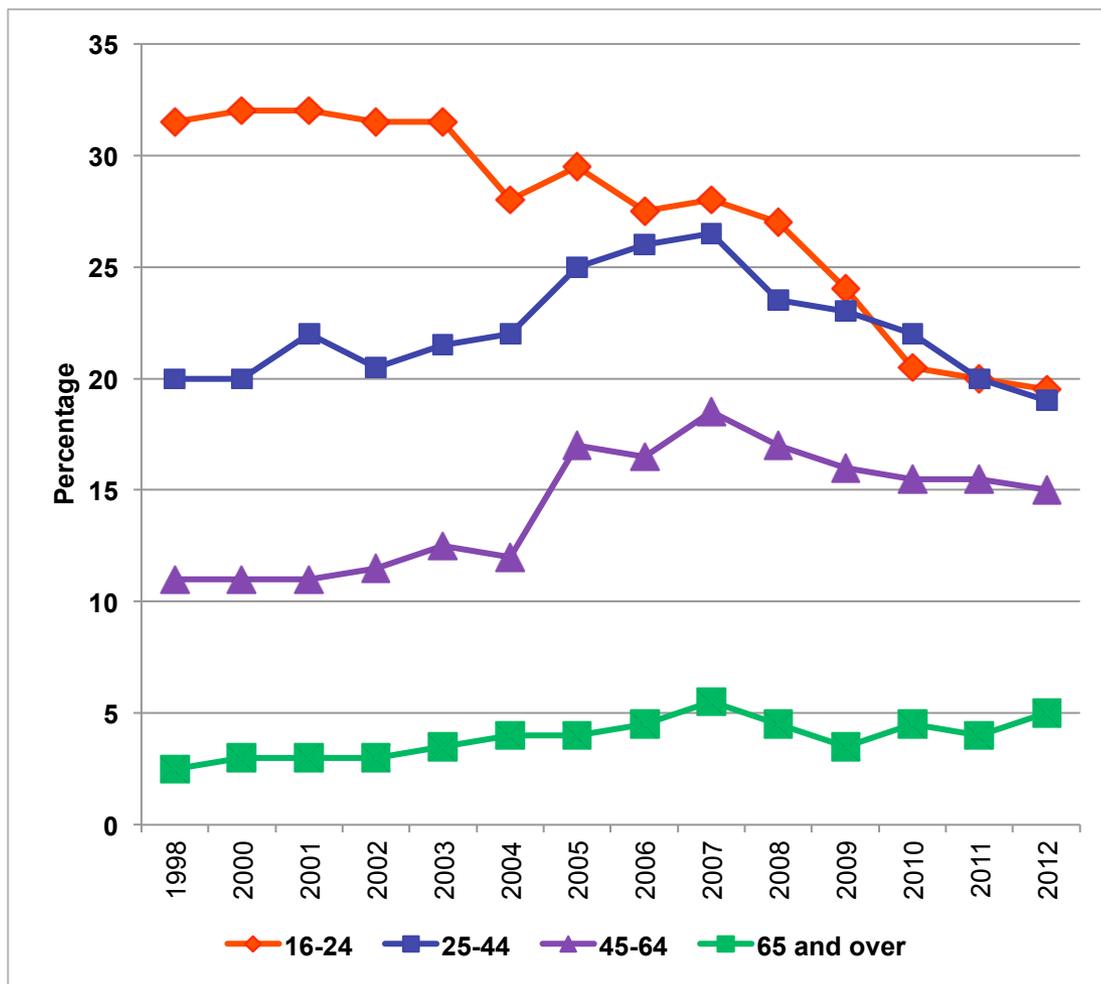
- This follows a long term rise, with the average number of litres of alcohol consumed per head of population almost doubling since the mid 1950s.

Litres of alcohol consumed in the UK, World Health Organisation European Health For All Database 1970-2012

Trends in consumption

- While alcohol consumption per person across the UK population has fallen since 2004-05, it is still twice as high as in the mid-1950s. Although the proportion of the population which abstains from alcohol has increased in recent years, a significant proportion of adults (21%) still consume excessive levels of alcohol and the heaviest drinking 10% of the population consume nearly 50% of all alcohol.
- Total units of alcohol per head in the UK are about twice as high as in the mid-1950s (nearly 800 units in 2012/13 compared to less than 400 units) . A rapid increase in consumption during the 1960s and 1970s was followed by a slower increase during the 1980s and 1990s. There was a further rapid increase from 1993 to 2004, followed by a fall to 2012.
- Trends in per capita alcohol consumption should be viewed in the context of changing patterns of drinking behaviour. The proportion of people who abstained from alcohol increased from 10% in 1998 to 17% in 2012 (ONS)
- It is well documented that the overall level of consumption in a population correlates with health harms. It is also well recognised that there is a time lag between excessive consumption and some directly attributable harms, notably alcohol-related liver disease. Liver disease is the only major cause of death for which premature mortality is increasing in England

Trends in heavy 'binge' drinking



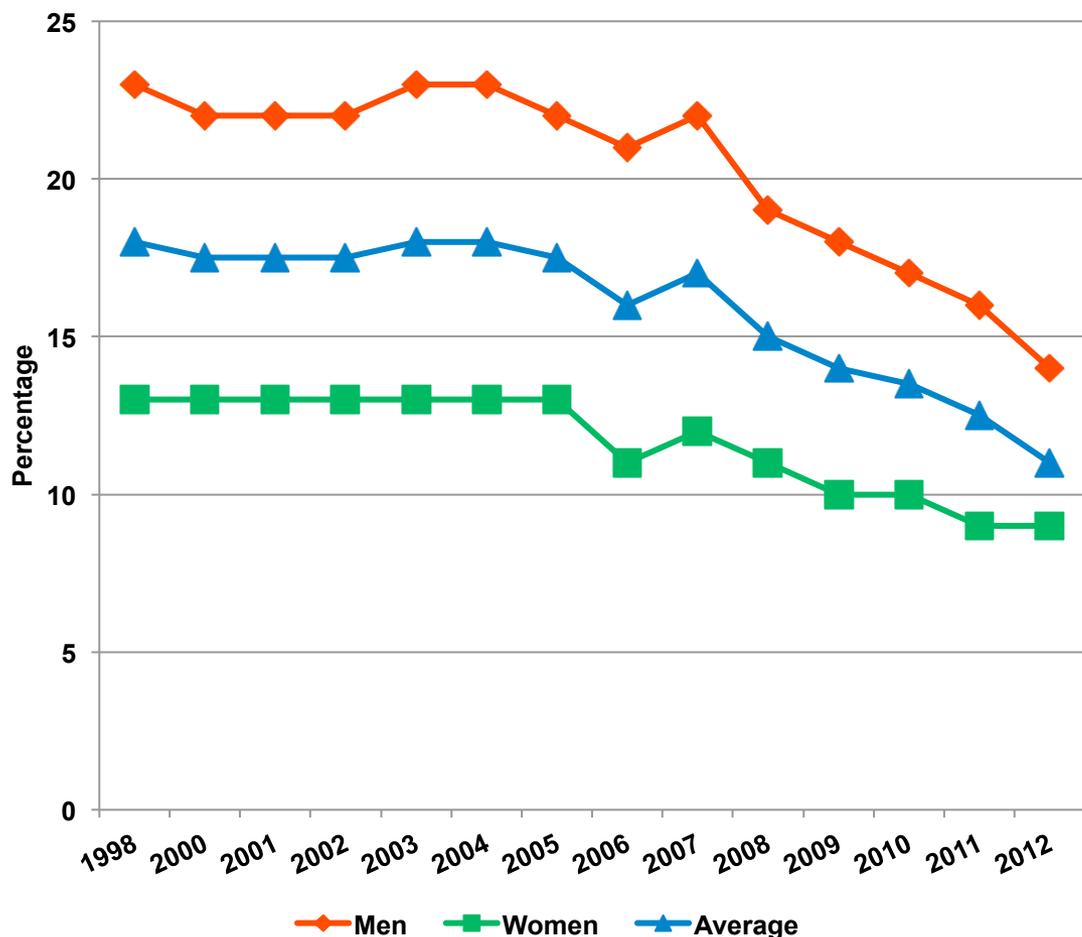
- Since the mid 2000s there has been a **general downward trend in the proportion of people drinking heavily (commonly known as binge drinking)**.
- **Younger age groups are more likely to report drinking heavily** than those in the older age groups, though most pronounced fall is across the 16-24 age group.
- Men are more likely than women to report drinking heavily.

1998 to 2004 data: Office for National Statistics (2005) *General Household Survey 2004: Smoking and drinking among adults, 2004* [Available online](#)

2005 to 2011 data: Office for National Statistics (2013) *General Lifestyle Survey: Drinking, 2011* [Available online](#)

2012 data: Office for National Statistics (2013) *Opinions and Lifestyle Survey, Drinking Habits Amongst Adults, 2012* [Available online](#)

Trends in frequent drinking



- Since the mid 2000s **there has also been a fall in the proportion of people drinking regularly** (defined as drinking on five days or more in the last week) .
- Men are more likely to be regular drinkers than women (16% of men in comparison to 9% of women).
- **Regular drinking is most prevalent in older age groups and least prevalent in younger groups** (only 4% of those age 16-24 report drinking regularly).

1998 to 2004 data: Office for National Statistics (2005) *General Household Survey 2004: Smoking and drinking among adults, 2004* [Available online](#)

2005 to 2011 data: Office for National Statistics (2013) *General Lifestyle Survey: Drinking, 2011* [Available online](#)

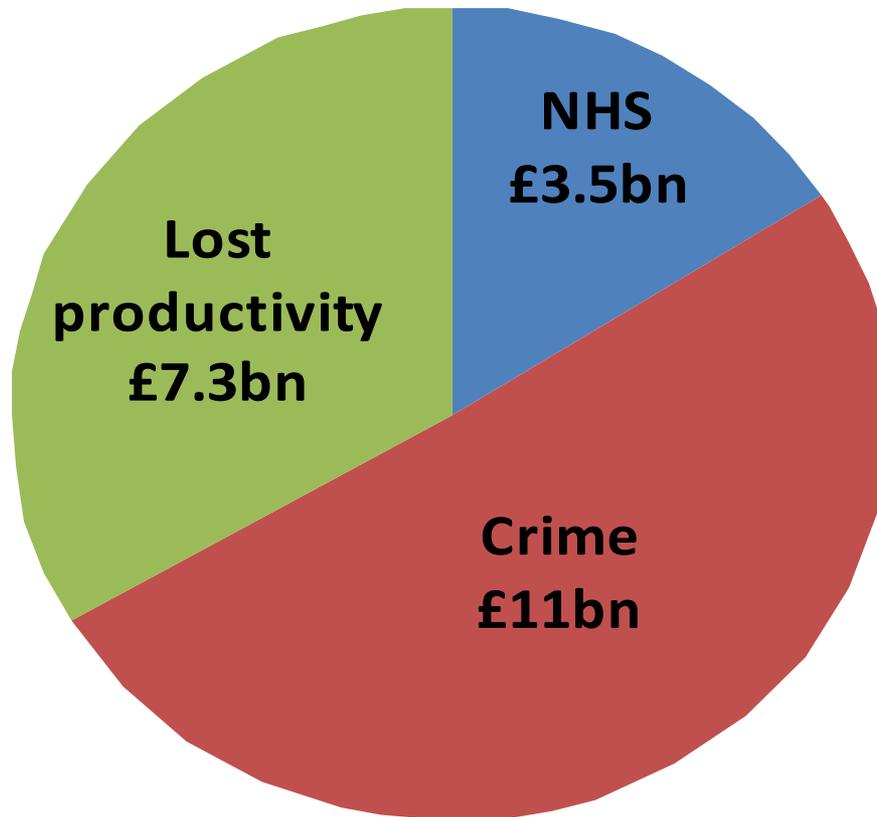
2012 data: Office for National Statistics (2013) *Opinions and Lifestyle Survey, Drinking Habits Amongst Adults, 2012* [Available online](#)

Alcohol consumption by young people

- The smoking, drinking and drug use survey of 11-15 year olds in schools in England shows that in recent years there has been a steady decline in the proportion of pupils who drink alcohol (the proportion of pupils who had never drunk alcohol rose from 39% in 2003 to 57% in 2012).
- In 2012, the average (mean) alcohol consumption by pupils who had drunk in the last week was 12.9 units. Mean consumption levels have varied between 10.4 unit and 14.6 units since 2007, with no clear trend.

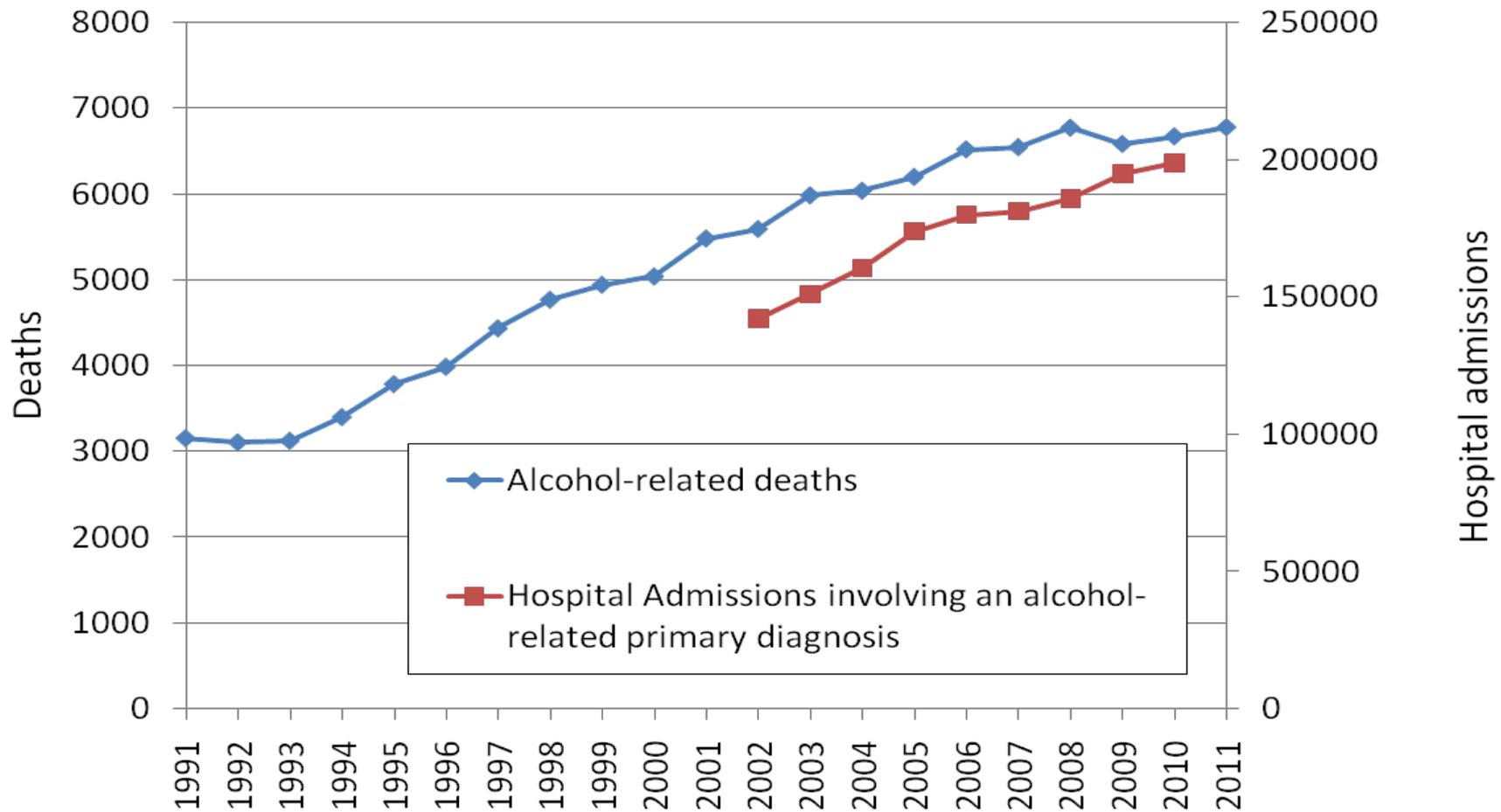
Alcohol-related harms

We estimate the costs of alcohol misuse in England to be around £21bn per year.

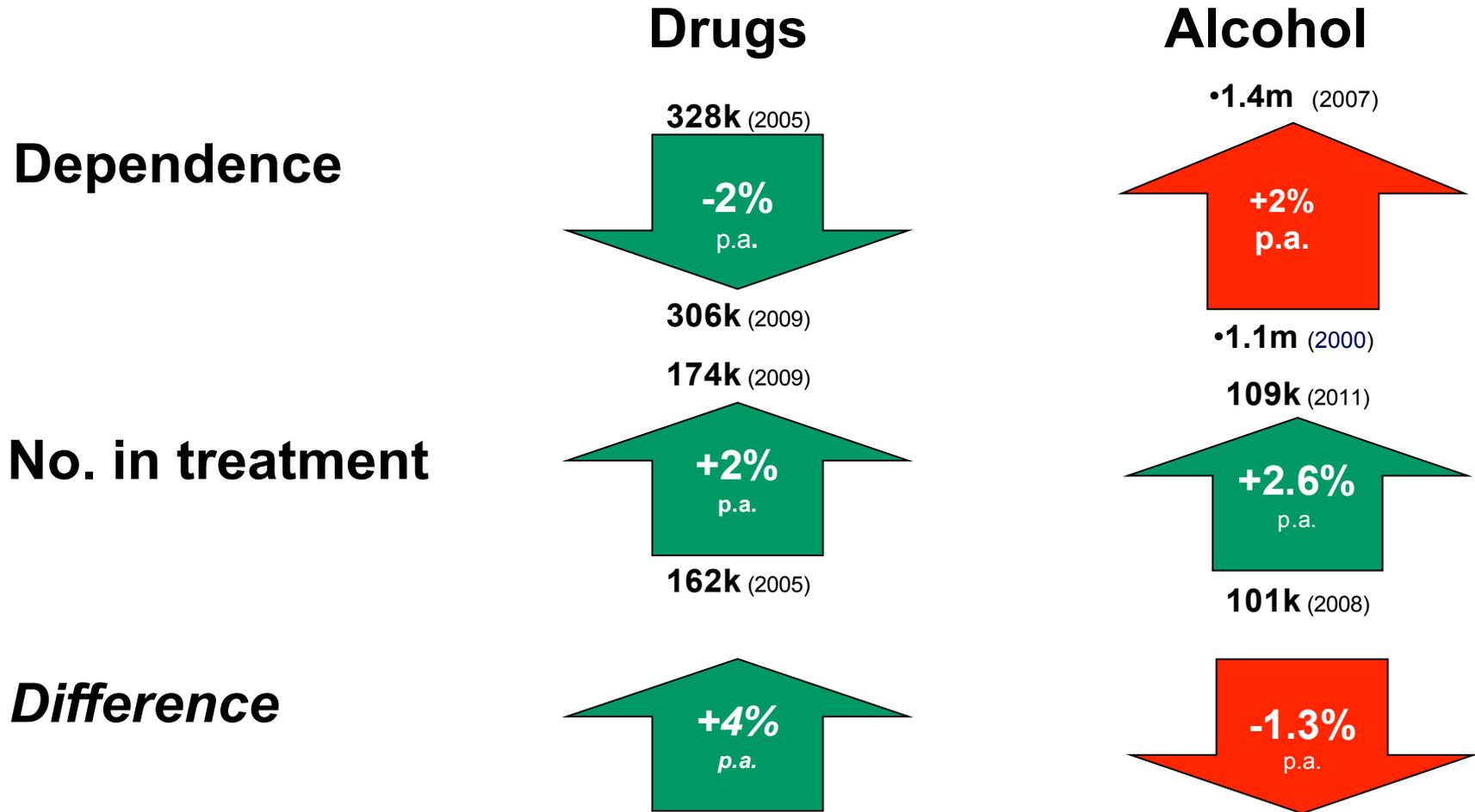


Alcohol related harms (admissions & deaths) rising to 2011

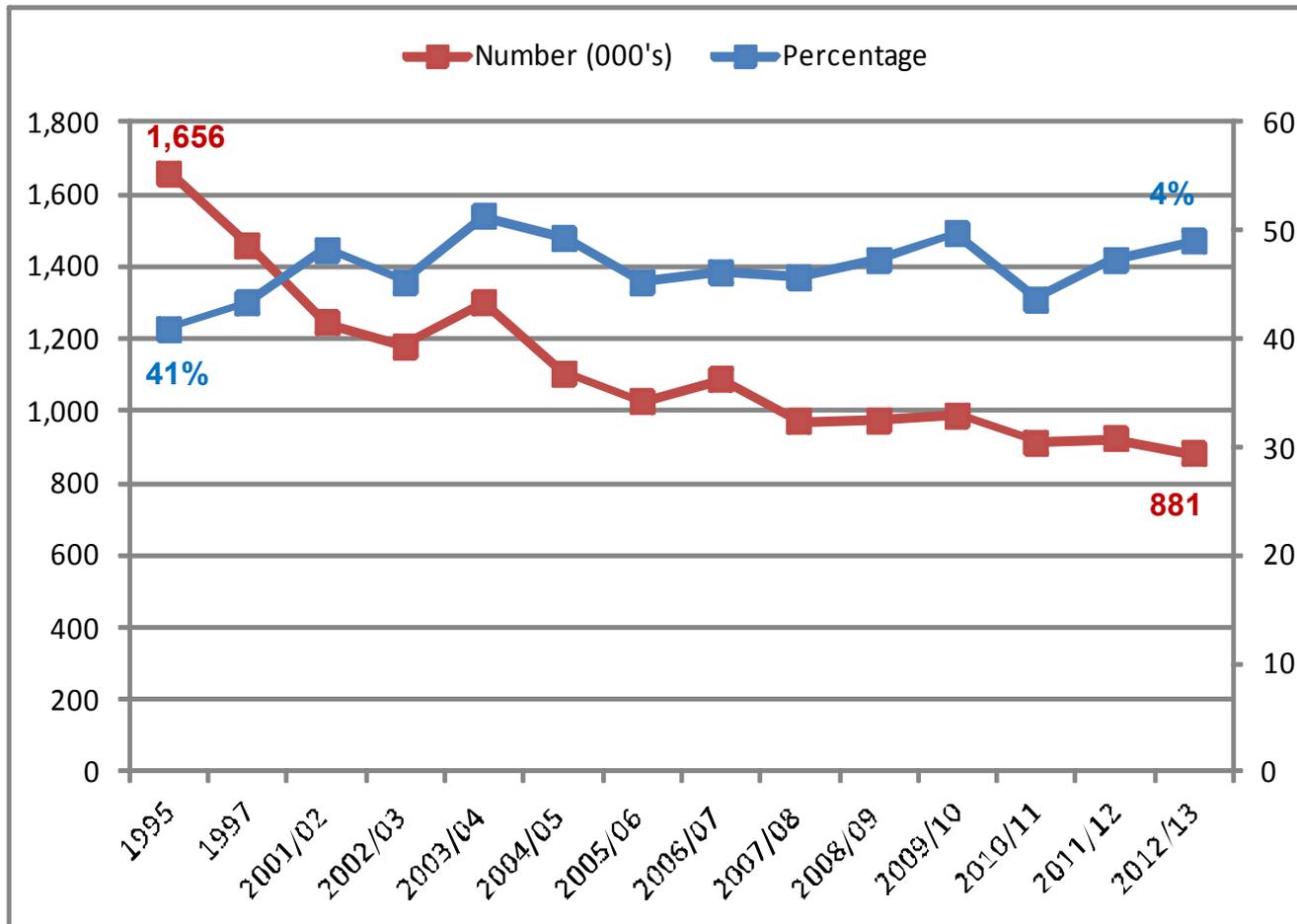
Alcohol-related deaths and hospital admissions



Alcohol provision needs to outstrip current need if prevalence of dependence is to fall



The number of incidents of alcohol-related violence has fallen – though the proportion has remained relatively stable



- In 2012/13 nearly half (49%) of all violent incidents the victim believed the perpetrator to be under the influence of alcohol.
- The proportion of violent crimes where offenders were under the influence of alcohol increased between 1995 (41%) and 2001/02 (49%), but has been relatively stable with some fluctuations thereafter.

Location and timing of alcohol-related violence

WHERE: 15% of all violent incidents in 2012/13 took place in or around **a pub or club**, around a fifth (22%) occurred **on the street**, whilst around a third (30%) took place **in or around the home**.

TYPES OF OFFENCE: **Wounding** was the most commonly experience offence type (62%) and **stranger violence** the most common violence type (69%).

WHEN: **Just over a half** of violent offences occurred at the **weekend** (54%). 61% took place in the evening or at night (6pm to 6am).

Perceptions of alcohol-related anti-social behaviour

In 2012/13 around a fifth (21%) of adults perceived people being drunk or rowdy as a problem in their local area. This is lower than in recent years - between 2007/08 and 2011/12 it was consistently estimated as as around a quarter of adults.

Around one in eight (12%) had witnessed anti-social behaviour related to drinking behaviour in 2011/12. Of these, 7% reported witnessing this behaviour every day and around a third (32%) at least once a week.

Around 12% of business premises had experienced at least one incident of anti-social behaviour in the in 2012 – drink related behaviour and groups hanging around on the street were the most frequently reported types of asb.

Understanding trends in alcohol use

It may be interesting to explore factors behind the trends to help inform policy responses. Likely that no one single factor can explain trends in alcohol use and associated harms, probably due to the combined impact of many different factors acting over a similar time period. Below is a list of initial hypotheses.

Potential upwards and downwards pressures on 'binge drinking'.

Downwards pressures

- Overall decline in risky behaviours
- Decline in smoking
- Parental influence
- Peer pressure/guidance
- Changes in drinking habits
- Changes to the night time economy
- More activities for young people
- Demographic changes
- Awareness campaigns
- Economic downturn
- Staff training
- Police and legislative powers

Upwards pressures

- Advertising
- Alcohol promotions
- Affordability
- Increased availability
- Parental influence
- Peer pressure/guidance
- Changes in drinking habits
- Changes to the night time economy

Understanding trends in alcohol-related crime and disorder

Potential upwards and downwards pressures on alcohol-related crime and disorder

Downwards pressures

- Enforcement
- Changes to the night time economy
- Police and legislative powers
- Impact of intervention and prevention measures
- Staff training
- Demographic changes

Upwards pressures

- Enforcement
- Changes to the night time economy