

Adults (18-75) in the UK who drink alcohol for coping reasons

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Background and objectives

Background

This report presents some of the findings from research conducted by YouGov in March-April 2017, into UK adults' behaviour and attitudes in relation to alcohol. The findings from the wider study are published in the Drinkaware Monitor 2017 report.¹

The main objectives of the Drinkaware Monitor 2017 research were:

- To provide an overview of adults' drinking behaviour in the UK, including how frequently and how much they are drinking
- To explore attitudes towards alcohol, drinking occasions, motivations for drinking, harmful drinking behaviour, and strategies people use to moderate their drinking
- To investigate drinking behaviour among different demographic groups and explore which groups may be at higher risk of alcohol-related harm
- To provide profiles of different types of drinkers, to help Drinkaware to target its communications and tailor its messages effectively

Objectives

This report presents specific data on all adults (18-75) as a representative sample of the UK population who drink alcohol for three coping reasons: drinking to forget about problems, drinking to cheer up when in a bad mood and drinking because it helps when feelings depressed or nervous. We are presenting data for those who report drinking for the relevant reasons either all the time, most of the time or some of the time.

Method

YouGov interviewed a representative sample of 6,174 UK adults aged 18-75 online between 27th March and 18th April 2017. Data has been weighted to be representative of the UK adult population (aged 18-75) according to gender, age, social grade and region.

Standardised tools

Findings from the following standardised tools are being reported on in this report:

The Drinking Motive Questionnaire: Revised Short Form (DMQ-R SF)

The Drinking Motive Questionnaire: Revised Short Form (DMQ-R SF)² consists of 12 motivations for drinking and a five point response scale. An individual's responses are used to determine the extent to which they drink for social reasons (e.g. to improve parties and celebrations), enhancement reasons (e.g. because they like the feeling), conformity (e.g. to be liked), or coping reasons (e.g. to improve a bad mood). This report focuses specifically on findings related to the three coping reasons for drinking.

¹ Gunstone, B. & Butler, B. (2017). *UK adult drinking behaviours and attitudes: Findings from Drinkaware Monitor 2017*. London: YouGov and Drinkaware.

² Kuntsche, E. & Kuntsche, S. (2009). Development and validation of the Drinking Motive Questionnaire Revised Short Form (DMQ-R SF). *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology*, 38:6, 899-908.

Alcohol Use Disorder Identification Test (AUDIT)

The AUDIT tool, developed by the World Health Organisation³, is used to measure an individual's level of risk and/or harm in relation to their alcohol consumption patterns. The test consists of ten questions, each of which carries a score of 0-4, depending on the answer given. This gives each individual an overall AUDIT score between 0 and 40. Scores for this tool have been grouped as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: AUDIT categories

Category	AUDIT score
Low risk	0-7
Increasing risk	8-15
Higher risk	16-19
Possible dependence	20+

Interpreting the data

Where differences between sub-groups are discussed, only those differences that are statistically significant are reported (unless otherwise stated). These differences are statistically significant to a confidence level of 95%.

Findings

Motivations for drinking are an important aspect of drinking behaviour and over half of all drinkers (58%) report that they drink for at least one coping reason, at least some of the time. Specifically, 38% drank to forget their problems, 47% to cheer themselves up when in a bad mood and 41% because it helps when they feel depressed or nervous (Table 2).

Table 2: All drinkers who drink for coping reasons at least some of the time

Coping Reason	All drinkers (18-75)
Any coping reason	58%
Drink to forget problems	38%
Drinking to cheer up when in a bad mood	47%
Drinking because it helps when feeling depressed or nervous	41%

³ Babor et al. (2001). AUDIT; The Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test: Guidelines for use in primary care. Second Edition. *World Health Organisation: Department of Mental Health and Substance Dependence.*

Of those who drank to forget their problems at least some of the time, 43.1% were low risk drinkers and 56.9% were increasing or higher risk drinkers (Table 3). Of those who drank to cheer themselves up 45.4% were low risk drinkers and 54.2% were increasing or higher risk drinkers. Of those who drank to help with depressed and nervous feelings, 45.8% were low risk drinkers and 54.2% were increasing or higher risk drinkers. Finally, of those who drank for any coping reasons, 45.8% were low risk, and 54.2% were increasing or higher risk drinkers.

Table 3: All drinkers who drank for coping reasons at least some of the time by AUDIT risk category

Coping Reason	Low risk	Increasing /higher risk
Any coping reason (n=3,143)	48.7%	51.3%
Drink to forget problems (n=2,067)	43.1%	56.9%
Drinking to cheer up when in a bad mood (n=2,510)	45.4%	54.6%
Drinking because it helps when feeling depressed or nervous (n=2,206)	45.8%	54.2%

A third (33%) of drinkers in the highest social grades A and B drank to forget about their problems, whereas among drinkers in the lowest social grades D and E over two fifths (44%) were drinking for this reason (Table 4). There is a significant difference (11 percentage point) between the highest and lowest social grades. A similar percentage point difference is found in relation to another coping reason: because drinking helps when you feel depressed or nervous (9 percentage point). However, the motivation to drink to cheer themselves up when they are in a bad mood is roughly equally found in social grade AB (44%) and DE (47%).

Table 4: Drinkers by social grade who drink for coping reasons at least some of the time

		Drinking to forget about your problems	Drinking to cheer you up when you're in a bad mood	Drinking because it helps when you feel depressed or nervous	Any coping reason
All UK adults (18-75) who ever drink (n=5,427)		38%	47%	41%	58%
Social Grade	AB (n= 2,010)	33%	44%	36%	55%
	C1 (n=1,506)	38%	49%	40%	60%
	ABC1 (n=3,516)	36%	46%	38%	58%
	C2 (n=839)	38%	47%	43%	59%
	DE (n = 1,072)	44%	47%	45%	59%
	C2DE (n=1,911)	41%	47%	44%	59%