

Drink Free Days 2018 evaluation: insights and implications

Executive Summary

This page summarises the evaluation with further detail about each section on the following pages.

Campaign overview

The Drink Free Days (DFD) campaign was launched in September 2018 and ran for ten weeks, targeting midlife men and women (aged 40-64) drinking routinely in the home and over the low risk drinking guidelines. The overall aim was to start to promote and normalise the idea of drink free days and moderate drinking generally as the initial stage of a two-year campaign.

Key findings

1. *Campaign recall:* The campaign achieved good recall among target audiences and midlife women, compared to men, were more receptive and willing to engage with the alcohol harm messages.
2. *Female campaign perceptions:* Overall, both the breast cancer and weight messages performed well, and although there were some differences, generally in favour of breast cancer messaging, the findings suggest these both resonated well with the target audience.
3. *Male campaign perceptions:* The messages engaged around half of the men, particularly those in England drinking over the low risk guidelines. This is encouraging, as this audience is sceptical about any perceived criticism of their drinking. However, there is evidence of Scottish men drinking over the low risk drinking guidelines expressing disengagement with more hard-hitting health messages, suggesting a different approach or message strategy could be more effective for them.
4. *UK drinker segments' perceptions:* The campaign mainly resonated with the UK drinker segments who drink routinely and at risky levels (segments 4, 5 and 8). Around half in each of these segments stated that the ads were relevant to them. Although the campaign was designed to target segments 4 and 8, the evidence supports including segment 5 in the target audience.
5. *Campaign influence:* There is evidence that people who had seen the campaign were influenced to consider their drinking and take action to have more drink-free days. This impact was greatest among men drinking over the low risk drinking guidelines, and stronger in England than in Scotland. Furthermore, the drink-free days message may also influence other moderation activity.
6. *Awareness of health harms:* There was some increase in health harm awareness associated with the campaign. However, there is only emerging evidence for this as would be expected after only 10 weeks of campaign activity. Furthermore, the evidence suggests that there may be an opportunity to provide further information on how alcohol causes individual health conditions.
7. *Impact on attitudes and behaviour:* There is some evidence of the campaign making a positive impact in terms of more people trying to cut down and take drink-free days, especially among those drinking over the low risk drinking guidelines. However, as expected after this initial 10-week campaign activity, sustained reductions in harmful drinking are yet to be achieved. There is so far no evidence of the campaign having an unintended effect of increase in binge drinking.

Campaign overview

The first burst of the Drink Free Days (DFD) campaign (10 September to 18 November 2018) was run in collaboration with Public Health England in England, and by Drinkaware alone in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. It is the intention for the campaign to be running for a minimum of 2 years. Over the course of this period it is the aim for the campaign to achieve the following outcomes among midlife men and women:

1. raise their awareness of alcohol harm,
2. increase their positive attitudes to moderating their drinking,
3. increase the proportion taking steps to reduce their drinking,
4. increase the proportion who take more days off drinking and
5. reduce harmful drinking.

It is hypothesised that the outcomes will be achieved in stages. Following the 2018 campaign burst we are expecting to see some change in awareness and attitudes but only moderate increases in terms of use of drink free days as a moderation strategy. After subsequent campaign activity in 2019 and 2020 we expect to see stronger changes in awareness and attitudes, together with increasingly greater uptake of drink-free days and reduced harmful drinking.

To guarantee the integrity and robustness of the analysis, the expected impact and the methodology used to assess this was registered prior to the completion of the first campaign activity (AsPredicted, #16477).

Survey methodology

Using a representative online panel YouGov undertook a pre-campaign survey in May 2018 and a post-campaign survey in November 2018, including midlife men and women (aged 40-64) in England and Scotland. South West England had been chosen as a control area due to its average alcohol-harm profile and relative geographical isolation. No paid campaign advertising was delivered in the control area, although it is recognised that social media advertising easily travels across physical borders and any not-paid national media promotion cannot be controlled.

Sample sizes for the study were as follows:

Area	Pre-campaign (May 2018)		Post-campaign (November 2018)	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
England (excl. SW)	1475	1470	734	792
Scotland	337	324	775	868
South West England	270	283	259	259

2018 campaign results and implications

Key findings from the pre-post evaluation and their implications are in the following presented under the respective headlines.

Each section starts with a paragraph in bold highlighting the key insights and learning. Some further details in support of these are then presented.

1. Campaign recall

The campaign achieved good recall among target audiences and midlife women, compared to men, were more receptive and willing to engage with the alcohol harm messages.

Relative to the advertising spend (£1.17m) the campaign was well recognised among the target audience of midlife men and women who drink alcohol, with around a third recalling having seen or heard any element of the campaign. This was higher in England (35%) than in Scotland (32%).

The advertising focus on radio (60% of spend) is reflected in higher recall of this medium, compared to online ads and social media ads.

As expected, based on our pre-campaign insight and testing research ([Drinkaware and Future Thinking 2018](#)) midlife women were, compared to men, found to be more receptive and willing to engage with alcohol harm messages. Regularly drinking midlife men are particularly difficult to engage on the issue of their drinking. Generally they feel in control of their drinking and do not want to be lectured to ([Parke et al. 2018](#), [Christmas and Souter 2016](#)).

2. Female campaign perceptions

Overall, both the breast cancer and weight messages performed well, and although there were some differences generally in favour of breast cancer, the findings suggest these both resonated well with the target audience.

Women generally found the breast cancer advert to be somewhat more *attention-grabbing* than the weight advert, although the highest proportion to agree an advert that 'caught their attention' was found for the weight advert among English women drinking over the low risk guidelines (69%).

In terms of *interest in* and perceived *relevance* of the message of the adverts in general the breast cancer advert performed somewhat better, with the exception of perceived relevance being highest for the weight advert among English women drinking over the low risk guidelines (69%).

There were some differences between women in England and Scotland, with generally somewhat higher proportions of the English women positively responding to the campaign messages.

3. Male campaign perceptions

The messages engaged around half of the men, particularly those in England drinking over the low risk guidelines. This is encouraging, as this audience is sceptical about any perceived criticism of their drinking. However, there is evidence of Scottish men drinking over the low risk drinking guidelines expressing disengagement with more hard-hitting health messages, suggesting a different approach or message strategy could be more effective for them.

Around or just under half of men found the messages of blood pressure and weight attention-grabbing. The notable difference is found among men drinking over the low risk drinking guidelines where the adverts caught the attention of a considerably smaller proportion of Scottish men compared to English men (41% vs 52% for blood pressure and 44% vs 57% for weight).

In terms of interest in and perceived relevance, little difference was found between the blood pressure and weight messages. Men drinking over the low risk drinking guidelines generally thought the adverts were relevant to them, although there was some difference between Scotland and England (48% vs 57% for blood pressure and 48% vs 54% for weight). However, message interest was considerably less in Scotland compared to England (36% vs 49% for blood pressure and 37% vs 47%

for weight). Hence, although Scottish men generally recognise the health issues are relevant to their drinking, many were less interested in engaging with these.

4. *UK drinker segments' perceptions*

The campaign mainly resonated with the UK drinker segments who drink routinely and at risky levels (segments 4, 5 and 8). Around half in each of these segments stated that the ads were relevant to them. Although the campaign was designed to target segments 4 and 8, the evidence supports including segment 5 in the target audience.

5. *Campaign influence*

There is evidence that people who had seen the campaign were influenced to consider their drinking and take action to have more drink-free days. This impact was greatest among men drinking over the low risk drinking guidelines, and stronger in England than in Scotland. Furthermore, the drink-free days message may also influence other moderation activity.

Approximately two-thirds of those who remembered any campaign material agreed that the campaign influenced them to consider their drinking habits (65% and 67% in Scotland and England respectively). This influence was strongest among men drinking over the low risk drinking guidelines – and higher in England (79%) than in Scotland (73%).

Over two-fifths of campaign recallers said they were influenced to make a plan to take more drink-free days (41% and 46% in Scotland and England, respectively). Again, this influence was strongest among men drinking over the low risk drinking guidelines – and higher in England (65%) than in Scotland (56%).

Furthermore, among male drinkers in England who recalled any campaign material, nearly three out of four of those drinking over the low risk drinking guidelines stated they were influenced to take action to have more drink-free days (73%), compared to 58% of men drinking at this level in Scotland.

As well as taking more drink-free days, 45% of those in England and 42% of those in Scotland who recognised any campaign materials were influenced to cut down on their drinking in other ways. This influence was particularly observed among men drinking over the low risk drinking guidelines – and, interestingly, marginally higher in Scotland (58%) than in England (56%).

6. *Awareness of health harms*

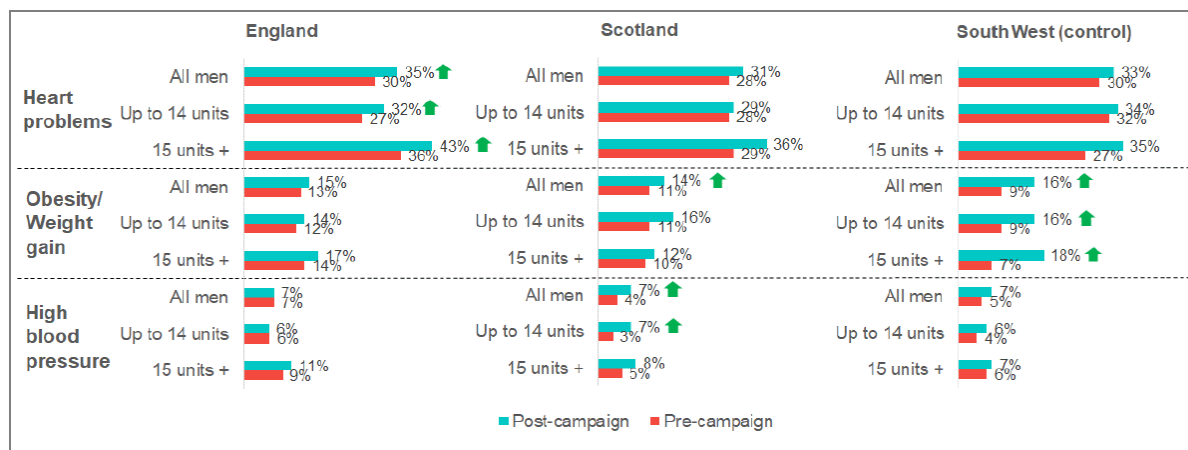
There was some increase in health harm awareness associated with the campaign. However, there is only emerging evidence for this as would be expected after only 10 weeks of campaign activity.

Furthermore, the evidence suggests that there may be an opportunity to provide further information on how alcohol causes individual health conditions.

Men

There was evidence of some increase in men's spontaneous (unprompted) awareness of the alcohol health harms of heart problems, high blood pressure and obesity/weight gain. This was especially the case in England for heart problems and in Scotland and high blood pressure and obesity/weight gain (Figure 1). However, as a positive increase was also observed in the South West control area in relation to obesity/weight gain it is uncertain whether the campaign was a significant cause of this change.

Figure 1: Men’s spontaneous recollection of health conditions caused by alcohol



Base: all male 40-64s in England (excluding SW), Scotland, South West.

In contrast, no change was observed in relation to prompted awareness, which remained unchanged at a relatively high level (around 70%-80%) for all conditions.

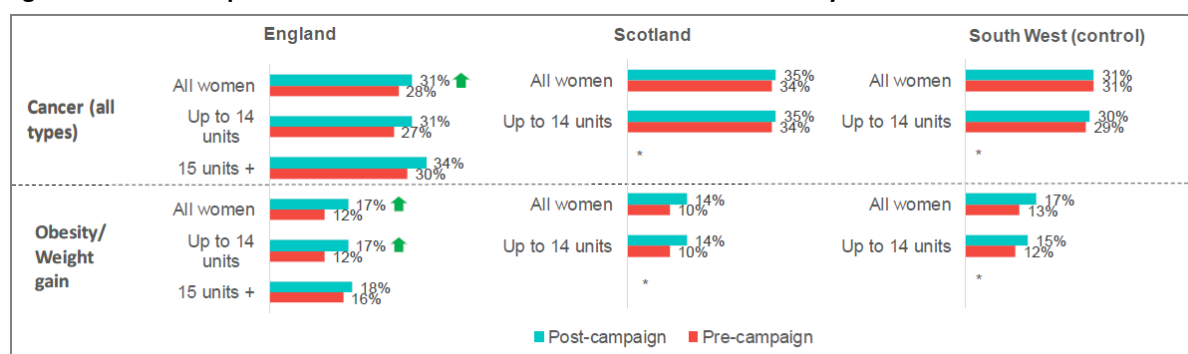
Equally, no change was observed pre-post the 2018 campaign in relation to the extent to which men understand how these health harms are related to alcohol. Around 50%-60% continued to claim that they either have a ‘good understanding’ or ‘some understanding’ – with around 10%-25% claiming a good understanding, suggesting that there is still opportunity to improve this area.

Women

In England there was some increase in spontaneous awareness as alcohol as a cause of cancer and obesity/weight gain, as illustrated in Figure 2. This change was not observed for cancer in Scotland, where the pre-campaign level of awareness was higher. Nor was any change seen in the control region.

However, for obesity/weight gain there are positive changes from a low base both in Scotland and South West, but not at statistically significant levels.

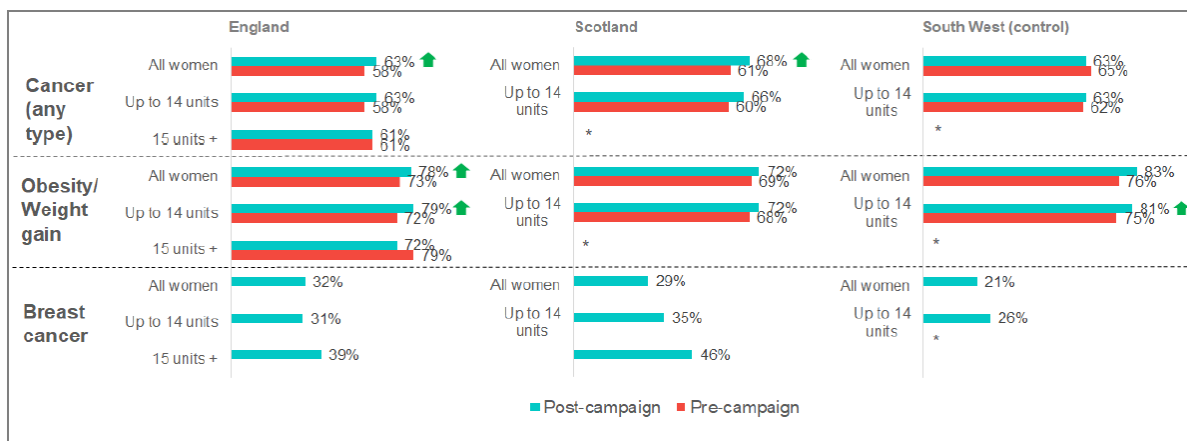
Figure 2: Women’s spontaneous recollection of health conditions caused by alcohol



Base: all female 40-64s in England (excluding SW), Scotland, South West.

For women, prompted awareness also increased, particularly in England – as shown in Figure 3. Again, it should be noted that a statistically significant increase was also found for obesity/weight gain in the control area, and caution should be exercised in attributing the change to the campaign.

Figure 3: Women’s prompted recollection of health conditions caused by alcohol



Base: all female 40-64s in England (excluding SW), Scotland, South West.

As found for men, there was little or no change in how well women claimed to understand how alcohol causes the specific health harms. It is however worth noting that this understanding is significantly lower for cancer, and breast cancer specifically, compared to obesity/ weight gain.

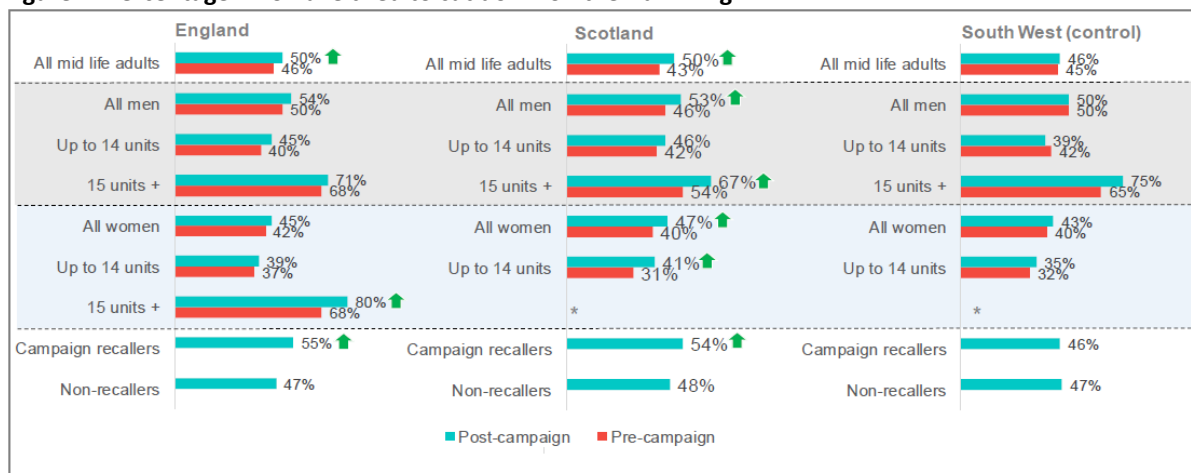
Whereas around 60%-65% claim to have either a ‘good understanding’ (around 25%) or ‘some understanding’ (around 40%) of how alcohol causes obesity/weight gain, this is much lower at around 40% for cancer (10% ‘good’ and 30% ‘some’), and only around 20% for breast cancer (5% ‘good’ and 15% ‘some’).

7. Impact on attitudes and behaviour

There is some evidence of the campaign making a positive impact in terms of more people trying to cut down and take drink-free days, especially among those drinking over the low risk drinking guidelines. However, as expected after this initial 10-week campaign activity, sustained reductions in harmful drinking are yet to be achieved. There is so far no evidence of the campaign having an unintended effect of increase in binge drinking.

There was a significant increase in English and Scottish respondents saying they had taken measures to cut down on their drinking (at any point in the past).

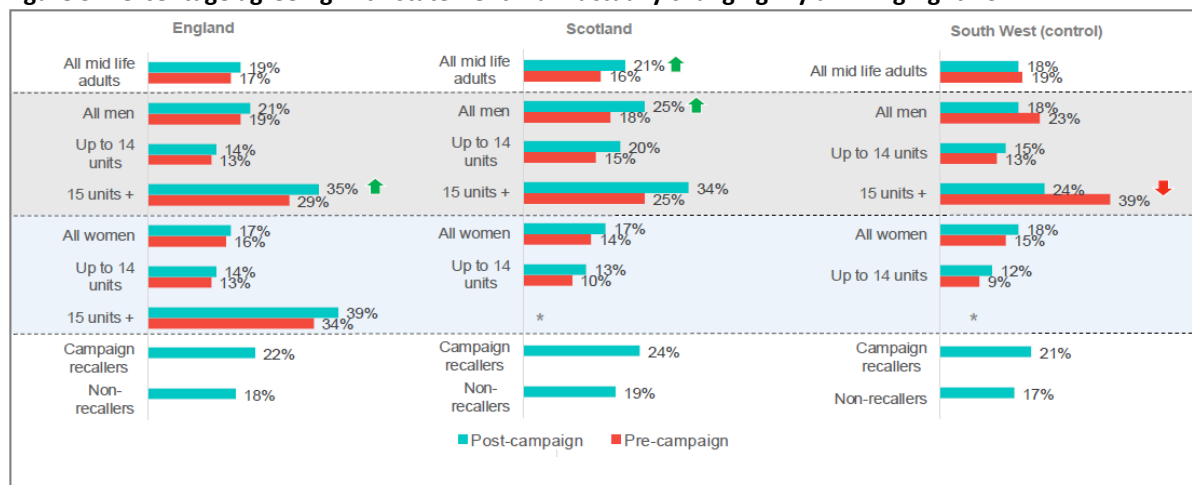
Figure 4: Percentage who have tried to cut down on their drinking



Base: all drinkers England (excluding SW), Scotland, South West

There was also an increase in people saying that they are changing their drinking habits right now, and this was mainly driven by those drinking over the low risk drinking guidelines, as illustrated in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5: Percentage agreeing with statement: I am actually changing my drinking right now



Base: all drinkers England (excluding SW), Scotland, South West

However, we did not find any statistically significant change in readiness to change, measured using a combined metric of three statements measuring precontemplation, contemplation and action regarding alcohol consumption.

There was some increase in people taking a drink-free day in the week before the survey. This was mainly driven by an increase from 69% to 77% among English men drinking over the low risk drinking guidelines – this figure remained stable among Scottish men drinking at this level (from 77% to 78%).

General measures of harmful drinking, AUDIT-C scores and total units consumed, showed little change. Although in Scotland there was an increase in the number of non-drinkers, most pronounced among men with the figure raising from 8% to 12% after the 10-week campaign activity.

There was no evidence that the campaign affected binge-drinking habits. The proportion who drink 6 units (women) or 8 units (men) once a week or more often remained steady between the two surveys with no regional differences.