

23 October 2019

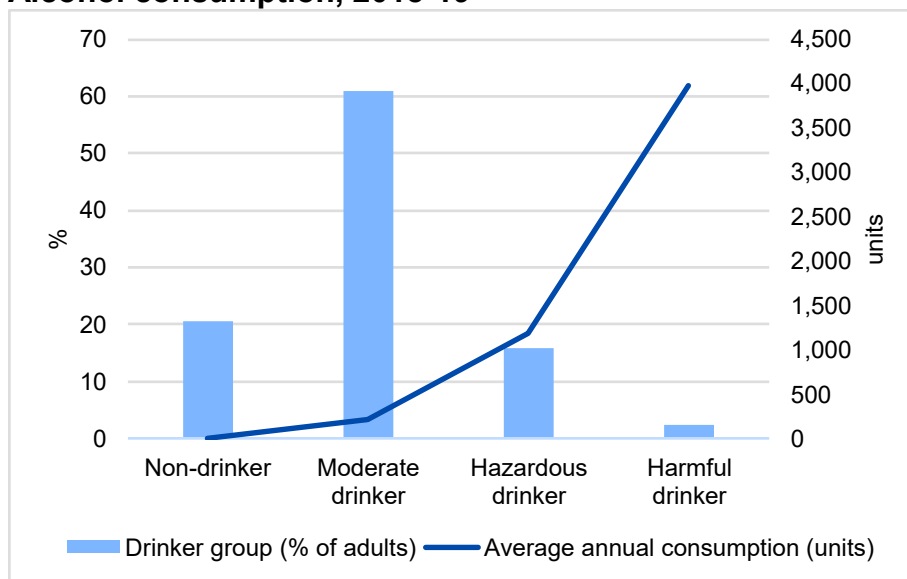
SB 41/2019



## National Survey for Wales 2016-17 to 2018-19: Alcohol consumption prior to introduction of minimum price

This bulletin analyses data from the National Survey for Wales to provide estimates of alcohol consumption levels prior to the introduction of minimum pricing. All results in this bulletin relate to adults aged 16+.

### Alcohol consumption, 2018-19



### In 2018-19:

- 2% of adults were harmful drinkers, drinking an average 3,973 units of alcohol a year.
- A further 16% of adults were hazardous drinkers, drinking an average 1,194 units of alcohol a year.

### About this bulletin

This bulletin provides more information about the alcohol consumption of adults living in Wales from the National Survey for Wales 2018-19, following publication of initial results in June 2019. Results for the two preceding years are also shown.

### In this bulletin

Background	2
Results	3
Table	4
Notes	5

## Background

The [Public Health \(Minimum Price for Alcohol\) \(Wales\) Act 2018](#) provides a legislative basis for addressing some of the concerns around the effects of excess alcohol consumption in Wales. It makes provision for a minimum price for alcohol supplied in Wales, and aims to reduce the amount of alcohol being consumed by hazardous and harmful drinkers, whilst minimising impacts on moderate drinkers.

The University of Sheffield analysed the [modelled impacts of introducing a minimum unit price](#) at various levels in Wales between 35p and 70p. This estimated that under a 50p minimum unit price, consumption reductions would be largest among harmful drinkers, with the smallest effect seen among moderate drinkers. It also estimated that consumption reductions would be larger among the most deprived quintile of drinkers<sup>1</sup>.

Between September and December 2018, the Welsh Government consulted on a [proposed minimum unit price](#) of 50p. It is expected that regulations will be laid before the National Assembly for Wales for its consideration later in 2019, with the view to then implementing minimum unit pricing for alcohol in early 2020.

This bulletin analyses data from the National Survey for Wales to provide estimates of alcohol consumption levels prior to the introduction of minimum pricing. Data for the years 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19 are shown. The data is available on [StatsWales](#), and some high level summary information is also available in the Statistical Bulletin "[National Survey for Wales 2018-19: Adult lifestyle](#)", both of these are updated annually.

The bulletin presents results for 3 groups of drinkers – moderate, hazardous, and harmful drinkers – these are the terms used in the University of Sheffield report, and are defined as follows:

- Moderate drinkers: average weekly alcohol consumption no more than 14 units (the current UK guidelines)
- Hazardous drinkers: average weekly alcohol consumption more than 14 units but no more than 50 units (men) or 35 units (women)
- Harmful drinkers: average weekly alcohol consumption more than 50 units (men) or 35 units (women)

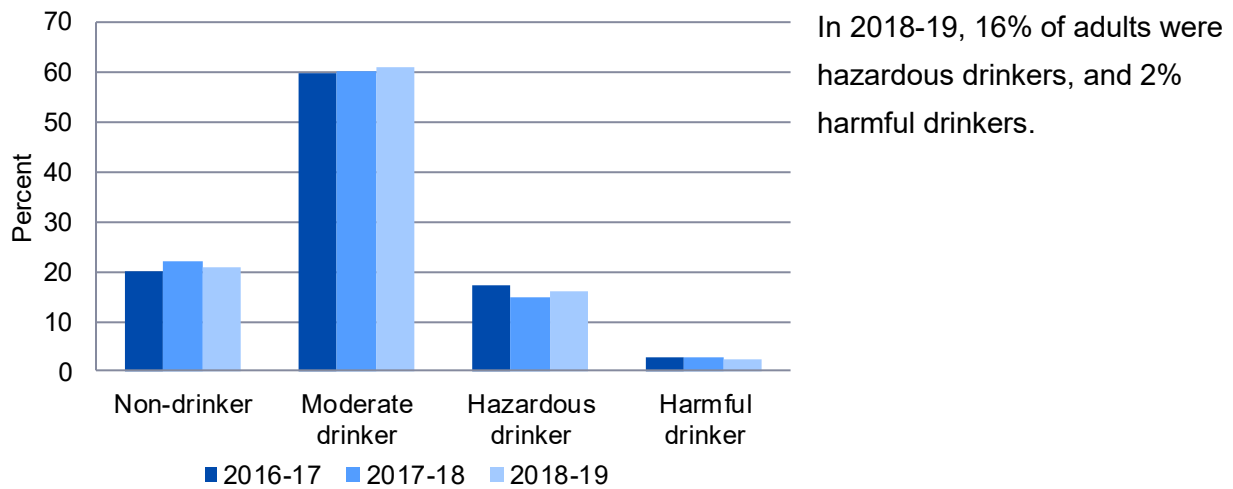
Some results are also shown for non-drinkers (those whose average weekly consumption is zero), and for all drinkers combined (ie excluding non-drinkers).

---

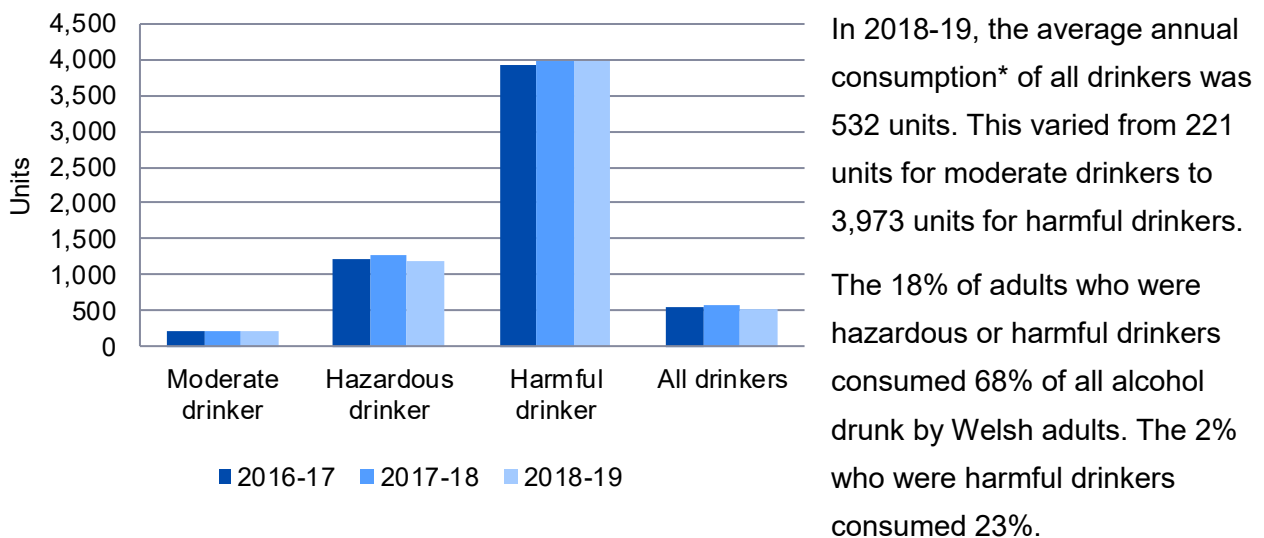
<sup>1</sup> Deprivation quintiles were based on the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation, WIMD. See notes for further details

## Results

**Figure 1: Percentage of adults in each drinker group, by year**

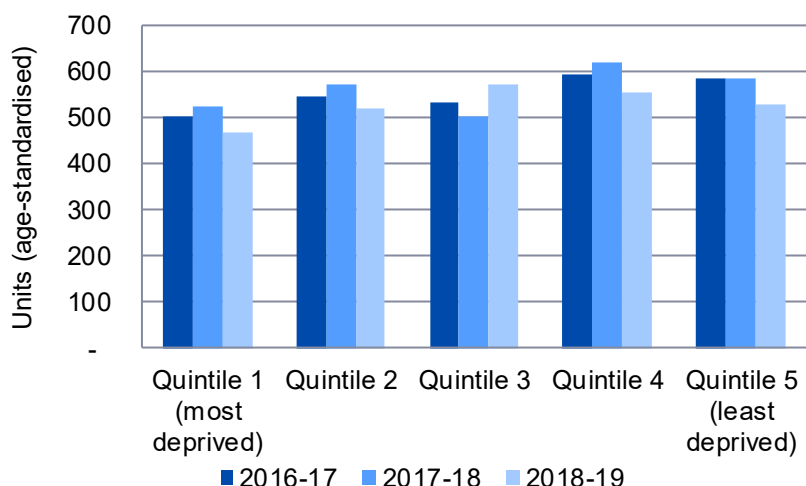


**Figure 2: Average annual alcohol consumption, by drinker group and year**



\*The mean (average) provides a summary measure of alcohol consumption, but the number of units can vary substantially among respondents. An indication of the extent of variability can be given by the lower and upper quartiles, which contain the middle 50% of observations. In 2018-19, these were 64 - 690 for all drinkers (so 25% of drinkers drank fewer than 64 units in the year and 25% drank more than 690 units), 858 - 1447 for hazardous drinkers, and 2,730 - 4,104 for harmful drinkers.

**Figure 3: Average annual alcohol consumption, by deprivation quintile and year**



In 2018-19, the average annual consumption of drinkers fluctuated by deprivation quintile. For each of the 3 years, consumption in the most deprived quintile was slightly lower than in the 2 least deprived quintiles, although the difference was not statistically significant.

### Change since 2016-17

There was little change between 2016-17 and 2018-19 in drinker groups or average annual alcohol consumption.

### Summary table

#### Drinker group and annual alcohol consumption

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
<b>Drinker group (% of adults):</b>			
Non-drinker	20	22	21
Moderate drinker	60	60	61
Hazardous drinker	17	15	16
Harmful drinker	3	3	2
Hazardous or harmful drinker	20	18	18

#### Average annual alcohol consumption of drinkers (units):

By drinker group:

Moderate drinker	209	221	221
Hazardous drinker	1,212	1,280	1,194
Harmful drinker	3,923	3,984	3,973
All drinkers	554	568	532

By WIMD deprivation quintile (age-standardised):

Quintile 1 (most deprived)	501	523	469
Quintile 2	544	571	521
Quintile 3	532	503	570
Quintile 4	593	618	554
Quintile 5 (least deprived)	586	582	530

Source: National Survey for Wales

## Definitions

### Alcohol Consumption

The survey asked adults a set of questions about their alcohol consumption.

Respondents were asked how often they drank alcohol in the past 12 months and, if never, whether they had always been a non-drinker.

Respondents were asked to indicate how often they had consumed each type of alcohol during the past 12 months, and how much they had usually consumed; they were also asked how many measures of each type of alcohol they had consumed on their heaviest drinking day the previous week. This bulletin focuses on usual alcohol consumption. The following table was used to calculate the average weekly units drunk.

Some respondents who did drink stated that their usual weekly consumption was none – this may lead to an underestimate in weekly drinking estimates.

Type of drink	Measure	Alcohol units
Normal strength beer, lager, stout, cider or shandy	Pints	2
	Large cans	2
	Small cans	1.5
	Bottles	1.5
Strong beer, lager, stout or cider	Pints	4
	Large cans	3
	Small cans	2
	Bottles	2
Wine	Large glass (250ml)	3
	Standard glass (175ml)	2
	Small glass (125ml)	1.5
	Bottles (750ml)	9
Spirits or liqueurs	Measures or shots (single measure)	1
Sherry or martini	Glass	1
Alcopops	Small can	1.5
	Standard bottle (275ml)	1.5
	Large bottle (700ml)	3.5

Weekly consumption of each type of drink was calculated by multiplying the units usually consumed on a day when that type of alcohol was drunk by a factor representing the frequency with which it was drunk. The results for each type of drink were added together to give an overall weekly figure. In turn, this weekly figure was multiplied by 52 to produce an estimate of average annual consumption.

The weekly frequency multipliers used were:

<b>Drinking frequency</b>	<b>Multiplying factor</b>
Almost every day	7.0
5 or 6 times a week	5.5
3 or 4 times a week	3.5
Once or twice a week	1.5
Once or twice a month	0.375
Once every couple of months	0.115
Once or twice a year	0.029

As announced in the UK Chief Medical Officers' Low Risk Drinking Guidelines during 2016, a weekly alcohol guideline was recommended to replace the former daily guidelines. This new guideline for both men and women suggests drinking no more than 14 units a week on a regular basis.

The bulletin presents results for 3 groups of drinkers – moderate, hazardous, and harmful drinkers – these are the terms used in the University of Sheffield report, and are defined in the following table. Some results are also shown for non-drinkers, and for all drinkers combined (ie excluding non-drinkers). The estimates of average alcohol consumption in this bulletin differ slightly from those shown in the University of Sheffield report due to slightly different assumptions about the volume and strength of some drinks, however the broad patterns are the same.

<b>Drinker group</b>	<b>Average weekly units</b>
Non-drinker	average weekly alcohol consumption zero
Moderate drinkers:	average weekly alcohol consumption no more than 14 units (the current UK guidelines)
Hazardous drinkers:	average weekly alcohol consumption more than 14 units but no more than 50 units (men) or 35 units (women)
Harmful drinkers:	average weekly alcohol consumption more than 50 units (men) or 35 units (women)

Health-related behaviours can be a complex area to measure and there may be some differences between what people report and what they do (for instance, they may tend to underestimate their alcohol consumption). However, survey data still provides a reliable means of comparing patterns for these behaviours between different groups and over time.

## Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation

The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) is used as the official measure of deprivation in Wales. Deprivation is a wider concept than poverty and refers to wider problems caused by a lack of resources and opportunities. The WIMD is constructed from eight different types of deprivation. These are: income, housing, employment, access to services, education, health, community safety and physical environment. Wales is divided into 1,909 Lower-Layer Super Output Areas (LSOA) each having about 1,600 people. Deprivation ranks have been worked out for each of these areas: the most deprived LSOA is ranked 1, and the least deprived 1,909. Respondents to the survey have been split into five groups based on the LSOA they live in (with 20 per cent of LSOAs allocated to each group). Results are compared for the five groups.

## Age standardisation

Age standardisation has been used in selected analysis in order to enable groups to be compared after adjusting for the effects of any differences in their age distributions. Age standardisation was carried out using the direct standardisation method. The standard population to which the age distribution of sub-groups was adjusted was adapted from the 2013 European Standard Population. Calculations were done using Stata. The age-standardised proportion  $p'$  was calculated as follows, where  $p_i$  is the age specific proportion in age group  $i$  and  $N_i$  is the standard population size in age group  $i$ :

$$p' = \frac{\sum_i N_i p_i}{\sum_i N_i}$$

Therefore  $p'$  can be viewed as a weighted mean of  $p_i$  using the weights  $N_i$ . Age standardisation was carried out using the age groups: 16-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, 65-74, 75 and over.

## Key quality information

### Background

The National Survey for Wales was carried out by the Office for National Statistics on behalf of the Welsh Government. The results reported in this bulletin are based on interviews completed between 1 April and 31 March in 3 successive years: 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19.

Addresses were chosen randomly from the Royal Mail's Small User Postcode Address File. Interviewers visited each address and randomly selected one adult (aged 16+) in the household. They then carried out a 45-minute face-to-face interview with them, covering a range of views, behaviours, and characteristics. Of these, approximately 6,000 (about half of the sample) were asked the adult lifestyle questions, which include alcohol consumption, in 2017-18 and 2018-19, with the full sample, about 10,000, being asked the questions in 2016-17. More [background information about the survey](#) is given on the survey webpages.

### Interpreting the results

Percentages quoted in this release are based on only those respondents who provided an answer to the relevant question. Missing answers occur for several reasons, including refusal or an inability to answer a particular question and cases where the question is not applicable to the respondent.

The results of the National Survey are weighted to compensate for unequal selection probabilities and differential non-response (i.e. to ensure that the age and sex distribution of the final dataset matches that of the Welsh population).

### Quality report

A summary [quality report](#) is available, containing more detailed information on the quality of the survey as well as a summary of the methods used to compile the results.

### Technical report

More detailed information on the survey methodology is set out in the [technical report](#) for the survey.

### Sampling variability

Estimates from the National Survey are subject to a margin of uncertainty. Part of the uncertainty comes from the fact that any randomly-selected sample of the population will give slightly different results from the results that would be obtained if the whole population was surveyed. This is known as sampling error.<sup>2</sup> Confidence intervals can be used as a guide to the size of the sampling error. These intervals are calculated around a survey estimate and give a range within which the true value is likely to fall. In 95% of survey samples, the 95% confidence interval will contain the 'true' figure for the whole population (that is, the figure we would get if the survey covered the entire population). In general, the smaller the sample size the wider the confidence interval. Confidence intervals are included in the tables of survey results published on [StatsWales](#).

---

<sup>2</sup> Sampling error is discussed in more detail in the [Quality Report](#) for the National Survey.



As with any survey, the National Survey is also subject to a range of other sources of error: for example, due to non-response; because respondents may not interpret the questions as intended or may not answer accurately; and because errors may be introduced as the survey data is processed. These kinds of error are known as non-sampling error, and are discussed further in the [quality report](#) for the survey.

## **National Statistics status**

The [United Kingdom Statistics Authority](#) has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value.

All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Statistics. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the UK Statistics Authority's regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.

It is Welsh Government's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected of National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.

National Statistics status means that our statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value, and it is our responsibility to maintain compliance with these standards.

The continued designation of these statistics as National Statistics was confirmed in 2017 following a [compliance check by the Office for Statistics Regulation](#). These statistics last underwent a [full assessment](#) against the Code of Practice in 2012 (as former Welsh Health Survey) and 2013 (as former [National Survey for Wales](#)).

Since the latest review by the Office for Statistics Regulation, we have continued to comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics, and have made the following improvements:

- provided more detailed data in StatsWales.
- produced additional statistical bulletins such as this.

## **Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG)**

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act puts in place seven well-being goals for Wales. These are for a more equal, prosperous, resilient, healthier and globally responsible Wales, with cohesive communities and a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. Under section (10)(1) of the Act, the Welsh Ministers must (a) publish indicators ("national indicators") that must be applied for the purpose of measuring progress towards the achievement of the Well-being

goals, and (b) lay a copy of the national indicators before the National Assembly. The 46 national indicators were laid in March 2016.

Information on the indicators, along with narratives for each of the well-being goals and associated technical information is available in the [Well-being of Wales report](#).

Further information on the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#).

The statistics included in this release could also provide supporting narrative to the national indicators and be used by public services boards in relation to their local well-being assessments and local well-being plans.

### **Release policy**

Information about the process for releasing new results is available from the [Welsh Government's statistics web pages](#), including information on our [revisions policy](#).

### **Availability of datasets**

The data behind the charts and tables in this release are published on [StatsWales](#). An anonymised version of the annual datasets (from which some information is removed to ensure confidentiality is preserved), together with supporting documentation, will be deposited with the UK Data Archive. For more information, please contact us (see below).

### **Further details**

The document is available at: <https://gov.wales/national-survey-wales-population-health>

### **Next update**

Not known

### **We want your feedback**

We welcome any feedback on any aspect of these statistics which can be provided by email to [stats.healthinfo@gov.wales](mailto:stats.healthinfo@gov.wales)

### **Open Government Licence**

All content is available under the [Open Government Licence v3.0](#), except where otherwise stated.

