

## GINA monthly e-news May 09

### Drinking in the UK: An exploration of trends



The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has published a study that explores drinking trends in the UK. The study by Lesley Smith and David Foxcroft of the School of Health and Social Care at Oxford Brookes University is a systematic review of research relevant to trends in alcohol consumption over the last 20 to 30 years in the UK.

One of the key findings that is highlighted is the increased drinking amongst women. In terms of the narrowing of the gender gap, the study shows that men are binge drinking less, but women are binge drinking more as female drinking behaviour increases toward that of men.

Some of the key points from the research in relation to gender are highlighted below:

- Average units of alcohol consumed by men and women in Great Britain have increased since 1992. For women over 25 this increase has been marked. However, consumption by men aged 16-24 has fallen since 2000.
- Since 1998, there has been a general increase in drinking over

recommended weekly limits, especially for women. Among men aged 16-24 drinking over weekly limits has decreased alongside overall consumption since 2000. In Northern Ireland, there has been a clear increase in both genders and especially in adults aged 18-24.

- Binge drinking levels (twice the recommended daily limit) overall have changed little between 1998 and 2006 in Great Britain. However, this masks that there has been an increase of 7 per cent in women – especially those over 25 – counterbalanced by a fall amongst men aged 16-24.
- There is some evidence that the proportion of drinkers under 16 has fallen slightly since 1988 in England, Northern Ireland and Scotland, though this is not consistent across boys and girls of different ages.
- Continued monitoring of women's and under-16s drinking using consistent consumption measures, and greater recruitment from underrepresented groups, such as different ethnic groups, are needed to help interpret future trends.

The research looks at many other groupings, and other key findings include:

- An increase in drinking among middle- and older-age groups;
- an increase in drinking in Northern Ireland compared with the rest of the UK;
- a possible recent decrease in drinking among 16 to 24 year-olds;
- an increase in alcohol consumption amongst very young adolescents.

The publication can be downloaded at [www.jrf.org.uk](http://www.jrf.org.uk)

## In the news . . .

### Predicted rise in women's drinking

Women's drinking habits are under the spotlight again following a study that projects dramatic rises in alcohol consumption over the next five years.

Young British women are forecast to **increase their alcohol intake 31% by 2009** to 291 litres a year, according to the report - up from an average consumption of 162 litres in 1999. The report, by research firm Datamonitor, attributes the changes to a number of factors including young women having more independence, a higher disposable income, and there being a wider acceptance in society of women drinking. If accurate, the predictions will worry government and health professionals who have been attempting to caution young women against the dangers of drinking to excess. Between 1988/89 and 2002/03, the number of women aged 16 to 24 who exceeded the government's recommended weekly maximum **more than doubled from 15% to 33%**. All other age groups, including women 65 and over, increased their intake over the same period. While men are more likely to exceed the recommended maximums, the rise in the number of women doing so is more pronounced.

Source: [guardian.co.uk](http://guardian.co.uk) 27/04/09

### Average wine drinker puts on half a stone of fat a year

Wine drinkers put on half a stone of fat each year, a campaign group says. Britain is one of the fattest nations in Europe and is also classed as being home to the biggest drinkers. Few middle class drinkers realise that a couple sharing a bottle of red wine a night are both consuming the equivalent of a Snickers chocolate bar in alcohol. This means a woman would consume eight days worth of calories in a week. A YouGov poll found that the average wine drinker admits to consuming around a bottle of wine per week, a spokesman for the Department of Health said. Government guidelines say women should drink no more than two to three units a day and men no more than three to four. **There is eight grams of alcohol and seven calories in a UK unit of alcohol.** Heather Caswell, spokesperson for

the British Nutrition Foundation added: "Many women don't know that two large glasses of white wine not only puts them over the recommended daily limit for alcohol consumption, but also provides them with nearly 20 per cent of their daily calorie allowance, at approximately **370kcal** in total."

Source: [The Telegraph online](http://The Telegraph online), 17/04/09

### Alcohol 'damages mother-baby bond'



Women who drink during pregnancy are at greater risk of not bonding with their babies, researchers have found. The study, which was carried out by PhD student Eilidh Duncan at Aberdeen's Robert Gordon University, also indicated that **mothers who drink alcohol are more likely to spend longer recovering in hospital following labour.** A total 130 women took part in the research project, at their 20-week check-up and three months later. All were non-smoking first time mothers with 45% drinking on a monthly basis or less, 47.5% drinking two to four times per month, and 7.5% consuming alcohol two or three times per week when not pregnant. The study looked at issues including delivery type, length of hospital stay, pregnancy and labour complications, maternal attachment and post-natal drinking habits. Results showed that women who drank **just one measure of alcohol per month when pregnant took an extra day to recover** in hospital, with a bond being harder to forge with their child. "Helen Ryall, Programme Manager for maternal and infant health at Health Scotland, said: "There is evidence that even drinking one or two units a day can lead to health and development problems for your baby."

Source: [The Herald online](http://The Herald online), 22/04/09

## Women buy wine - eight out of ten bottles, survey finds



Women choose and buy eight out of every 10 bottles of wine that are drunk at home, according to the Vinexpo 2009 survey. The data, the result of industry research among more than 1,300 British women aged between 18 and 60, overturns common perceptions that men take the lead in wine buying, and reveals that in many cases women are far more influential. **Six out of 10 women in Britain said they drank wine at least once a week.** And the same proportion said they preferred red wine to white or rosé. Most women said they enjoyed drinking wine because they liked the taste (80%) and because it went well with food (70%). But despite appearing knowledgeable about wine, the majority choose to ignore its health risks. More than half see it as a "healthier" alternative to other alcoholic drinks such as beer and spirits, while the same proportion said they were not deterred by the government's health warnings. Less than a fifth of women said they had cut back on their consumption because of such advice. When it comes to choosing wines, women said they were driven mainly by price (74%), followed by the type of grape (64%), the country of origin (55%) and more superficial trappings such as the label (42%).

Source: Guardian online, 02/04/09

## £36 million to tackle alcohol misuse

Scotland's health boards have received £36 million this year to tackle alcohol misuse - a jump in spending of 45 per cent. Speaking on a visit to Liber8, a South Lanarkshire based alcohol action project which has recently moved into purpose built premises

in Blantyre, Public Health Minister Shona Robison said: "Scotland's alcohol misuse problem is costing our country 2.25 billion pounds and blighting the lives of families and communities across the country. This further significant investment will help to turn lives around across Scotland by identifying and treating people in need of help." The £36 million for 2009-10 is 45 per cent higher than the allocation for 2008-9 of £24.86 million. It forms part of a planned three-year package of £120 million to tackle alcohol misuse more widely - an overall funding increase of 230 per cent compared to the previous period. Part of this year's funding will allow boards to deliver more 'brief interventions' - in which people turning up at GP surgeries, A&E and other healthcare settings with problems that could be alcohol-related are asked about their intake and given advice on sensible drinking. The bulk of the money will, however, support treatment for people whose problems have been identified.

## Events

### 3 June 2009, Alcohol: The Holyrood debate, Sheraton Grand Hotel, Edinburgh

Moving beyond the polarised debate between health advocates and the alcohol industry, the discussion will consider the implications of the key proposals in their entirety and provide an impartial forum to improve understanding of what this alcohol framework would mean for you, your organisation and the wider community. For more information and to book a place visit [www.holyrood.com](http://www.holyrood.com)

### 3 June 2009, Substance use and sexual violence: Good Practice guidelines in service provision and interventions, London

The Stella Project is a partnership between the Greater London Domestic Violence Project (GLDVP) and the Greater London Alcohol and Drug Alliance (GLADA). The Greater London Domestic Violence Project works to end domestic violence by supporting direct service providers and promoting joint working.

[www.gldvp.org.uk](http://www.gldvp.org.uk)

## 18 June 2009, Hidden Harm: Families, Drugs & Alcohol, London

The conference aims to update participants on relevant research and good practice, support an evidence-based approach to an expanding and innovative area of practice and provide a cross-disciplinary forum in which the range of people with an interest in the well-being of substance misusing parents and their children can network and exchange ideas. For more information please visit [www.kca.org.uk](http://www.kca.org.uk)

## 16 September 2009, Scottish Women's Aid Conference: Apex International Hotel Edinburgh.

Interested? To receive a conference programme as soon as it is available please email [info@scottishwomensaid.org.uk](mailto:info@scottishwomensaid.org.uk)  
Please include your name and contact details.

## Training

### 4 June 2009, Psychological Evidence-Based Approaches to Addiction Seminar, Glasgow

An advanced training for experienced professionals in the addictions field provided by Professors Robin Davidson, John B Davies and Richard Velleman. The cost is £185 including lunch, refreshments and handouts. For more information and to book a place contact Christine McKendrick, University of Strathclyde Department of Psychology on 0141 548 4263 or email: [casp@strath.ac.uk](mailto:casp@strath.ac.uk)

## Resources

### Alcohol and depression factsheet

Alcohol Focus Scotland and Depression Alliance Scotland have worked together to produce an 'Alcohol and Depression' factsheet. This covers the links between alcohol, mood and depression, signs that someone has an alcohol problem, signs of depression, mixing medication and alcohol, tips for feeling better, and where to get support.



The factsheet is now available to download. Please visit [www.alcohol-focus-scotland.org.uk](http://www.alcohol-focus-scotland.org.uk)

## Do you have any information you would like to share with the GINA network?

We would love to hear from you if you have examples of best practice, studies of interest, information on services or upcoming events etc. If so please get in touch.

The next GINA newsletter will be distributed in June 2009.

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