

4. RELATIONSHIP WITH ALCOHOL

Scotland

Data from the 2016 Scottish Health Survey has been analysed to reveal the extent of drinking in Scotland by males and females, and the differences in habits for various age groups. The data cover the period 2003 to 2016, so include the period leading up to the publication of the Scottish Government's "Framework for Action" in 2009, which aimed to introduce measures to reduce the misuse of alcohol⁹.

Since 2003 there has been a gradual decline in the average weekly consumption of alcohol in Scotland. For men the average has reduced from almost 20 units per week to 13.5 while for females the average has reduced from 9 units per week to 7.4, with a rise in 2014 from the 2013 data (Figure 6).

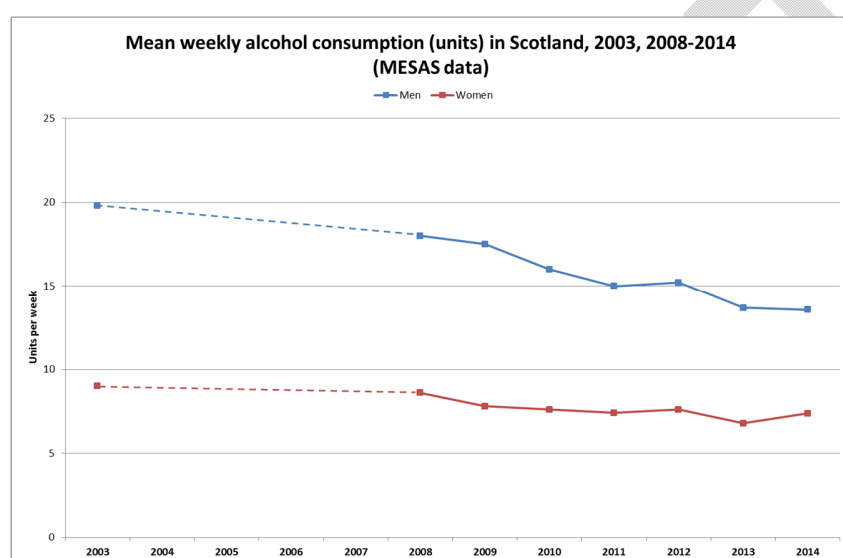


Figure 6: Mean weekly alcohol consumption in Scotland 2003, 2008-14 (MESAS)¹⁰

Charts with the data for the following measures showing the difference between male and female drinking, over time, and by age groups are attached at Appendix 2. The following summarises the findings:

- People who reported drinking on more than 5 days in previous week

From 2003 until 2014 there was a steady decline in the percentage of males in Scotland who reported drinking on more than 5 days in the previous week (from 20.4% to 11.4%). However, since 2014 the trend has reversed and the proportion of males drinking more than 5 days in a week rose to 15.4% (Figure 7). The data for females shows a similar trend, with a gradual drop from 2003 to

⁹ Changing Scotland's Relationship with Alcohol: A Framework for Action (2009)

¹⁰ Monitoring and Evaluating Scotland's Alcohol Strategy (<http://www.healthscotland.scot/health-topics/alcohol/monitoring-and-evaluating-scotlands-alcohol-strategy>)

2015 (13.1% to 8.2%), but with a rise to 10.4% in 2016. There are fewer, regular female drinkers compared to men; the proportion of females is between 60-75% of the regular male drinkers.

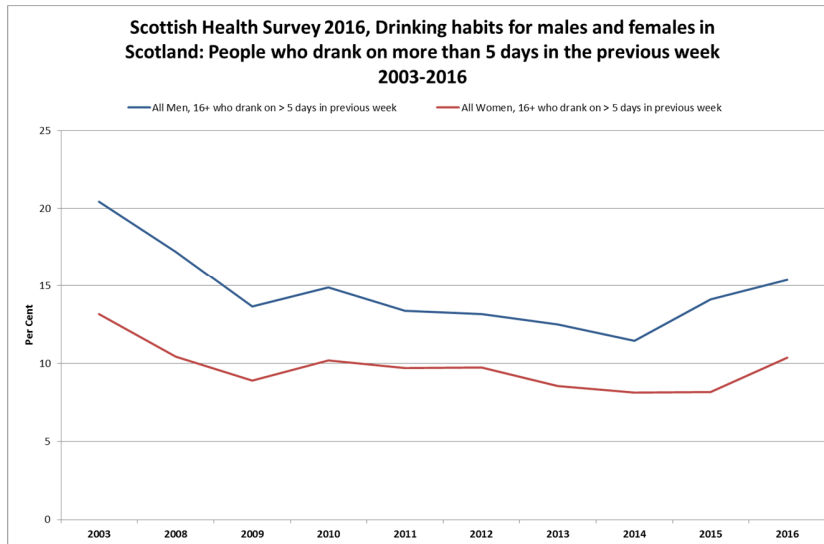


Figure 7: People in Scotland reporting drinking on more than 5 days in the previous week

However, what the above does not show is the large difference between the age groups that are drinking more regularly. The detailed charts are at Appendix 2, but the following 2 charts illustrate the age groups with the lowest and highest rates of regular drinking (Figure 8).

The highest rate, by some margin, is the over 75s with around 40% of men and 30% of women having had a drink on more than 5 occasions in the previous week. The lowest rate is for the 16-24 age group. Until 2016 the rate for males had dropped to just 2%, and for females to 1%. However, the figures for 2016 have shown a significant rise to around 10% for both men and women; the reason for this rise is not clear.

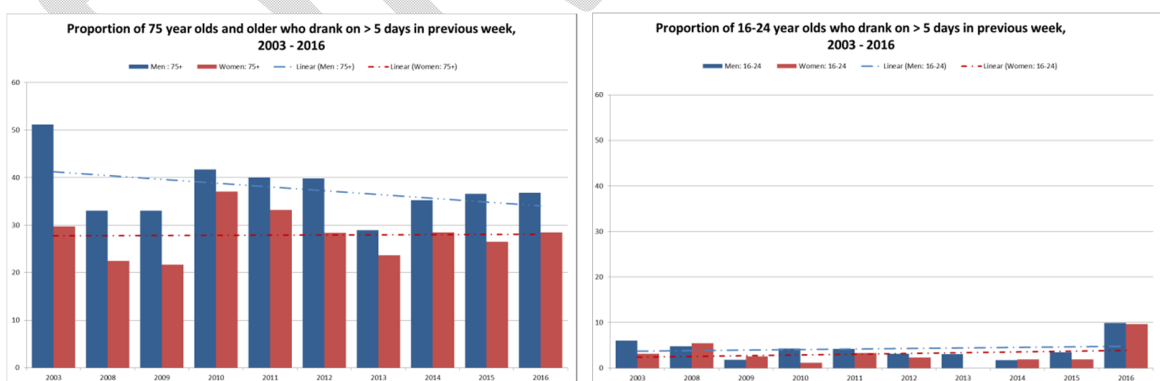


Figure 8: Comparison of 75 year olds and over drinking on more than 5 days in the previous week with 16-24 year olds

Apart from the rise observed in the 16-24 year old age group in 2016, the overall rise in the proportion of people drinking on more than 5 days in a week appears to be due to increases in: males and females aged between 45 and 54 years old; males aged 55-64 years old; and, to a lesser extent, males aged over 75. All these groups have shown a steady increase in the past 3 years.

- On heaviest drinking day drank 4 units/8 units (males); 3 units/6 units (females)

The next set of charts illustrates the proportion of males and females residing in Scotland who exceeded the daily recommended amount of alcohol on their heaviest drinking days. The proportion drinking double the daily recommended amounts are also included (Figure 9).

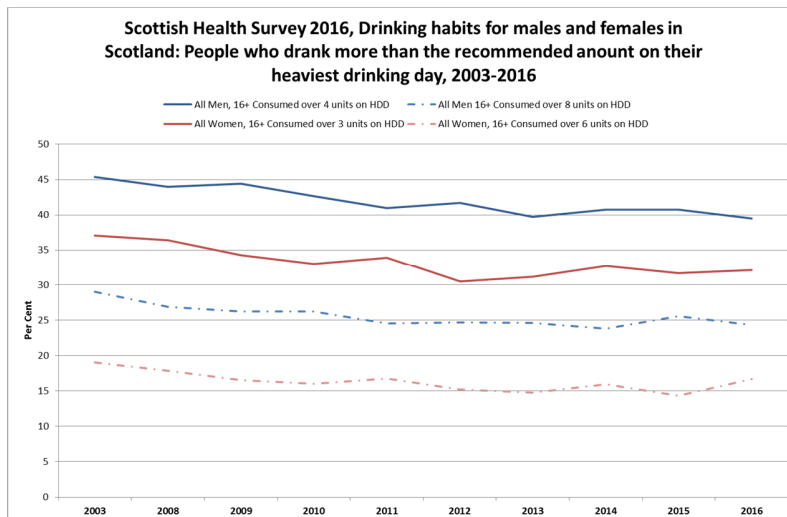


Figure 9: People exceeding recommended drinking levels, and double the recommended drinking levels on their heaviest drinking day

The groups drinking the most amount of alcohol on their heaviest drinking day were exactly the reverse of the groups who reported drinking on more than 5 days in the previous week. Approximately, 40-45% of the 16-24 year old group drinks more than the recommended number of units (with a greater proportion of females than males in 2016), while relatively few over 75s, who are the most regular group of drinkers, drink over the recommended limits. Indeed, almost no females in the age group drink double the recommended daily limit of 6 units (Figure 10).

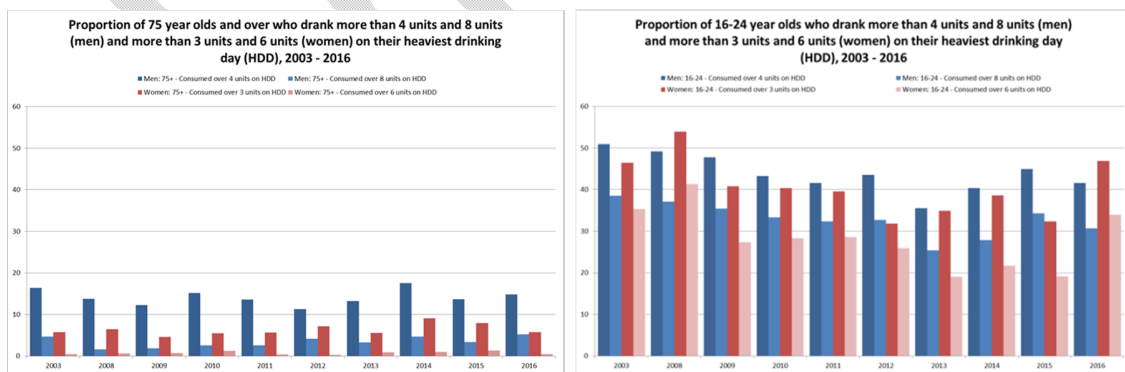


Figure 10: Comparison of 75 year olds and over drinking over the recommended limits, or double the recommended limits with 16-24 year olds

Between 40 -50% of males aged from 25–64 years old are drinking more than 4 units a week, although the trend in all age groups is reducing, except for those aged 55-64 years old, where the

proportion is showing a slight increase over time. Females in the same age range drink less than males, and also exhibit a downwards trend, apart once more from the 55-64 year olds where there has been an 8% rise since 2003.

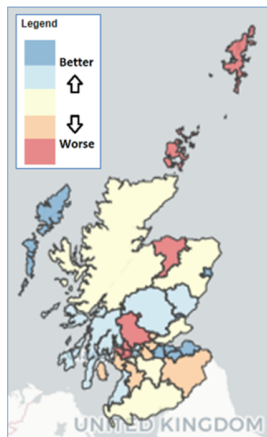


Figure 11: Proportion of S4 pupils who are weekly drinkers - 2013 (ScotPHO)

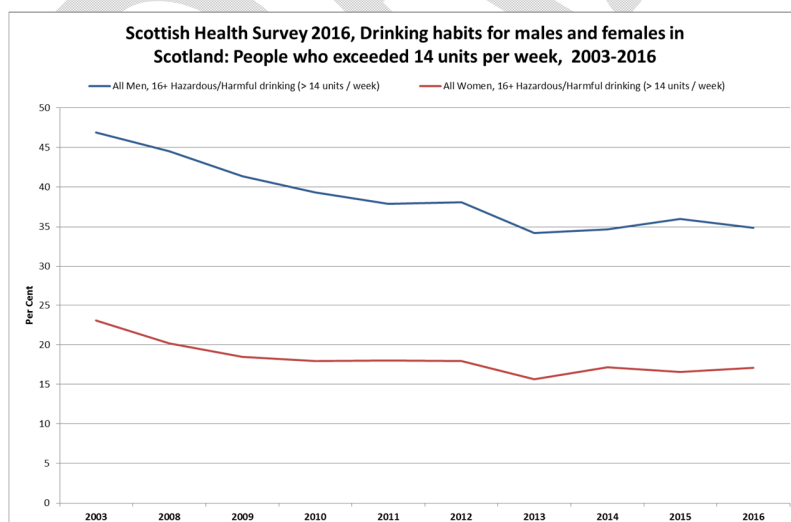
Given the habits of the 16-24 age group with a rising proportion drinking on more than 5 days a week, and a growing proportion drinking above safe limits when they do, it is worth noting that Moray ranks 5th highest in Scotland for S4 pupils who stated in the 2013 Scottish Schools Adolescent Lifestyle and Substance Use Survey (SALSUS) that they drank weekly.

The rate for Moray was 15% compared to the lowest rate of 5.7% recorded by Midlothian and Aberdeen City, and above the Scottish average of 12.2%.

- Percentage reporting Hazardous/Harmful drinking (> 14 units / week)

The proportion of both males and females drinking more than the weekly safe limit guidelines for alcohol has shown a steady reduction since 2003. However, since 2013 the rates have levelled-out for males at around 35% and have risen slightly for females to 17% (Figure 12).

For comparison, responses to a survey undertaken in England¹¹ during 2015 showed that 31% of men and 16% of women drank over 14 units in a usual week.



¹¹ Health Survey for England, 2015 (<http://digital.nhs.uk/catalogue/PUB22610>)

Figure 12: Residents in Scotland over 16 drinking more than 14 units per week

In 2016 males aged between 55 and 64 years old had the highest proportion of people drinking more than 14 units per week, with a figure of 40%. For females in this age group 23% drank at this level, with the highest proportion (25%) of females drinking harmful levels being the 16-24 year old age group (Figure 13).

Males aged between 55 and 64 were also the largest group drinking over 4 units per week (47% of the age-group). However, the largest proportion of males drinking over 8 units per week were 16-24 and 25 – 34 years old, with both groups reporting 31% drinking at these levels on their heaviest drinking day (Figure 14).

Female drinking levels are generally lower than male levels, except in the 16-24 year old age group with 47% drinking over 3 units on their heaviest drinking day compared to 42% of men drinking more than 4 units. Similarly, 34% of females in this age group reported drinking more than 6 units, compared to 31% of men drinking over 8 units. Females aged between 55-64 years old were the second highest group consuming more than 3 units on their heaviest drinking day at 40% (Figure 15).

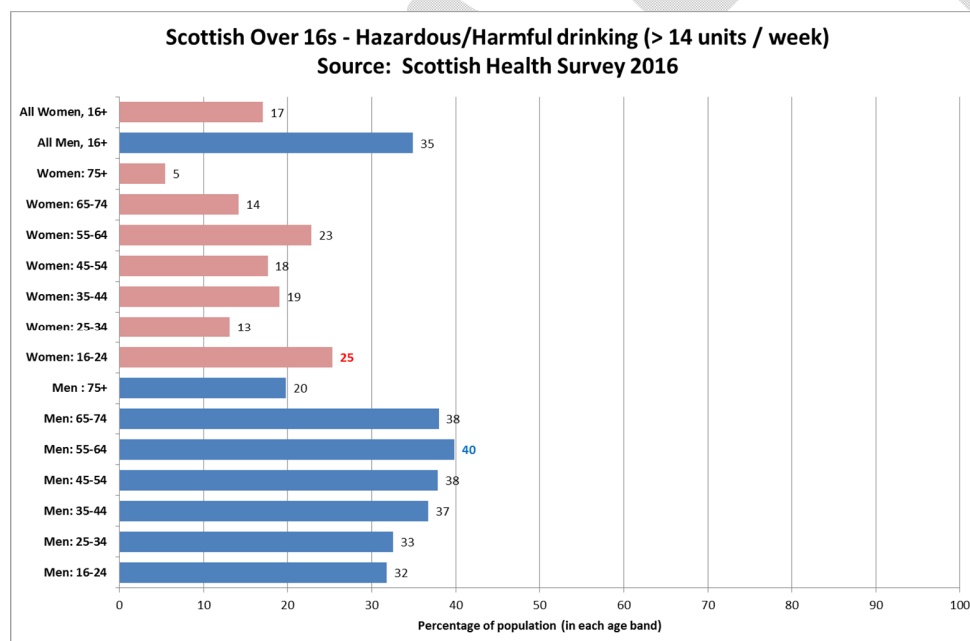


Figure 13: Scottish over 16 year olds drinking more than 14 units per week by age-group and gender (2016)

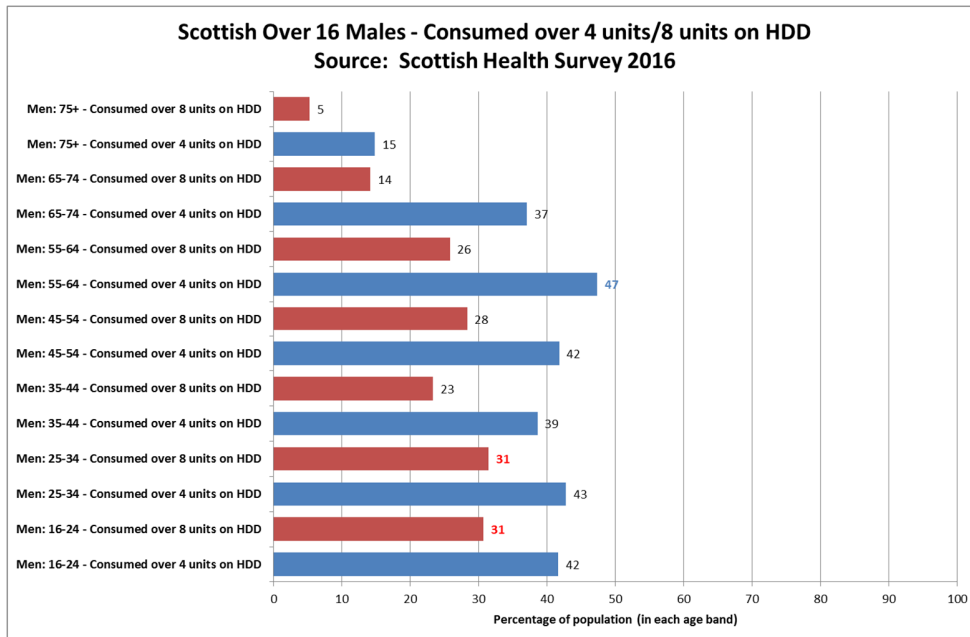


Figure 14: Scottish males over 16 year olds drinking more than 4 and 8 units per week by age-group (2016)

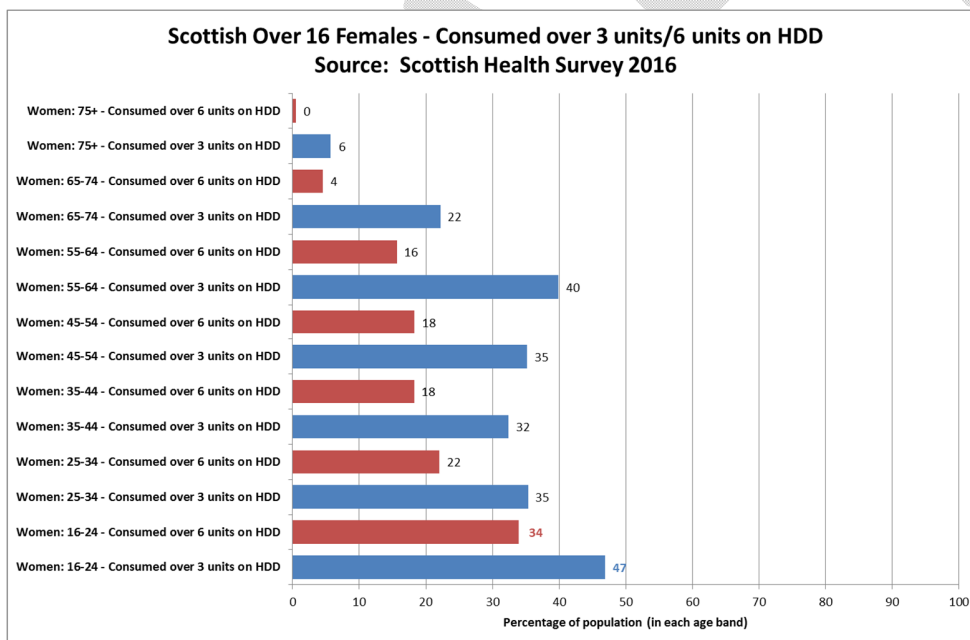


Figure 15: Scottish females over 16 year olds drinking more than 4 and 8 units per week by age-group (2016)

Great Britain – Habits

Since 2005 there has been a gradual reduction in the proportion of Great Britain residents drinking on more than 5 days in the week prior to the survey (Figure 16). Until 2014 residents of Scotland were showing a similar trend, but in the last 2 years the proportion has started to increase as discussed in the previous section. If this change becomes a long-term trend then it would appear to be unique to Scotland rather than England and Wales. From the previous section the issue appears to lie with the

older age-groups tending to drink more regularly, but fewer of them drinking above safe guidelines. Indeed, when comparing “binge” drinking, that is males who drink more than 8 units in one session, and females drinking more than 6 units, Scotland has lower proportions in each age group compared to Great Britain as a whole (Figure 16), particularly for females aged 25 years old and over. As with the Scottish data the group with the highest proportion of “binge” drinkers are females aged between 16 and 24 years old.

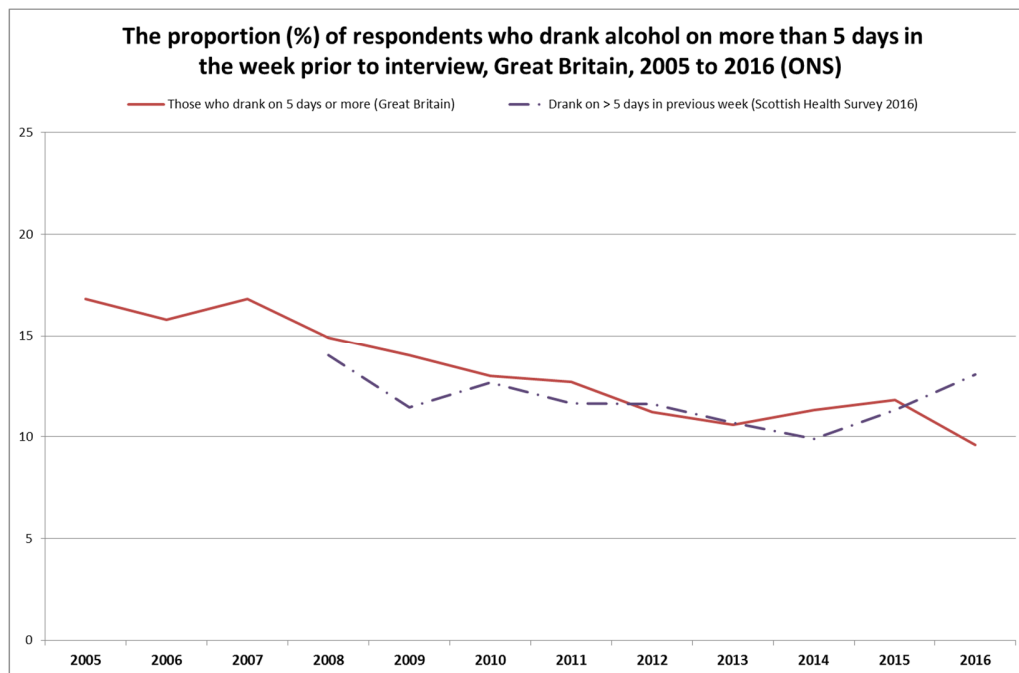


Figure 16: Proportion of residents who drank alcohol on more than 5 days in previous week – Great Britain and Scotland comparison

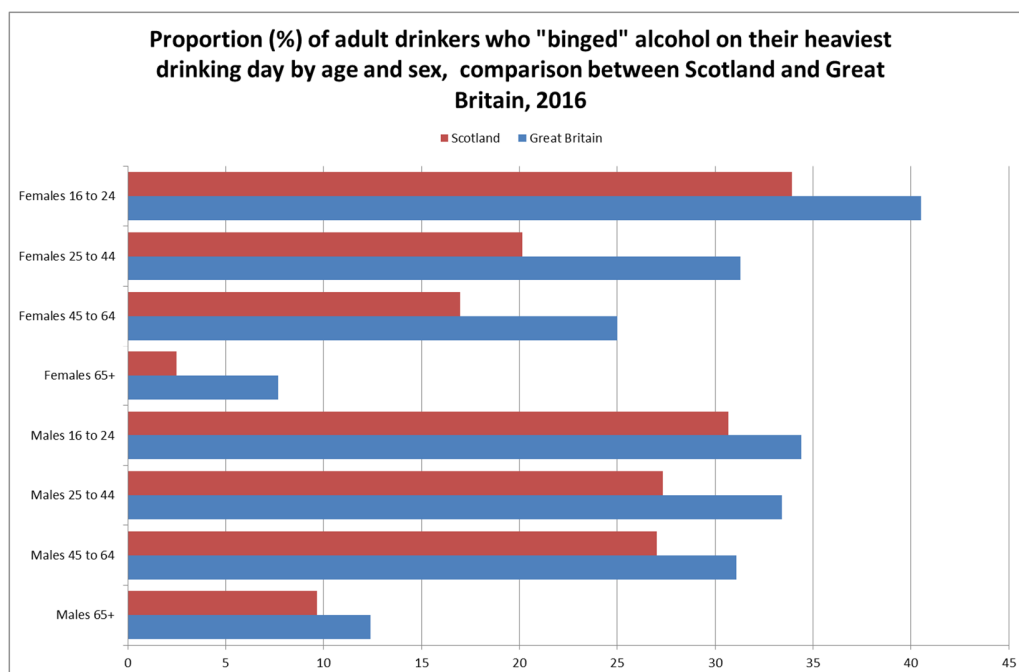


Figure 17: Proportion of residents who “binged” alcohol on their heaviest drinking day by age and sex – Scotland compared to Great Britain (2016)

According to the ONS statistical bulletin ‘*Adult drinking habits in Great Britain: 2005 to 2016*’ the majority of male “binge” drinkers (67.1%) drank normal strength beer; while for females wine was the most popular choice (70%). However, the 16 to 24 year old age-group was more likely to drink spirits and liqueurs than any other age group. Among binge drinkers aged 45 years and above, wine was a more likely choice of alcoholic drink.

An analysis of the preferred alcoholic drink for “binge” drinkers in Scotland, and also for Moray, has not been found.

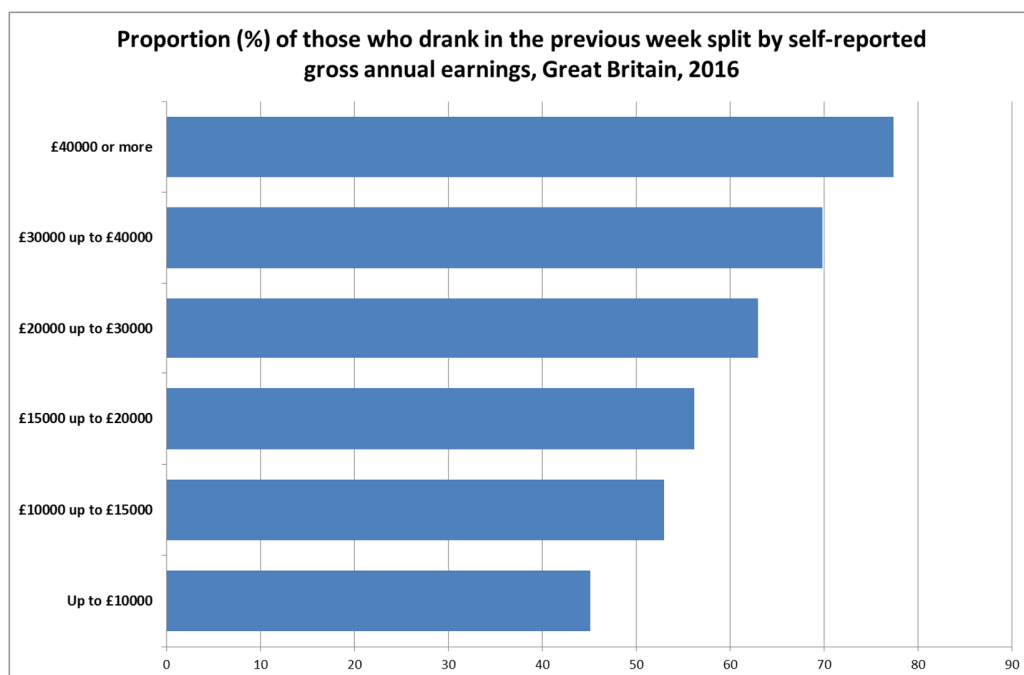


Figure 18: Proportion (%) of those who drank in the previous week split by self-reported gross annual earnings, Great Britain, 2016

According to ONS a greater proportion of people in the higher income brackets across Great Britain reported drinking in the previous week compared to people in lower income groups¹²; 76% of higher earners compared with just 45% of lower earners (Figure 18). However, as the previous section indicates regular drinking does not necessarily imply excessive drinking. Similar information has not been found for Scotland, but the next section looks at the differences in drinking habits between the most and least-deprived areas in Scotland. While not a direct correlation with Figure 16 there were a higher proportion of non-drinkers in the most-deprived areas, and fewer in the least-deprived (Figure 19).

¹² Adult drinking habits in Great Britain: 2005 to 2016, ONS Statistical Bulletin

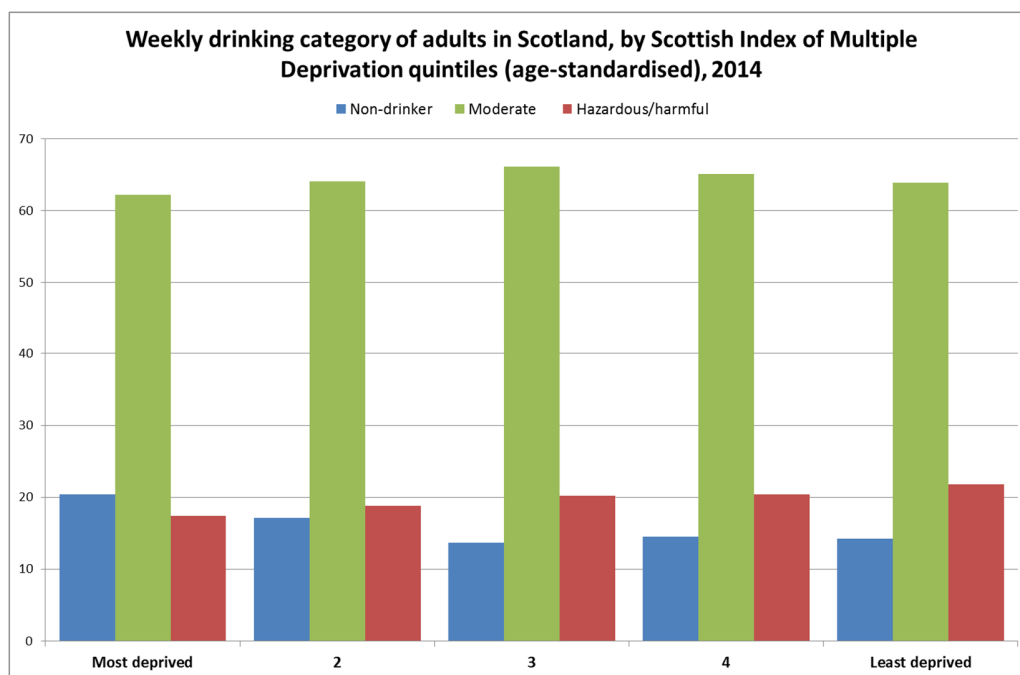


Figure 19: Weekly drinking category of adults in Scotland, by Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation quintiles (age-standardised), 2014 (Monitoring and Evaluating Scotland's Alcohol Strategy data)

In Scotland in 2014 there were 6% more non-drinkers from data zones in the most deprived quintile for Scotland compared to those from the least deprived quintile. Conversely, there were 5% more people from data zones in the least deprived quintile drinking at hazardous and harmful levels than from the most deprived quintile. Between 62 and 66% of residents across all deprivation quintiles drink in moderation (men up to and including 21 units per week/women up to and including 14 units per week)¹³.

This chart makes an interesting comparison with Figure 45 (page 38), which demonstrates that hospital admissions across Scotland due to alcohol-related illnesses are considerably higher for residents from more deprived areas.

Data for drinking habits at the SIMD¹⁴ data zone level has not been found for Moray.

Summary of Scottish drinking habits:

- Most people aged 16 years old and over living in Scotland drink on 5 or fewer days per week (85% of males, and 90% of females, based on 2016 data)¹⁵.
- Similarly, the majority of Scottish residents (aged 16 years old and over) drink less than the recommended amount on their heaviest drinking day: 60 percent of males and over 65% of females (2016 data).

¹³ <http://www.healthscotland.scot/publications/mesas-final-report>

¹⁴ Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2016

¹⁵ Scottish Health Survey, 2016

- Males, generally, drink more frequently than females and a higher proportion of males drink above the recommended limits compared to females.
- While those drinking at hazardous and harmful levels (greater than 14 units per week) have declined since 2003 there has been little change in the proportion of Scottish residents in this category since 2013. Again male rates are higher than female rates, with 35% of males drinking more than 14 units per week, and 17% females drinking this amount.
- There are significant differences between age groups, with the highest proportion of regular drinkers (more than 5 days per week) being in the 75 years old and over age group, and the lowest in the 16-24 year old age group. However, a larger proportion of younger age-groups drink above the recommended limits.
- In 2016 there was a larger proportion of 16-24 females consuming more than 3 units of alcohol on their heaviest drinking day, compared to males drinking more than 4 units.
- Feedback against “*Changing Scotland’s Relationship with Alcohol: A Framework for Action, 2009*”
 - reduced alcohol consumption;
 - **Was on track, but figures for 2013/14 suggest a plateauing in the rates for men, and a slight increase for women.**
 - supporting families and communities:
 - **No data to indicate if this happening.**
 - positive public attitudes, positive choices;
 - **Not clear how this is being measured.**
 - improved treatment and support.
 - **This is covered in section 6.**