

DRINKAWARE

Drinkaware research reveals new trends in alcohol consumption, highlighting the need for increased public awareness

One in four adults typically engaged in binge drinking when they drank alcohol in the past 30 days

19th November 2024 – Drinkaware, the national independent charity working to prevent and reduce alcohol misuse, today releases the first round of findings from its Drinkaware Barometer 2024. The annual report provides a comprehensive overview of adults' attitudes and behaviours towards alcohol consumption in Ireland.

Key findings include:

Weekly Drinking Patterns:

- 59% of adults classify themselves as weekly drinkers, a figure that has remained consistent since 2023.
- Weekly drinking is higher among men (67%) and adults aged 50 and over.

Binge Drinking Trends:

- One in four drinkers (25%) typically engaged in binge drinking, consuming six or more standard drinks when they drank alcohol in the past 30 days
 - 58% of drinkers consumed six or more standard drinks in one sitting in the past 30 days—up from 49% since 2021.
 - The incidence of recent binge drinking continues to be particularly pronounced among younger adults, with 70% of drinkers aged 18-24 years old engaging in binge drinking at least once in the past 30 days.
- Binge drinking is defined as consuming six or more standard drinks in one sitting.

Occasions for drinking:

- "Drinking at home alone" is now the most common drinking occasion, with 32% of adults reporting doing so at least once a week for the second year in a row, increasing from 15% in 2018.

Public Awareness and Health Messaging:

- While spontaneous awareness of the health risks associated with excessive drinking remains high for liver disease (57%), spontaneous awareness of the links to heart disease, stroke and cancer remains low at 15% - highlighting the urgent need for increased awareness about the health risks of excessive drinking.
- About 1 in 4 adults feel they will likely increase their health problems in the future if they continue their current pattern of drinking; this dramatically rises to 48% among those who have increased drinking in the past 12 months.
- Notably, 89% of adults acknowledge that any amount of alcohol can impair driving abilities.

Desire to Drink Less:

- A record 37% of adults indicate that they wish to drink less often, reflecting a growing awareness of alcohol's effects on health and well-being.
- The same percentage of adults state they have made small positive changes to their drinking habits in the past 30 days (i.e. drinking less).

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The research, carried out by Ipsos B&A in July and August 2024, reveals critical insights into the shifting alcohol consumption patterns of adults in Ireland – particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic – underscoring a concerning rise in binge drinking behaviours while simultaneously capturing a growing desire among the public to reduce alcohol intake.

John O’Mahoney, Director of Behaviour and Attitudes Research, said, *“The Drinkaware Barometer has been tracking alcohol consumption and attitudes in Ireland for eight years now, and each annual iteration provides us with valuable insights into how Irish adults are engaging with alcohol. By repeating this research year after year, we can identify important shifts in behaviours and attitudes over time. The Drinkaware Barometer gives us a clear picture of both the progress being made and the areas where more work is needed.”*

According to the report, 59% of adult drinkers now report consuming alcohol on a weekly basis. While this figure has remained consistent since 2023, the data highlights that binge drinking remains common practice, with one in four drinkers (25%) typically engaging in binge drinking, consuming six or more standard drinks when they drank alcohol in the past 30 days. Furthermore, 58% of drinkers admitted to consuming six or more standard drinks in one sitting in the past 30 days—up from 49% since 2021. This represents a worrying trend that continues to gain traction, especially among younger adults – with 70% of drinkers aged 18-24 engaging in binge drinking.

Binge drinking (or heavy episodic drinking) is defined by [The World Health Organisation \(WHO\)](#) as the consumption of 60 grams of pure alcohol or six [standard drinks](#) in one sitting. Binge drinking is when you drink faster than your liver’s ability to process alcohol. It further increases the likelihood of a person experiencing both short and long-term harms, and the levels of binge drinking being reported year-on-year through the independent national charity’s annual survey need to be urgently addressed.

Drinkaware CEO Dearbhla O’Brien comments on the findings, emphasising the urgency of addressing the practice of binge drinking, saying, *“Alcohol Data is nuanced and complex, and it’s no surprise to find a mixture of both positive and negative trends. While it’s encouraging to see a growing desire to drink less—with 37% of adults indicating they want to cut back and the same number of adults making small positive changes to their drinking habits in the past 30 days—we still face challenges, particularly around binge drinking.”*

One in four drinkers report typically consuming six or more standard drinks in a single sitting, and almost six out of 10 drinkers consumed six or more standard drinks in a single sitting in the past month. This trend points to the need for ongoing education about responsible drinking and increased awareness of the broader health risks of excessive alcohol consumption. At Drinkaware, we are committed to empowering individuals with the knowledge to make informed choices and to support positive changes in drinking habits.”

For more information about Drinkaware, visit www.drinkaware.ie.

Ends

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Notes to the editor:

About Drinkaware: Drinkaware is a national charity working to prevent and reduce alcohol misuse in Ireland. It is governed by an independent board and regulated by the Charities Regulator. Registered Charity Number: 20204601

For more information on research projects and publications, visit www.drinkaware.ie/research

References

1. The Drinkaware Barometer 2024 is a national population-based survey of 1,045 adults aged 18+ conducted by Ipsos B&A in July and August 2024. It included a series of internationally recognised modules on alcohol consumption and mental health.