

# An exploration of the knowledge and attitudes of the general public, towards alcohol safety guidelines and their own alcohol consumption.

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## Background

Numbers of alcohol related deaths are increasing year on year (HSCIC, 2016), these rising numbers support the need for newer and clearer public guidelines on alcohol consumption (DoH, 2016 A). In January 2016, UK Chief Medical Officers proposed new updated alcohol guidelines, which included decreasing the weekly alcohol units for men from 21 to 14 units (DoH, 2016 C). The aim of this research is to explore the public's knowledge, understanding, and attitudes towards the current alcohol safety guidelines.

## Methods

This research was a cross-sectional study, using a quantitative questionnaire distributed to the public, designed to test public knowledge but also to explore attitudes through Likert scale questions.

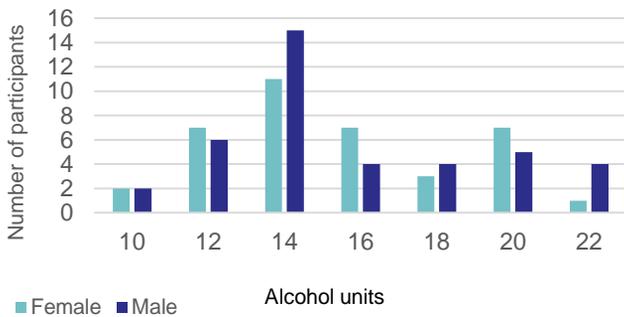
## Results

92 participants completed the questionnaire. 53% (n=49) of participants were men and 47% (n=43) of participants were women.

### Awareness of the updated alcohol guidelines

(n=15) males reported that they believed that 14 units is the correct weekly recommended units for men which was higher than amongst females. 49% (n= 24) of men believed the recommended units to be higher than 14 and this was the same for 12% (n=5) of women. A higher proportion of men selected the correct units than women however this was not statistically significant (Chi-square test,  $p=0.712$ ,  $t=3.738$ ,  $df=6$ ).

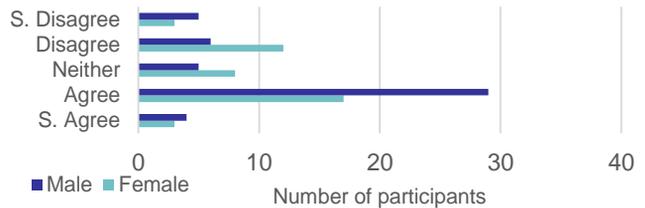
Male and female participants estimation of the recommended alcohol guidelines for men



### Attitudes and perceptions towards alcohol consumption

92.39% of participants agreed and strongly agreed that frequently exceeding the recommended guidelines is likely to damage their health.

Participant's response towards the statement "It does not worry me if I drink more alcohol than the guideline recommends" presented by gender



A higher proportion of men (n=29) agreed and strongly agreed that they did not worry if they exceed the recommendations compared to women (n=17). However, the association between this statement and gender was not statistically significant (chi-squared,  $p=0.119$ ,  $t=7.345$ ,  $df= 4$ ). 50% of all participants (n=46) do not worry if they exceed alcohol guidelines.

Participant's response towards the statement "It is important to me that I drink within recommended limits"

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
7 (7.69%)	28 (30.77%)	17 (18.68%)	31 (34.07%)	8 (8.79%)

34.07% of participants (n=31) did not feel that drinking within recommended limits was important to them. However 30.77% of participant's (n=28) agreed that it was important to them.

## Discussion and conclusion

The results of this study support previous research that found individuals continue to exceed alcohol recommendations regardless of their knowledge of its associated health risks (BSA, 2015). The present study results show there is a large proportion of the public that do not consider it important to keep within alcohol recommendations and many do not worry about exceeding the recommendations. This study also shows a lack of knowledge around the updated recommendations for men, with almost half the male participants still thinking their weekly recommended units are higher than women's.

This paper highlights the need for further investigation into the public's attitudes towards alcohol and the reasons behind these. There is limited research into the public's attitudes towards alcohol and it would be interesting to expand on whether factors such as age, gender and level of knowledge play a part in these. Furthermore, exploration into attitudes and perceptions of the public could help design more effective ways to educate and increase public awareness around the dangers of exceeding alcohol recommendation guidelines.

## References

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