

# 18-24s Drinking Habits - UK - June 2010

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## What is this report about?

Because 18-24-year-olds are a notoriously difficult group to reach and engage with using more mainstream research methodologies, Mintel has chosen to use mobile phone based research for this report. By sending surveys directly to their mobile phones – their favoured technology – we were able to capture their responses in real time, and engage with them directly, rather than ask them to reflect on their past behaviour. Another advantage of this was that respondents were able to fill in the questionnaire when it suited them.

In addition to mobile research, Mintel also conducted an online discussion group among a demographically mixed group of around 15 consumers.

## What have we found out?

- Binge drinking (defined by the government/NHS as 6 units in one session for women and 8 for men) is rife among 18-24-year-olds, with four in five of this age group exceeding the recommended limit on a regular basis.
- Although the drivers of binge drinking among the young is multi-faceted, lack of awareness about how easy it is to drink excessively is undoubtedly a major cause. For example, more than half of regular binge drinkers are unwittingly so, and many 18-24-year-olds believe binge drinking means losing control of one's senses as opposed to having as little as two large glasses of wine (for a woman) or three pints of premium-strength lager (for a man).
- Younger women are just as likely to binge drink as younger men. But men, particularly those aged 18-20, are much more likely to drink regularly to greater extremes, ie twice or three times over the binge drinking limit.
- For younger men, drinking, and indeed getting drunk, is seen both as more fun and more of a crucial social crutch than is the case for women. In contrast, younger women have more internal conflict about excessive drinking, and are particularly concerned about its implications for their weight and general health.
- The harsh economic climate of the past year has had a significant impact on the drinking habits of 18-24-year-olds. The recession has resulted in young people cutting back. But they are also opting for more affordable ways of drinking such as buying cheaper drinks, spending more time drinking in-home than out, and not drinking every single time they go out.
- The majority of 18-24-year-olds drank on only one or two nights a week, at which point they would drink to excess. As a result, Friday and Saturday night drinking was most popular to allow for 'recovery days' when they did not have to work or study.

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