

WHAT DO PEOPLE KNOW ABOUT ALCOHOL?



Report summary

What is this report about?

This report highlights the findings from our public health What Do People Know About Alcohol campaign. The campaign was aimed at students and staff from Wiltshire College and gathered feedback on their knowledge of alcohol and safe drinking as well as the support available in their local area for those who abuse alcohol. We wanted to find out if people were aware of alcoholism and the impact it has on individuals.

What did we do?

We created a questionnaire asking students and staff a series of questions around alcohol, including responsible consumption, health service and government guidelines on drinking, and if they knew about support available to them if needed. We also had an activity that asked participants to match the alcohol percentage with a series of popular alcoholic drinks and a short video on alcoholism for people to watch.

What were the key findings?

- More needs to be done to ensure that people are aware of the support available to them and how to access services
- 75% of respondents did not know how much alcohol was in the drinks they consume
- 25% of respondents did not know the drinking limit for driving
- Most opinions on drinking were on the dangers that come with it
- Most were aware of the impact of alcohol on physical and mental health

Conclusions and recommendations

We received a lot of useful feedback which gave a real insight into people's awareness of alcohol and their knowledge of health service and government guidelines. The report draws conclusions from the views that have been shared with us and makes recommendations based on these.

Introduction

We are students from Wiltshire College studying Level 3 Health and Social Care and have partnered with Healthwatch Wiltshire on our public health campaign about alcohol. Consumption of alcohol by young people was seen as an important area to concentrate on and we wanted to find out how much students and staff knew about alcohol, including responsible consumption, health service and government guidelines, and the support available for those who need it. We received 15 responses to our questionnaire.

What we did

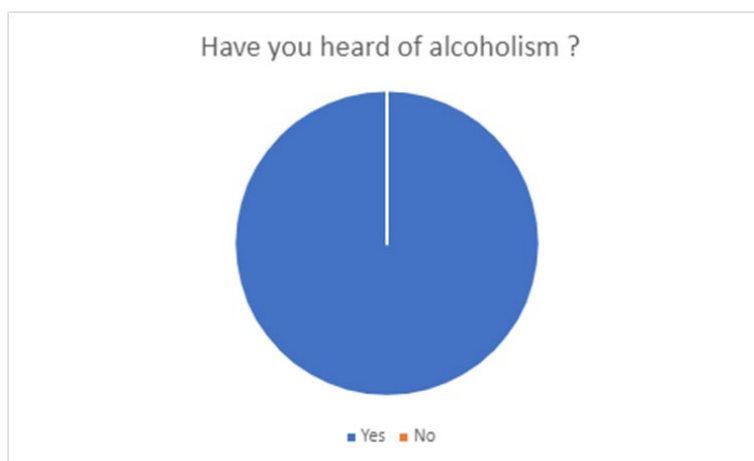
We created a questionnaire to find out how aware people were about NHS and government guidelines on alcohol and their own consumption of alcohol. The aim was to raise awareness of drinking responsibly and to sign post people to help and support if needed.

Our activities:

- We created an anonymous questionnaire for people to complete on the day
- We asked people to match a percentage of alcohol to a series of popular drinks
- We played a short video about alcoholism and the impact it had on individuals

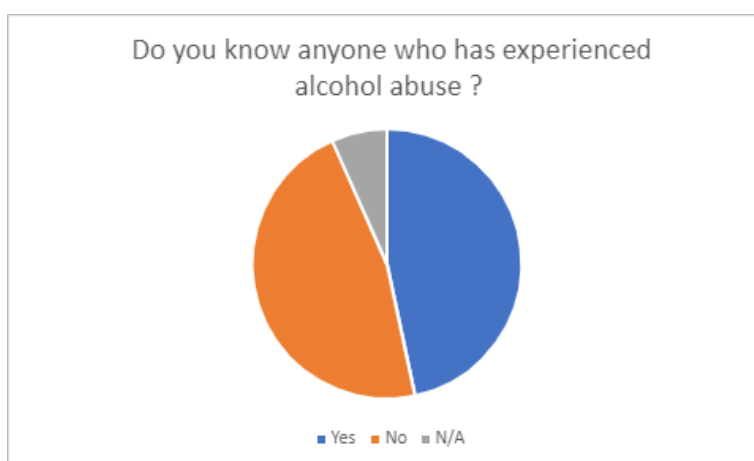
What people told us

Have you heard of alcoholism?



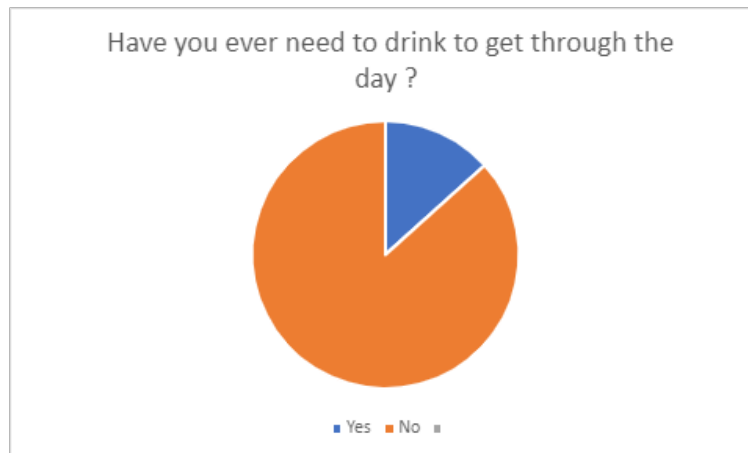
In answer to this question all 15 respondents said that they had heard of alcoholism.

Do you know anyone that has experienced alcohol abuse?



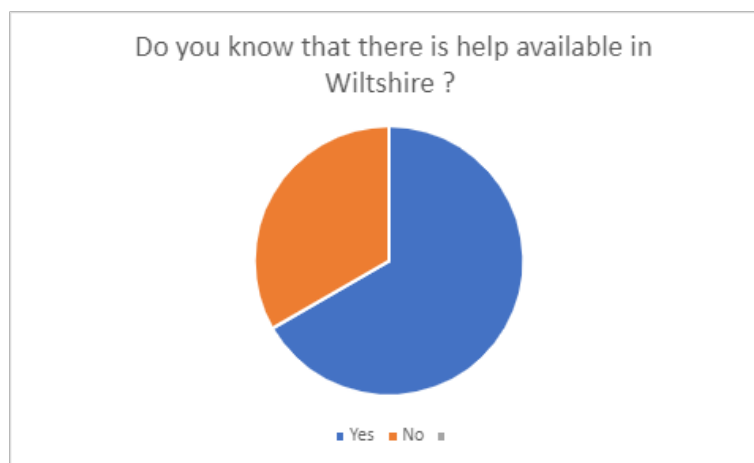
7 people said yes, they did know someone who had experienced alcohol abuse with 7 saying no. One person did not answer this question. Nearly half of the respondents knew someone who had experienced alcohol abuse which highlights the prevalence of problem drinking.

Have you ever needed to drink to get through the day?



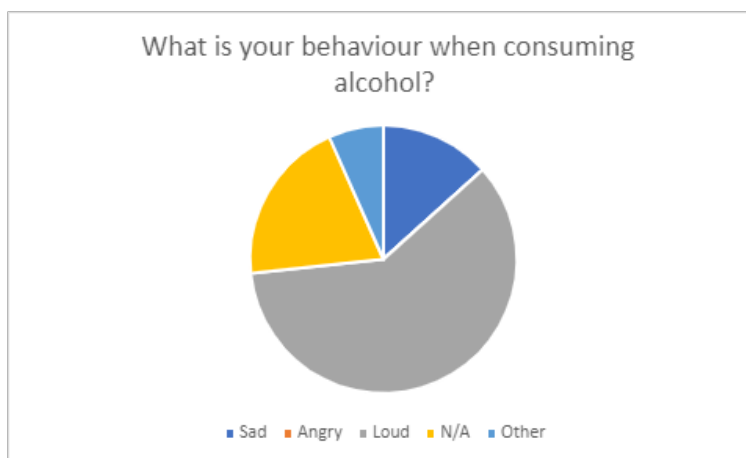
13 respondents answered no to this question, however, 2 said yes, they had needed a drink to get through the day. This behaviour could be a signal that they are self-medicating to relieve stress and that their relationship with alcohol could be a cause for concern. Educating people on the effects alcohol has on physical and mental health should be made compulsory in schools as alcohol abuse affects not only the individual but those around them.

Do you know that there is help available in Wiltshire?



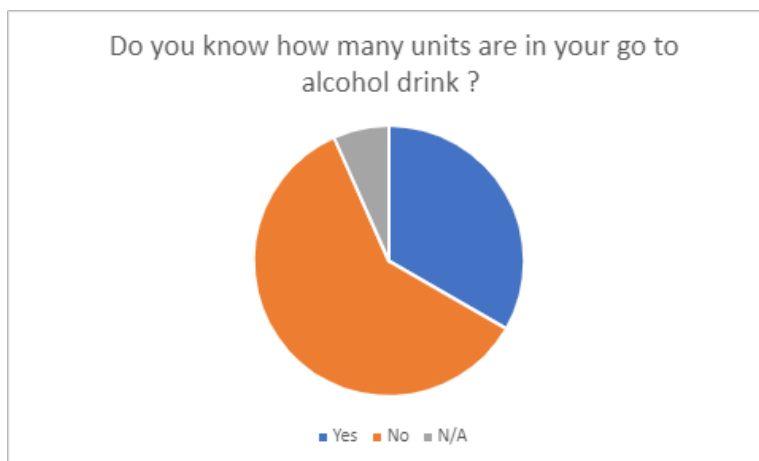
Two thirds of the respondents said that they were aware of the support available in Wiltshire, which was very positive, however, a third said they were not. More needs to be done to ensure that people know where, and how, to access services if they need support.

What is your behaviour when consuming alcohol?



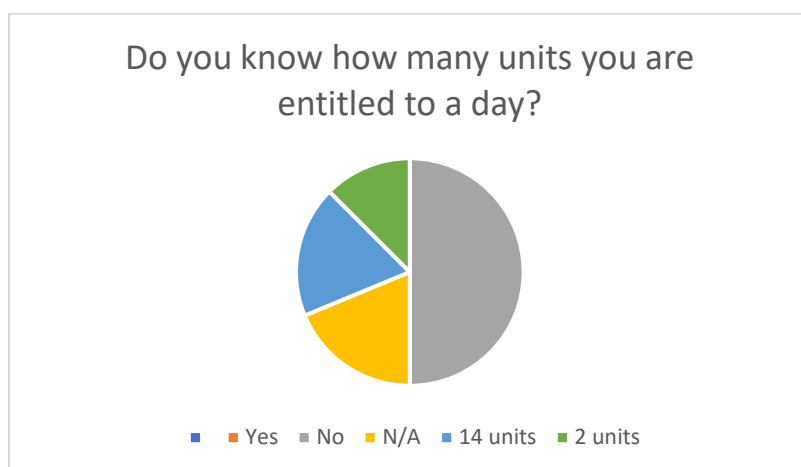
When asked how alcohol made them behave, 9 respondents said that it made them “loud”, with 2 saying that it made them sad. 3 people did not answer the question with one person saying other. This highlights the differences alcohol can have on the body and emotions, and how people react when consuming it.

Do you know how many units are in your go to alcohol drink?



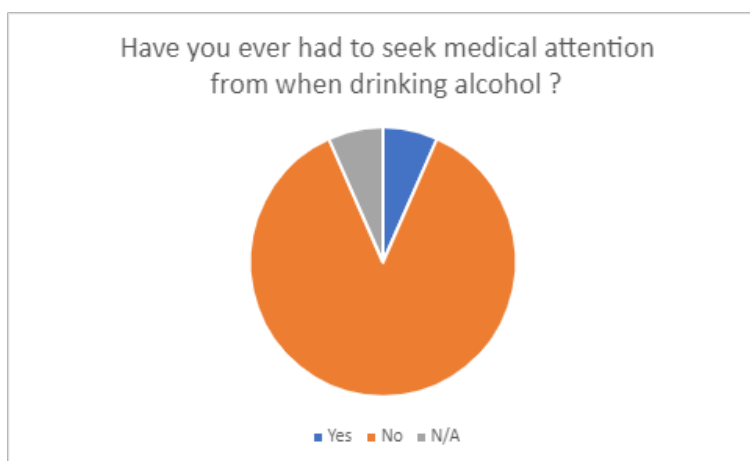
In answer to this question a third of respondents said that they were aware of how many units were in their go to drink, however almost two thirds did not, showing how easy it is to go above the recommended units. This highlights the lack of knowledge people have about the amount of alcohol they consume, and the guidelines set out by the NHS and government.

Do you know how many units you are entitled to a day?



8 respondents were not aware of the NHS guidelines on the recommended units of alcohol per day with three people saying 14 units was the recommended amount. Only one person knew that 2 units a day was the recommended daily intake again highlighting the lack of knowledge about safe limits for alcohol consumption.

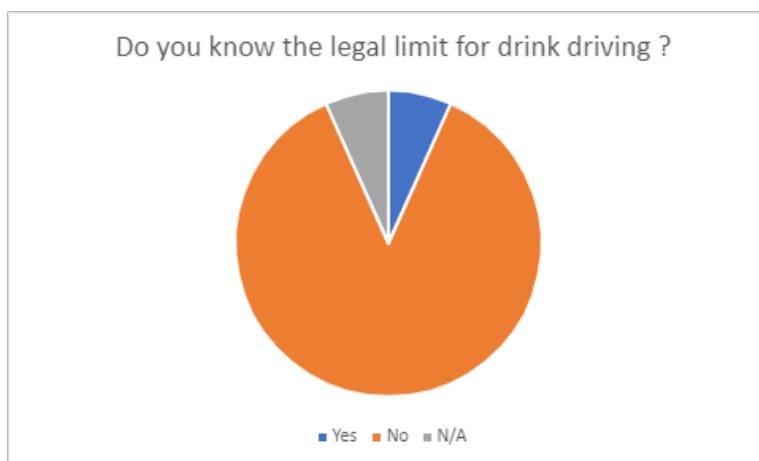
Have you ever had to seek medical attention when drinking alcohol?



In response to this question one person said that they had needed medical attention after drinking alcohol, 13 people said they had not with one not answering. Statistics by Alcoholchange.org shows that in England and Wales in 2020 there were 7,423 alcohol-specific deaths (around 13 per 100,000 people), a 19.6% increase in deaths from 2019. Other

findings showed that alcohol misuse is the biggest risk factor for death, ill-health, and disability among 15–49-year-olds in the UK, and the fifth biggest risk factor across all ages.¹

Do you know the legal limit for drink driving?



The legal limit for drink driving is eighty milligrams of alcohol per 100 milliliters of blood and almost two thirds of respondents said they were aware of the government guidelines, however, nearly one third did not. It is not possible to say exactly how many drinks this equals as it is different for each person depending on weight, age, sex and metabolism, the type and amount of alcohol consumed, whether you have recently eaten and stress levels at the time of drinking. More awareness is needed about the legal limit to drive.

What help are you aware of in Wiltshire that support with alcohol abuse?

There was a variety of answers to this question showing that people were aware of help available in Wiltshire for people and their families.

“Support groups, medical professionals”

“Turning point, families out loud”

“You can go to GP and pharmacies.”

“Healthwatch to help provide some information and charities”

“Helplines, AA groups”

¹ <https://alcoholchange.org.uk/alcohol-facts/fact-sheets/alcohol-statistics>

What is your opinion on drinking?

There were mixed responses to this question, however, most people were aware of the dangers of alcohol and the consequences of drinking too much.

“Dangerous, at risk if they have medical conditions”

“I think there is better things to binge”

“It is complicated, and people binge drink for different reasons.”

“It's okay as long as you don't take it too far and stop when you do.”

“If long term it ends in problems”

“Bad – if you're going through something, find another way out.”

Conclusions and recommendations

The aim of our public health campaign was to see how many people were aware of NHS and government guidelines on consuming alcohol, if they were aware of the effects alcohol had on physical and mental health, and if they knew where to access support if help was needed.

Overall, those who took part in the campaign were aware of alcoholism with nearly half of the respondents knowing someone who had experience with alcohol abuse.

Most were aware of the support available in Wiltshire, however, more needs to be done to educate people on the effects alcohol has on physical and mental health and how to access services if needed.

Three quarters of the respondents were not aware of the alcohol content in the drinks they consumed showing that there is a need for people to be fully aware of how much they are consuming. Information on packaging would ensure that people could make informed decisions about how much they drank.

One third of people did not know the drinking limit for drink driving. As the guidelines cannot accurately predict how many units this is due to other factors it is essential that people are made aware that they may be over the limit without realizing it. Education is key in addressing this.

Opinions on drinking were mostly about the dangers it can have on physical and mental health and the impact it can have on individuals. More needs to be done to ensure that people are educated about the effects of alcohol on health services and society.

Based on what we heard from people who took part in our campaign we make the following recommendations.

- Consider more alcohol awareness education in schools and for the wider public on the effects alcohol has on physical and mental health as well as to health services and society as a whole
- Ensure that people are aware of the support services available in Wiltshire and how to access these services

Thank you to those who took part in our campaign for sharing your views and experiences with us.