

# DOES THE AGE AT WHICH STUDENTS BEGIN CONSUMING ALCOHOL REGULARLY HAVE AN EFFECT ON CURRENT ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION, BOTH ALONE AND MIXED WITH ENERGY DRINKS?

## INTRODUCTION

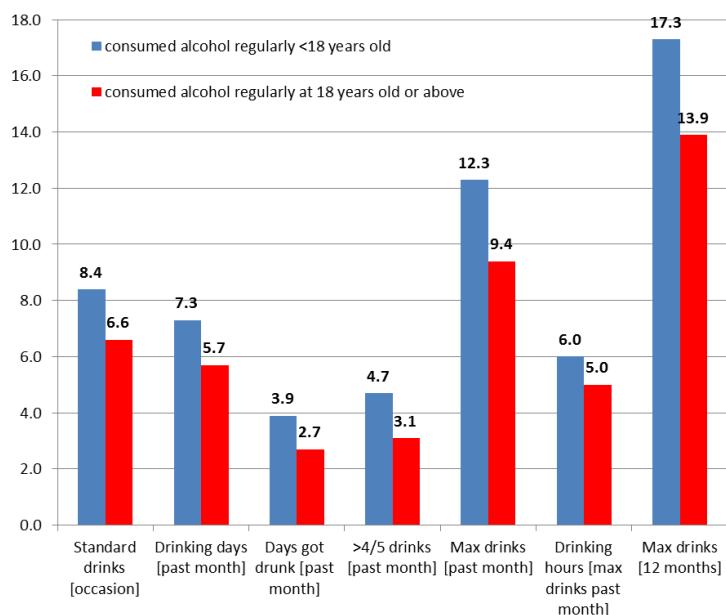
Previous research has shown that those who consume alcohol at an earlier age are at a higher risk of developing alcohol-related problems. There has also been recent debate as to whether mixing alcohol with energy drinks increases the amount of alcohol consumed. The aim of this research was to examine whether the age at which students began consuming alcohol regularly had an effect on their current alcohol consumption, both alone and mixed with energy drinks.

## METHODS

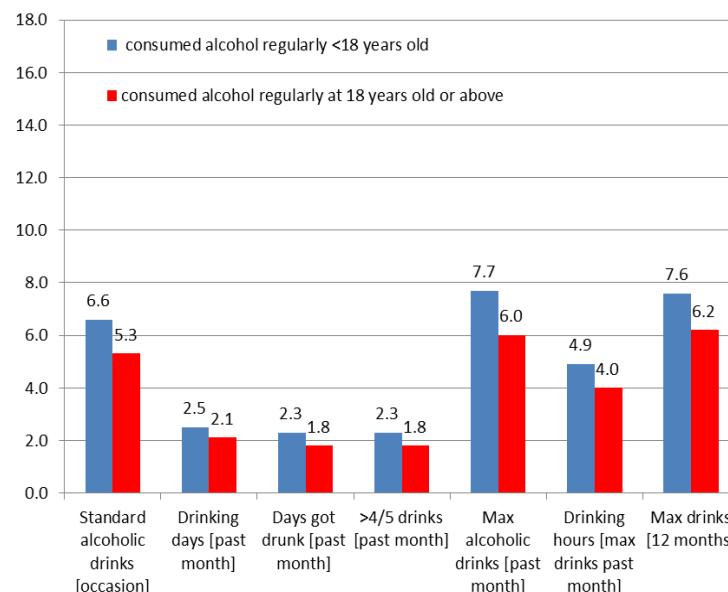
A survey collected alcohol consumption data, including age at which they began consuming alcohol regularly, from University students across the UK.

## RESULTS

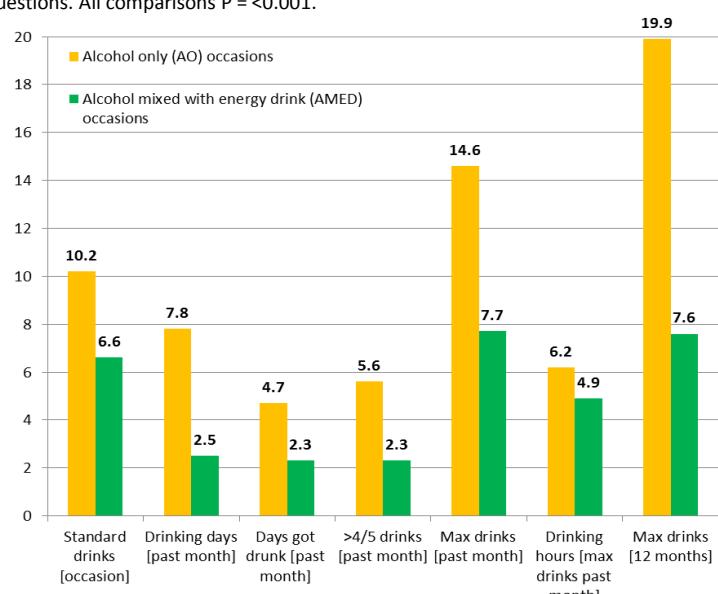
Of the 1788 alcohol consumers, 50.6% reported consuming alcohol on a regular basis at an age below the legal limit in the UK (18 years old). These students reported significantly higher current alcohol consumption levels, on both alcohol only ( $P < 0.001$ ) and AMED ( $P < 0.05$ ) occasions, in comparison to those who began consuming alcohol at a regular basis aged 18 years or older. Those who consumed alcohol regularly under 18 years old were significantly more likely to consume AMED (45%) than those who consumed alcohol regularly aged 18 or older (36%). However, within-subjects analysis revealed that within both drinking age groups (<18  $N=364$ , 18 and older  $N=285$ ), alcohol consumption was significantly lower on AMED occasions compared to alcohol only occasions ( $P < 0.001$ ).



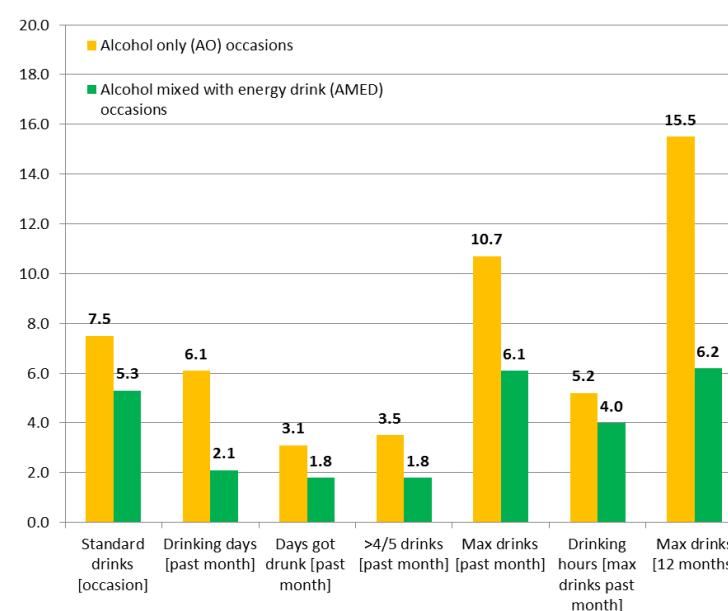
**Figure 1:** Between subjects comparison of those who consumed alcohol regularly <18 years old ( $N = 876$ ) and those who consumed alcohol regularly 18 years old or above ( $N = 842$ ) on alcohol only consumption questions. All comparisons  $P < 0.001$ .



**Figure 2:** Between subjects comparison of those who consumed alcohol regularly <18 years old ( $N = 364$ ) and those who consumed alcohol regularly 18 years old or above ( $N = 285$ ) on AMED consumption questions. All comparisons  $P < 0.05$ .



**Figure 3:** Within subjects comparison of alcohol consumption on AO occasions and AMED occasions among those who consumed alcohol regularly <18 years old. ( $N=364$ ) All comparisons  $P < 0.001$ .



**Figure 4:** Within subjects comparison of alcohol consumption on AO occasions and AMED occasions among those who consumed alcohol regularly 18 years old and above. ( $N=285$ ) All comparisons  $P < 0.001$ .

## CONCLUSIONS

These findings indicate that those who consume alcohol regularly at an earlier age consume significantly more alcohol at University and are more likely to consume AMED than those who begin consuming alcohol regularly at the legal age limit in the UK. However, AMED consumption does not appear to influence overall alcohol consumption. Future research should focus on developing educational policies to prevent early onset of alcohol consumption among young people.

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