

Does where you live influence your attitude to alcohol?

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(Medical Xpress)—Binge drinking is seen as normal by young people living in the North East, a new study has shown

Researchers for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that because drinking is widespread across the region, in city centres, in the street and in parks, teenagers and young adults are more likely to find [excessive alcohol consumption](#) commonplace than their [peers](#) in the South East.

The experts, including Tim Townshend from the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape at Newcastle University, studied three groups of young people. They spoke to 15 and 16-year-olds, those aged 18 and 19 and those aged between 22 and 24, from similar backgrounds in the North East and South East and asked them about their [attitudes](#) to alcohol.

They found that where you live does have an effect on your attitude to alcohol. It also highlighted a lack of diversionary activities for under-18's in the North East.

But despite [negative images](#) of [teenagers](#) and [young adults](#) drinking in the media, the researchers found that the groups they spoke to, considered drinking and going out with friends as a social activity and they would try to avoid trouble and [drunkenness](#) wherever possible.

Tim Townshend said: "We were very interested to see if where you live has an effect on what you think and feel about alcohol. We purposefully

chose the North East –where there is a high rate of alcohol-related harm – and the South East – where there are lower incidences so we could find out what was different."

"What we found was that for under-18s in the North East there are far fewer social activities for them compared to the group in the South East and this means that there were fewer [distractions](#) from drinking."

"We also found that in city centres in the North East, in some places it is sometimes difficult to get away from bars and nightclubs. So for example, city centre cinemas might be surrounded by nightspots so young people see that as they go to see a film. Overall drinking was just much more visible in this region."

"In the next group there was a much bigger emphasis of having a 'big night out' and a 'wild time' in the North east group. And it takes a little longer for the North Easterners to get this out of their system because by the time we go the 22 to 24 –year-olds, in the South East they were talking about quiet drinks with friends and staying in, whereas more of the North eastern group were still very keen on going out."

The experts recommend there should be higher spending and more support for on leisure activities for under-18. They also said future planning in towns and cities should ensure that bars and clubs are separated from other leisure facilities and should also be spread further out in city centres to prevent 'clusters'. They also concluded that there are positive aspects to young people's drinking, such as socialising and getting together with friends, which are often overlooked.

More information: The full paper: [Local variations in youth drinking cultures](#)

Provided by Newcastle University

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