

A quarter of adults reported drinking more during first lockdown

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A quarter of people in the UK reported drinking more than usual during the first lockdown, particularly those who were younger, female and suffering from anxiety, finds a study by UCL researchers.

The study, published today in *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, surveyed over 30,000 adults about their drinking behavior during the earliest stage of lockdown between 21 March and 4 April 2020 and found that a third (34.3%) weren't drinking.

Among people who drank, 48.1% reported drinking about the same, 26.2% reported drinking more and 25.7% reported drinking less than usual during the surveyed week.

The study shows that [younger women](#) with post-16 educational qualifications and a [household income](#) over £30,000 were more likely to report increased alcohol consumption.

Researchers also found that having an anxiety disorder, being stressed about finances or about catching or becoming seriously ill from COVID-19 were factors associated with increased [alcohol consumption](#).

Lead author, Dr. Claire Garnett (UCL Institute of Epidemiology and Health Care) said: "Despite women being more likely than men to report drinking more than usual during lockdown, heaviness of drinking is still positively associated with being male, which was the case before lockdown.

"Women might be more likely to drink more than usual during lockdown because they have been more negatively affected by the pandemic through increased gender inequalities as women are more likely to lose their jobs and carry the burdens of increased childcare and housework."

Having an anxiety disorder was associated with drinking more than usual and the authors noted it is possible that people with [anxiety disorders](#) are changing their drinking behavior to self-medicate or as an unhelpful coping mechanism during a period of increased anxiety.

Drinking less than usual during the surveyed week was independently associated with being younger, male, BAME, having a household income lower than £30,000, having been diagnosed with or suspected to have COVID-19, taking on COVID-19 related protective behaviors, being stressed about becoming seriously ill from COVID-19 and not being a key worker.

Co-author, Dr. Melissa Oldham (UCL Institute of Epidemiology and Health Care) said: "These findings show that one in four drinkers have reported an increase in their consumption since lockdown began, and that targeted approaches to provide support for certain groups who are more likely to drink more is needed, particularly with the start of this third lockdown."

More information: Claire Garnett et al. Factors associated with drinking behaviour during COVID-19 social distancing and lockdown among adults in the UK, *Drug and Alcohol Dependence* (2021). [DOI: 10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2020.108461](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2020.108461)

Provided by University College London

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