



This glancesheet looks at why more and more of us are choosing to consume our alcohol at home, and why this might not be the safest choice.

- **Home or away?**

There has been a noticeable shift towards drinking away from licensed premises in recent years. Research carried out in Wales by Alcohol Concern in 2010 found that 50% of drinkers said they drank only at home, and an additional 21% drank equally at home and in the pub. According to Mintel, the home drinking market in the UK has expanded by 17% since 2006, and is likely to be worth £13.6 billion by the end of 2011.

- **Why are we choosing to drink at home?**

The fact that more of us are consuming alcohol at home can be partly explained by an overall rise in alcohol consumption levels since the 1960s, and the increasingly popularity of home-base entertainment (such as television and electronic games systems) and other activities linked to home drinking, such as barbecues and parties. There is also a convenience factor, with many of us preferring the home environment, where we can help ourselves to own beverages.

"You can relax more at home. You don't have to wait at the bar to be served; you can just go and get yourself a drink. You sit down and you are pretty much there for the rest of the night."

Comment collected by **Greenwich University researchers**

In addition, there is a perception that alcohol-related violence is a common occurrence in and around bars and clubs, with town and city centres increasingly regarded as 'no-go areas' after dark.

Probably the main reason for more home drinking, however, is the growing availability and affordability of alcohol in supermarkets and off-licences. Sales of alcohol in the off-trade now account for nearly half of all alcohol sold in the UK, and the practice of selling heavily discounted alcohol has made it more attractive and more affordable. 46% of drinkers in Wales have said they drink at home because it's cheaper.

The relative cheapness of alcohol sold in the off-trade has also led to a practice of 'pre-loading' - consuming alcohol at home before going out to drink. A study by Liverpool John Moores University suggests that people who drink before going out end up consuming considerably more alcohol over the course of the night. People who drank before going out were also found to be 2.5 times more likely to end up in a fight.

- **Helping yourself?**

Whilst drinking at home may seem like a safer option, given concerns about alcohol-related disorder in town centres, it also brings particular risks. Statistics suggest that those of us who drink at home often pour much more than the standard pub measures of drinks, and are less likely to stick to the recommended daily limits of 2-3 units for a woman and 3-4 units for a man. Drinking to excess at home by also be easier than overdoing it in the pub, since the alcohol has normally already been paid for and does not have to be ordered (and paid for) in separate rounds.

"[Home drinkers] don't associate themselves at all with the images we see in the media of binge-drinking and anti-social behaviour. However, this doesn't preclude them from suffering the same effects of excessive alcohol consumption as those who are obviously overdoing it."

Dr. Tony Jewell, Chief Medical Officer for Wales