

ALCOHOL HABITS AND HARMS

Report for Hackney and
the City of London

20
24



CITY OF LONDON AND HACKNEY

PHIT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

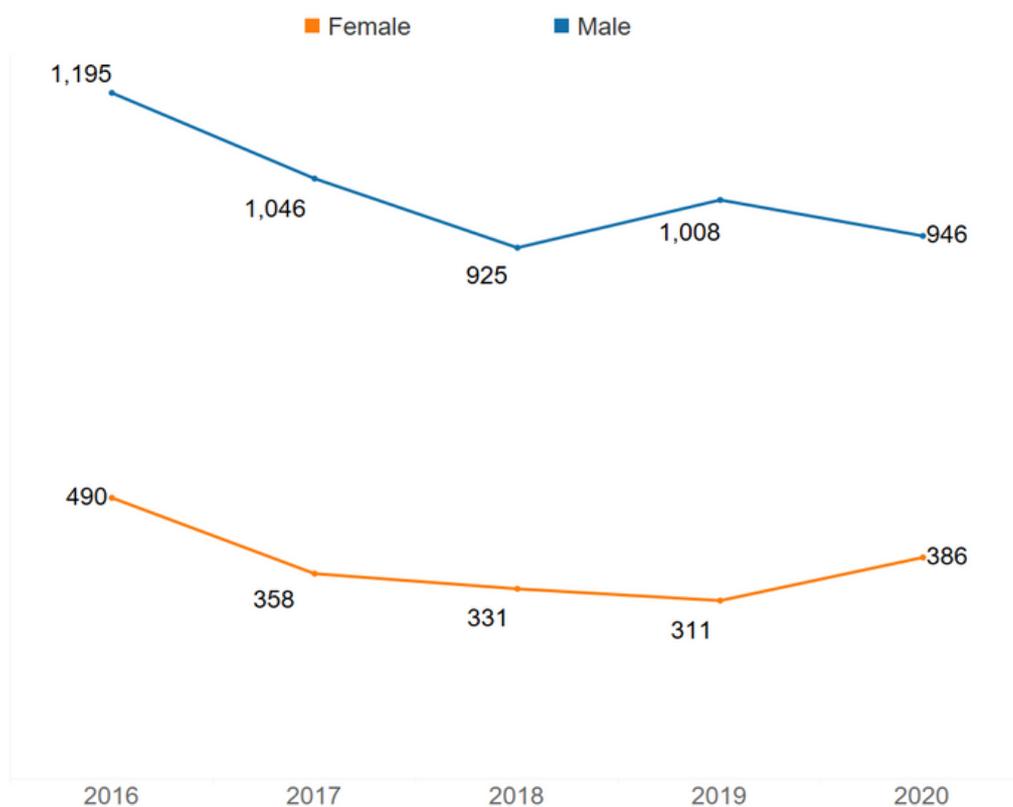
- Around 1,300 years of life are lost due to alcohol-related conditions in the City of London and Hackney every year.
- Hackney's Hoxton East and Shoreditch Ward has a high concentration of bars and restaurants, and has the highest concentration of ambulance incidents related to alcohol consumption in Hackney, accounting for around a quarter of these incidents every year.
- Local data show that there is some overlap between areas with high concentrations of premises selling alcohol and high levels of harmful alcohol consumption.
- Levels of harmful alcohol consumption vary significantly across Hackney, with particularly high rates in the City of London, except for Portsoken Ward.
- It is estimated that over 20,000 adults living in City and Hackney drink at a harmful level, and around 1,400 of those are possibly alcohol-dependent, with some groups being more susceptible to the risks associated with alcohol than others.
- Around a third of those who habitually consume alcohol at potentially harmful levels do not receive lifestyle advice and only 12 people are known to have been referred to support services for alcohol use in the last five years.

INTRODUCTION

Alcohol plays a significant role in various cultures, contributing to social and community life. However, it comes with health risks, causing conditions like liver disease, hypertension (high blood pressure), diabetes, depression and cancer. (1) For those aged 15 - 49 in the UK, alcohol is the main reason for death, ill-health and disability. (2)

In City and Hackney combined, around 1,300 years of life are lost¹ due to alcohol-related conditions every year with men's lives being significantly more affected compared to women's (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Potential years of life¹ lost due to alcohol-related conditions, City and Hackney



Data source: OHID, Fingertips, 2022

Notes: Men and women rates are statistically significantly different across all time periods shown.

¹ Years of life lost is a summary measure of premature mortality, which estimates the length of time a person would have lived had they not died prematurely.

Some people view drinking alcohol as a 'lifestyle choice', but our behaviours are heavily shaped by the wider context in which we live our lives. Drinking behaviours are strongly linked to **mental health** and influenced by **family** and **peer norms**, as well as **wider social, economic and environmental factors**, such as availability and cost of alcohol, advertising and promotion, and education levels. (3)

Drinking alcohol has been normalised through approaches from the alcohol industry that involve both encouraging people to start drinking and making it difficult for people with problematic drinking behaviours to stop. (4) Some of these practices include:

- Selling single drink cans that are bigger than the recommended daily alcohol intake.
- Omitting important health risk information from alcohol packaging and industry websites.
- Placing information on health risks 'below-the-fold' and in hard-to-read fonts or colours.



**Every year, in
City and
Hackney around
1,300 years of
life are lost to
alcohol-related
conditions**

Graphic source: Lo, C. "Selective Focus Photo Of Alcohol Bottles." Canva, Pexels, Date Accessed: 6th February 2023.

DRINKING ENVIRONMENT

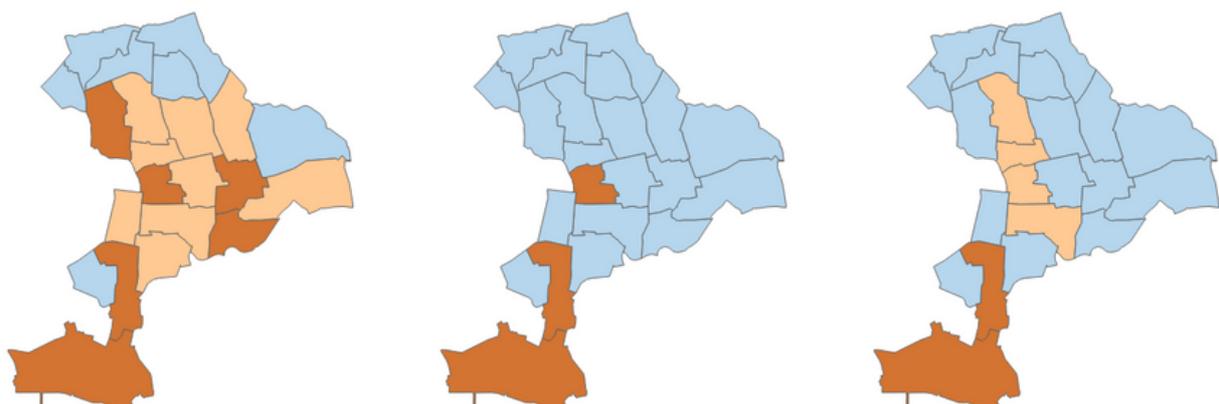
Research indicates that having fewer tobacco shops nearby and being farther away from them is associated with lower tobacco use. (5) Although additional studies are required to confirm if a similar pattern exists for alcohol, there is a belief that the **concentration and proximity of places selling alcohol** to people can impact **alcohol consumption** levels. (6–9) Furthermore, online retail provides easy access to alcohol, but the impact of this on drinking habits in Hackney and the City is not yet clear. (10)

Figure 2 compares the concentration of alcohol-license premises with ambulance call-outs for alcohol-related incidents and with the proportion of Hackney and the City of London residents who drink at a level that increases health risks. Hackney's **Hoxton East and Shoreditch** Ward has a high concentration of bars and restaurants, contributing to a vibrant night-time economy with many visitors coming from outside the borough. As a result, however, this area has the highest concentration of ambulance incidents related to alcohol consumption, accounting for approximately a quarter of all ambulance incidents related to alcohol consumption in the borough every year. (11)

Figure 2. Proportion of the population drinking at a level that increases health risks, alcohol-related ambulance incidents and alcohol licenses granted by ward, City and Hackney

Rate of population drinking at a level that increases health risk per 100 GP population Rates of alcohol-related ambulance incidents per 100 resident population Rates of alcohol-related licenses granted per 100 resident population

■ lower than average ■ similar to average ■ higher than average



Data source: Clinical Commissioning Group, 2023; Safestats, 2022; Hackney Council, 2022, City of London Corporation, 2022.

Primary care data shows that some areas with high concentrations of licensed premises also have a significantly higher proportion of residents drinking at a level that increases their health risks. The City of London has a particularly high prevalence of hazardous drinking, with 21% of the population drinking at a level that increases their health risk, compared to a combined average of 8% in the City and Hackney. This could be due to its population profile, composed of young professionals and a more affluent population. The only exception to this trend is the ward along the border with Tower Hamlets, Portsoken. A significant proportion of residents in this area are Muslim, with many choosing not to consume alcohol due to their beliefs. This is also the most deprived area in the City. These factors may explain the lower rates of hazardous drinking.

In Hackney, the proportion of adults drinking at a level that increases health risks varies significantly by ward: from around 2% to 14%. Areas in the south, south-east and north-west of the borough have significantly higher rates of hazardous drinking compared to the City and Hackney average, while many areas in the north of Hackney and Hoxton West Ward in the south of the borough have significantly lower rates (Figure 2). Please see [Appendix 1](#) for more details.

Considering the significant impact of these factors on levels of alcohol consumption, **action must be taken in the wider environment** rather than focusing solely on individual behaviour change interventions.



UNDERSTANDING ALCOHOL HARMS

Screening tools, such as AUDIT-C, can assess the risk of alcohol consumption at an individual level and can be administered by appropriately trained health professionals. (12) Screening provides an opportunity for **early intervention**, such as information, advice, and treatment referrals. However, only around 13% of the City of London and Hackney adults have a valid AUDIT-C screening record. The proportion of adults screened with AUDIT-C varies significantly by GP practice, from none to over half of their adult patients having a valid screening record.

It is estimated that **over 20,000 adults (18+) living in City and Hackney drink at a harmful level**. However, this might be an underestimate as there is evidence to suggest that people generally underreport how much alcohol they drink, especially those who drink at harmful levels. (14)



Alcohol screening provides an opportunity for early intervention, but the screening rates in City and Hackney are low.

Table 1. Harmful drinking in the City of London and Hackney, number and proportion (%) of adults (18+), 2023

	City of London		Hackney	
	Percentage of the population	Estimated number of residents	Percentage of the population	Estimated number of residents
Drink at a level that increases health risks	21%	1,500	7%	17,500
Possible dependence	1%	100	0.5%	1,300

Data source: Clinical Commissioning Group, 2023.

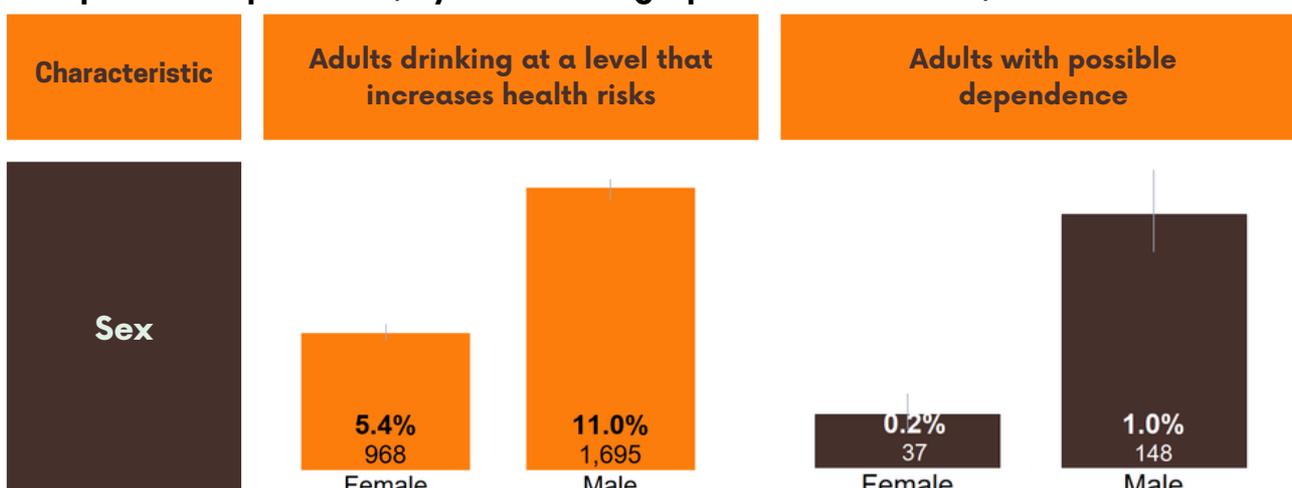
Notes: Only adults with a valid screening were included in the percentage calculation. The AUDIT-C screening tool categorises individuals who score 0 to 4 as low risk. Those scoring 5 to 7 are considered to have an increasing risk, while individuals scoring 8 to 10 are at a higher risk. Those scoring 11 to 12 are seen as possibly dependent. In this report, “drinking at a level that increases health risks” refers to scoring 5 or more, and possible dependency aligns with the screening definition.

People whose screening result indicates a **level of alcohol consumption that increases health risks** should receive **advice** on the benefits of reducing consumption, while those with **possible dependence** should be **referred to alcohol treatment services**. However, primary care data suggest that only **around two-thirds** of those who habitually consume alcohol at potentially harmful levels **receive lifestyle advice**, and **only 12 people** were recorded to be **referred to support services** for alcohol use in the last five years. (13)

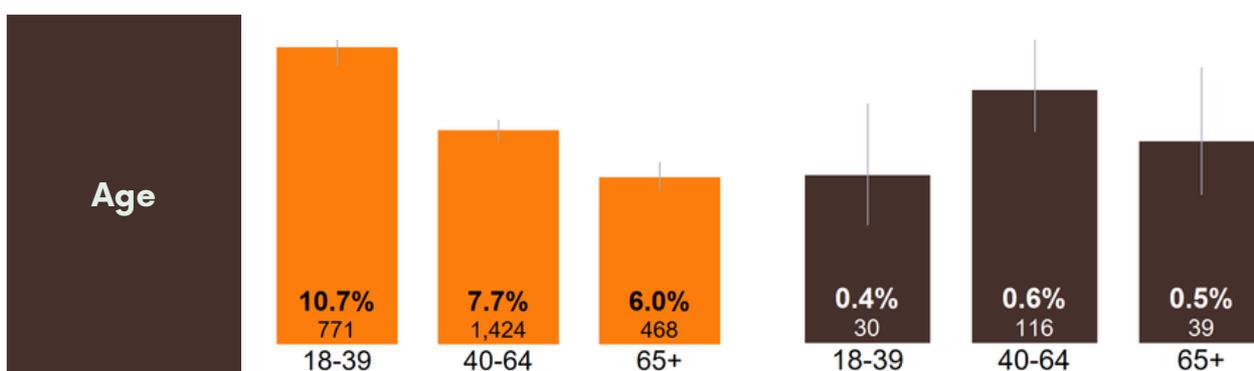
INEQUALITIES IN HARMFUL ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

Information collected through screening tests can uncover alcohol consumption patterns across socio-demographic groups. In City and Hackney, some groups are more susceptible to the risks associated with alcohol than others (Figure 3). (3)

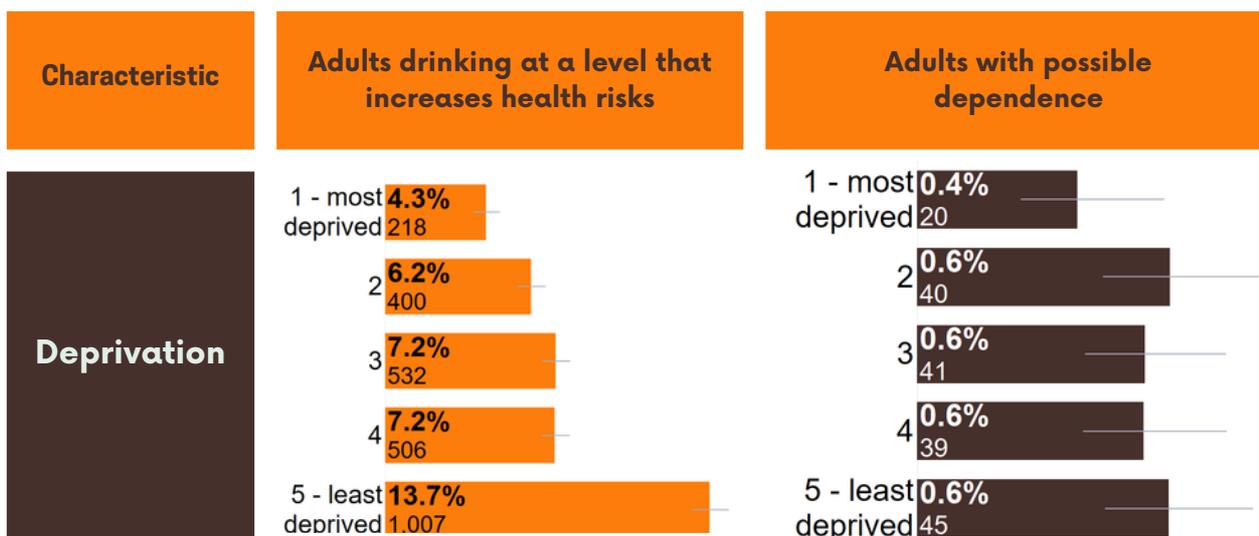
Figure 3. Proportion of adults (18+) drinking at a level that increases health risks, and with possible dependence, by socio-demographic characteristics, 2023



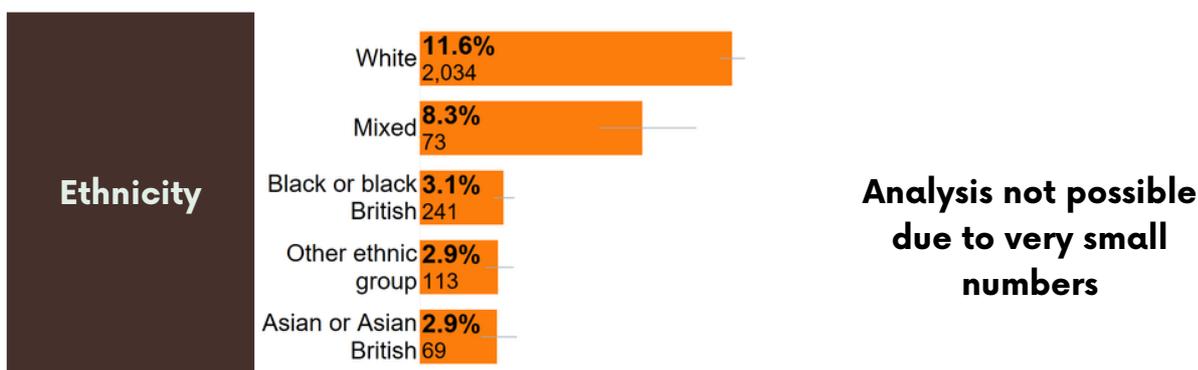
A higher proportion of men drink alcohol at a level that increases health risks and are potentially dependent on alcohol compared to women.



A higher proportion of young people are drinking alcohol at a level that increases health risks, while the proportion of those who are potentially dependent on alcohol is highest among residents aged 40-64 years old.



While individuals in lower socioeconomic groups generally consume less alcohol, they tend to experience worse alcohol-related harms. (4) The proportion of individuals drinking at a level that increases health risks is higher in the least deprived areas of City and Hackney, while there is no statistical difference in the proportion of residents potentially dependent on alcohol across different deprivation strata.



The proportion of adults drinking at a level that increases health risks is significantly higher among residents from white backgrounds, which is significantly higher than all other groups, followed by those from mixed backgrounds, which is significantly higher than all groups but white backgrounds. The levels of harmful drinking are similar.

HOW TO AVOID OR REDUCE HARMFUL IMPACTS OF ALCOHOL

Alcohol Change UK's Dry January campaign helps people to reset their relationship with alcohol. The campaign has been shown to provide additional benefits such as improved sleep, saved money, increased energy, a heightened sense of achievement, and weight loss. (16, 17)

For a Dry January risk assessment, advice and support, visit Alcohol Change's 'Get help now' page. For a risk assessment or advice and support, contact your GP, a pharmacist, or the City and Hackney Recovery Service.

To check if your alcohol consumption may be harmful, click here or use the QR code below.



Ways to minimise health risks from alcohol: (15)

- Limit regular alcohol intake to no more than 14 units per week. This is roughly 5 pints of beer or 4 glasses of wine.
- Spread the drinks over 3 or more days.
- Do not drink at all if you are pregnant or planning to become pregnant.

APPENDIX 1. CITY AND HACKNEY WARD MAP



Ward	Rate of people drinking at a level that increases health risks per 100 GP population	Rate of alcohol-related ambulance incidents per 100 population	Rate of alcohol-related licenses per 100 population
Brownswood	5.6%	1.6%	0.4%
Cazenove	3.5%	1.0%	0.3%
City of London	21.1%	29.5%	12.0%
Clissold	10.6%	1.0%	0.6%
Dalston	10.7%	4.3%	1.4%
De Beauvoir	9.5%	1.4%	0.5%
Hackney Central	6.7%	3.0%	0.8%
Hackney Downs	7.3%	1.9%	0.3%
Hackney Wick	6.3%	1.9%	0.5%
Haggerston	8.5%	1.1%	0.7%
Homerton	10.2%	2.5%	0.6%
Hoxton East and Shoreditch	10.5%	12.9%	2.8%
Hoxton West	5.5%	2.6%	0.5%
King's Park	5.4%	1.1%	0.2%
Lea Bridge	7.7%	1.7%	0.5%
London Fields	8.4%	2.7%	1.0%
Shacklewell	6.8%	2.3%	0.8%
Springfield	2.1%	2.6%	0.3%
Stamford Hill West	3.7%	0.7%	0.2%
Stoke Newington	8.5%	2.3%	0.9%
Victoria	13.5%	2.5%	0.3%
Woodberry Down	3.2%	3.0%	0.2%
Average	8.0%	3.6%	1.1%

■ lower than average
 ■ similar to average
 ■ higher than average

Data source: Clinical Commissioning Group, 2023; Safestats, 2022; Hackney Council, 2022, City of London Corporation, 2022.

Notes: The data from the City of London Corporation includes corporate hospitality in addition to public licenses, and would not be disentangled at the moment. However, if only the public licenses were included, the ranking would remain but that could affect the average and, consequently, the relationship between the rates for other wards and average.

REFERENCES

1. London Borough of Hackney. JSNA - Lifestyle and behaviour: alcohol [Internet]. 12/2016 [cited 2023 Nov 23]. Available from: <https://cityhackneyhealth.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/JSNA-Lifestyle-and-behaviour-Alcohol.pdf>
2. Uk AC. Alcohol Change UK. 2018 [cited 2023 Dec 20]. Why do dry January? Available from: <https://alcoholchange.org.uk/help-and-support/managing-your-drinking/dry-january/why-do-dry-january-1/why-do-dry-january>
3. Brooks-Russell A, Simons-Morton B, Haynie D, Farhat T, Wang J. Longitudinal relationship between drinking with peers, descriptive norms, and adolescent alcohol use. *Prev Sci*. 2014 Aug;15(4):497–505.
4. Petticrew M, Maani N, Pettigrew L, Rutter H, VAN Schalkwyk MC. Dark Nudges and Sludge in Big Alcohol: Behavioral Economics, Cognitive Biases, and Alcohol Industry Corporate Social Responsibility. *Milbank Q*. 2020 Dec;98(4):1290–328.
5. Lee JGL, Kong AY, Sewell KB, Golden SD, Combs TB, Ribisl KM, et al. Associations of tobacco retailer density and proximity with adult tobacco use behaviours and health outcomes: a meta-analysis. *Tob Control* [Internet]. 2021 Sep 3; Available from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/tobaccocontrol-2021-056717>
6. Holmes J, Guo Y, Maheswaran R, Nicholls J, Meier PS, Brennan A. The impact of spatial and temporal availability of alcohol on its consumption and related harms: a critical review in the context of UK licensing policies. *Drug Alcohol Rev*. 2014 Sep;33(5):515–25.
7. Maheswaran R, Green MA, Strong M, Brindley P, Angus C, Holmes J. Alcohol outlet density and alcohol related hospital admissions in England: a national small-area level ecological study. *Addiction*. 2018 Nov;113(11):2051–9.
8. Shih RA, Mullins L, Ewing BA, Miyashiro L, Tucker JS, Pedersen ER, et al. Associations between neighborhood alcohol availability and young adolescent alcohol use. *Psychol Addict Behav*. 2015 Dec;29(4):950–9.
9. Shortt NK, Rind E, Pearce J, Mitchell R, Curtis S. Alcohol risk environments, vulnerability and social inequalities in alcohol consumption. *Ann Assoc Am Geogr*. 2018 Mar 21;108(5):1210–27.
10. Uk AC. Alcohol Change UK. 2022 [cited 2024 Jan 24]. Online alcohol sales: a problem on our doorstep?;

Available from:
<https://alcoholchange.org.uk/blog/online-alcohol-sales-a-problem-on-our-doorstep>

11. Safestats. London Ambulance Service [Internet]. [cited 2022 Jul 21]. Available from:
<https://safestats.london.gov.uk/safestats/home?> (not publicly available)

12. UK Government. Guidance Alcohol use screening tests [Internet]. 2017 [cited 2022 Dec 7]. Available from:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/alcohol-use-screening-tests>

13. Clinical Commissioning Group. East London Database. 2023.

14. Khadjesari Z, Marston L, Petersen I, Nazareth I, Walters K. Alcohol consumption screening of newly-registered patients in primary care: a cross-sectional analysis. *Br J Gen Pract*. 2013 Oct;63(615):e706–12.

15. Department of Health. UK Chief Medical Officers' Low Risk Drinking Guidelines [Internet]. 2016 [cited 2022 Aug 11]. Available from:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/545937/UK_CMOs__report.pdf

16. Ford A. The University of Sussex. 2019 [cited 2023 Dec 13]. How "Dry January" is the secret to better sleep, saving money and losing weight. Available from:
<https://www.sussex.ac.uk/broadcast/read/47131>

17. de Visser and Dr Nina Lockwood R. Alcohol change UK. 2019 [cited 2023 Dec 13]. Dry January evaluation 2018. Available from:
<https://alcoholchange.org.uk/publication/dry-january-evaluation-2018>

Cite this report as: City and Hackney Public Health Intelligence Team. Alcohol habits and harms: Report for Hackney and the City of London. (February 2024)