

‘No Alcohol days’ (Drink Free Days) campaign evidence pack

This document presents the research evidence supporting claims presented as part of the Drink Free Days / No Alcohol days campaign first launched in September 2019.

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Background

The Drink Free Days (DFD) campaign targets midlife drinkers who drink more than the Chief Medical Officers' (CMOs') low risk drinking guidelines (more than 14 units per week)¹ and who are often drinking at home. The campaign has evolved from the Drinkaware 'Have a Little Less' (HALL) campaign, which ran for two years (May 2016 to June 2018) targeting midlife male drinkers who are drinking routinely in their home and over the CMOs' low risk drinking guidelines. The HALL campaign focused on engaging men to realise the harmful effects of their drinking and making them start to reflect on their drinking practices. An online tool (DrinkCompare Calculator) was developed to assist men with this. The Drink Free Days campaign is an evolution of HALL and focuses on routine drinking in the home while continuing to target midlife men. However, it now includes midlife female drinkers and presents a stronger 'call to action' (CTA) by encouraging people to take more drink free days in order to reduce the amount they drink each week.

Building on previous work, this iteration of Drink Free Days, 'No Alcohol days' aims to continue to raise awareness of the health impact of alcohol and encourage people to take more DFDs. The latest campaign aims to be more attention grabbing, improve memorability and provide alternative lifestyle behaviours to drinking whilst driving the perception of Drinkaware as a positive and supportive organisation, rather than confronting in tone.

The selection of our target population was informed by an initial segmentation developed from the Drinkaware Monitor 2014.² This work identified a segment of increasing or high-risk drinkers, 'Risky Career Drinkers', of which the single biggest demographic group was 45 to 64-year-old men. Furthermore, in England and Scotland middle-aged men (aged 55-64) had, and continue to have, the highest average weekly alcohol consumption,^{3,4} with men aged 55-69 having the highest rate of alcohol-specific deaths in the UK—39.2 - 40.6 deaths per 100,000 population in 2017.⁵ Informed by a systematic review of qualitative research into UK

¹ Department of Health, UK. (2016). *UK Chief Medical Officers' Low Risk Drinking Guidelines*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/alcohol-consumption-advice-on-low-risk-drinking>. [Accessed 8 August 2019].

² Ipsos MORI. (2015). *Drinkaware Monitor 2014: Adults' drinking behaviour and attitudes in the UK*. Drinkaware. Available at: <https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/research/our-research-and-evaluation-reports/drinkaware-monitor-2014-adults-drinking-behaviour-and-attitudes-in-the-uk/>. [Accessed 8 August 2019].

³ NHS Digital. (2018). *Health Survey for England, 2017: Adult health related behaviours – tables*. Table 12. [Online]. Available at: <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/health-survey-for-england/2017>. [Accessed 8 August 2019].

⁴ Scottish Government. (2018). *Scottish Health Survey 2017: Trend Tables*. Table W6. [Online]. Available at: <https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Health/scottish-health-survey/Publications/Trend2017>. [Accessed 8 August 2019].

⁵ Office of National Statistics. (2018). *Alcohol-specific deaths in the UK*. [Dataset]. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/causesofdeath/datasets/alcohol-specific-deaths-in-the-uk-main-dataset>. [Accessed 21 August 2019].

midlife men's drinking,⁶ our insight research in 2016, 'Midlife Male Drinking',⁷ found that this audience are habitual drinkers who do the majority of their drinking at home and who very often do not realise they are drinking at levels which affect their long-term health.

Midlife women (aged 45-64) are included as part of the target audience for the DFD campaign due to the evolution of the campaign messaging towards a stronger call to action and further segmentation insights emerging from the Drinkaware Monitor 2017.⁸ Specifically, the new segmentation of UK drinkers identified two segments, which replaced the previous category of 'Risky Career Drinkers' by providing more granular detail around the drinking behaviours and demographics of different groups.

The Drinkaware Monitor 2018 found that those men or women who rated drinking as the easiest lifestyle factor to improve on (compared to diet, exercise and smoking) were in segment 4 (34%) followed by segment 8 (33%),⁹ supporting the case for targeting alcohol moderation messages at these audiences. Furthermore, findings from the Drinkaware Monitor 2018 suggest that men are more likely to report that advice from a spouse or partner prompts them to think about reducing their drinking – with 12% of men saying that this was a trigger for them to think about cutting down. Hence, targeting messages at midlife women may engage not only the women themselves, but also indirectly the men who are their partners or spouses.

⁶Parke, H., Michalska, M., Russell, A., Moss, A. C., Holdsworth, C., Ling, J., and Larsen, J. (2018). Understanding drinking among midlife men in the United Kingdom: A systematic review of qualitative studies. *Addictive Behaviors Reports* 8, 85-94.

⁷Christmas, S., and Souter, A. (2016). *Midlife male drinking: findings from research with men aged 45-60*. Drinkaware. Available at: <https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/research/our-research-and-evaluation-reports/midlife-male-drinking-report/>.

⁸Gunstone, B., and Butler, B. (2017). UK adults drinking behaviours and attitudes: Findings from Drinkaware Monitor 2017. YouGov and Drinkaware. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/research/our-research-and-evaluation-reports/drinkaware-monitor-2017/>.

⁹Gunstone, B., Piggott, L., Butler, B., Appleton, A. and Larsen, J. (2018). *Drinking behaviours and moderation among UK adults: Findings from Drinkaware Monitor 2018*. London: YouGov and Drinkaware. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/research/our-research-and-evaluation-reports/drinkaware-monitor-2018-drinking-behaviour-and-moderation/>.

Drink Free Days / No Alcohol days- Message Focus

'Drink free days' is the campaign's main call to action, and has superseded the previous 2016-2018 Drinkaware campaign message of 'Have a little less, feel a lot better'. There are a number of reasons for this: 1) it offers a simple and clear message to more effectively support behaviour change, 2) it is recommended as a drink moderation strategy in the 2016 CMOs' low risk drinking guidelines, and 3) much of the UK public are finding the message relevant, acceptable and attractive as a way to reduce their alcohol consumption. In addition, 4) Public Health England's independent evaluation of the DFD 2018 campaign confirmed 'notable successes' of the campaign and concluded that the 'proposition is strong enough to repeat, using the evaluation findings to adjust and test improvements'¹⁰.

In line with good practice principles for social marketing,¹¹ the 'drink free days' message has the benefit of being simple and clear, offering no risk of the audience misunderstanding what they are being asked to do. Furthermore, research suggests that public health messages focusing on making lifestyle behaviour changes in a non-stigmatising way are more likely to be positively received by the audience.¹² The No Alcohol days campaign looked to build on this further, through an adapted tone of voice and approach in encouraging drinkers to take more drink free days.

The 2016 UK CMOs' guidelines recommend having several drink free days per week.¹³ The guidelines state that:

'If you wish to cut down the amount you drink, a good way to help achieve this is to have several drink-free days each week.'

Our insight research has indicated that the 'drink free days' message is positively received by the target audience.¹⁴ During the first half of 2018, message testing research undertaken for Drinkaware explored the drinking of midlife women in segments 4 and 8, and it examined which messages and calls to action both midlife men and women would find most engaging.¹⁴ Taking drink free days was found to be a receptive message for the midlife male and female audiences, positively encouraging them to change their drinking habits for the

¹⁰Public Health England(2019). *Drink Free Days campaign 2018: executive summary*. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/drink-free-days-2018-campaign-evaluation/drink-free-days-campaign-2018-executive-summary#conclusions> [Accessed 22 August 2019]

¹¹Lee, N.R. and Kotler, P. (2015). *Social marketing: changing behaviors for good*. Sage Publications.

¹²Puhl, R., Peterson, J. L., and Luedicke, J. (2012). Fighting obesity or obese persons? Public perceptions of obesity-related health messages. *International Journal of Obesity*, 37, 774.

¹³UK Government, UK. (2016). *UK Chief Medical Officers' Low Risk Drinking Guidelines*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/alcohol-consumption-advice-on-low-risk-drinking>. [Accessed 8 August 2019].

¹⁴Future Thinking. (2018). *'Drink Free Days' campaign: Insight research and message testing*. Drinkaware. [Online][Available at: <https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/media/293005/dfd-insight-research-and-message-testing-report-sep-2018.pdf>

better and therefore reduce the risk of alcohol related harm. This was supported by audience research which had previously been undertaken on behalf of PHE, similarly finding that taking days off drinking was felt to be appealing.¹⁵

Furthermore, taking drink free days is already by far the most popular drink moderation strategy in the UK with 72% of drinkers having used this in the past.¹⁶ Data from the Drinkaware Monitor 2017¹⁷ show that, among UK adults aged 45-65, 26% of men and 16% of women drink alcohol on at least four days of the week, suggesting that among these there is good potential to be adding extra drink free days.

Our latest iteration of the Drink Free Days campaign aims to evolve the campaign with a more positive and supportive message. The campaign prominently suggests substitution activities to help in moderating alcohol consumption, an approach shown to reduce alcohol unit consumption.¹⁸ Though the central message and call to action of the campaign (take more DFDs) remains consistent, the latest campaign aims to deliver it in a more memorable and engaging way. This approach was validated through qualitative insight research, which indicated that overall, our target audiences were more receptive to the tone and approach of the 'No Alcohol days' campaign compared to the 2018 iteration.¹⁹

Alongside the Drink Free Days call to action, the 'No Alcohol days' campaign addresses key health harm topics, including: high blood pressure, heart disease and weight. The rationale for focusing on these is that message testing research found that the midlife audience was most receptive to messaging around high blood pressure and weight. Health harm messages were targeted at particular groups, in order to avoid 'message overload' and ensure messaging was relevant and clearly communicated, in agreement with good practice principles for social marketing messaging.²⁰

¹⁵ This audience testing research was undertaken for Public Health England in 2016 in relation to their preparations for supporting the Dry January campaign (report not publicly available).

¹⁶ Gunstone, B., Piggott, L., Butler, B., Appleton, A. and Larsen, J. (2018). *Drinking behaviours and moderation among UK adults: Findings from Drinkaware Monitor 2018*. London: YouGov and Drinkaware. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/research/our-research-and-evaluation-reports/drinkaware-monitor-2018-drinking-behaviour-and-moderation/>.

¹⁷ Gunstone, B., and Butler, B. (2017). UK adults drinking behaviours and attitudes: Findings from Drinkaware Monitor 2017. YouGov and Drinkaware. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/research/our-research-and-evaluation-reports/drinkaware-monitor-2017/>.

¹⁸ Garnett, C.V., Crane, D., Brown, J., Kaner, E.F., Beyer, F.R., Muirhead, C.R., Hickman, M., Beard, E., Redmore, J., de Vocht, F. and Michie, S. (2018). Behavior change techniques used in digital behavior change interventions to reduce excessive alcohol consumption: a meta-regression. *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, 52(6), 530-543.

¹⁹ Xmarkthespot. (2019). 'No Alcohol days' campaign: Insight research and message testing. Drinkaware. [unpublished]

²⁰ Lee, N.R. and Kotler, P. (2015). *Social marketing: changing behaviors for good*. Sage Publications.

Recognising that a message alone has only limited impact to change behaviour,²¹ the advertising for the campaign directs the audience to go to the Drinkaware website where they are encouraged to complete an online calculator (DrinkCompare Calculator). This calculator demonstrates to users how their drinking compares to the rest of the UK, a social norming technique advocated in behaviour change theory²².

As per recommendations from the Behavioural Insights Team, the tool has been adapted further in 2019, to include Drink Free Days 'pledges' to drive user commitment to taking days off drinking and a more tailored user journey, with a range of messages targeted at different types of drinkers (e.g. drinking most nights, binge drinking, low risk).²³ These messages direct users towards relevant actions they might consider to reduce their drinking (e.g. walking football, swimming, c25k).

The Drink Free Days campaign uses radio, digital and poster advertising. The evidence supporting claims made as part of the campaign is presented below.

Drinking less generates health and wellbeing benefits

Radio

We're all going on a No Alcoholiday,
Drink free days for me and you,
Drink less each week with No Alcoholidays,
Down the pub, at home or at a work do,
Your body will thank you

CTA: Enjoy more Drink Free Days every week with No Alcoholidays. Find out more at [Drinkaware.co.uk](https://www.drinkaware.co.uk)

Evidence

²¹Kelly, M.P., and Barker, M. (2016). Why is changing health-related behaviour so difficult? *Public Health*, 136, 109-116.

²² Dotson, K. B., Dunn, M. E., and Bowers, C. A. (2015). Stand-alone personalized normative feedback for college student drinkers: A meta-analytic review, 2004 to 2014. *PloS one*, 10(10), e0139518.

²³Bianchi, F., Egan, M., and Harper, H. (2019). *Assessment of Drinkaware interventions for reducing harmful drinking*. Behavioural Insights Team.

The evidence behind this message is that the less you drink, the better it is for your health, which is supported by a recent evidence review²⁴ as well as the evidence informing the 2016 CMO low risk drinking guidelines.²⁵

The tone of voice of the message is informed by the message testing research carried out in 2019.²⁶

²⁴Griswold, M.G., Fullman, N., Hawley, C., Arian, N., Zimsen, S.R., Tymeson, H.D., Venkateswaran, V., Tapp, A.D., Forouzanfar, M.H., Salama, J.S. and Abate, K.H. (2018). Alcohol use and burden for 195 countries and territories, 1990–2016: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2016. *The Lancet*, 392(10152), 1015-1035.

²⁵Holmes, J., Angus, C., Buykx, P., Ally, A., Stone, T., Meier, P. and Brennan, A. (2016). Mortality and morbidity risks from alcohol consumption in the UK: analyses using the Sheffield Alcohol Policy Model (v. 2.7) to inform the UK Chief Medical Officers' review of the UK lower risk drinking guidelines. *Sheffield: SchARR, University of Sheffield*. Available at:

https://www.shef.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.538671!/file/Drinking_Guidelines_Final_Report_Published.pdf.

[Accessed 8 August 2019].

²⁶Xmarksthespot (2019). 'No Alcoholidays' campaign: Insight research and message testing. Drinkaware.

Heart and blood pressure

Radio

M:

We're all going on a No Alcoholiday.
Drink Free Days for me and you,
You can lower blood pressure with No Alcoholidays,
Walking football, rounders, or even Kung-Fu,
Your heart will thank you

CTA: Enjoy more Drink Free Days every week with No Alcoholidays. Find out more at [Drinkaware.co.uk](https://www.drinkaware.co.uk)

F:

We're all going on a No Alcoholiday.
Drink Free Days for me and you,
You can lower blood pressure with No Alcoholidays,
By going power walking with your best friend Sue,
Your heart will thank you

CTA: Enjoy more Drink Free Days every week with No Alcoholidays. Find out more at [Drinkaware.co.uk](https://www.drinkaware.co.uk)

Video

M + F:

Blood pressure a bit high?
Take more Drink Free Days each week with No Alcoholidays
Because drinking less can help lower your blood pressure
Enjoy more Drink Free Days each week
Go on, get started at [drinkaware.co.uk](https://www.drinkaware.co.uk)

Evidence

Alcohol can have a serious long-term effect on blood pressure and research has shown that sustained moderate drinking above CMOs' low risk guidelines or heavy drinking increases risk of hypertension for both men and women.^{27,28}

²⁷Briasoulis, A., Agarwal, V. and Messerli, F.H. (2012). Alcohol consumption and the risk of hypertension in men and women: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *The Journal of Clinical Hypertension*, 14(11), 792-798.

²⁸Roerecke, M., Tobe, S.W., Kaczorowski, J., Bacon, S.L., Vafaei, A., Hasan, O.S., Krishnan, R.J., Raifu, A.O. and Rehm, J. (2018). Sex-specific associations between alcohol consumption and incidence of hypertension: a systematic review and meta-analysis of cohort studies. *Journal of the American Heart Association*, 7(13), e008202.

Weight gain and central obesity

Radio

F:

We're all going on a No Alcoholiday.
Drink Free Days for me and you,
You can lose weight with No Alcoholidays,
'cos wine's calorific like Tiramisu
Your body will thank you

CTA: Enjoy more Drink Free Days every week with No Alcoholidays. Find out more at Drinkaware.co.uk

Radio

M:

We're all going on a No Alcoholiday.
Drink Free Days for me and you,
You can lose weight with No Alcoholidays,
'cos beer's calorific like a cheeky vindaloo,
Your body will thank you

CTA: Enjoy more Drink Free Days every week with No Alcoholidays. Find out more at Drinkaware.co.uk

Video

M + F:

Drinking daily can pile on the weight
Take more Drink Free Days each week with No Alcoholidays.
Because drinking less can help you lose weight.
Enjoy more Drink Free Days each week.
Go on, get started at drinkaware.co.uk

Evidence for comparison calculations

- (A) Two large glasses of wine amounts to 20% of your recommended daily calorie intake.
- A 250ml glass of 13% ABV wine = 2270 calories

- The recommended daily calorie intake is 2000 calories for women and 2500 calories for men²⁹

(B) That's like eating two 45g bars of milk chocolate

- A standard 45g Cadbury Dairy Milk chocolate bar = 240 calories (kcal)³⁰

(C) 'Cos wine's calorific like Tiramisu

- A 250ml glass of 13% ABV wine = 227 kcal
- Tiramisu serving (85g) –209kcal³¹

(D) 'Cos beer's calorific like a cheeky vindaloo

- Two pints of 5% strength beer = 530kcal³²
- Tesco Indian Chicken Vindaloo & Rice 225g serving (half a ready meal pack) = 560kcal³³
- The recommended daily calorie intake is 2000 calories for women and 2500 calories for men³⁴

²⁹NHS. *What should my daily intake of calories be?*[Online] (Reviewed 13 October 2016). Available at: <https://www.nhs.uk/common-health-questions/food-and-diet/what-should-my-daily-intake-of-calories-be/>. [Accessed 7 September 2018].

³⁰Information from Cadbury's website. Available at: <https://www.cadbury.co.uk/products/cadbury-dairy-milk-11294>. [Accessed 21 August 2019].

³¹Information from Tesco website. Available at: <https://www.tesco.com/groceries/en-GB/products/300474164>. [Accessed 22 July 2019].

³² NHS. *Calories in alcohol*. [Online]. (Reviewed 16 December 2016). Available at: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/alcohol-support/calories-in-alcohol/>. [Accessed 22 July 2019].

³³Information from Tesco website. Available at: <https://www.tesco.com/groceries/en-GB/products/293944638>. [Accessed 22 July 2019].

³⁴NHS. *What should my daily intake of calories be?*[Online] (Reviewed 13 October 2016). Available at: <https://www.nhs.uk/common-health-questions/food-and-diet/what-should-my-daily-intake-of-calories-be/>. [Accessed 7 September 2018].

Promoting behaviour substitution as an approach to moderating alcohol consumption

Video

M + F:

Having a drink most nights?

Take more Drink Free Days each week with No Alcoholidays

Because physical activity could be more fun than you think

Enjoy more Drink Free Days each week.

Go on, get started at drinkaware.co.uk

Evidence for substitution activities as a means of moderation

A key feature of the No Alcoholidays campaign encourages people to take more Drink Free Days by substituting drinking occasions with other activities.

This is an evolution of the Drink Free Days message from the previous iteration of the campaign and is founded in a review of behaviour change techniques which suggest substitution is an effective driver of behaviour change.³⁵

This approach was validated further during the concept and message testing carried out in 2019, in which drinkers felt substitution activities were an effective, positive approach to moderation³⁶.

³⁵Garnett, C.V., Crane, D., Brown, J., Kaner, E.F., Beyer, F.R., Muirhead, C.R., Hickman, M., Beard, E., Redmore, J., de Vocht, F. and Michie, S. (2018). Behavior change techniques used in digital behavior change interventions to reduce excessive alcohol consumption: a meta-regression. *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, 52(6), 530-543.

³⁶Xmarksthespot. (2019). 'No Alcoholidays' campaign: Insight research and message testing. Drinkaware.

Risk from alcohol

DrinkCompare Calculator

Level of health risk based on alcohol units consumed weekly presented in the calculations available online: www.drinkfreedays.co.uk

Evidence for the DrinkCompare calculation

The calculations are based on data used as part of the evidence that informed the 2016 CMOs' low risk drinking guidelines.³⁷

Population comparison data

DrinkCompare Calculator

Percentage of men or women drinkers in the UK who drink less than weekly. Presented in the calculations which is available online: www.drinkfreedays.co.uk

Evidence for the calculation

The calculation is based on self-reported drinking data obtained in March / April 2017 from a nationally representative sample of 6,174 adults in the UK.³⁸

Drink free days as an alcohol moderation strategy

Evidence

The claims are supported by the audience message testing research,³⁹ finding that taking days off drinking is **felt to be** appealing and relatively easy to do by UK drinkers. This is further evidenced in the Drinkaware Monitor 2018, in which 'taking Drink Free Days' was highlighted by drinkers as the preferred approach to moderating alcohol consumption

³⁷Holmes, J., Angus, C., Buykx, P., Ally, A., Stone, T., Meier, P. and Brennan, A. (2016). Mortality and morbidity risks from alcohol consumption in the UK: analyses using the Sheffield Alcohol Policy Model (v. 2.7) to inform the UK Chief Medical Officers' review of the UK lower risk drinking guidelines. *Sheffield: SCHARR, University of Sheffield*. Available at:

https://www.shef.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.538671!/file/Drinking_Guidelines_Final_Report_Published.pdf. [Accessed 8 August 2019].

³⁸Gunstone, B., and Butler, B. (2017). UK adults drinking behaviours and attitudes: Findings from Drinkaware Monitor 2017. YouGov and Drinkaware. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/research/our-research-and-evaluation-reports/drinkaware-monitor-2017/>.

³⁹Future Thinking. (2018). 'Drink Free Days' campaign: Insight research and message testing. Drinkaware. [Online] [Available at: <https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/media/293005/dfd-insight-research-and-message-testing-report-sep-2018.pdf>]

compared to other means of moderation⁴⁰. Finally, Public Health England's Drink Free Days evaluation validated this approach, noting that 'the evaluation showed that Drink Free Days is a good strategy for this group, as it is a message that is already understood and favoured by this audience in comparison to other methods of moderation, and so can be leveraged as a prompt to change'⁴¹.

⁴⁰Gunstone, B., Piggott, L., Butler, B., Appleton, A. and Larsen, J. (2018). *Drinking behaviours and moderation among UK adults: Findings from Drinkaware Monitor 2018*. London: YouGov and Drinkaware. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/research/our-research-and-evaluation-reports/drinkaware-monitor-2018-drinking-behaviour-and-moderation/>.

⁴¹Public Health England (2019). *Drink Free Days campaign 2018: executive summary*. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/drink-free-days-2018-campaign-evaluation/drink-free-days-campaign-2018-executive-summary#conclusions> [Accessed 22 August 2019]