
Summary: Alcohol habits among adult Danes 2020

This report shows the drinking habits of adult Danes in 2020. The report is based on data from an internet-based survey among 3.000 Danes between 18-74 years old. The data collection was handled by the market research company Epinion – which used Norstats Online Panel for this purpose – and the data is nationally representative in relation to gender, age, area of residence, and education.

The full report is available in Danish here: www.cancer.dk/alkoholvaner2020/
For questions concerning the report - please contact LIV@cancer.dk

Alcohol consumption

The majority of 18-74-year-old Danes (84%) state that they drink alcohol within the Danish Health Authority's recommendation of a maximum of 10 alcohol units per week. 12% of respondents specify a weekly alcohol consumption above the recommendation while the rest answer 'Don't know' to the question. Older respondents drink alcohol more often than younger respondents do, while the youngest of all respondents get drunk most often. The share of respondents that want to reduce their alcohol consumption is higher among those with high alcohol consumption than among those with low alcohol consumption. A third (34%) of respondents who drink alcohol on a typical week always, often or occasionally count their weekly number of drinks.

Age limits for buying alcohol – knowledge and opinions

Little less than half (47%) of 18-74-year-olds are aware of the existent age limits for buying alcohol in Denmark¹. 18-29-year-old Danes have a significantly higher knowledge of these age limits than other age groups. Six out of 10 Danes (59%) agree there should be an age limit of 18 years for buying all alcohol types regardless of alcohol percentage. 28% disagree while 13% answer 'Don't know'. Support for an 18-year age limit for buying all alcohol types increases with respondents' increasing age. There was an increase in the proportion of respondents supporting an 18-year age limit from 49% in 2017 to 59% in 2020. Seven out of 10 (69%) advocate for a more stringent control on whether shops comply with the legislation regarding sales of alcohol products to young people.

Attitude towards structural prevention

When questioned about other structural prevention measures focusing on alcohol use, 18-74-year-old Danes did not show clear support for any of the presented options. 44% like or very much like the proposal about showing the nutritional content of alcoholic beverages including calories. Only 13% are against this proposal – the rest are neither for nor against or answer 'Don't know'. 30% like or very much like the proposal about setting a minimum price for alcoholic beverages, so there is a lower limit on how cheap an item can be. 34% are against this proposal.

¹ The minimum age for buying alcohol in retail (shops/gas stations/supermarkets) is 16 years for purchases of alcohol of 16,5% and above (e.g. vodka, rum and other strong spirits). When buying alcohol at Danish pubs (bars/restaurants/discos) you must be 18 years old regardless of alcohol percentage.

Most respondents perceive the price of alcoholic beverages practiced in retail settings as appropriate (67%) – 11% think it is too expensive and a similar 11% think it is too cheap. According to the Danish Marketing Practices Act it is not allowed to advertise alcohol to children and young people under the age of 18. A third of respondents (33%) experience that the Danish Marketing Practices Act is complied with, while a quarter (25%) experience that it is *not* complied with. The rest answer 'Don't know' to the question. Especially 18-29-year-old respondents experience that the Danish Marketing Practices Act is not complied with.

Overall, 75% of respondents agree that students under the age of 16 should not be able to buy alcohol in secondary schools, whereas some think that it should also not be allowed for older students (under 17/18 years), and others believe that it shouldn't be allowed to buy alcohol at all in secondary schools.

The Danish alcohol culture

Six out of 10 Danes (61%) believe that alcohol consumption among Danes is too high. Almost nine out of 10 (88%) believe that we should have an alcohol culture, where everyone accepts a 'no thanks' to alcohol, but only four out of 10 (41%) Danes experience that we already have this kind of culture in Denmark in social contexts. A third of respondents (33%) find it difficult to be socially accepted at gatherings when not drinking alcohol. Most notably women and younger adults experience that the Danish alcohol culture can be problematic if they do not want to drink (as much) alcohol. 22% of Danes miss alcohol-free alternatives when at parties and/or other social events, and 44% state they have at some point bought alcohol-free versions of drinks that usually contain alcohol – either for themselves or for others.

Knowledge about the connection between alcohol and cancer

21% of 18-74-year-old Danes believe alcohol increases the risk of cancer, when questioned openly about which diseases alcohol increases the risk of (unprompted knowledge). There was no significant development from 2017 to 2020 in the unprompted knowledge of the link between alcohol and cancer. The same goes for prompted awareness², which was 47% in 2020. More women than men know that alcohol increases the risk of cancer.

Danes also lack knowledge about which types of cancer alcohol increases the risk of. Alcohol is most widely known to increase the risk of liver cancer (40%), followed by cancer of the mouth, pharynx and throat (24%), followed by oesophageal cancer (23%), and colorectal cancer (22%). Only 7% indicate breast cancer. Alcohol increases the risk of all these types of cancer. Although it is well documented that the consumption of approximately one drink per day increases the risk of cancer, 12% of 18-74-year-old Danes believe that cancer risk only arises with a high alcohol consumption – e.g. alcohol abuse. Among 18-74-year-old respondents who drink more than the Danish Health Authority's recommendation of a maximum of 10 units of alcohol in a week, 17% believe

² In the question assessing prompted knowledge, cancer is one of several answers from a list of possible diseases and conditions whose risk increases with the consumption of alcohol.

that they have to drink significantly more alcohol than they do before their risk of cancer increases.

Almost eight out of 10 (77%) believe there is need for information that alcohol increases the risk of cancer. A way to provide more information about the connection between alcohol and cancer could be to make this information mandatory on alcoholic beverages – a bit like warnings on cigarette packages. 56% of respondents think this idea is good or very good.

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www.cancer.dk/alkoholvaner2020/)

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