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# Binge drinking

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'Binge' drinking is defined as episodic excessive drinking, but there is no worldwide consensus on how many drinks constitute a 'binge'. BEACH (Bettering the Evaluation and Care of Health) used three questions from the World Health Organization's Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT)<sup>1</sup> to gather information on alcohol consumption of patients aged 18 years or over from a subsample (40%) of participants. We defined regular binge drinkers as those who have six or more standard drinks on one occasion, either weekly or monthly.

From April 2009 to March 2010 in BEACH, complete information on patients' alcohol consumption status was known for 31 771 patients. Of these patients, 15% could be classified as regular binge drinkers. In the other categories, 68% of patients did not binge (this included those who did not drink at all), 16% binge drank occasionally (less than monthly), and 2% were heavy drinkers (six or more standard drinks daily or almost daily). *Figure 1* shows alcohol consumption by gender of patient.

## Regular binge drinkers

The proportion of patients who were regular binge drinkers decreased significantly across age group of patients (*Figure 2*). The rate was highest among the youngest group: almost one-third of patients aged 18–24 years were regular binge drinkers. There were twice as many regular binge drinkers among non-healthcare card (HCC) holders than among HCC holders. Patients from an English speaking background were twice as likely to binge drink regularly as those from non-English speaking backgrounds. Regular binge drinkers made up a greater proportion of patients from remote areas compared with patients from major cities or regional areas.

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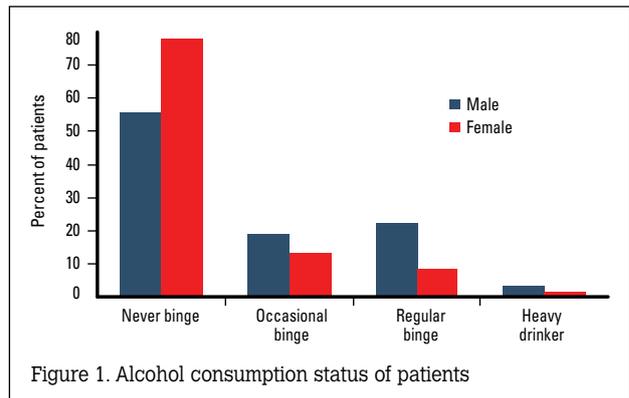


Figure 1. Alcohol consumption status of patients

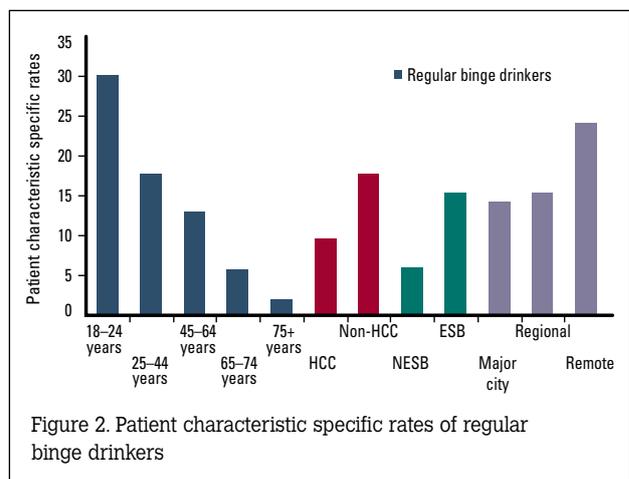


Figure 2. Patient characteristic specific rates of regular binge drinkers

Conflict of interest: none declared.

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