

Certain occupations may be associated with higher rates of heavy drinking

23 February 2021



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Working in certain occupations may be associated with a higher likelihood of heavy drinking in people aged 40-69 years, according to research published in the open access journal *BMC Public Health*. The findings could be used to help target public health or work-based interventions aiming to reduce heavy drinking, according to the authors.

Researchers at the University of Liverpool found that jobs classified as skilled trade occupations, such as construction and [manufacturing jobs](#), were most likely to be associated with heavy [drinking](#) while jobs broadly categorised as professional occupations, for example doctors and teachers, were associated with a lower likelihood of heavy drinking. The occupations associated with the highest rates of heavy drinking in the UK were publicans and managers of licenced premises, plasterers and industrial cleaning process occupations, including cleaners of industrial premises. The occupations associated with the lowest rates of heavy drinking were clergy, physicists, geologists and meteorologists and [medical practitioners](#).

Andrew Thompson, the corresponding author said:

"Heavy [alcohol consumption](#) increases the risk of physical and mental harm and by understanding which occupations are associated with heavy drinking, we can better target resources and interventions. Our research provides insight for [policy makers](#) and employers regarding which sectors may have the highest rates of heavy alcohol consumption."

To examine associations between [occupation](#) and alcohol consumption, the authors analysed data on 100,817 adults from across the UK who were 55 years old on average and recruited to the UK Biobank between 2006 and 2010. Participants reported their weekly or monthly alcohol intake and occupation. Heavy drinkers were defined as women consuming more than 35 UK units of alcohol per week and men consuming more than 50 units per week. In the UK, one unit of alcohol is defined as 10 millilitres (8 grams) of pure alcohol and typical servings of common alcoholic drinks, such as a 175 millilitre glass of wine or a pint of beer, contain one to three units of alcohol.

The authors found that associations between occupation and heavy drinking differed in men and women. For men, the jobs that were most likely to be associated with heavy drinking were skilled trade occupations, while jobs classified as managers and senior officials were most likely to be associated with heavy drinking for women. The occupations associated with the lowest rates of heavy drinking for men were clergy, medical practitioners and town planners, compared with school secretaries, biological scientists, biochemists and physiotherapists for women.

Andrew Thompson said: "The observed differences for men and women in associations between occupations and heavy drinking could indicate how work environments, along with gender and other complex factors, can influence relationships with alcohol. Workplace-based interventions aiming to address alcohol consumption in occupations where

[heavy drinking](#) is prevalent could benefit both individuals and the wider economy by improving employee wellbeing and by indirectly increasing productivity."

The authors caution that due to the cross-sectional nature of the study, it was not possible to establish a causal relationship between [alcohol](#) consumption and occupation. Additionally, as the data was collected between 2006 and 2010, it is unknown whether changes in drinking behaviours have occurred since then.

More information: : "Associations between occupation and heavy alcohol consumption in UK adults aged 40-69 years: a cross-sectional study using the UK Biobank" *BMC Public Health* (2021). [bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral. ... 6/s12889-021-10208-x](https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/s12889-021-10208-x)

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APA citation: Certain occupations may be associated with higher rates of heavy drinking (2021, February 23) retrieved 5 July 2022 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-02-occupations-higher-heavy.html>

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