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# **2017 Spot Survey**

## **Report on Alcohol Consumption Trends**

# **SPOT SURVEY 2017**

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## Executive Summary

ADIC SPOT Survey is a trend survey developed and conducted by Alcohol and Drug Information Centre (ADIC) since 1998. It was conducted as a biannual survey until 2016 both in July and December months of each year. From 2017, the study will be conducted only once a year in July.

The 2017 SPOT survey used a two-stage cluster sample design to produce a representative sample of male population in Sri Lanka above 15 years. At first-stage sampling 11 districts are selected out of the 25 administrative districts in Sri Lanka. Colombo and Jaffna are included automatically due to the importance of these two districts to ADIC's surveillance. In the next stage of sampling, three subgroups were created age wise as 15-24 years, 25-39 years and above 40 years. It was made possible for any male to participate the survey from the selected clusters regardless of the ethnicity, occupation, education etc.

In total 2999 males above 15 years have participated they survey. From the participants, 43.3% have stated they are lifetime abstainers. 25.3% were recognized as current users of alcohol (whom have consumed alcohol within past 30 days). This is a 23% reduction from previous year (32.9%). Percentages of alcohol consumption have decreased in 25-39 and above 40 age-categories compared to previous year(s). However, in age 15-24 youth category, it has increased to 18.2% in 2017 from 15% in previous year.

From current users of alcohol, majority were consuming arrack (68.4%). Beer is the second most used alcohol which was consumed by 44.4% of current users. Kasippu consumption is less than 10% (8.3%). On frequency of alcohol use, 23.6% of current users have stated they consume alcohol on daily basis.

Alcohol users 28.2% expressed they used alcohol as an enjoyment. Average amount spent monthly on alcohol was Rs. 4812.75.

Within the one year prior to July of 2017, 8.6% have initiated alcohol use while 70% of them were within age group 16-20 years. Beer was used most commonly (68.5%) by whom have initiated use within last year. Across all years, 49% have had an unpleasant experience during initiation of use. Mean initiation age among all male respondents is 20.13 years. Mean initiation age among the youth (15-24 years) is 17.87 years.

Following the price increase of alcohol due to imposing of VAT on liquor, nearly one third of the current users have stated they have reduced alcohol consumption with the price increase. On availability of alcohol at super markets, 56% of the total respondents have stated that it will increase the alcohol consumption.

## Introduction

Alcohol consumption has become a major contributing factor for burden of health cost and is listed as the first leading risk factor for premature deaths and disabilities in low and lower middle income countries (NPAC, 2016). Alcohol is a causal factor in 60 types of diseases and injuries and contributing factor in 200 others (WHO Global Status Report on Alcohol, 2004). Seven out of ten deaths are due to Non Communicable Diseases (NCD) in Sri Lanka and alcohol consumption is identified as a one of the four main reasons causing NCDs. Alcohol use is also recognized as a causal factor for domestic violence and increases poverty in Sri Lanka (NPAC, 2016).

Due to these negative consequences of alcohol use, implementation of effective controlling strategies are essential for the wellbeing of the society. Regular surveillance of consumption plays a vital role in evaluation of prevailing controlling strategies. In this context, annual ADIC SPOT Survey on Tobacco and Alcohol trends is a very useful tool not only in evaluating the effectiveness of prevailing national policies but also as a contributor to the research literature on prevailing trends, patterns and attitudes on smoking and drinking in Sri Lanka. This is the only scientific study conducted in Sri Lanka at this scale and in this regularity.

ADIC Spot survey in 2017 was done as a multi-staged cluster survey in 11 administrative districts in Sri Lanka within 3 age-categories. All males above 15 years within these groups were eligible for the study regardless of their ethnicity, education or occupation. Interviews were conducted both in Sinhala and Tamil languages.

Objectives of the SPOT Survey 2017 on alcohol consumption were as follow:

1. Primary objectives:

- Determine patterns of alcohol consumption in the country with respect to different types of alcohol, age groups and districts.
- Determine the trends of consumption with previous years.

2. Secondary objectives:

- Identify the prevailing attitudes and reasons for consumption of alcohol.
- Determine the age of initiation and causes for initiation of alcohol consumption.
- Determine the effects of price increase of alcohol in last quarter of 2016.

## Methodology

SPOT survey used a two-stage cluster sample design to produce representative sample of male population in Sri Lanka above 15 years. Study is limited to males since drinking prevalence has been significantly low among women always. Prevalence of alcohol use within last 30 days among women was only 0.5% in 2015 (STEPS, 2015).

At first-stage sampling, 10 districts were selected randomly out of the 25 administrative districts in Sri Lanka. Colombo was later added to the study, making it 11 districts altogether. In the next stage of sampling, three subgroups were created as 15-24 years, 25-39 years and above 40 years. Planned allocation of participants for each of these groups were 35%, 45% and 20% respectively. This allocation was chosen based on population figures from census and statistics.

Minimum of 250 participants were planned from each district. Participants planned for each age group was as follow:

- 15 – 24 age group: 35%. i.e. a minimum of 88 per district, and 968 in total
- 24 – 39 age group: 45%. i.e. a minimum of 112 per district, and 1238 in total
- Above 40: 20%. I.e. a minimum of 50 per district, and 550 in total

It was possible for any male to participate the survey from the selected clusters regardless of the ethnicity, occupation, education etc.

### Data collection

Data was collected through an interviewer administered questionnaire having 40 questions in total. There were 17 questions on tobacco smoking and 15 questions on alcohol use. Other questions were on demographic or measurements of tobacco control. Questionnaire was prepared in Sinhala and translated to Tamil. Interviewing was conducted in either Sinhala or Tamil medium depending on data collection area.

The survey was conducted in July, 2017 and completion took a period of one month.

Since some respondents did not have time to respond to all the questions, their answers were vague or incomplete. These incomplete responses were excluded from the study and 2999 respondents were left.

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used for analyzing the data.

## Results

### Demographic Information

Age distribution of the 2999 males who took part in the survey given in table below. 35.4% of males were from 15-24 years age category. 43% were from 25-39 years category and 21.6% of participants were above 40 years.

Age Category	Number	Percentage (%)
<b>15 - 24 Years</b>	1061	35.4
<b>25 - 39 Years</b>	1291	43
<b>&gt; = 40 Years</b>	647	21.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>2999</b>	<b>100</b>

TABLE 1: AGE CATEGORY OF THE RESPONDENTS

Data were collected from 11 administrative districts. Table 2 gives the breakdown of the respondents collected from each district.

District	Respondents (Number)
<b>Jaffna</b>	238
<b>Kilinochchi</b>	234
<b>Gampaha</b>	306
<b>Galle</b>	254
<b>Anuradhapura</b>	299
<b>Kandy</b>	273
<b>Kegalle</b>	300
<b>Colombo</b>	285
<b>Kurunegala</b>	255
<b>Ampara</b>	295
<b>Badulla</b>	252

TABLE 2: DISTRICT WISE BREAKDOWN OF RESPONDENTS

On level education of the respondents, more than 70% of the respondents have completed their education either upto GCE Advanced Level examination (36.5%) or the GCE Ordinary Level exam (34.4%). There was a 5.4% of degree holders among them and 2.2% who have not completed any proper education.

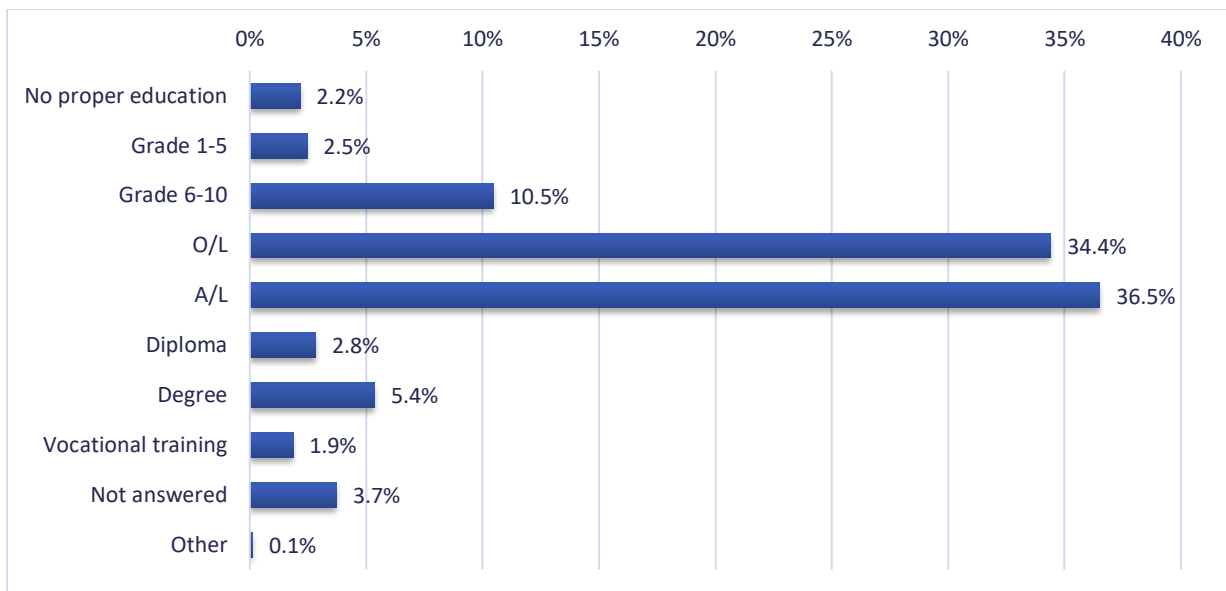


FIGURE 1: EDUCATION LEVELS OF RESPONDENTS

Job classification of the respondents were done under the Sri Lanka Standard Classification of Occupations, 2011. In addition to SLSCO category list, separate categorization was made for Students, Retired, Unemployed, and Police & Armed Forces. Distribution of respondents among each of the occupational categories are as follows.

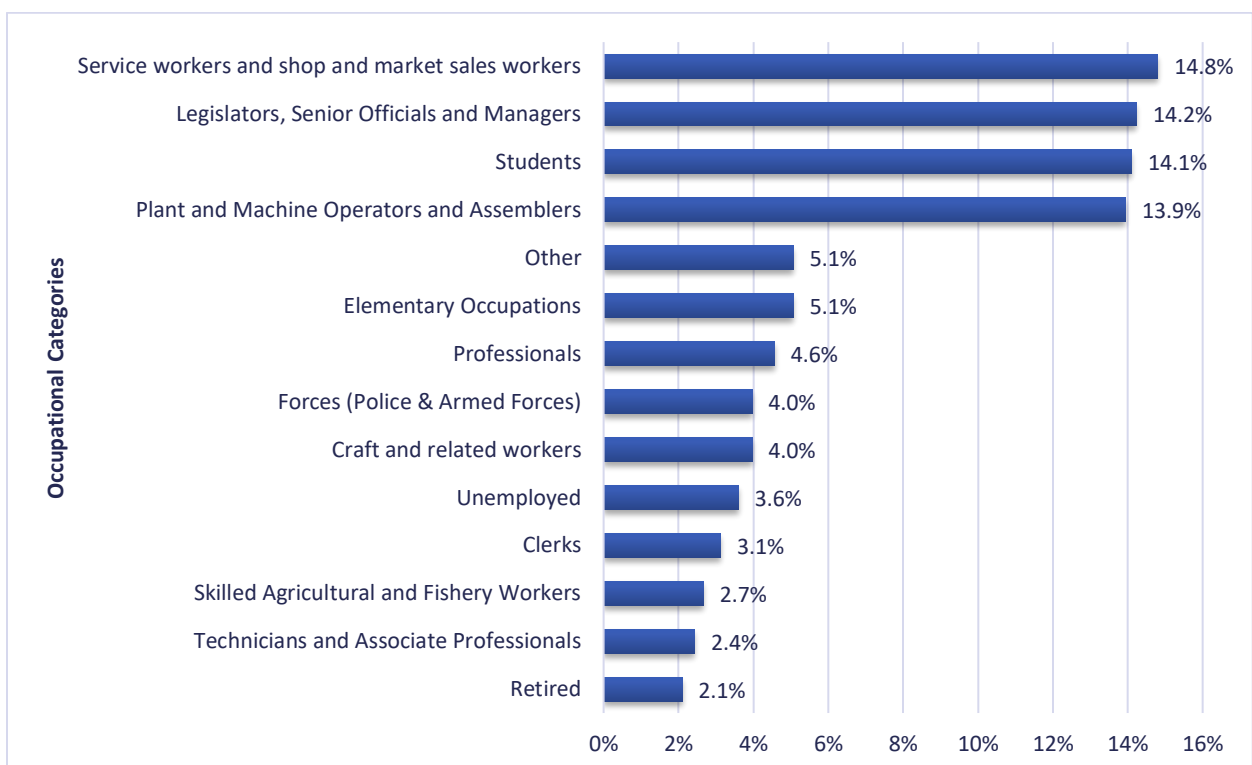


FIGURE 2: OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORIES OF THE RESPONDENTS



## Trends of Alcohol Use

### Alcohol Consumption

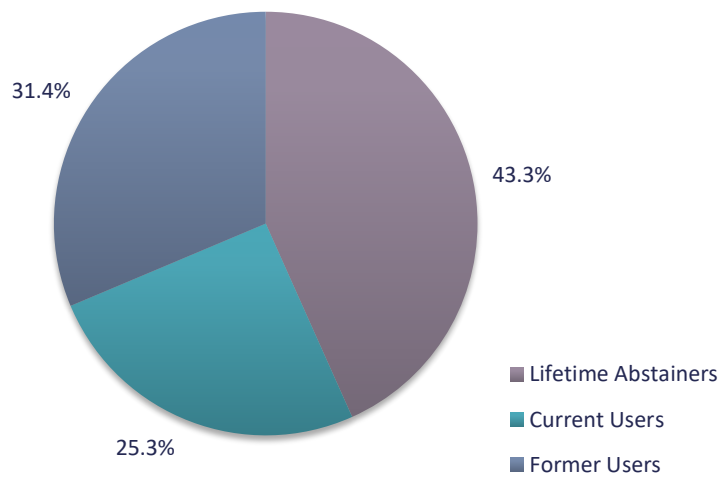


FIGURE 3: ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

From the total valid responses (n=2995), 43.3% of the males have stated that they had never used alcohol (n=1297). They are considered as lifetime abstainers (never users). Current users are who have used alcohol within past 30 days. 25.3% of the males were current users (n=759) while 31.4% of males were former users (n=939) who has not consumed alcohol within past 30 days.

### Comparison with Previous Year

In 2017, current users of alcohol (25.3%) have decreased by 23.5% compared to 2016 current user percentage (33.1%). Though the lifetime abstainers is lesser in 2017, more users have refrained from using alcohol in past 30 days in 2017 than in 2016.

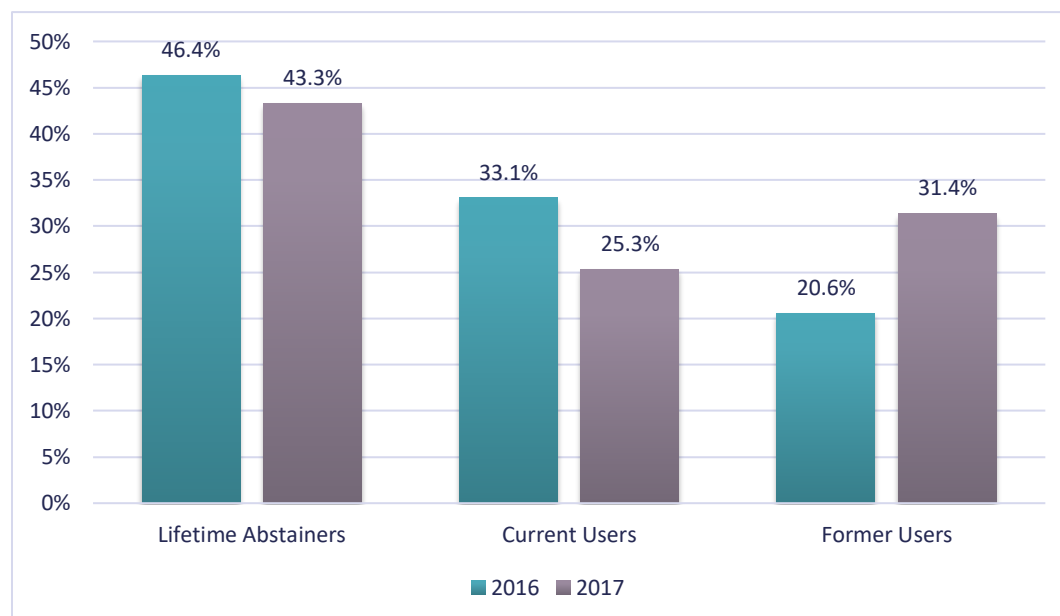


FIGURE 4: COMPARISON OF ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION 2016/2017

23%

Reduction  
of current  
drinkers

### Trends of Alcohol Use by Age

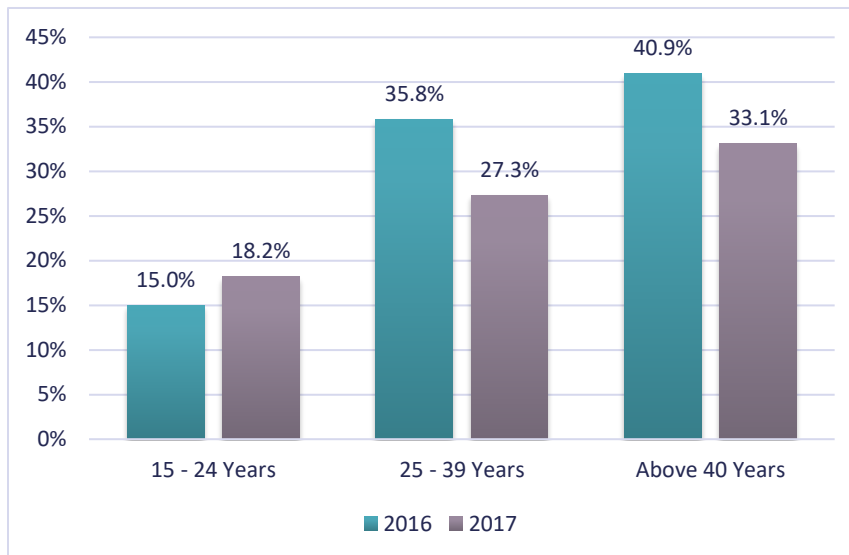


FIGURE 5: CURRENT ALCOHOL USAGE BY AGE GROUP (CURRENT USERS)

Highest percentage on current alcohol use was from the age category above 40 years (33.1%). The lowest current usage is recorded from the age category of 15-24 years (18.2%). Compared with 2016, current users of alcohol has increased in 15-24 age category while it has decreased in other two age categories.

### Trend of Alcohol Use by Frequency

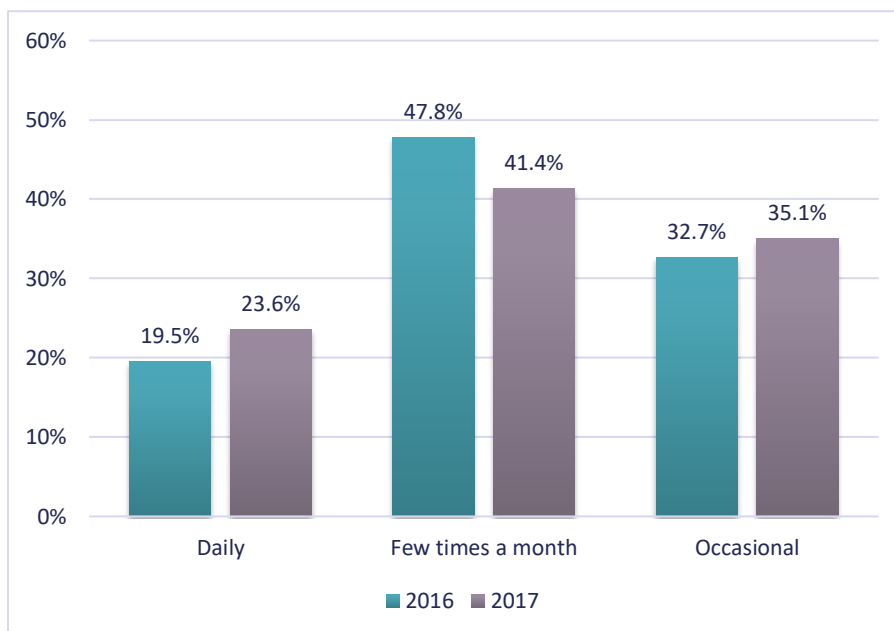
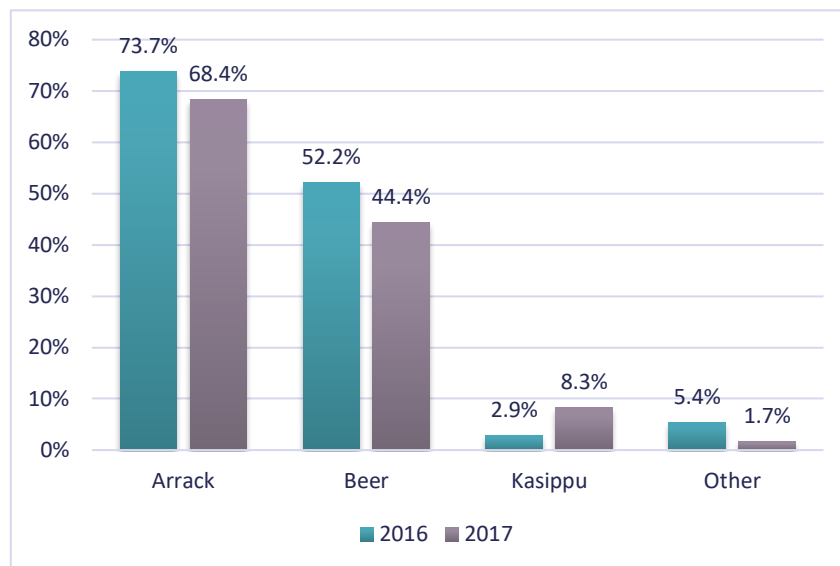


FIGURE 6: ALCOHOL USE BY FREQUENCY OF USE (CURRENT USERS)

Non daily use is most common among the current users over daily usage. In 2017, use of alcohol on daily basis among current users (23.6%) shows an increase compared to 2016 (19.5%).

### Trend of Alcohol Use by Type



Among the current users, arrack is consumed by most alcohol users (68.4%). Beer is consumed by 44.4% of the current users of alcohol. Kasippu use is significantly low compared to arrack and beer.

FIGURE 7: CURRENT ALCOHOL USAGE BY ALCOHOL TYPE

### Trend of Alcohol Use by Profession

Highest percentage of current users of alcohol from total respondents within the category was in “Plant and Machine Operators & Assemblers” category (39.2%). This was followed by Retired persons (34.9%) and “Technicians & Associate professionals” (34.2%) categories. From the employed categories, Skilled Agriculture and Fishery workers (17.5%) and Professionals (19.7%) were the lowest with current user percentage.

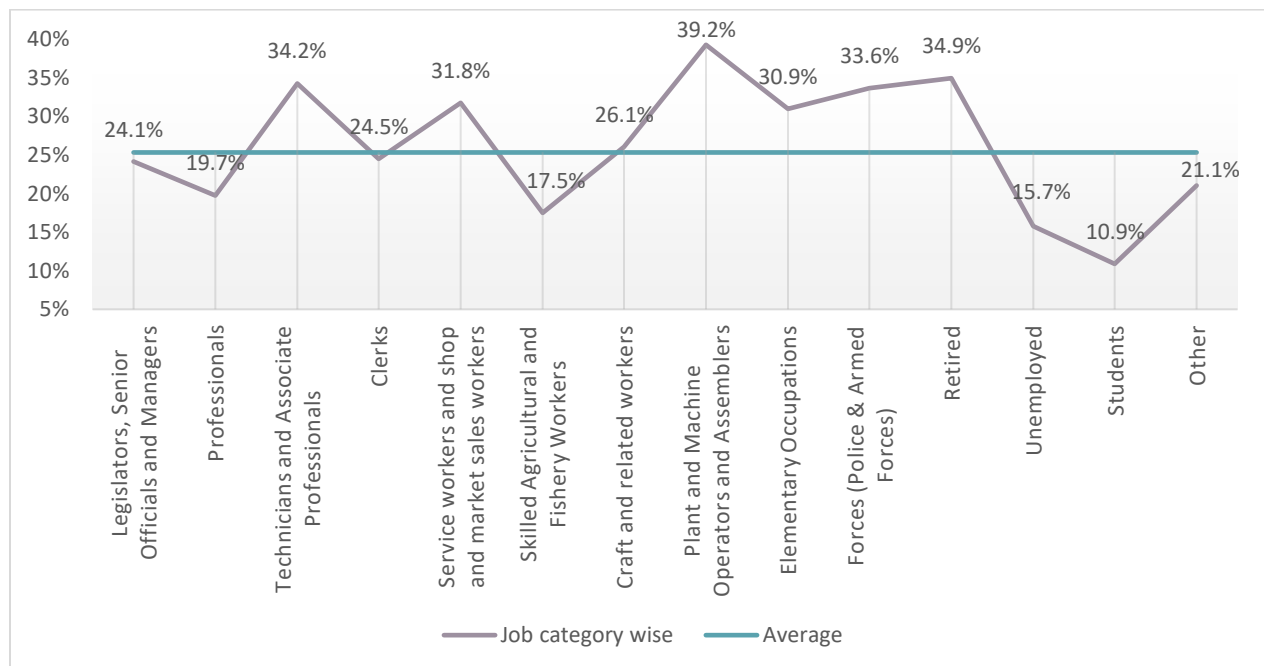
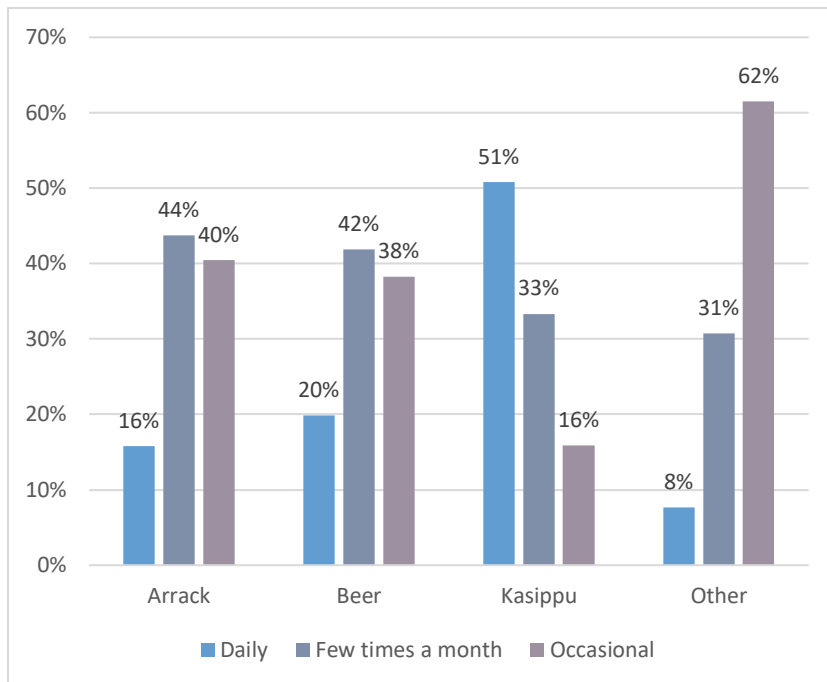


FIGURE 8: TREND OF ALCOHOL USE BY PROFESSION

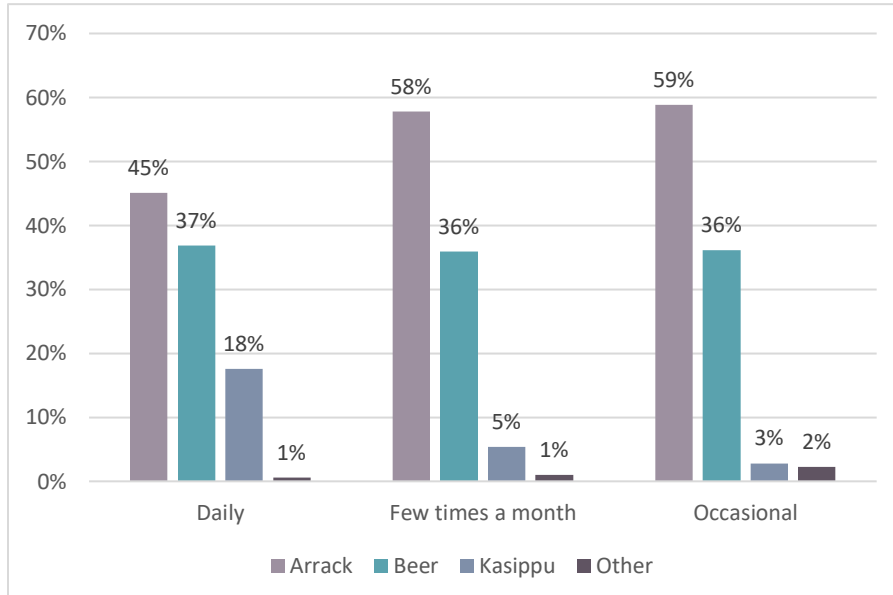
### Frequency of Alcohol Use by Type



For most types of alcohol, daily use is lower than the non-daily usage. Arrack and beer are used by most drinkers “few times a month” or occasionally. Most users of kasippu consume it on daily basis, but overall kasippu consumption is only 8.3% (Figure 7). Total number of Kasippu users (N=63) is very smaller than for arrack and beer (N=519, N=337).

FIGURE 9: FREQUENCY OF ALCOHOL USE BY TYPE

### Type of Alcohol Use by Frequency



Arrack is the most used alcohol type by the current alcohol users in all three types based on used frequency. Beer is the second most used type of alcohol across types of frequencies.

FIGURE 10: TYPE OF ALCOHOL USE BY FREQUENCY

### Type of Alcohol Use by Age

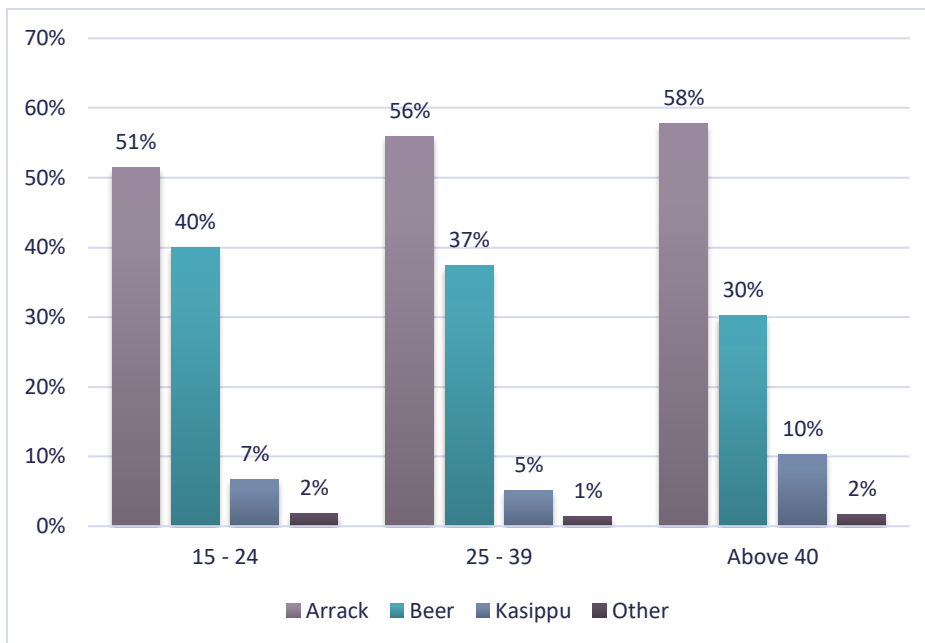


FIGURE 11: TYPE OF ALCOHOL USE BY AGE (CURRENT USERS)

Arrack is the most used alcohol type by the current alcohol users in all age categories. Beer is the second most used type of alcohol across age groups. Use of Kasippu or any other type of alcohol is significantly low among all age groups.

### Frequency of Alcohol Use by Age

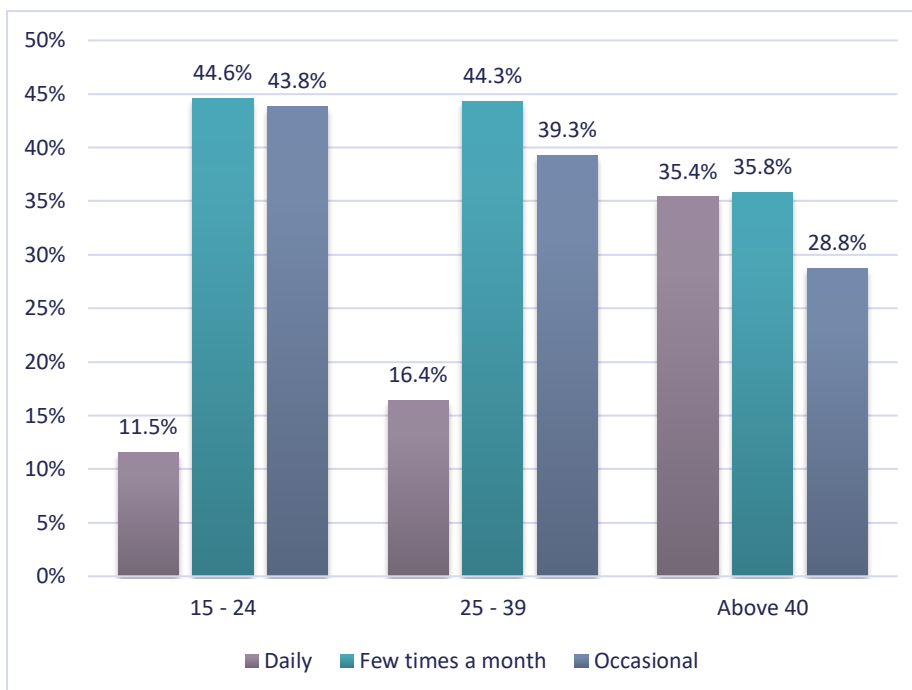
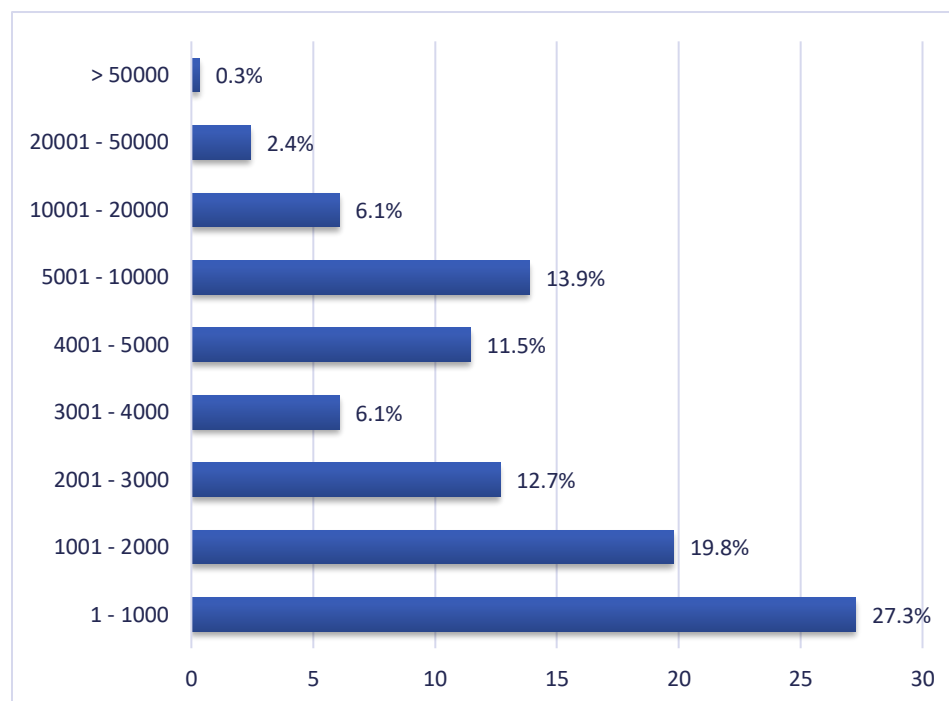


FIGURE 12: FREQUENCY OF ALCOHOL USE BY AGE (CURRENT USERS)

Daily use of alcohol is about one fourth of other frequencies in age group 15–24 years. It is about one third in age group 25-39 years. Daily use frequency is highest in age group above 40 years which is almost same as few times a month and more than the occasional use.

## Economics of Alcohol Use

### Monthly Expenditure on Alcohol (current users)



Though 27.3% of current users spend less than 1000 rupees on alcohol per month, about 40% of current users of alcohol spent more than 3000 rupees on alcohol per month.

FIGURE 13: MONTHLY EXPENDITURE ON ALCOHOL BY CURRENT USERS

### Average expenditure on alcohol

On average current users have spent Rs. 4812 (n=576) per month on alcohol. Table 3 shows average monthly expenditure on alcohol by current users according to the frequency of use.

Frequency of use	Mean (Rs)	N	Std. Error (Rs)
Daily	8756.95	123	1087.02
Few times a month	4001.76	238	332.97
Occasional	2250.81	161	225.40
Average of all users	4812.75	576	316.91

TABLE 3: AVERAGE EXPENDITURE ON ALCOHOL

### Average Monthly Expenditure on Alcohol by Profession

Blue collar workers appear to spend more on alcohol than white collar workers. Though the expenditure is less for “Forces” category, it should be noted that they are able purchase alcohol at a lower price.



FIGURE 14: AVERAGE EXPENDITURE ON ALCOHOL BY PROFESSION

## Initiation of Alcohol Use

### Alcohol Initiated Age (across all years)

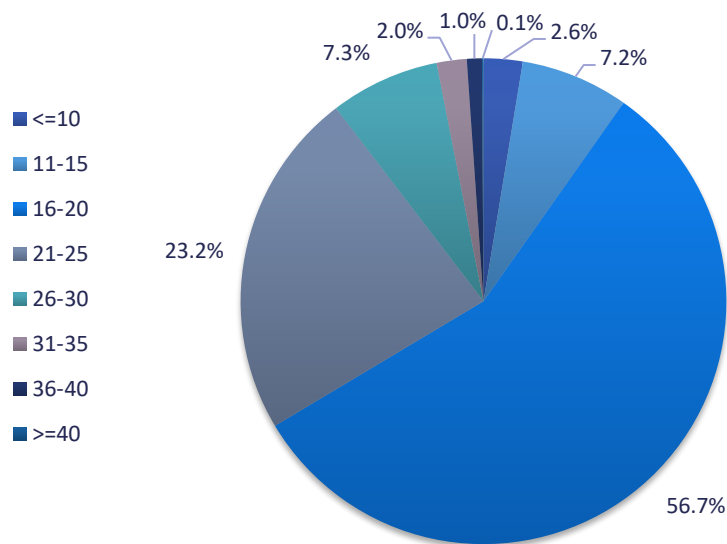


FIGURE 15: AGE OF ALCOHOL INITIATION (ACROSS ALL YEARS)

Most of the ever users of alcohol have initiated their usage between 16 – 20 years (56.7%). Next highest (23.2%) age range ever users have initiated alcohol is 21-25 years.

### Initiation within last year

In 2017, 8.6% (n=146) of all ever users of alcohol (N=1696) have initiated the use within last one year period. In 2016, 8.1% (n=102) of all ever users (N=1253) have initiated within an year.

### Alcohol Initiated age (last year)

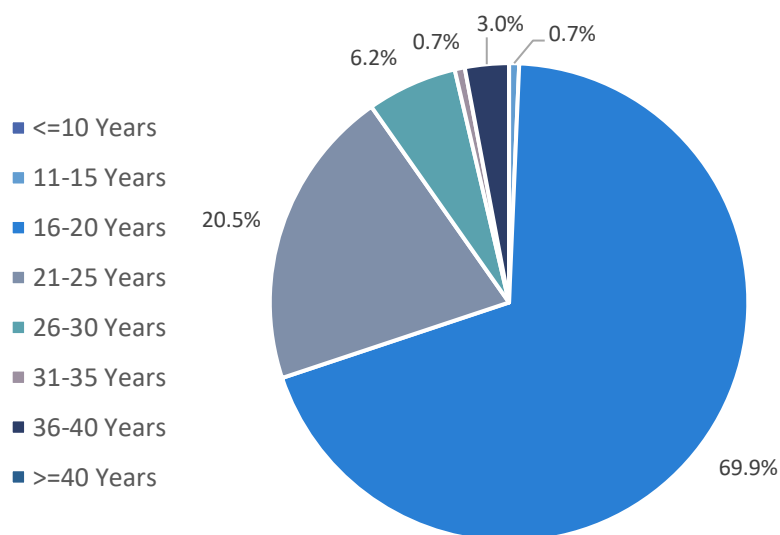


FIGURE 16: ALCOHOL INITIATED AGE (WITHIN LAST YEAR)

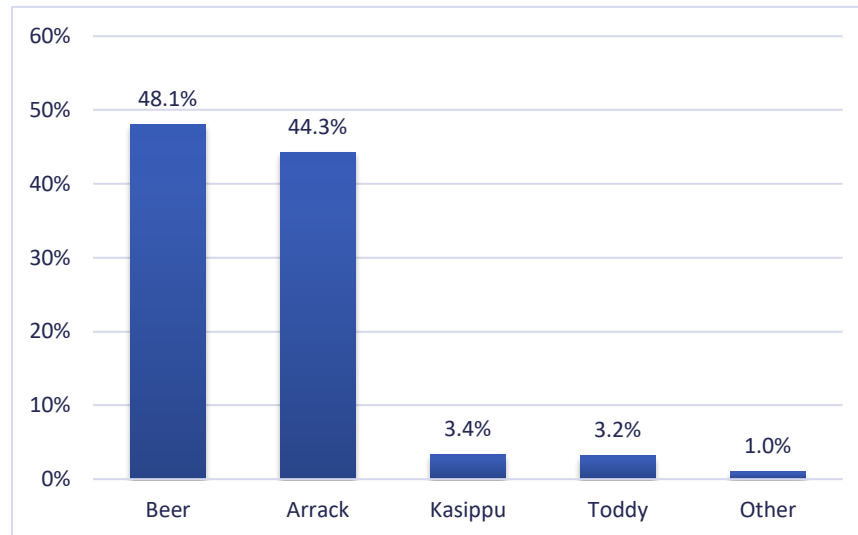
Distribution of users who have initiated within last one year across different age groups is as in Figure 16. Majority of initiation within last year 69.9% (n=102) occurred in 16-20 years age group while next highest 20.5% (n=30) occurred in the 21-25 years age group.



### Mean Initiation age

Mean initiation age of alcohol is 20.13 years ( $n=1641$ ,  $SD=5.27$ ) of all users across age groups. In the youth group (15-24 years), mean initiation age of alcohol is 17.87 years ( $n=448$ ,  $SD=2.92$ ).

### Type of Alcohol Consumed at Initiation (across all years)



Most prominent alcohol type used at initiation have been beer and arrack. Beer has been used by 48.1% of ever users followed by Arrack which was used by 44.3% of ever users. Other types for initiation is not that common and are less than one tenth of the two prominent types.

FIGURE 17: TYPE OF ALCOHOL AT THE INITIATION (ACROSS ALL YEARS)

### Type of Alcohol Consumed at Initiation (last year)

Majority of ever users of alcohol who have initiated within last one year have used beer (68.5%,  $n=100$ ), while next highest used alcohol type was arrack which was 28.8% ( $n=42$ ).

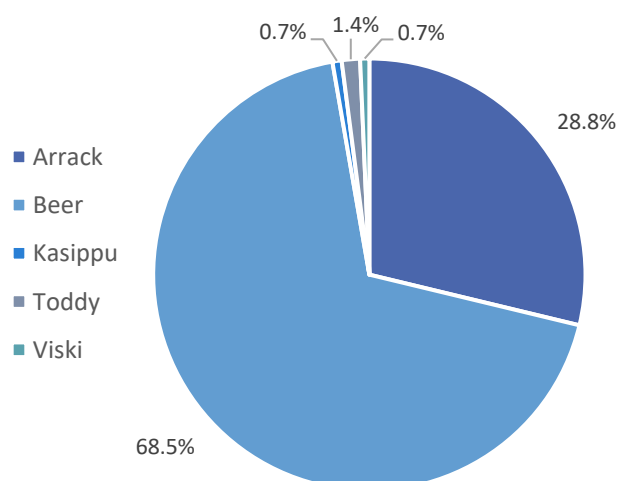
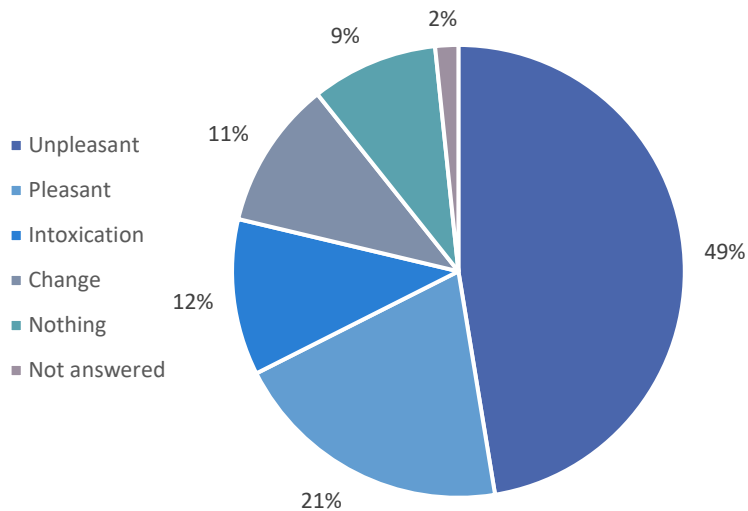


FIGURE 18: TYPE OF ALCOHOL CONSUMED AT INITIATION (LAST YEAR)

### Experience at Initiation of Alcohol (across all years)



Majority of ever alcohol users (49%) have had an unpleasant experience on their first use of alcohol. Only 21% of the ever users have stated their first experience was pleasant.

FIGURE 19: EXPERIENCE AT FIRST USE (ACROSS ALL YEARS)

Most users have reported that the unpleasant experience was a burning feeling (22.1%). Another 18.8% of users have reported they felt disgusted. Other mostly reported unpleasant experiences were; faintish (15.5%), bitter (15.3%) and vomitish (11.6%).

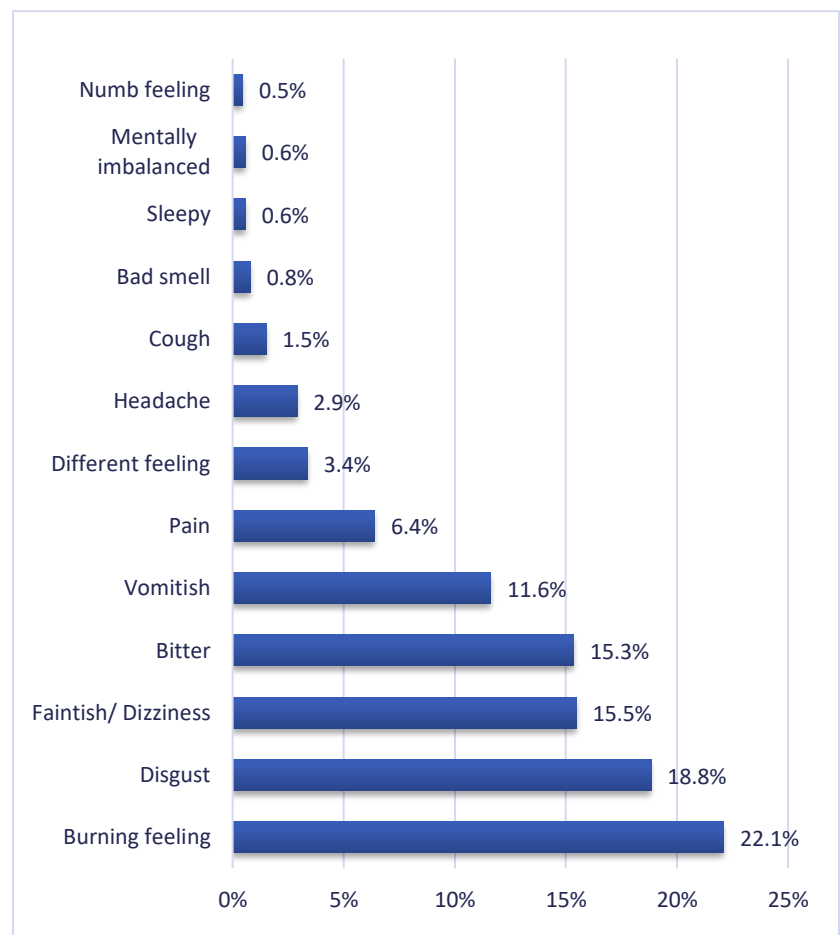
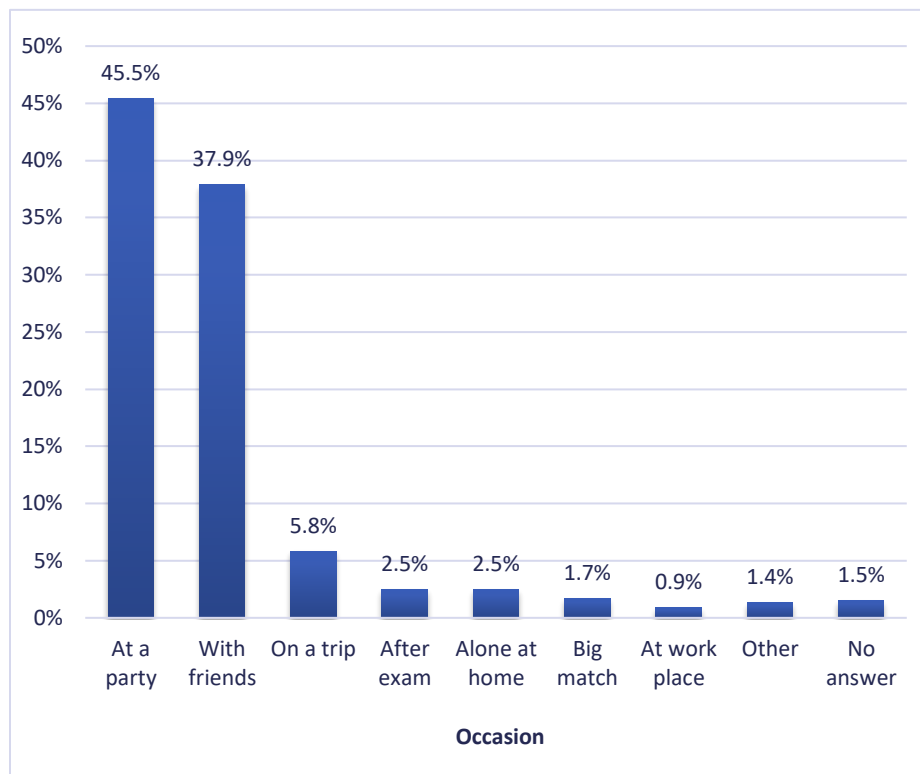


FIGURE 20: UNPLEASANT EXPERIENCE ON FIRST USE OF ALCOHOL

### Occasions of Alcohol Initiation (across all years)

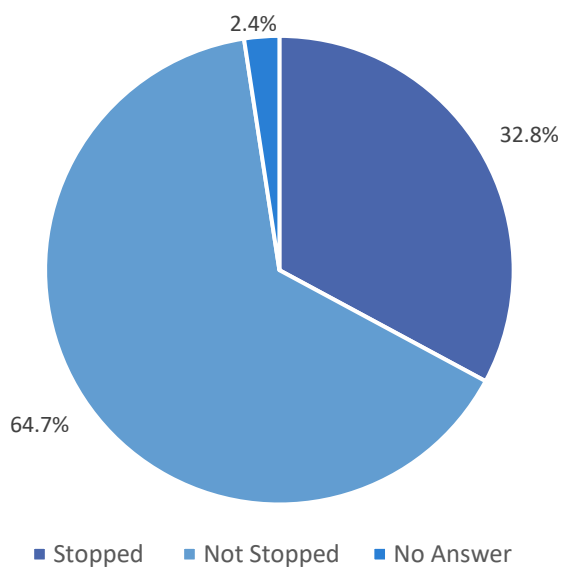


The majority of the ever users (N=1696) of alcohol have initiated use at a party (45.5%, n=771). Another 37.9% of the ever users have initiated alcohol use together with friends.

FIGURE 21: OCCASIONS OF ALCOHOL INITIATION (ACROSS ALL YEARS)

## Cessation of Alcohol Use

### Quit from Alcohol Use (across all years)



From ever users of alcohol (n=1696), 32.8% (n=557) have quit alcohol use. 64.7% have not quit alcohol use and 2.4% have not answered the question.

FIGURE 22: QUIT FROM ALCOHOL USE  
(ACROSS ALL YEARS)

### Age Quit from Alcohol Use

From the respondents who specified the age they have quit from alcohol use (n=420), most have quit within 21-25 years (24.3%, n=102) and 16-20 years (22.9% n=96).

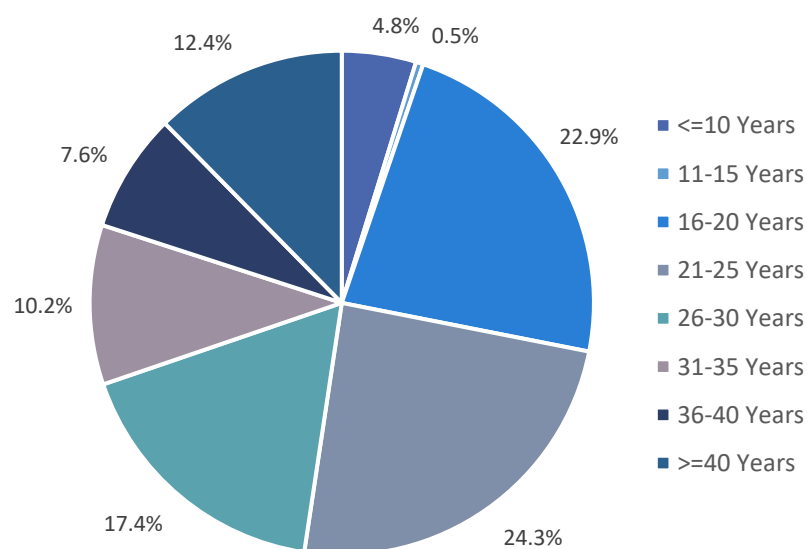


FIGURE 23: AGE QUIT FROM ALCOHOL USE

## Reasons to Quit Alcohol Use

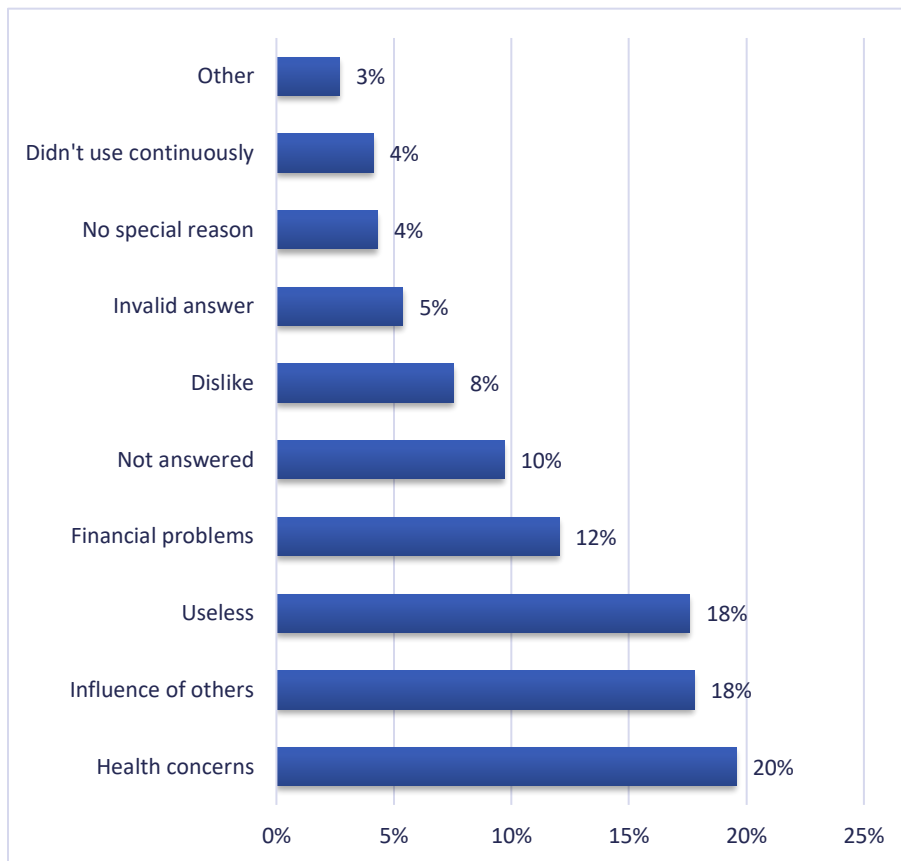


FIGURE 24: REASONS TO QUIT ALCOHOL USE

From whom have quit use of alcohol most percentage (20%) have done it due to “Health concerns” while another 18% have quit due to influence of others like family, friends etc. and considering consuming alcohol as a “useless” practice.

## Effectiveness of Alcohol Control Policies

### Impact of Price Increase on Alcohol

In November 2016, price of all types of alcohol increased by 15% - 20% due to imposing of 15% value added tax (VAT). Survey results suggests, due to the price increase of alcohol, one third (31.5%) of current users have reduced their usage. Another 10% of users have reduced spending their own money on alcohol. There was no change on 52.2% of the current users.

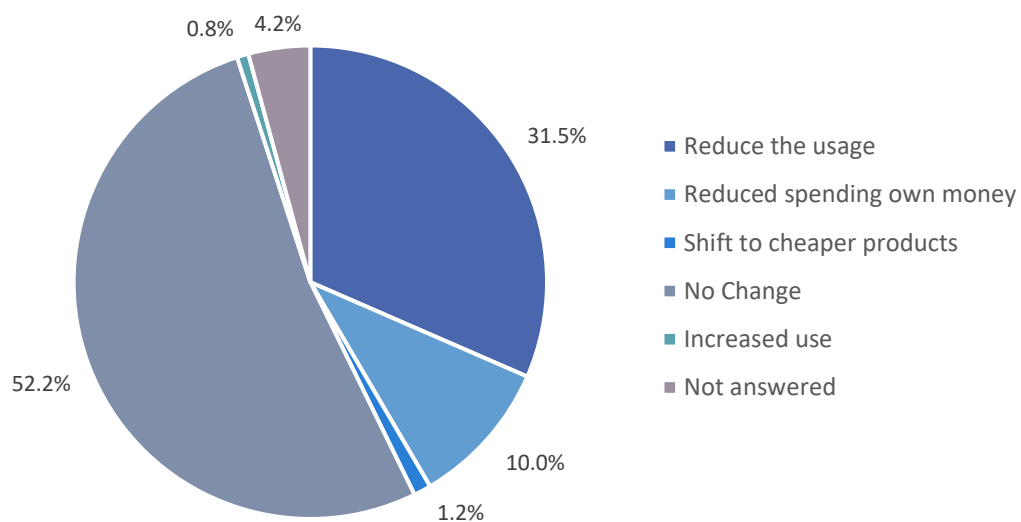
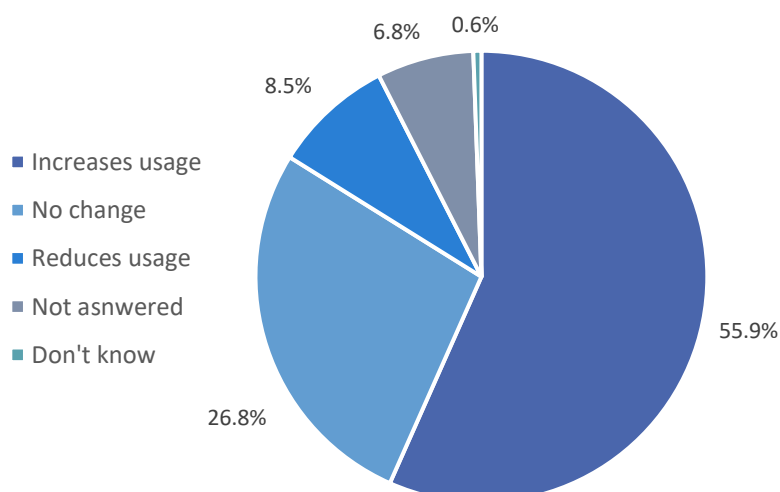


FIGURE 25: IMPACT OF PRICE INCREASE ON ALCOHOL USAGE

### Opinion on availability at super markets

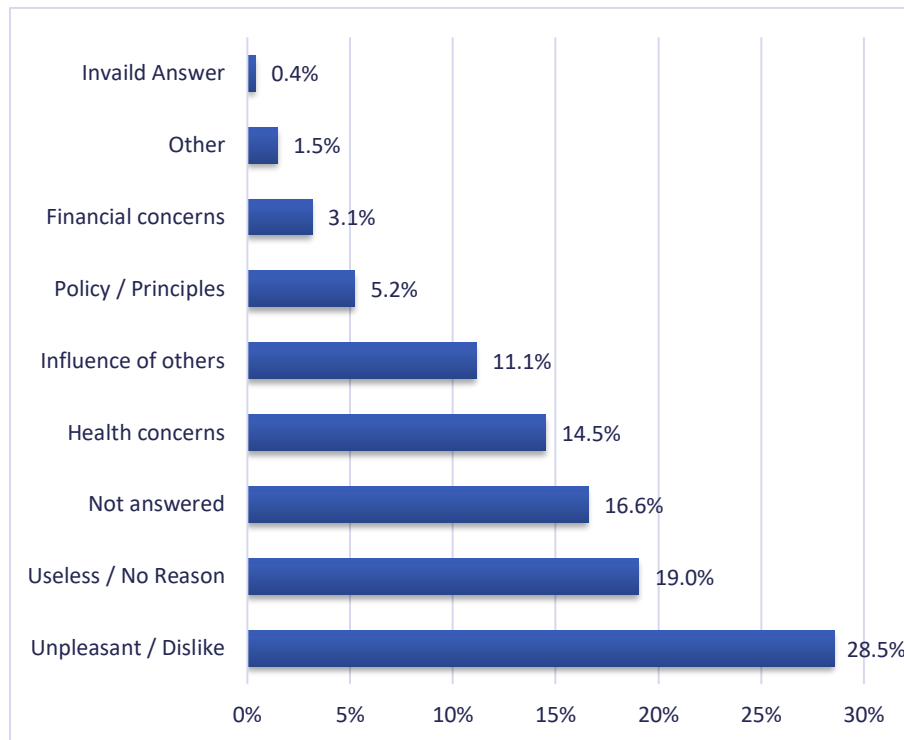


More than half of participants of the survey (55.9%) were of the opinion that availability of alcohol at super markets is increasing the usage. Only 26.8% had the opinion it does not change the usage.

FIGURE 26: OPINION ON AVAILABILITY AT SUPER MARKETS

## Miscellaneous

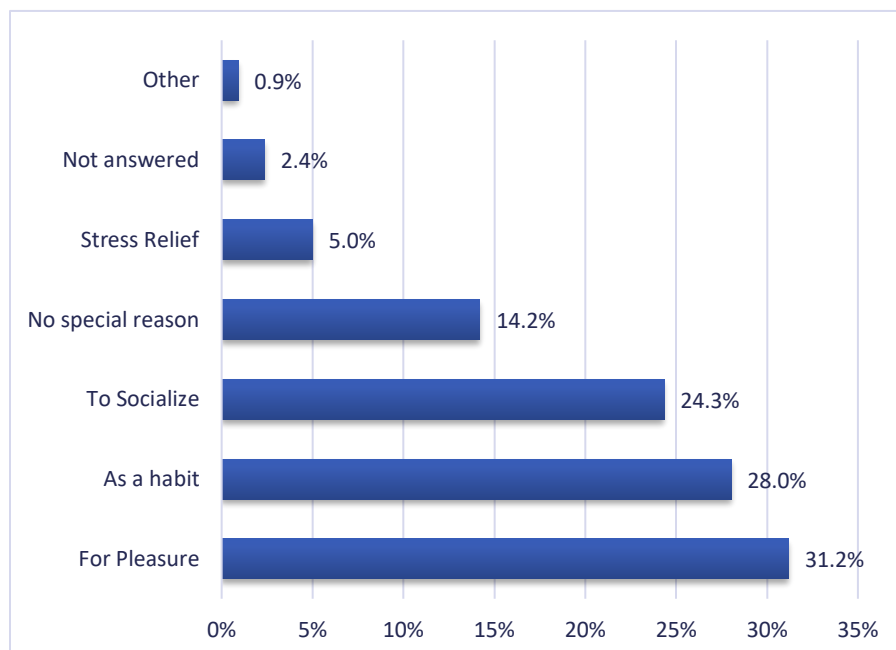
### Reason for Never Consuming Alcohol



From never users of alcohol 28.5% have not used alcohol due to dislike or since they consider alcohol as unpleasant. Another 19% of never users consider consuming alcohol as “useless” or do not see any reason to consume. 14.5% of never users do not use alcohol due to concerns on health.

FIGURE 27: REASONS FOR NEVER CONSUMING ALCOHOL

### Reasons for Consuming Alcohol



From current users of alcohol, only 31.2% use it for pleasure. 28% of use it as a habit and another 24.3% use it to assist socialize with others. 14.2% of users could not specify any reason to use alcohol.

FIGURE 28: REASONS FOR CONSUMING ALCOHOL

### Alcohol Consumption Trend (Across Years)

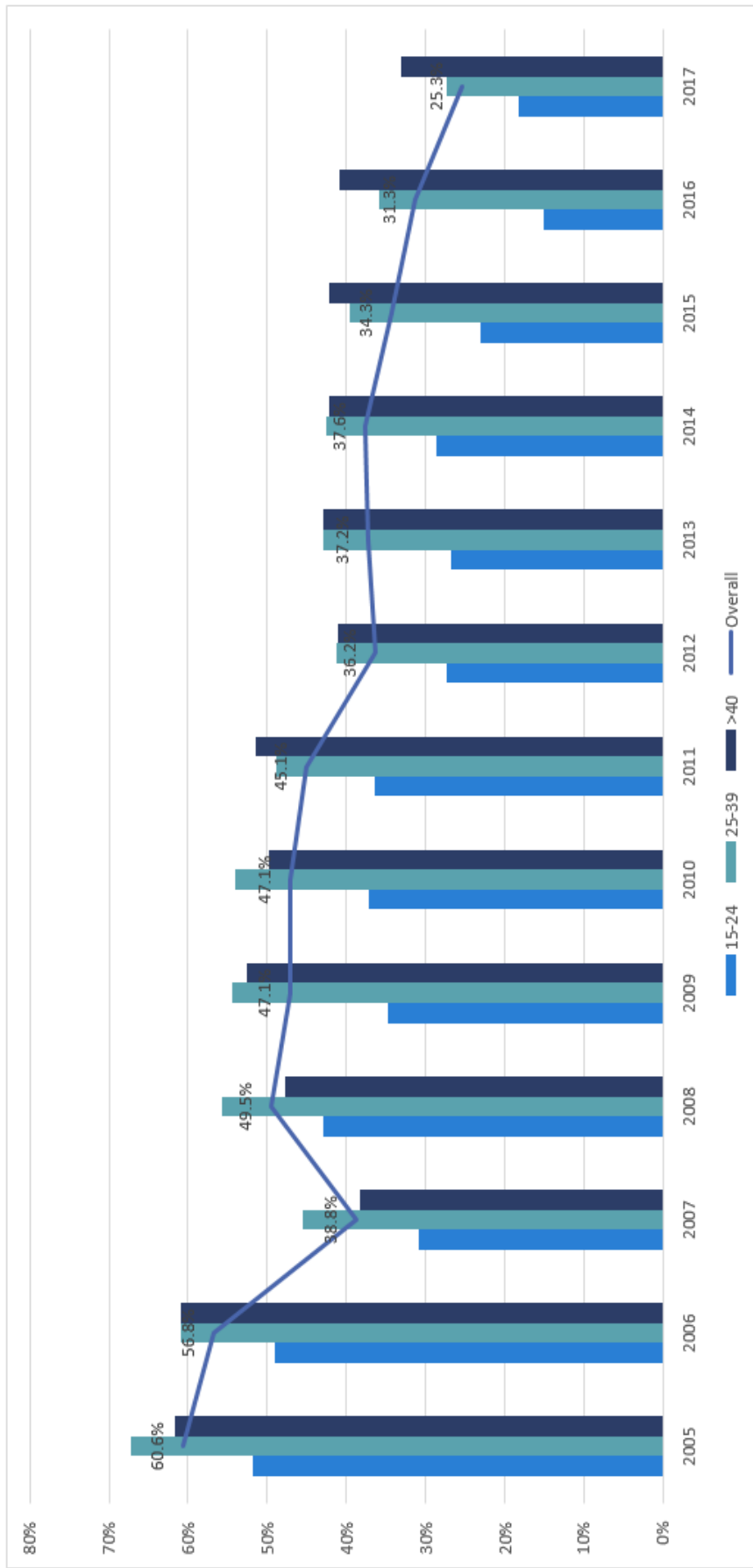


FIGURE 29: ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION TREND (CURRENT USERS)

Source: ADIC SPOT SURVEY (2005 – 2017). Values are standardized for 2017 distribution among age groups.



## Discussion

Due to enforcement of VAT on liquor from November, 2016 price of almost all types of alcohol increased by 15%. SPOT Survey results indicates a decreasing trend of alcohol use by July of 2017 which is about 23%. Also one third of the current users have reduced their alcohol use due to price increase which is a further indication that the price increase was catalyst in reducing consumption.

However, number of users initiated use within a year does not show any decrease. And 70% of alcohol initiation within last year was by males below 21 years of age. This is alarming since long term use and alcohol related harms are associated with early use of alcohol. Also majority of initiation was with “beer”, which is a concern since less than 21 year olds are not permitted to purchase alcohol. 56% of all the respondents have stated that availability of alcohol in super markets will increase the consumption. These results suggests controlling strategies should be further tightened to reduce the availability and promotion of alcohol on this age group. Also younger generation should be effectively educated to reduce the appeal to alcohol.

SPOT Survey results also suggests both arrack and beer use had reduced during this period but remain much higher than the illicit liquor use. Arrack is consumed by 68.4% of current users and beer is consumed by 44.4% of current users. Kasippu consumption was less than 10% (8.3%) among the current users of alcohol. This results suggests that illicit liquor (kasippu) consumption is not as popular as industry claims it to be.

On reasons for consuming alcohol, only one third of the current users are using it for pleasure. Majority of users are not using it for pleasure and other main reasons for use as stated by the current users are to socialize (24.3%) and as a habit (28%).

From the respondents, 43.3% of the males were lifetime abstainers of alcohol. Main reasons for never using alcohol given by them were “dislike”, “considering it as useless” and “health concerns”. Another 31.4% of the males were former users. “Health concerns”, “influence of closed ones” and “considering it as useless” were among main reasons to quit from alcohol use. High number of abstainers and former users may indicate the effectiveness of prevention efforts conducted by various government and non-government institutes in addition to the effective policy measures.

Consumption trend varies among different occupation categories. Certain blue color work categories have a higher use of alcohol in comparison to the overall average. Therefore the penetration of alcohol prevention programs is recommended for these occupational categories.

## References

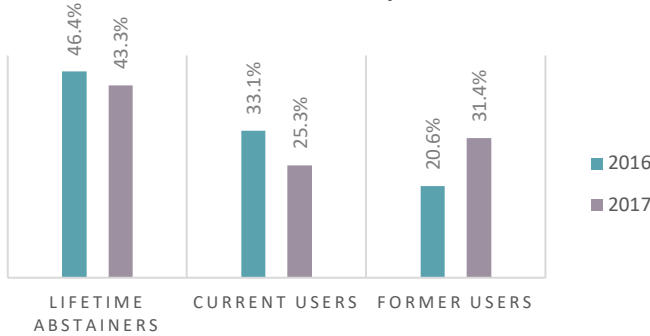
National Policy on Alcohol Control, Sri Lanka (2016), Ministry of Health, Nutrition and Indigenous Medicine.

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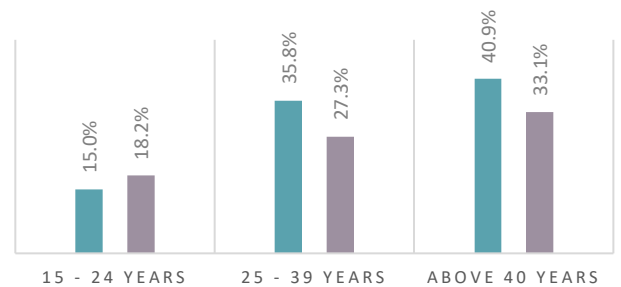
## Annexure 1: Alcohol Fact Sheet (SPOT 2017)

Sample size 2999 respondents | 11 Districts | Males above 15 years (15+)

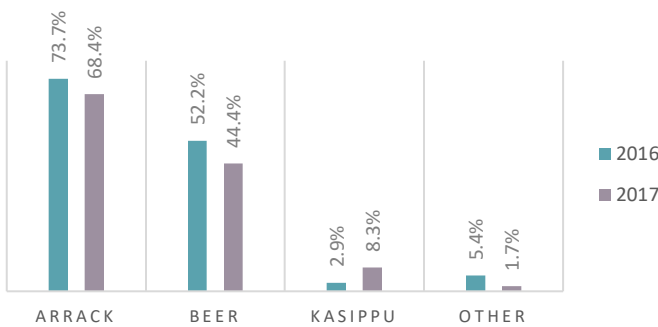
**Alcohol consumption**



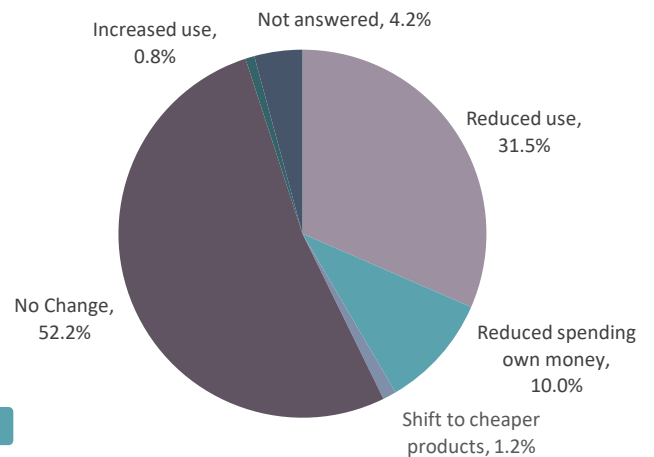
**Alcohol consumption by age**



**Alcohol consumption by type**



**Effect of price increase<sup>1</sup>**



Mean age of initiation of alcohol for youth group (15-24) is 17.87 years.

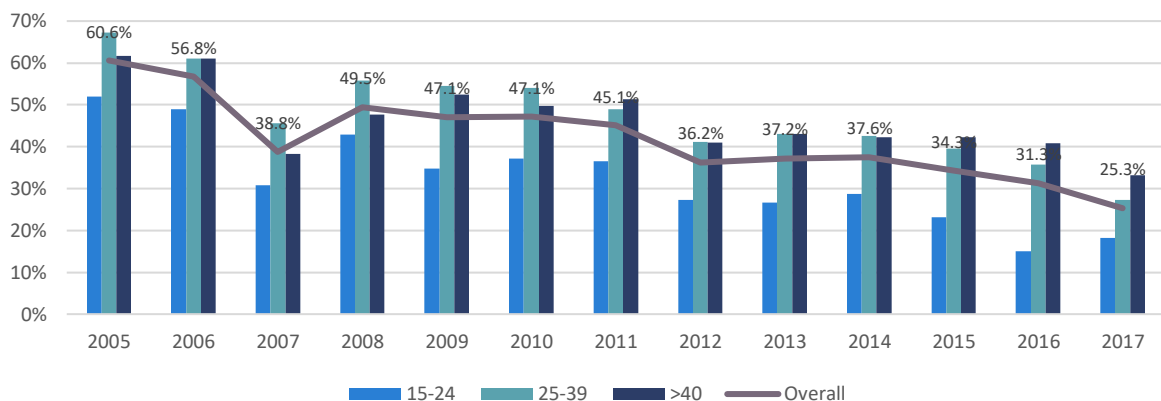
68.5% of the alcohol initiation within last year in youth group is with beer.

64.7% of the ever users have not been able to quit.

31.5% of the current drinkers have reduced use after the price increase.

<sup>1</sup> Price of alcohol increased in November 2016 due to imposing of VAT (15%)

**Age standardized trend of alcohol consumption (2005-2017)**



## Annexure 2: Questionnaire

1. What is your age?

Questions 3 – 19 are on smoking. These questions are available on 2017 SPOT Survey – Report on Trend of Smoking in Sri Lanka - 2017.

20. Have you ever consumed alcohol?

21. If you have never consumed alcohol, what was the reason for it?

Questions 20 – 34 are only for who have ever consumed alcohol

22. At which age you consumed alcohol for the first time?

23. What was the occasion you consumed alcohol for the first time?

24. What was the type of alcohol you consumed at first instance?

25. What is your experience at first use?

26. Have you stopped consuming alcohol now?

27. What is the reason for your answer above?

28. If you have stopped alcohol, when was it?

29. When did you consume alcohol last? (Within last month or Beyond last month)

Questions 30 - 34 are only for who have consumed alcohol within last month

30. What are the type of alcohol products you consumed with the frequencies?

31. How much did you spend on alcohol in last month?

32. What are the reasons for you to consume alcohol?

33. Did you use of alcohol change after price increase?

34. What were the changes?

Question 35 – 38 are on alcohol availability and industry strategies

39. What is your highest level of education?

40. What is your occupation?

*Note: Questionnaire is developed in Sinhala language and then translated to Tamil language. Translation for English is done for documentation purposes.*