

2020

TREND SURVEY ON **ALCOHOL**



Annual Trend Survey on
Alcohol Consumption in Sri Lanka

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2020**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Alcohol and Drug Information Centre (ADIC Sri Lanka) conducts trend surveys annually for Alcohol and Tobacco since 1998. The trend survey analysis (also known as the SPOT Survey) is conducted under the main aim of mapping and tracing current trends of Alcohol and Tobacco consumption across Sri Lanka. This report will present the findings of the trend survey for the year 2020 which was aimed at determining trends of alcohol consumption across the country, thereby assisting policymakers in formulating effective policies that aid reduction and prevention. Data was collected through a survey administered among the population of males above 15 years of age across 11 selected districts.

Data analysis and results were formulated based on a total of 2963 responses who fit the inclusion criterion. 22% (n=644) were current consumers of alcohol. This was a 6% decrease compared to the previous year (2019, 28%). The sample was divided into three age groups for analysis namely, the 15-24, the 25-39 and 40 and above. Although a decrease is visible in all age groups, decline is significant in both 15-24 and 40 and above age groups while decline is slight in the 25-39 age group. The daily consumers (9%) are insignificant among the current alcohol consumers. However, Beer consumers are higher than alcohol consumers only among the 15-24 age group alcohol consumers, while Arrack consumption is higher than Beer in both the 25-39 age groups and 40 and above age groups of alcohol consumers.

The most vulnerable group for alcohol initiation is the teenagers. The highest figure for the alcohol initiation is visible in ages 18-20 and it is 41.6%. 65.9% of alcohol consumers has initiated their alcohol consumption by 20 years. Almost all the alcohol consumers (95.8%) have initiated by age before 30 years. The median age for alcohol initiation is 20 years. The majority of alcohol consumers has consumed Beer as the first time of alcohol consumption (55%) while the second highest consumed alcohol at the beginning is Arrack (38%). Reasons for the alcohol initiation are solely depended on the socialising and a vast majority has initiated when they are hanging around with friends (66.4%). Quitting alcohol consumption is lesser (19.4%) comparatively to the non-quit. However, COVID 19/ Curfew has been a significant reason for reducing the consumption of tobacco.

According to the findings, still there is a 12% of current smokers among the minors group. Among them half of them consumed Beer while the second major alcohol product is Arrack (43%).

INTRODUCTION

The objectives of the “Trend Survey on Alcohol” for the year 2020 are as follows.

- Determine different trends of smoking across the country in terms of different products, age groups and districts.
- Analyse and compare the trends of smoking from surveys conducted in previous years.
- Identifying the underlying attitudes and reasons for smoking among different age groups, and districts.
- Determining the age of initiating alcohol consumption.
- Examine the COVID-19 outbreak affect alcohol consumption.

METHODOLOGY

The trend survey continues to use the similar methodology to keep the consistency of the results. However, 2020 was a challenging year for the entire globe due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Data collection for the trend survey from the field has been revised according to the guidance given by the health authorities.

Study Design

Like the previous years multi-stage sample design was used to comprise a representative of Sri Lankan male population above 15 years.

Inclusion Criteria

Males above 15 years of age who were currently residing in Sri Lanka were included for the study.

Exclusion Criteria

Females were not included in the study as the consumption rates of males is relatively less in Sri Lanka. Males who were under 15 years and any individuals who were currently residing in the selected districts were excluded from the survey.

Sample Size

Similar to previous trend surveys, 275 participants (with a 10% standard error) from each district were determined. In total, a sample size of 3025 was drawn to be collected from 11 districts for the survey.

Sampling Method

Firstly, a randomized batch selection process was followed to select one district each from the nine administrative provinces in order to determine a representative sample of Sri Lanka. This procedure was repeated three times to create three batches of districts out of which two were used previously for the years 2018 and 2019. The third batch was used in this current survey for the year 2020. Colombo and Jaffna districts were included automatically as important districts. With this inclusion, there were 11 districts in total. In the next stage of sampling, age was divided into three sub-groups as 15-24 years, 25-39 years and above 40 years, to get a representative sample of males above 15 years. Since prior surveys indicate that the first two age groups have lower usage, it was purposively oversampled. Therefore, the planned allocation for the chosen age groups were 35%, 45% and 20% respectively. This was determined based on population figures from the census and statistics

Table 1: Planned allocation of survey participants

Age group	Sample allocation	Per district	Per age group
15 – 24 Years	35%	96	1056
24 – 39 Years	45%	124	1364
40 Years and above	20%	55	605
Total	100%	275	3025

Data Collection

Data collection was carried out using an interviewer-administered questionnaire containing 40 questions in total (See Appendix). A number of demographic questions were also included. The questionnaire was initially prepared in Sinhala and translated into Tamil and conducted in a language that suited the respondent.

Data collection was carried out by trained data collectors from the Faculty of Medicine, University of Kelaniya, Women Development Federation (WDF) Hambantota and Technical Colleges in Matale and Batticaloa Districts. The survey was conducted within the month of July 2019.

Conventional data collection has been revised during this survey. Mobile devices (Phone and Tablets) were used to fill the electronic questionnaire, in order to reduce the waste and easy use during this COVID -19 pandemic period. This method will be considered since it reduces the consumption of paper and avoids the time for data entry.

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using SPSS while tables and figures that represent trends were compiled using Microsoft Excel.

RESULTS

A total of 2963 valid responses were received from males above 15 years with a response rate of 97.95%. However, the response rate for each question may vary from the overall sample. A summary of the status of responses from all the 11 districts are stated below in Table 1

Table 2: Survey responses based on district

District	Province	Age Group			Total response and rate
		15-24 Years n(%)	25-39 Years n(%)	>=40 Years n(%)	
Ampara	Eastern	87 34.3%	124 48.8%	43 16.9%	254 100.0%
Vavuniya	Northern	93 33.9%	131 47.8%	50 18.2%	274 100.0%
Puttalam	North Western	103 37.2%	122 44.0%	52 18.8%	277 100.0%
Kalutara	Western	91 33.8%	124 46.1%	54 20.1%	269 100.0%
Colombo	Western	87 31.3%	136 48.9%	55 19.8%	278 100.0%
Galle	Southern	99 34.6%	133 46.5%	54 18.9%	286 100.0%
Kandy	Central	93 33.5%	123 44.2%	62 22.3%	278 100.0%
Ratnapura	Sabaragamuwa	82 32.5%	126 50.0%	44 17.5%	252 100.0%
Polonnaruwa	North Central	101 39.6%	107 42.0%	47 18.4%	255 100.0%
Monaragala	Uva	105 36.2%	130 44.8%	55 19.0%	290 100.0%
Jaffna	Northern	82 32.8%	118 47.2%	50 20.0%	250 100.0%
Total		1023 34.5%	1374 46.4%	566 19.1%	2963 100.0%

1 Demographic Information

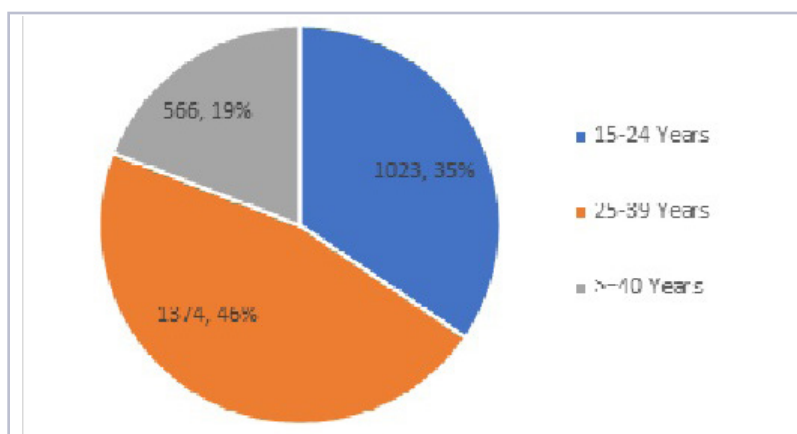


Figure 1: Survey responses based on age

This section will present the demographic information of the survey respondents. Mainly it has analysed how the respondents were distributed within age categories, level of education and occupational sector.

According to the Figure 1, the response sample size for each age group were almost the same. The Youth group has shown the same, while other groups has shown slight variations (compare with Table 1)

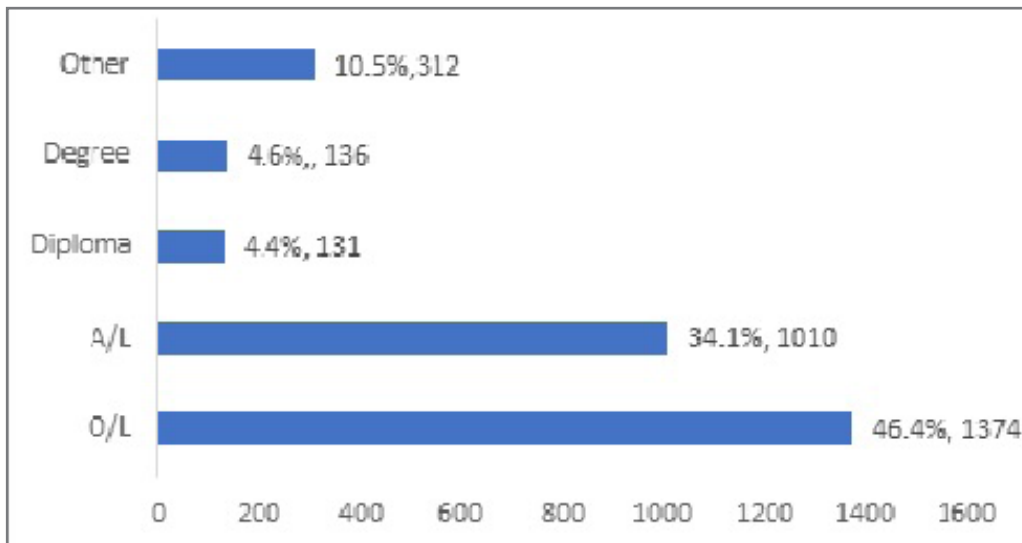


Figure 2: Education level of respondents

The survey sample reflected various education levels. Approximately half of the respondents had completed their Ordinary Level (O/L) while one-third had completed their Advance Level (A/L). Additionally, the sample consisted with Diplomas and Degree holders (See Figure 2 / Response rate 100%).

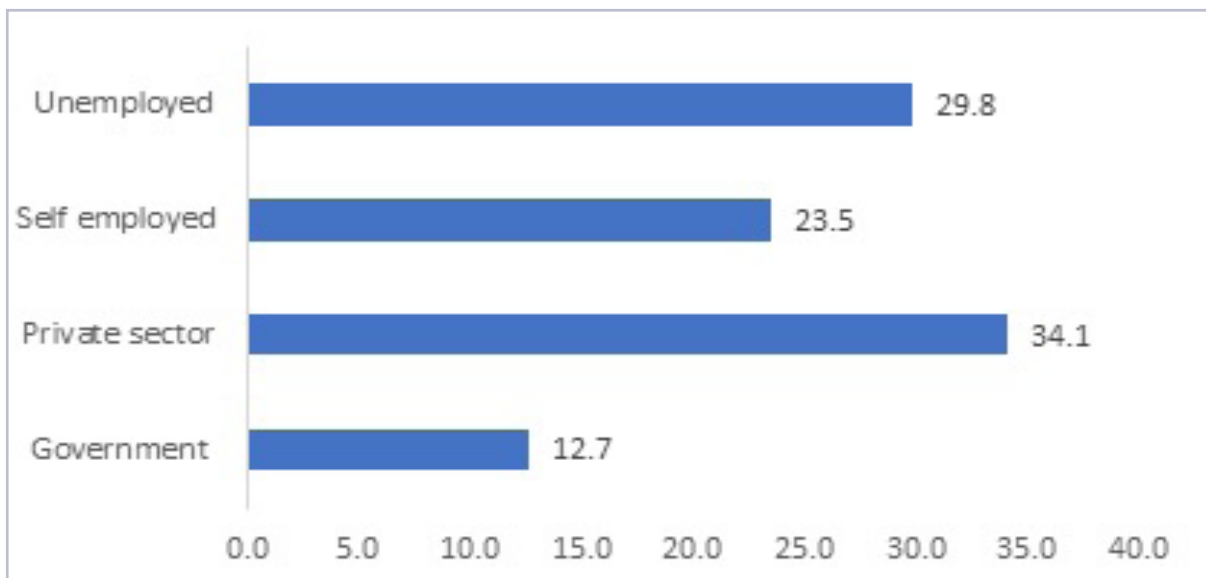


Figure 3: Occupation of respondents

Figure 3 illustrates the type of occupational sector of the respondents. According to figure 3, the highest represent Private (Cooperate) sector (34.1%) while the least represent the Government sector. The second highest category is listed as unemployed since youth who represent the age 15-24 years falls under this classification.

Trends of Alcohol Use

Key analysis of this report is based on the response of “Current consumers”¹. The term Current consumers refers to those who have consumed alcohol during the past 30 days when the survey was conducted. Respondents who have never consumed alcohol in their lifetime when the survey was conducted were considered as “Lifetime abstainers”. Respondents who have consumed alcohol in their lifetime but have abstained during the past 30 days when the survey was conducted was considered as the Last 30 days abstainers.

¹Apart from initiation and cessation the rest of the analysis is based on the respondents who is under the category of the current consumers.

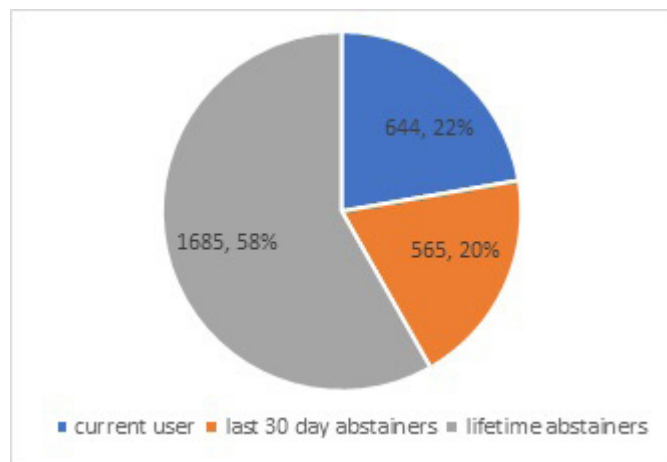


Figure 4: Status of Alcohol consumption

According to the Figure 4, most of the respondents has mentioned that they have never consumed alcohol in their lifetime (58%) while the lowest proportion of the respondents had not consumed for the last 30 days.

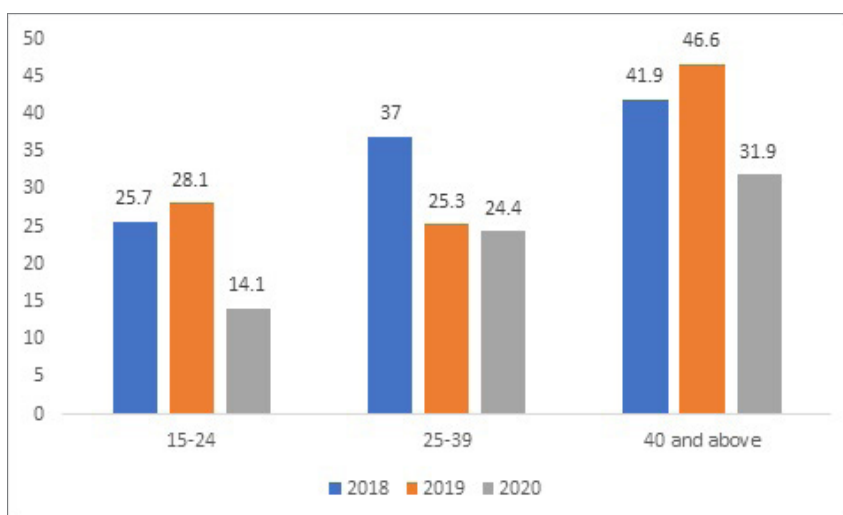


Figure 5: Comparison of alcohol consumption with previous years

As shown in figure 5, Compared to the previous year, 2020 showed a decline of alcohol consumption in all the groups. However, a significant decline was observed in the 15-24 and above 40 age groups.

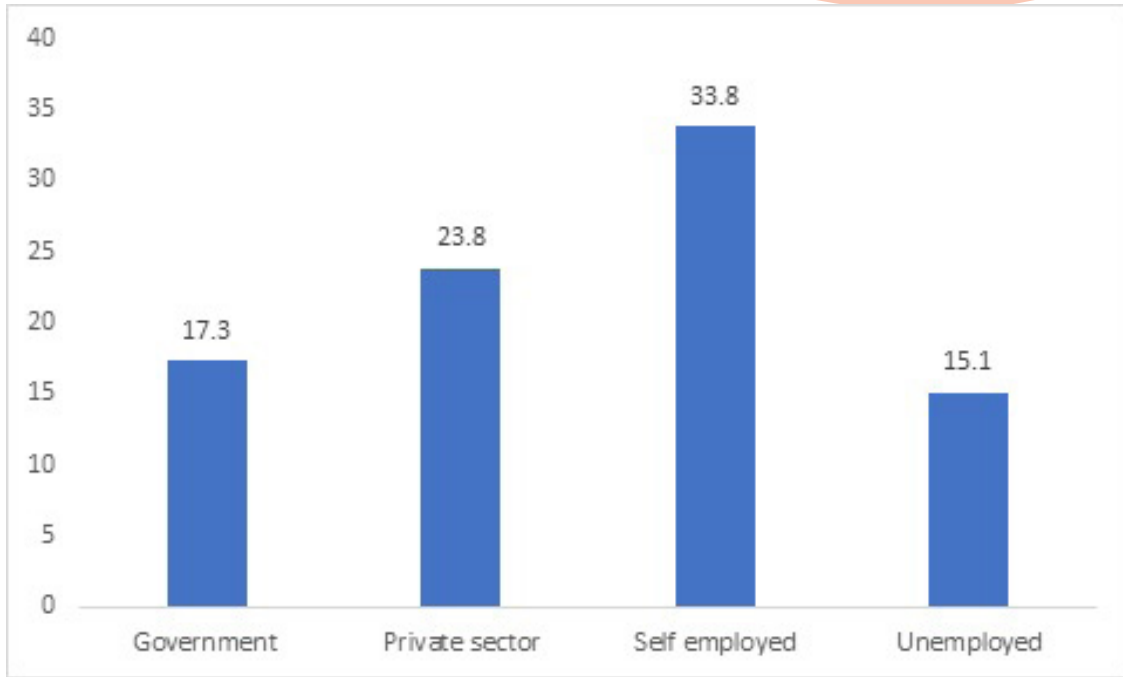


Figure 6: Alcohol consumption by Occupational sector

According to figure 6, the highest proportion of alcohol consumers were from the occupational sector of Self-employed (33.8%). Alcohol consumption was lowest among the unemployed sectors (15.1%)².

¹Apart from initiation and cessation the rest of the analysis is based on the respondents who is under the category of the current consumers.

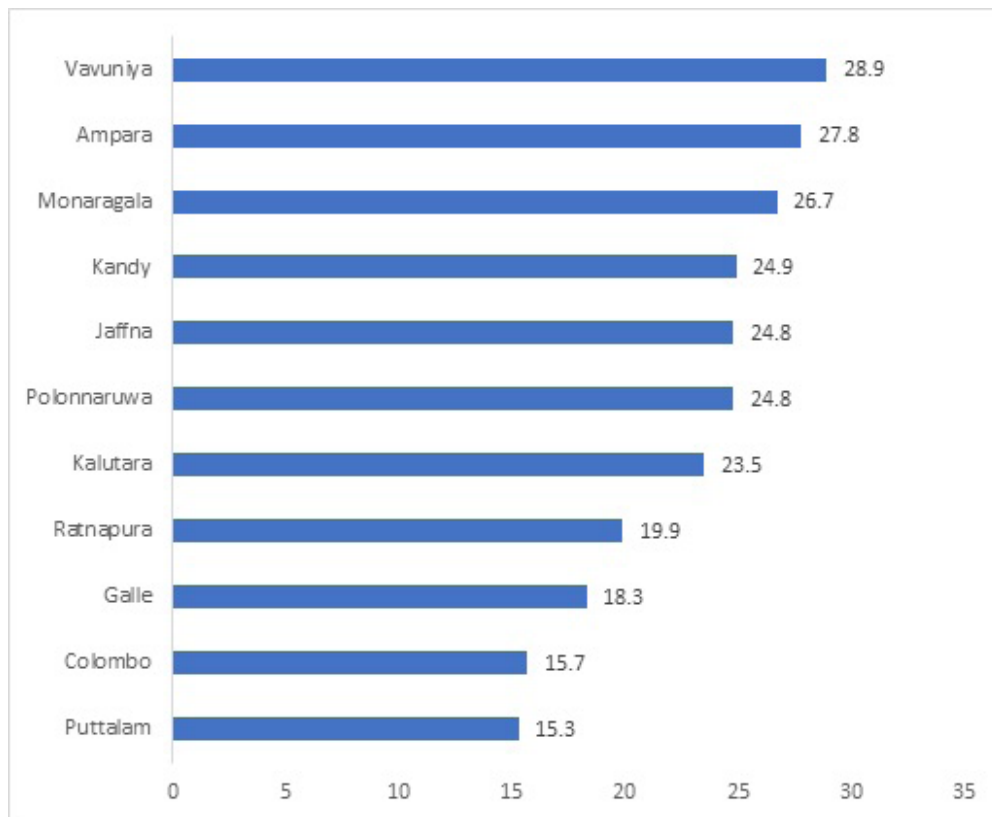


Figure 7: Status of alcohol consumption by district

RESULTS

As shown in the Figure 7, the highest number of current consumers were observed from the Vavuniya District while the second highest was observed from the district of Ampara. The lowest number of current consumers were observed from the Puttalam district while the second lowest was observed from the Colombo district. The total average percentage of current consumers across all districts was 22.0%. Monaragala, Ampara and Vavuniya districts showed comparatively high above-average consumption rates.

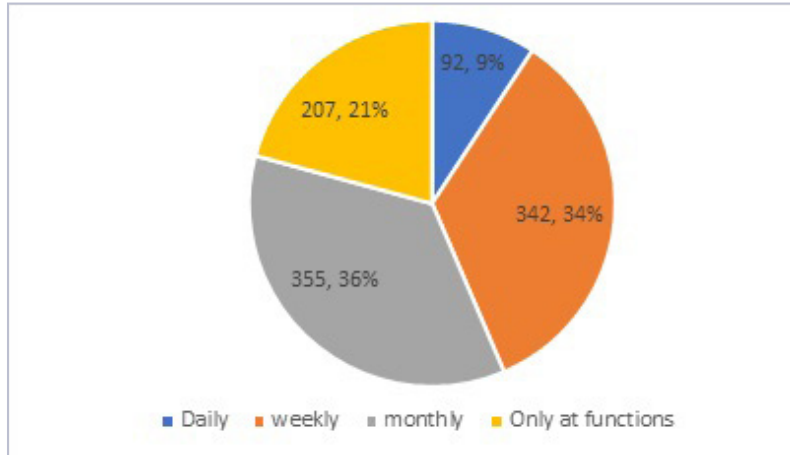


Figure 8: Trends of Alcohol Use by Frequency

According to figure 8, the least proportion of current consumers were daily users (9%). Most of the current users only consumed few times a month and a similar proportion consumed a few times a week.

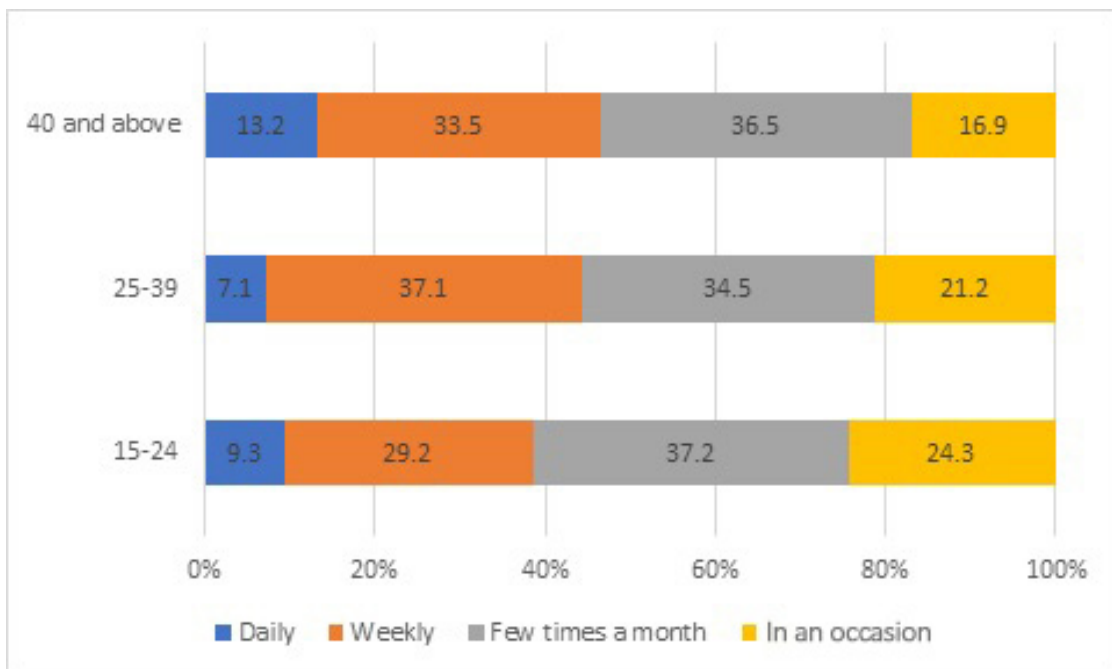


Figure 9: Frequency of Alcohol Consumption by Age groups

The proportion of a daily user is the least proportion among all the age groups. Few times a week or few times a month are the most significant frequency in any age groups. However the highest daily consumption rate was reported from the age groups of 40 and above while the least rate was reported from the age groups of 15-39.

Alcohol Products

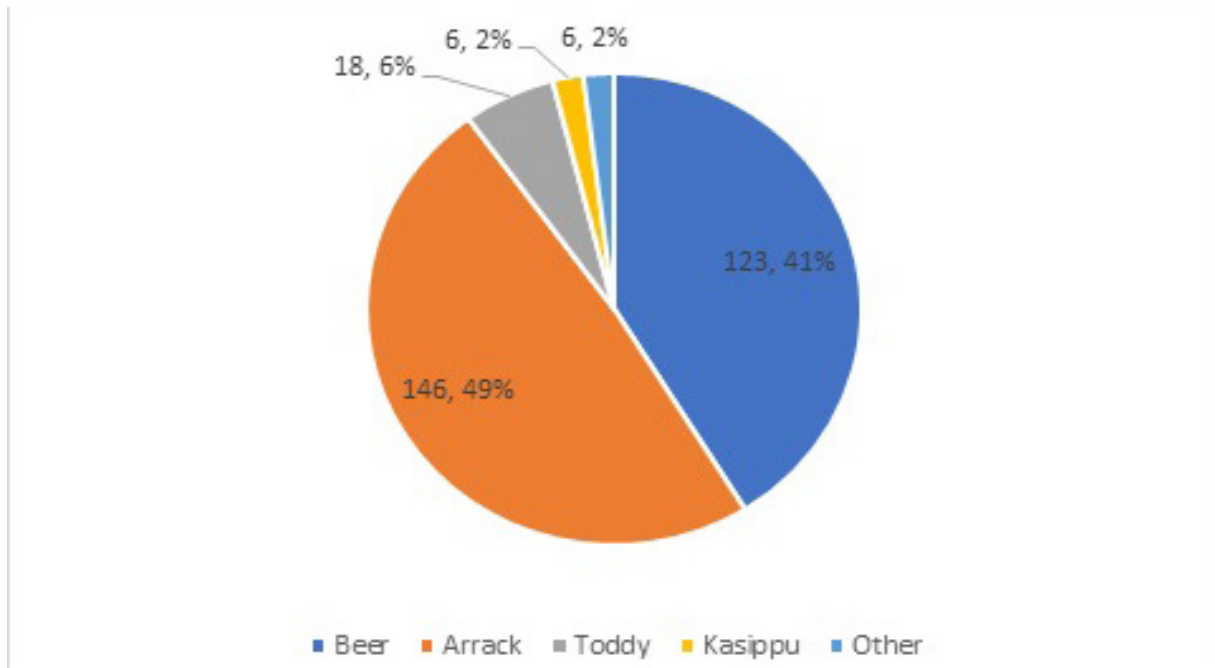


Figure 10: Alcohol consumption by type

Alcohol consumers may use multiple products of alcohol. According to figure 10, the most used alcohol product was Arrack. The second most used alcohol product was Beer. The least proportions of current users consumed other products and Kasippu (Illicit alcohol).

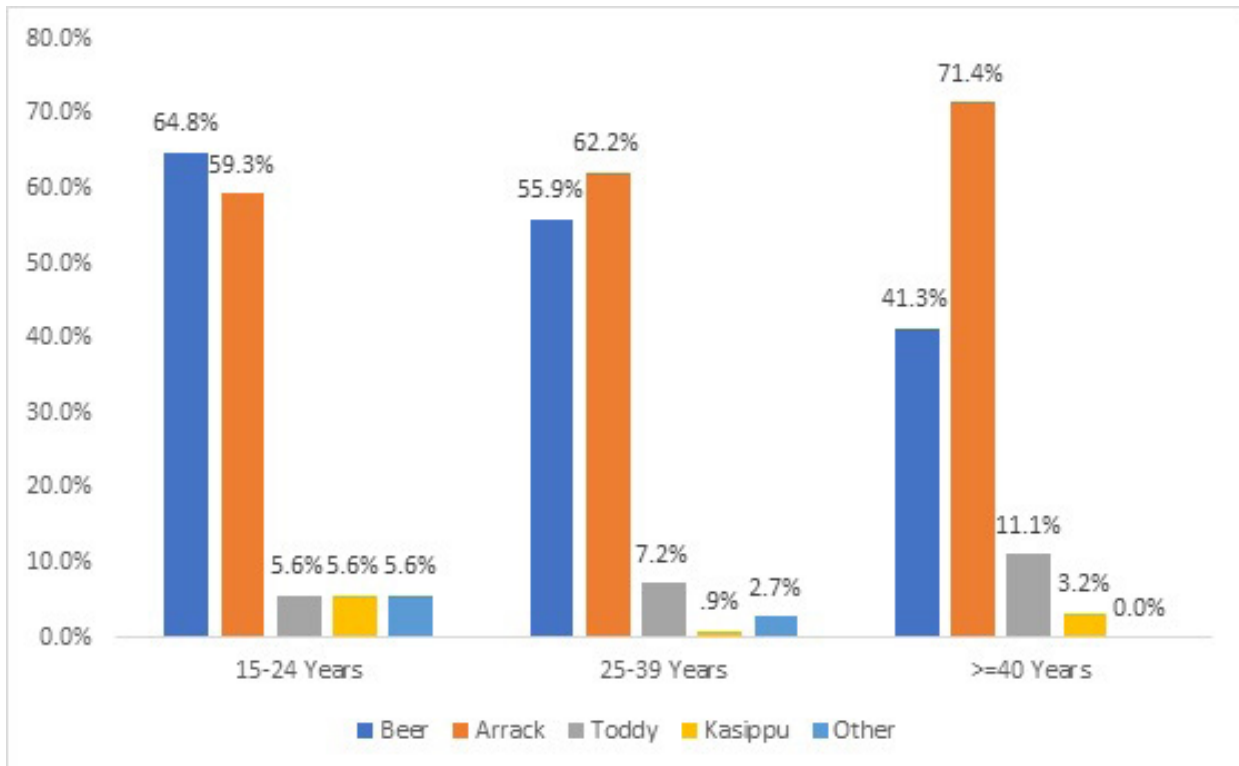


Figure 11: Types of Alcohol Products Consumed by Age Groups

RESULTS

According to figure 11, Arrack was the major type for both the 25-39 and 40 and above age groups. The second highest consumed product was beer among those two age groups. Beer was the most common alcohol product among the 15-24 age groups while Arrack came as the second. Results show that there is a huge gap between the Arrack consumption rate and the Beer consumption rate in the 40 and above age group while the other two groups show less difference.

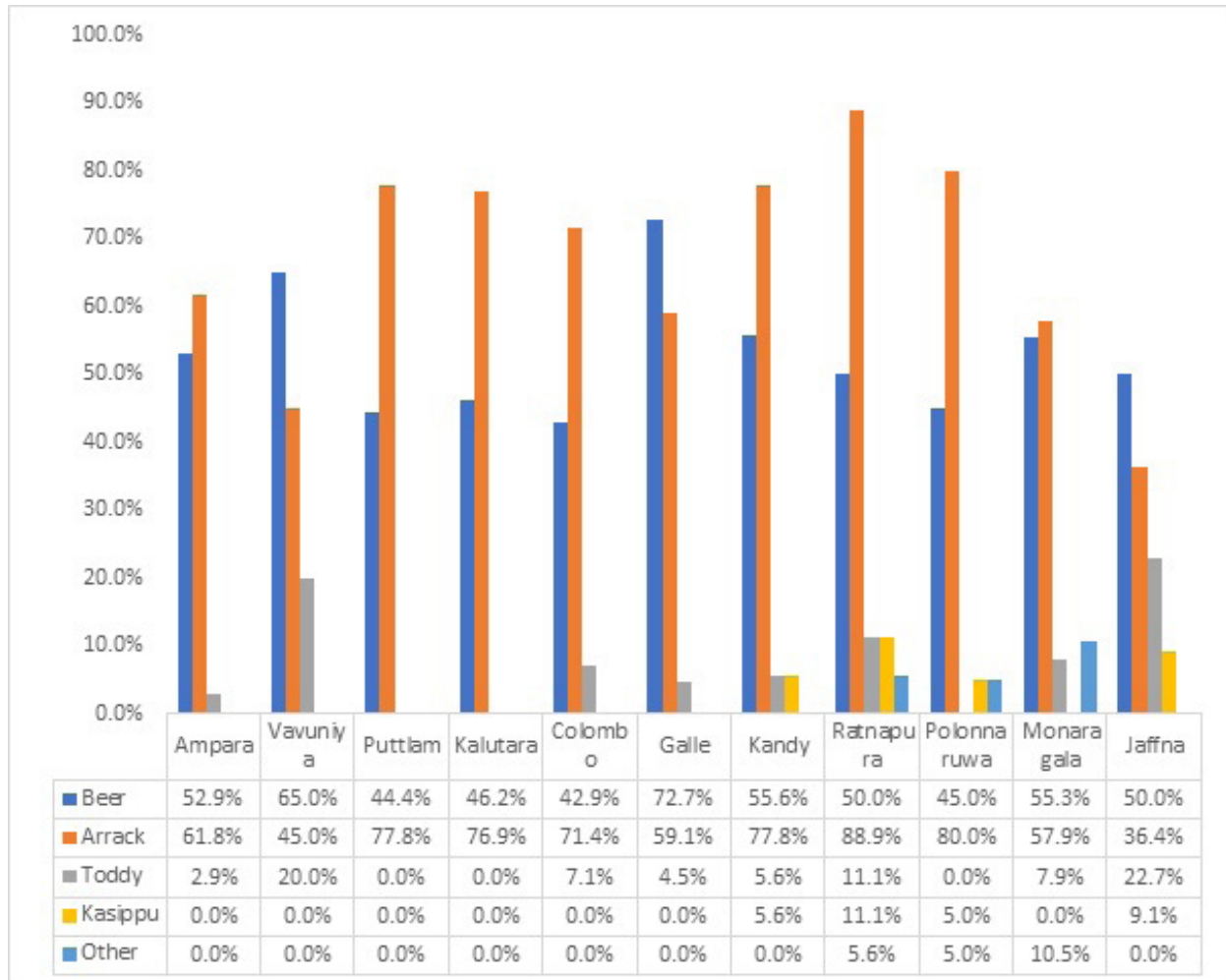


Figure 12: Alcohol Products used by Current Consumers at District Level

Beer and arrack were the two alcohol products that were prominently consumed across all districts. Except for Galle and Jaffna, Arrack was the most consumed alcoholic beverage across all districts. Beer was consumed the most in the districts of Galle and Jaffna. Toddy was the third alcohol product popular among all, Jaffna reported the highest toddy consumption while Vavuniya reported the second highest across the other districts. But toddy consumption was not reported in the Puttalam and Kalutara districts. Kasippu was only reported in the districts of Kandy, Ratnapura, Polonnaruwa and Jaffna.

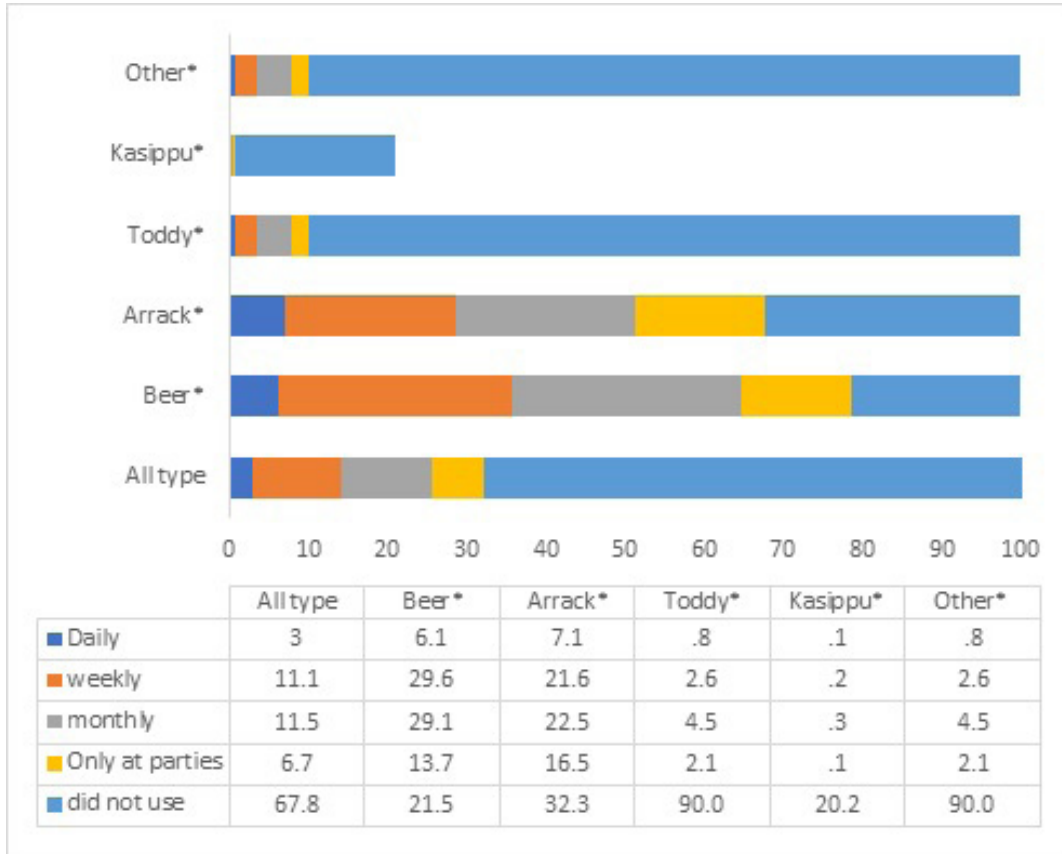


Figure 13: Frequencies of Alcohol Products Consumed

According to figure 13, arrack was the highest consumed alcoholic beverage on a daily basis and only at functions/parties. Beer was highest on a weekly and monthly basis. The least consumed alcoholic beverage in all frequencies was kasippu.

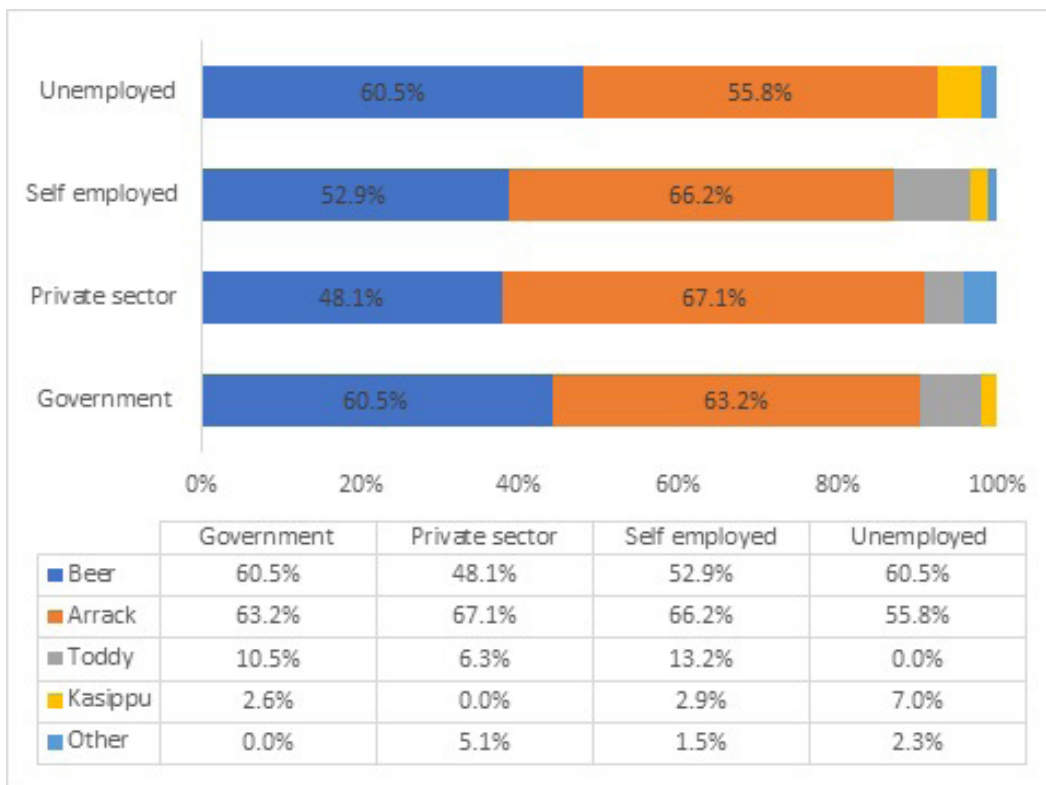


Figure 14: Consumption of Alcohol Products by Occupational sector

Consistent with previous figures, beer and arrack remain as the most prominently consumed alcoholic beverages across all occupations. Arrack was prominently consumed among all occupational sectors except the unemployed groups, while beer was prominent among the unemployed groups. The highest consumption rate of kasippu was reported in the unemployed groups while it was not reported in the private sector. The highest toddy consumption was reported in the self-employed sector while it was not reported in the unemployed groups.

Alcohol Initiation

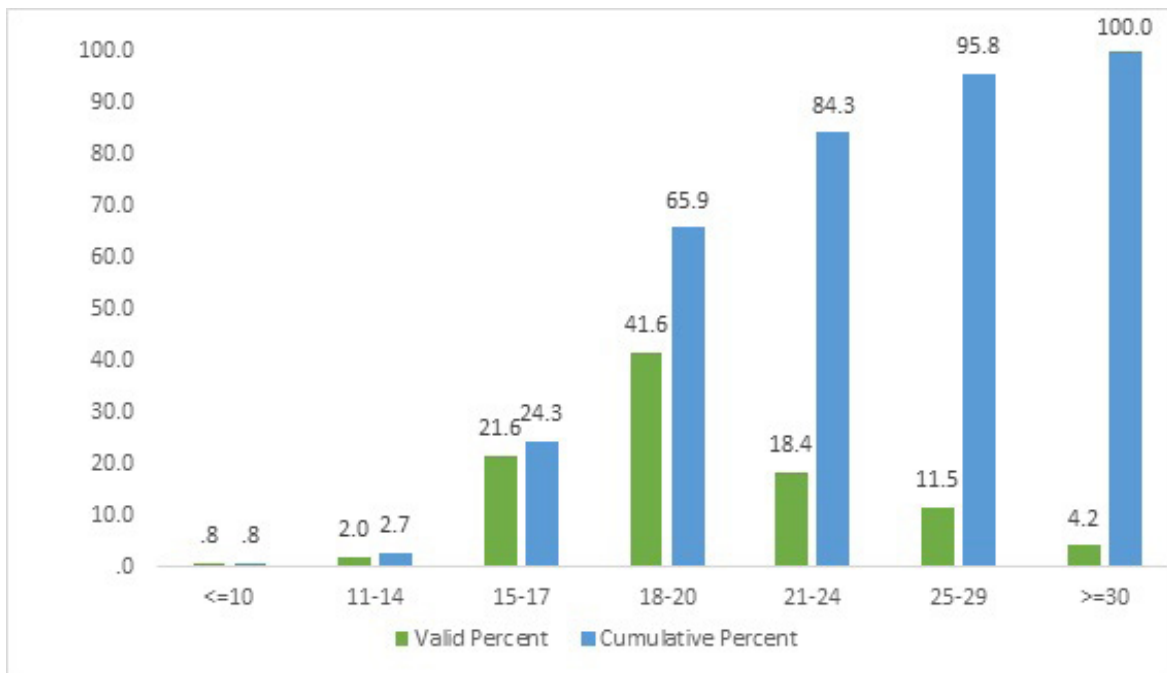


Figure 15: Alcohol Initiation Age

The age of the Alcohol ever consumers was questioned for the first consumption. According to the Figure 15 data shows that the highest number of initiations (41.6%) reported was at 18-20 years. It further shows that at the age of 24 the majority of alcohol consumers has initiated their alcohol consumption (84.3%). Among the ever alcohol consumers only 4.2% has initiated at 30 years of age or above.

Table 3 gives the statistical data of the initiation age for the alcohol smoke. It further supports the illustration of data in Figure 14. The median age for the alcohol initiation is 20 for all age groups while 18 is for the 15-24 age groups.

Table 3: Initiation age by age group

Age group	N	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation	Std. Error of Mean	Skewness	F value
overall (weighted)	1178	20	20	4.241	.170		
15-24	303	17.00	18.00	2.377	.137	-1.649	134.245
25-39	562	20.00	20.00	3.587	.151	.501	.000
40 and above	313	22.00	22.00	5.507	.311	1.637	

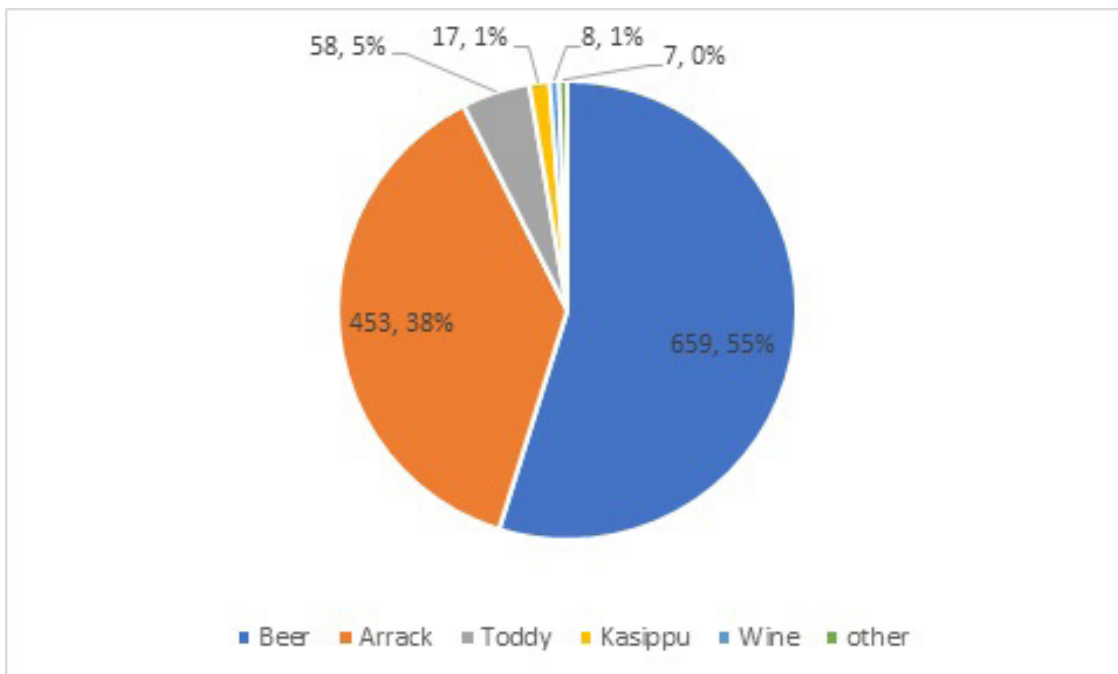


Figure 16: Type of Alcohol Products Consumed at Initiation

According to figure 16, the most consumed alcoholic beverage at initiation was beer. Arrack was the second most commonly used beverage at initiation. The least consumed alcoholic beverage at initiation was other types, while wine was the next least consumed product used at initiation.

RESULTS

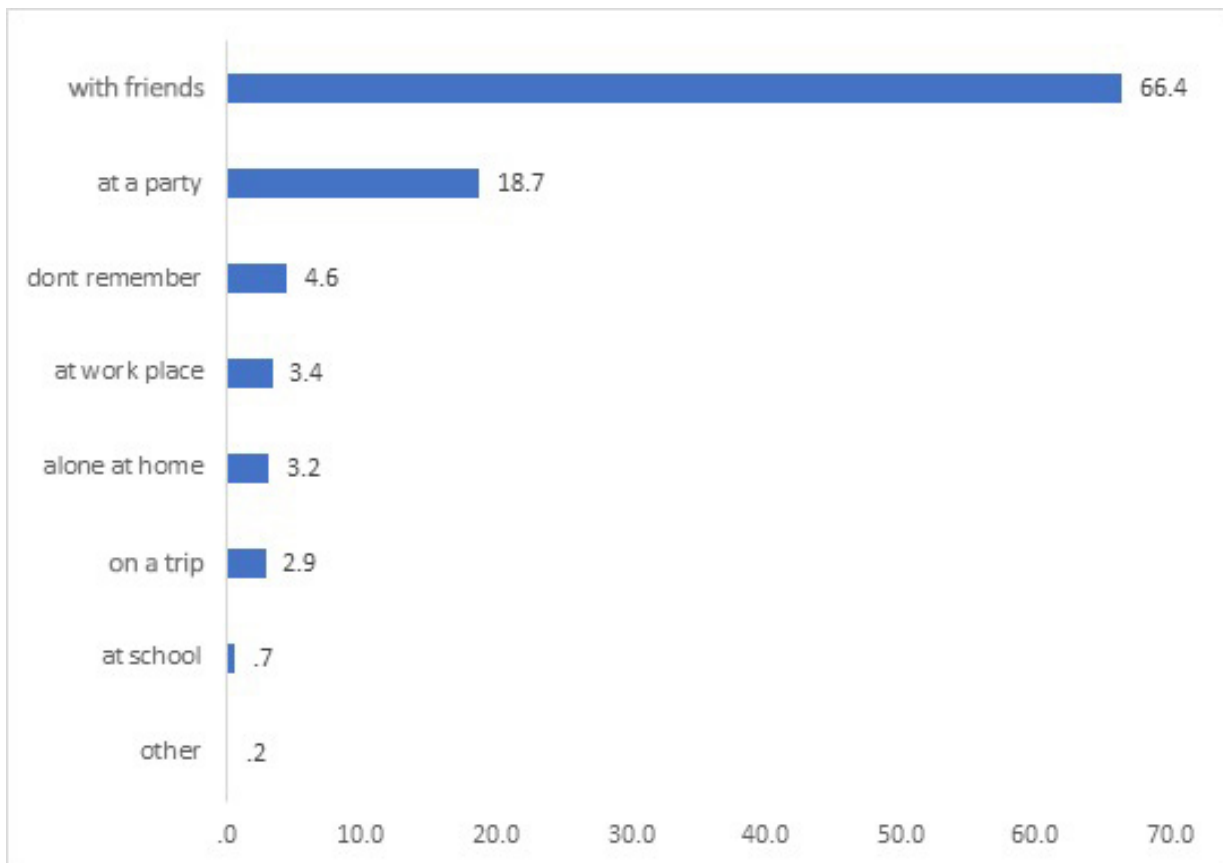


Figure 17: Alcohol Initiation Occasion

According to figure 17, alcohol had been initiated most commonly with friends. The second most common initiation occasion were parties.

Cessation of Alcohol Use

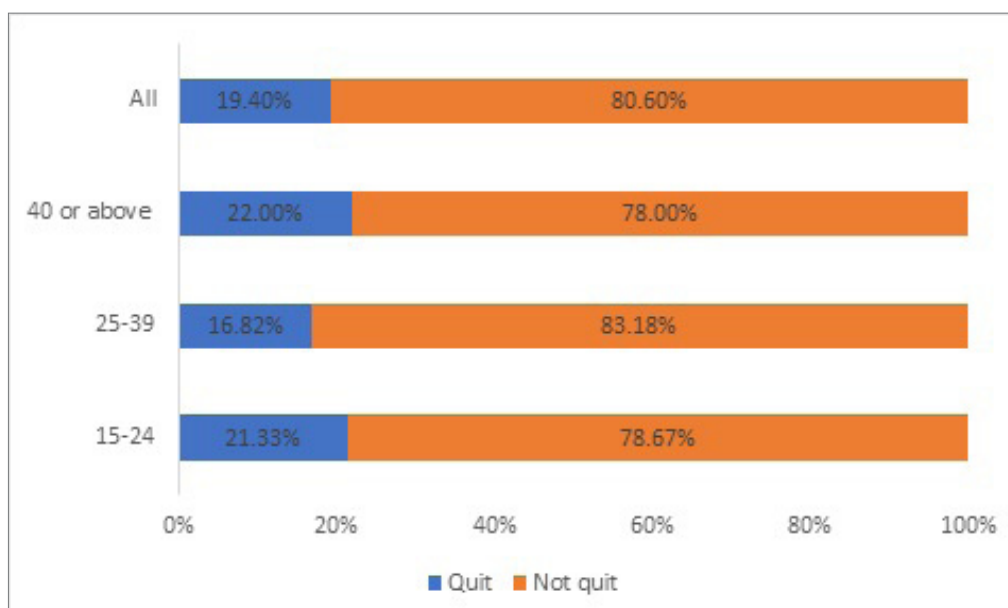


Figure 19: Quitting Alcohol Consumption

As shown in figure 19, only one-fifth of the sample had quit alcohol use at the time of the survey. A large proportion of the sample was still consuming alcohol.

Table 4: Cessation of Alcohol use by Age Group

	No. of respondents	Mean quit age	Std. Deviation	Min-Max
overall	303	29	10.750	13-64
15-24	77	19	2.255	13-24
25-39	127	26	4.625	16-45
40 or above	99	40	10.680	17-64

Above Table 4 gives the statistical data of the quitting age for alcohol consumption. The mean age for the alcohol cessation is 29 years. However, this figure varies in three different age groups.

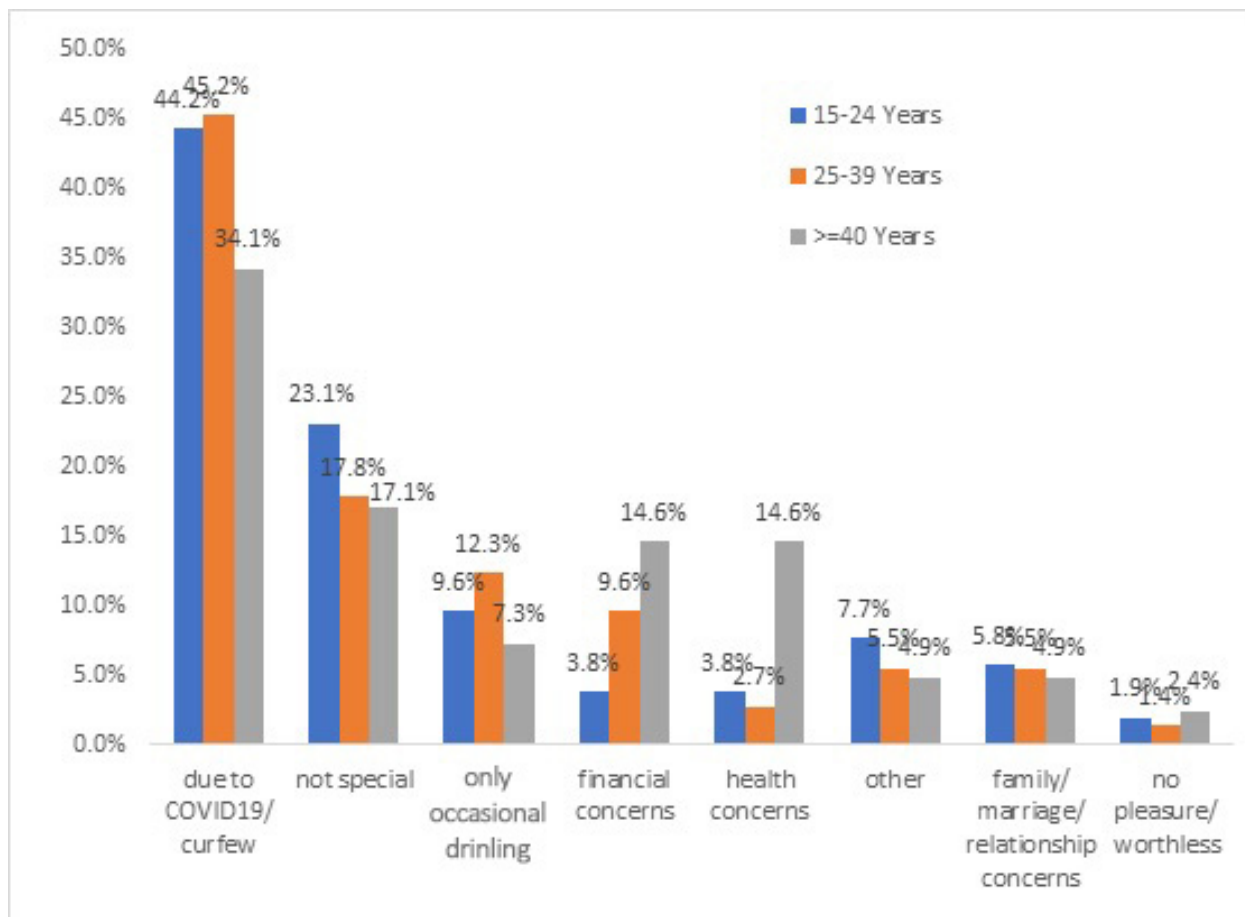


Figure 20: Reasons for quitting alcohol use

The survey questioned from the ever users as to whether they have changed their alcohol consumption during the previous 6 months, when the survey was conducted. The above figure 20 has taken the analysis of the reasons from the respondents who reduced or quit their alcohol consumption. Even though the response rate is low for this question the reasons are interesting among the age groups. The obvious and major reason for all age groups was due to COVID 19/ curfew situation in the country.

RESULTS

Table 5: Monthly Expenditure on Alcohol for Different Age Groups

	NO. of respondents	Median (in rupees)	Interquartile Range (in rupees)	Min -Max (in rupees)
Age group (all current users)				
15-24	142	2000.00	3200	0-25000
25-39	330	3000.00	3400	0-49500
40 and above	172	3400.00	3360	0-67200
Age group (Daily Beer)				
15-24	10	7098.77	24000	1000-25000
25-39	18	18106.79	18106.79	3000-48300
40 and above	10	7450.62	7450.62	1000-20000
Age group (Daily Arrack)				
15-24	5	8833.33	24000	1000-25000
25-39	16	17194.44	34700	300-35000
40 and above	23	7876.19	19000	1000-20000
Beer Frequency				
Daily	38	12172.84	47300	100-48300
Weekly	183	4120.49	49500	0-49500
Few times a month	180	2760.08	40000	0-40000
Only at functions	85	1696.19	10000	0-10000
Arrack Frequency				
Daily	44	11111.67	34700	300-35000
Weekly	134	5623.28	49300	200-49500
Few times a month	139	3388.43	20000	0-20000
Only at functions	102	2170.41	15000	0-15000

Table 5 shows the monthly expenditure on all alcohol products among the current alcohol consumers in different age groups and different frequencies for arrack and beer. The median value of the monthly expenditure is highest among the 40 and above age groups in all types of alcohol consumers (Rs.3,400.00).

The expenditure on alcohol consumption in the last month for districts is shown in Figures 21. Among the group of daily smokers, the lowest expenditure was observed from the Districts of Polonnaruwa while the highest was reported from Monaragala.

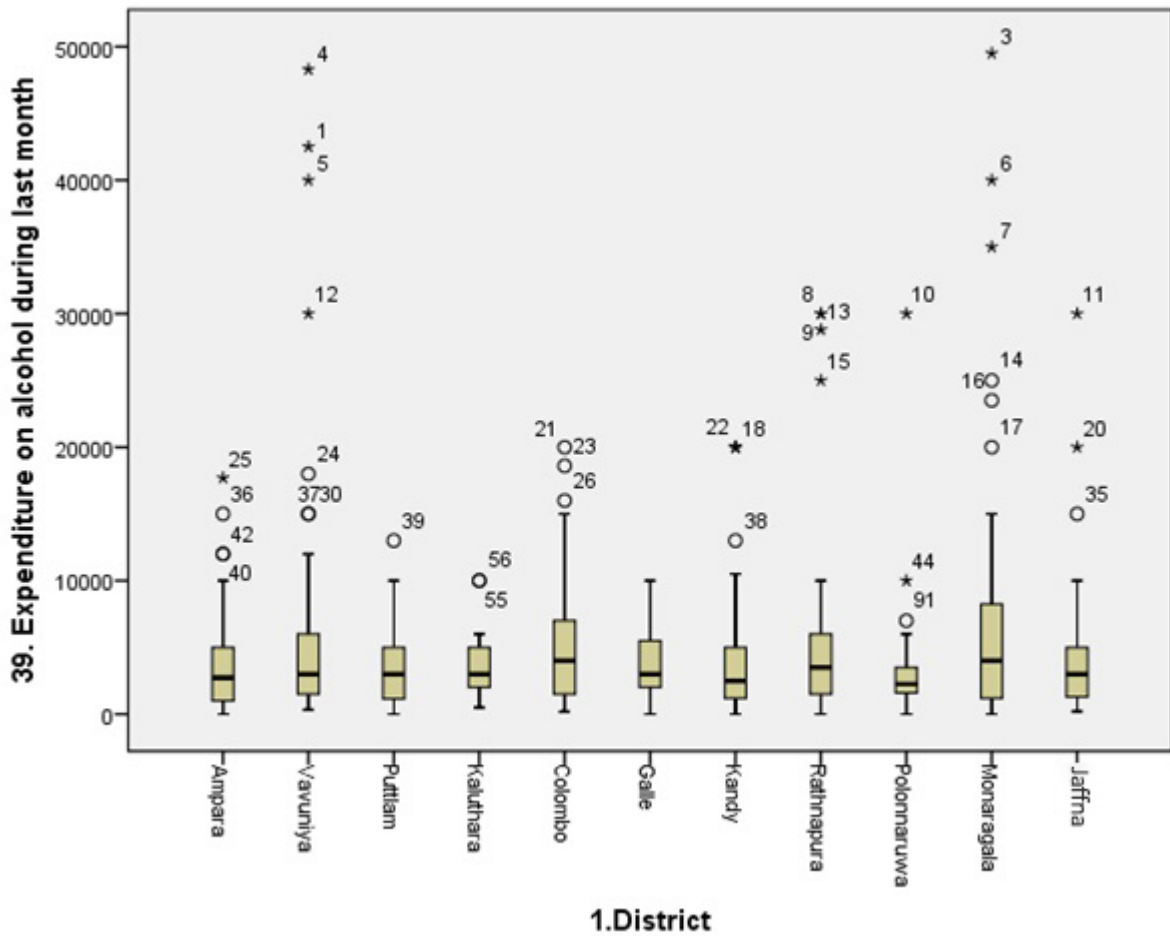


Figure 20: Reasons for quitting alcohol use

Miscellaneous

Alcohol consumption below 21 years

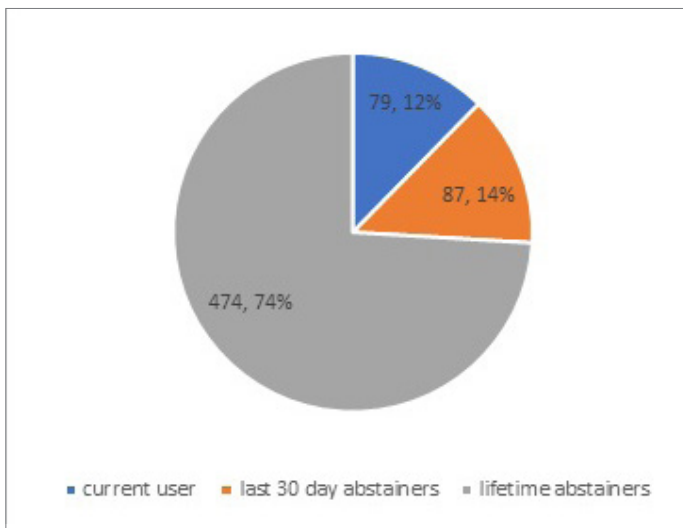


Figure 22: Status of alcohol consumption below 21 years

The National Authority on alcohol and tobacco Act No. 27 enacted in 2006 imposed the legal boundaries on selling alcohol, is prohibited to under the age of 21 years. However, figure 22 showed the response of alcohol consumption for those below that, of 21 years. According to the respondent still there were 12% (n=79) of current alcohol consumers among the under 21 years of age. Simultaneously lifetime abstainers are the majority (74%, n=474) among the under 21 years of age.

RESULTS

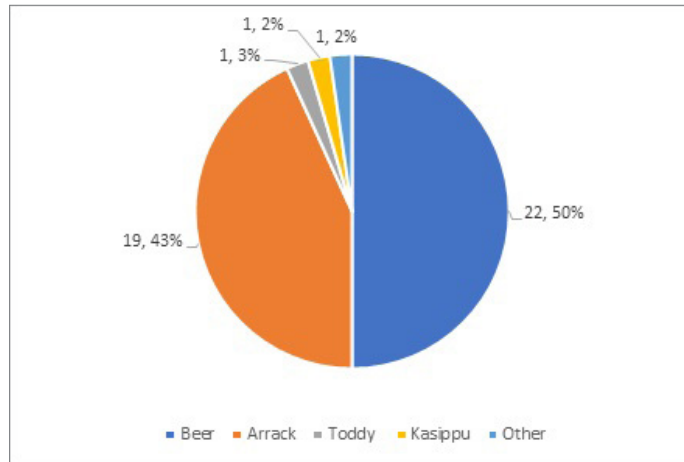


Figure 23: Type of alcohol products used below 21 years

As shown in Figure 23, half of the current alcohol consumers had consumed beer while less than half had consumed arrack. Consumption of toddy, kasippu and other types of alcohol were reported as minor among this age group below 21.

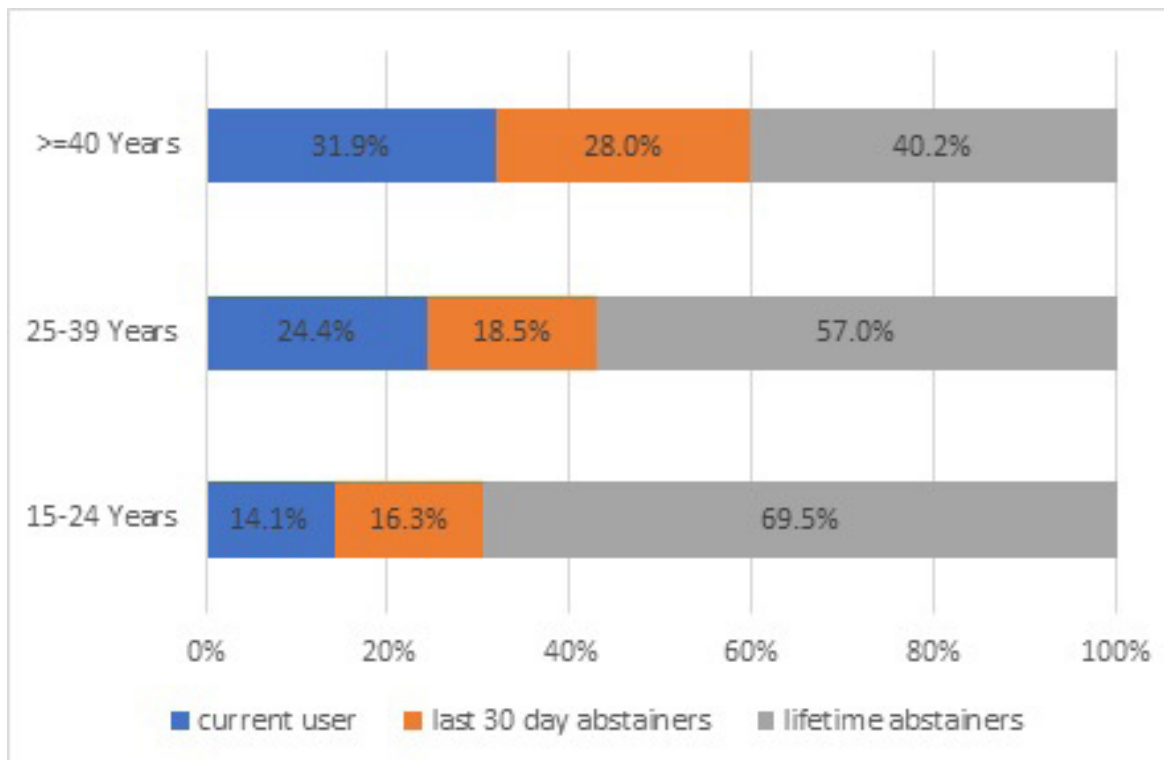


Figure 24: Life-time abstainers of alcohol consumption

According to Figure 24 the highest proportion of lifetime abstainers were observed from the 15-24 age groups while the lowest was from the 40 and above age groups. Current users and Last 30 days abstainers were the lowest among the 15-24 age groups. The response rate were observed as increment by age.

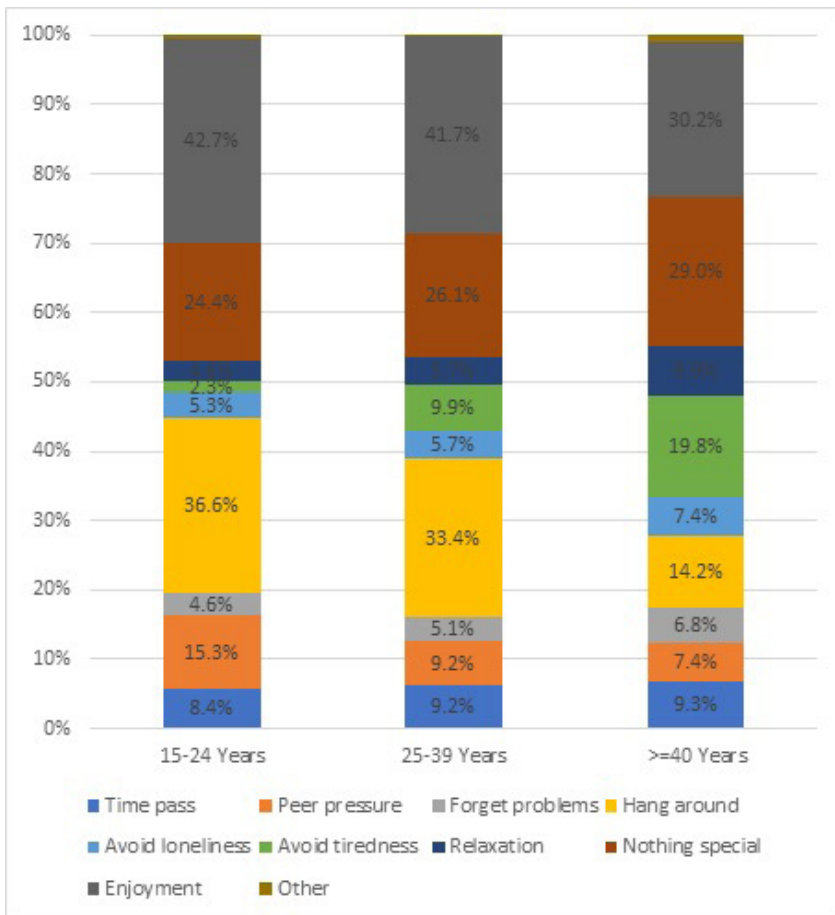


Figure 25: Reasons for alcohol consumption

Figure 25 shows the reasons for the current alcohol consumption by age groups. Enjoyment was the most popular reason for current alcohol consumption among all the age groups. The second popular reasons, hanging around was among the 15-24 and 25-39 age groups. While nothing special was the second most popular reasons for the 40 and above age groups.

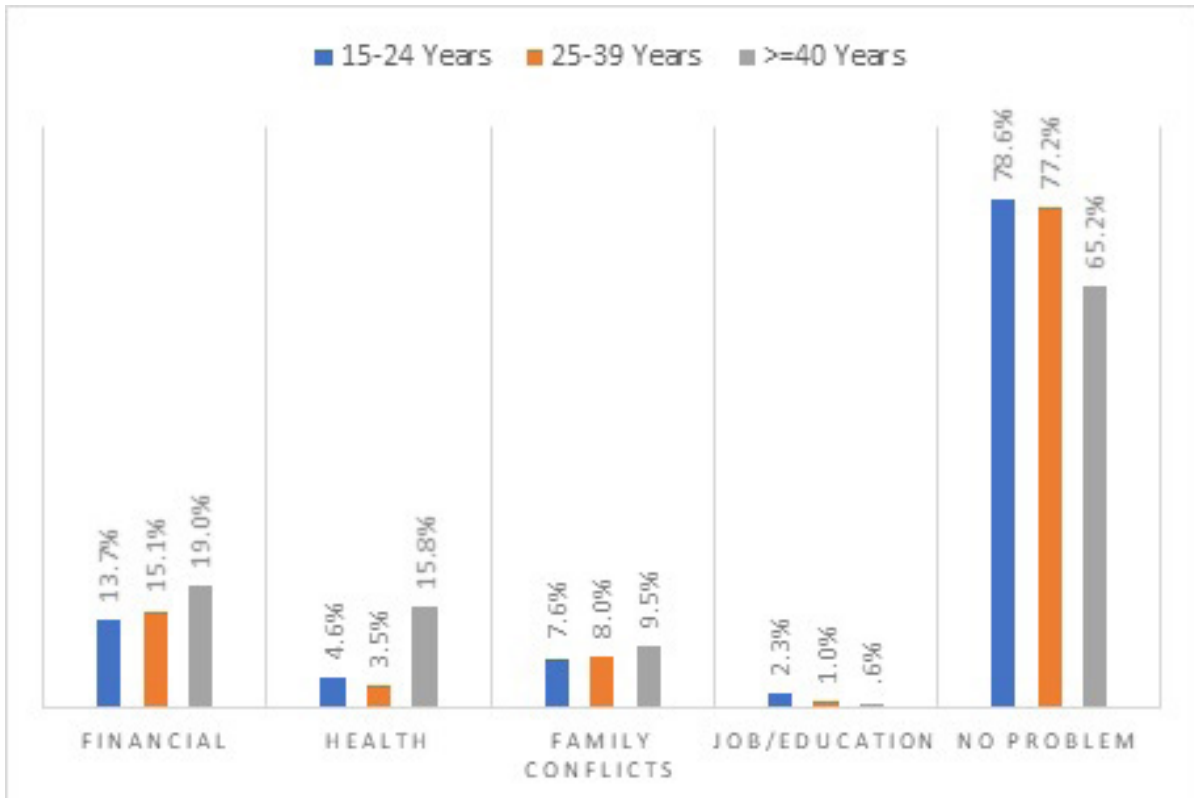


Figure 27: Problems faced by alcohol consumers

Figure 27 shows the problems faced by the current alcohol consumers. According to the responses the majority has faced no problems by their consumption. However, as a problem economical problem comes as the prominent, followed by health and family issues by all the age groups.

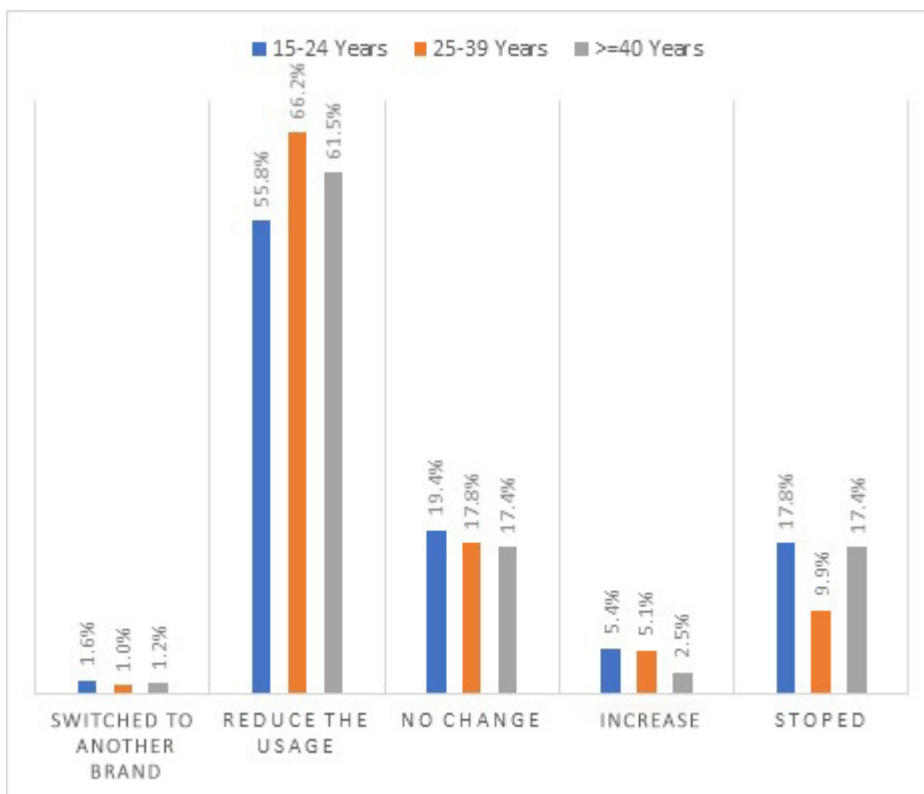


Figure 28: COVID 19 outbreak effect on alcohol consumption

The survey has been carried out during the global pandemic of COVID 19 and interval period during the first wave and second wave in Sri Lanka. Hence how COVID-19 has affected the current alcohol consumption was inquired from the current alcohol consumers. According to figure 28 COVID-19 clearly has reduced the alcohol consumption among all the age groups.

DISCUSSION

During the time the survey was conducted alcohol consumption was highly demotivated in various ways. As a mechanism to prevent the spread of COVID the government took policy decisions to shut down liquor shops even after the curfew was lifted. Both demand and supply declined for alcohol in the country.

This survey specifically addressed the relationship between smoking and COVID-19 (Figure 20 & Figure 28). The major reasons to reduce Alcohol consumption during the past 6 months was the COVID-19/ Curfew situation which reduced the supply and effect on alcohol consumption within a short period of time. Which means policy implementation can be used for reducing the alcohol consumption significantly in a shorter period.

The popular type of alcohol products in Sri Lanka are beer, arrack, toddy and kasippu. However, the survey revealed that the major alcohol products are beer and arrack. The toddy consumption was visible only among specific geographical locations in Sri Lanka, especially the Northern and Eastern provinces. Kasippu which is an illegally brewing alcohol product is minor and not reported in some areas. According to the findings arrack accounts for almost half of the consumption among the alcohol consumers (49%) while beer comes as the second major alcohol product (41%). Altogether arrack and beer consumption are 90% and the rest of the 10% is for the other types. (See Figure 10: Alcohol Consumption by Type). This is also prominent among any occupational sector (See Figure 14: Consumption of Alcohol Products by Occupational sector) age group (Figure 11: Types of Alcohol Products Consumed by Different Age Groups in any district (See Figure 12: Alcohol Products used by Current Consumers at District Level).

Initiation for the alcohol consumption has been shown significantly at the age of 18-20 years. Most alcohol consumers have initiated at the age of 20 and this is the average initiation age for alcohol consumption (See Table 3. Initiation Age by Age Group, Overall mean age and median age 20). By the age of 20 years more than half of the alcohol consumers (65.9%) has initiated alcohol consumption. These figures are evidence that youth are the most vulnerable for the alcohol initiation in Sri Lanka. Surprisingly, Sri Lanka has regulations on alcohol sales on the minors. The NATIONAL AUTHORITY ON TOBACCO AND ALCOHOL ACT, No. 27 OF 2006 clearly mentions that “A person shall not sell, offer for sale, or permit or promote the sale of any tobacco product or alcohol product to any person under twenty-one years of age”. However, the survey is evidence that there are loopholes in the enforcement of polices (see Figure 22: Status of alcohol consumption below 21 years). Even though the daily consumption is less among the current alcohol users in the youth groups, this should not be ignored by the authorities. However, arrack and beer companies claim that they are in compliance with Sri Lankan government regulation (DCSL, 2020; Lion brewery, 2020). However there is a huge loop hole in implementing the policies.

Initiation of alcohol consumption mostly are socialization (See Figure 17: Alcohol Initiation Occasion). According to Figure 17, the majority initiate alcohol with their peer groups (66.4%) and at a party (18.7%) are social incidents. However, reasons for prolonging consumption are interesting (Figure 25). The major reason has been the “enjoyment” in every age groups which is a decline from the youth groups to the elder age groups. The second major reason “hang around” also shows a similar pattern. The third major reason has been the “Nothing special” which they have no special

DISCUSSION

reason to prolong the consumption of alcohol, is observable as increasing from youth groups to elder age groups. According to the above reasons we can observe that youth are consuming alcohol with the influence from their peers and socialising. With maturity they are moving away from the peer pressure and influences, but they are shifting to different reasons such as socially constructed for instance “avoid tiredness” “relaxation”.

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ANNEXURE

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