

2021

**TREND SURVEY ON
ALCOHOL**

Annual Trend Survey on
Alcohol Consumption in Sri Lanka

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Abbreviations

ADIC	Alcohol & Drug Information Centre
NATA	National Authority on Tobacco and Alcohol
ATOD	Alcohol, tobacco and other drugs
COVID-19	Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2)
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
NCD	Non-Communicable Diseases

Executive Summary

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 2021 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 10 selected districts. Data analysis and results were formulated based on the responses obtained from a total of 2504 respondents who matched the inclusion criteria. From the study participants, 26% (n=635) were current alcohol consumers. Even though the trend survey presents an increase in alcohol consumption in the year 2021 compared to the previous years, this increment may not be considered for major conclusions since the years 2020 and 2021 had an impact on social behaviour due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The sample was divided into three age groups for analysis, namely, 15-24 years, 25-39 years and 40 years and above. The majority of the users consumed alcohol on a weekly basis. The highest alcohol consumption rates were reported from the age category 40 years and above, which was consistent with previous trend surveys.

Arrack and Beer are the most prominently consumed alcohol products among the majority of the current consumers, regardless of their age group and district. Toddy and other alcohol-related products were consumed at a lower rate within all age groups, districts and occupational categories. When considering the district-wise comparison, Batticaloa reported the highest alcohol consumption rates, while Jaffna reported the lowest. Initiation of alcohol use has occurred mostly during the age 18-20 years (41.6%). By the age of 20, 68.3% had initiated alcohol consumption and the most common type of alcohol product consumed at initiation was arrack (51%). Majority of the users have initiated consuming alcohol products with friends and at parties, which shows that peer influence and pleasurable environment had mostly accounted for alcohol initiation.

Only 16.4% of the respondents had been successful in quitting alcohol consumption at the time of administering the survey, which indicates that more than three-quarter of the sample has not been able to quit. The reasons for quitting alcohol use were different among the three age groups. However, financial issues and health concerns were the two most common factors for quitting, while some mentioned they had no special reason.

The need for effective alcohol policy formulation and prevention strategies and the lack of a National Action Plan to effectively formulate policies are some important facts which are highlighted through the study findings. The study also provides a platform for further discussions on the importance of delaying or preventing initiation and banning sales of alcohol products for underage persons.

1. Introduction

Alcohol consumption accounts for about 5% of the global burden of disease and 3 million deaths a year worldwide (1). Around 4210 deaths for a population of 100,000 is caused by alcohol-related issues such as alcoholic cirrhosis, road accidents and cancer (2). Alcohol consumption is associated with a range of communicable and non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and mental health disorders. In particular, alcohol compromises the body's immune system and increases the risk of adverse health outcomes.

The emergence and the spread of COVID-19 pandemic within the country increased the risk factors associated with alcohol, creating a heavy burden on the country's health system, thereby emphasizing the need of alcohol prevention programs, especially for vulnerable groups. Also, alcohol use can make a person more vulnerable to COVID-19 due to the adverse health effects which occurs as a result of consumption. It was observed that even during the pandemic, companies were promoting their products through media, social media, and several other marketing tools. The more individuals are exposed to alcohol marketing, the more likely they are to consume alcohol. Exposure to alcohol marketing increases the acceptability of drinking alcohol, an earlier age of onset and drinking behaviours, including heavy episodic drinking. Digital platforms quickly became a powerful marketing tool for alcoholic beverages (3).

Therefore, facilitating alcohol policy development and reporting and building institutional capacity to support the implementation of alcohol control measures is a major need within our country.

1.1 Objectives

The objectives of the 2021 tobacco trend survey analysis are as follows.

- Determine different trends of alcohol use within the country in terms of different products, age groups and districts.
- Analyse the trends of alcohol use and compare the results with surveys conducted in previous years.
- Identify the underlying attitudes and reasons for using alcohol among different age groups, and districts.
- Determine the age of initiating alcohol use.

2. Methodology

2.1 Study method

The trend survey for the year 2021 was conducted following the same methodology which has been continued for the past two decades, to keep the consistency of the results. However, this had been a challenge since the year 2020 due to the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the procedure for data collection for the trend survey was slightly deviated from the standard process according to the guidelines established by the health authorities in the country.

2.2 Study locations

The survey was conducted in 10 districts in Sri Lanka. The districts which were selected as study locations are Anuradhapura, Badulla, Matale, Colombo, Gampaha, Jaffna, Kegalle, Kurunegala, Batticaloa and Hambanthota.

2.3 Sampling

2.3.1 Sample design

Same as in the previous years, multi-stage sample design was used in the study.

2.3.2 Inclusion criteria

Male population above 15 years of age who were residing in Sri Lanka at the time of the survey were included as respondents for the study.

2.3.3 Exclusion criteria

Females were not included in the study as consumption rate of tobacco products among females is relatively less compared to males in Sri Lanka. Males who were under 15 years and any Individuals who were not residing in the selected districts at the time of the study, were excluded from the survey.

2.3.4 Sample size

From each district, 250 participants were included in the survey. Therefore, the total sample size was 2500 in all 10 districts.

2.3.5 Sampling method

Firstly, through a randomized batch selection process, one district was selected from each of the nine administrative provinces in Sri Lanka, to obtain a representative sample of the whole country. This procedure was repeated three times to select three batches of districts out of which two were included in the previous surveys in the years 2019 and 2020. The third batch was used in the current survey for the year 2021. Colombo and Jaffna districts were automatically included as important districts. With this inclusion, 10 districts were included in total, in the survey. In the next stage of sampling, age was divided into three sub-groups as 15-24 years, 25-39 years and 40 years and above, to obtain a representative sample of males above 15 years. Since it was found from the previous surveys that the

first two age groups have lower usage, it was purposively oversampled. Therefore, the planned sample allocation for the chosen age groups were 40%, 40% and 20% respectively. This was determined based on population figures from the census and statistics. However exact sample size might have had slight variations during the study.

Table 01: Planned allocation of survey participants

Age group	Sample allocation	Per district	Per age group
15 – 24 Years	40%	100	1000
24 – 39 Years	40%	100	1000
40 Years and above	20%	50	500
Total	100%	250	2500

2.4 Data collection

Data collection was carried out using an interviewer-administered questionnaire, which contained 36 questions in total (Annex 1). The first five questions were developed for gathering demographic information of the study participants. Few questions were reserved for the contemporary issues directly affecting alcohol and tobacco use. The rest of them were composite questions which were developed to obtain information regarding both alcohol and tobacco consumption. The questionnaire was initially prepared in Sinhala and later translated into Tamil. Both Sinhala and Tamil questionnaires were administered in the field according to the language preference of the respondents.

Data collection was carried out by trained data collectors. Undergraduates from the Faculty of Medicine, University of Kelaniya, members of the Women Development Federation (WDF), Hambantota and Individuals from Technical Colleges in Matale and Batticaloa Districts were selected and trained by ADIC as data collectors, for the purpose of collecting data for the study. The survey was conducted during the months of October and November, 2021. The field survey was carried out following the health guidelines established by government authorities due to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.5 Data analysis

Data collected by the survey was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and figures that represent trends were compiled using Microsoft Excel.

Key analysis of this report is based on the response of **“Current consumers.”** Trends of alcohol use were analysed in different aspects and the following terminologies were defined and used for this purpose. Three groups, namely, current consumers, last 30-day abstainers and lifetime abstainers were identified. ‘Current consumers’ were defined as individuals who have consumed alcohol within the past 30 days at the time the survey was administered, while ‘Last 30-day abstainers’ were individuals who had consumed alcohol all long, however, have abstained during the past 30 days at the time of the survey. Individuals who have never consumed alcohol in their lifetime were referred to as ‘lifetime abstainers’. Apart from initiation and cessation, the rest of the study results were obtained based on the responses of current consumers.

3. Results

3.1 Survey responses based on district

A total of 2504 valid responses were received from males above 15 years with an overall response rate of 99.8%. However, the response rate for each question may vary from the overall sample. A summary of the status of responses from all 10 districts is stated below.

Table 02: Survey responses based on district

District	Province	Age Group			Total
		15-24	25-39	>=40	
Anuradhapura	North-central	95 38.00%	100 40.00%	55 22.00%	250 100.00%
Badulla	Uva	94 37.60%	96 38.40%	60 24.00%	250 100.00%
Matale	Central	88 35.60%	100 40.50%	59 23.90%	247 100.00%
Colombo	Western	91 36.40%	99 39.60%	60 24.00%	250 100.00%
Gampaha	Western	90 36.00%	96 38.40%	64 25.60%	250 100.00%
Jaffna	Northern	91 36.40%	111 44.40%	48 19.20%	250 100.00%
Kegalle	Sabaragamuwa	94 37.30%	101 40.10%	57 22.60%	252 100.00%
Kurunegala	North-western	92 36.80%	103 41.20%	55 22.00%	250 100.00%
Batticaloa	Eastern	92 35.90%	109 42.60%	55 21.50%	256 100.00%
Hambantota	Southern	95 38.20%	97 39.00%	57 22.90%	249 100.00%
Total		922	1012	570	2504
		36.8%	40.4%	22.8%	100.00%

3.2 Demographic information of the study participants

This section presents the demographic information of the survey respondents. It represents the distribution of respondents based on the age categories, level of education and occupational sector.

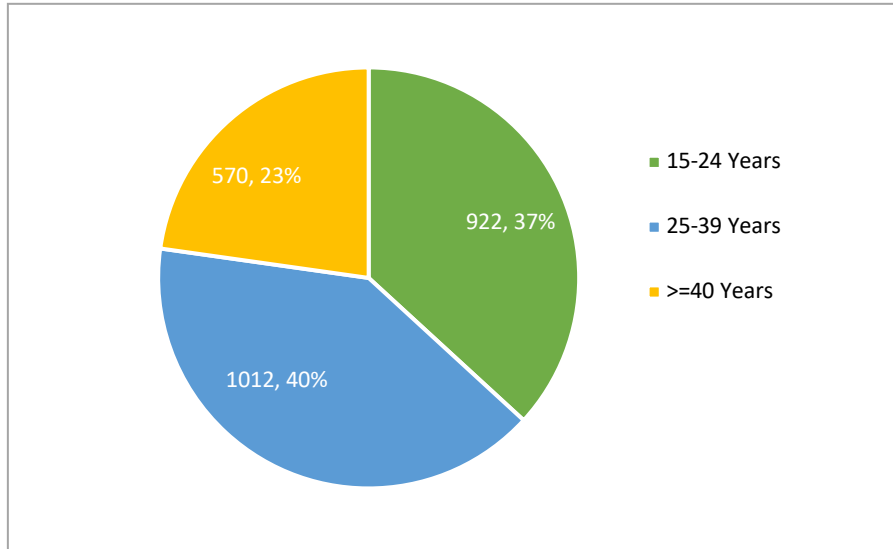


Figure 01: Survey responses based on age
Only males above 15 years of age

From the study participants, 40% belonged to the age group 25-39 years, which is the same as the allocated figure. The other two groups showed a slight difference in the actual figure when compared to the allocated sample percentage. (37% were in the age group 15-24 years and 23% were in the age group 40 years and above).

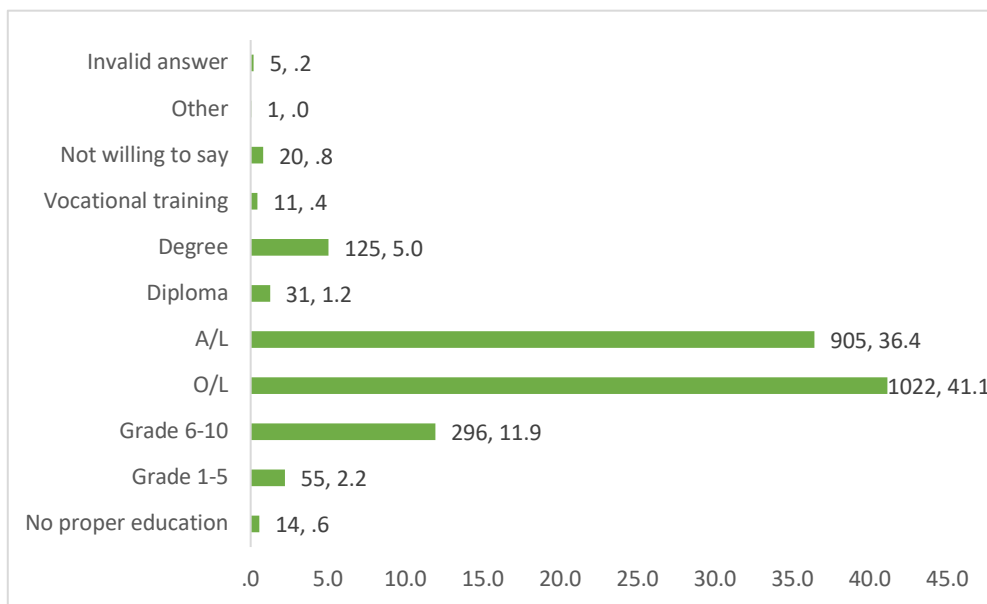


Figure 02: Education level of respondents
Only males above 15 years of age

The respondents belonged to various education levels. The highest percentage of respondents (41.1%) stated that they have completed G.C.E. Ordinary Level (O/L) while 36.4% of the respondents have completed G.C.E. Advance Level (A/L). Apart from that, 11.9% have only continued their education only up to grade 6-10. The sample also consisted of Degree (5%) and Diploma (1.2%) holders.

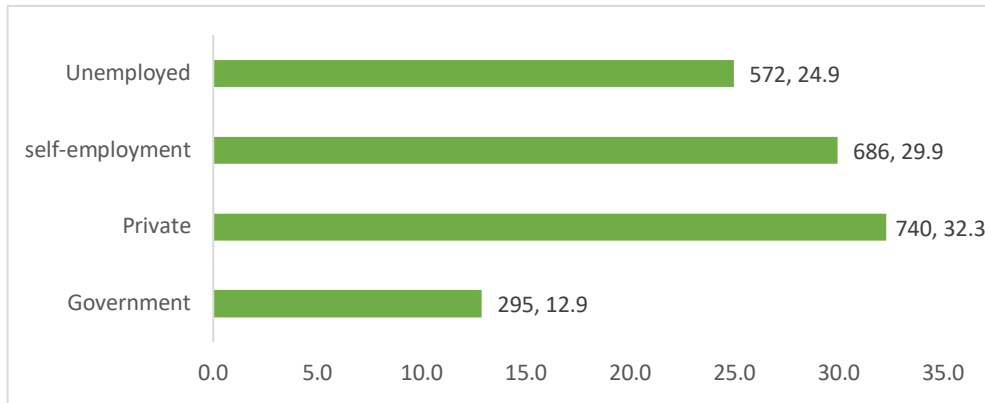


Figure 03: Occupation sector of respondents
Only males above 15 years of age

The highest percentage of the survey respondents were from the cooperate sector (32.3%) while the lowest percentage (12.9%) was from the government sector. The second highest percentage of respondents (29.9%) were self-employed. From the participants, 24.9% were unemployed, since a considerable number of students also participated in the survey.

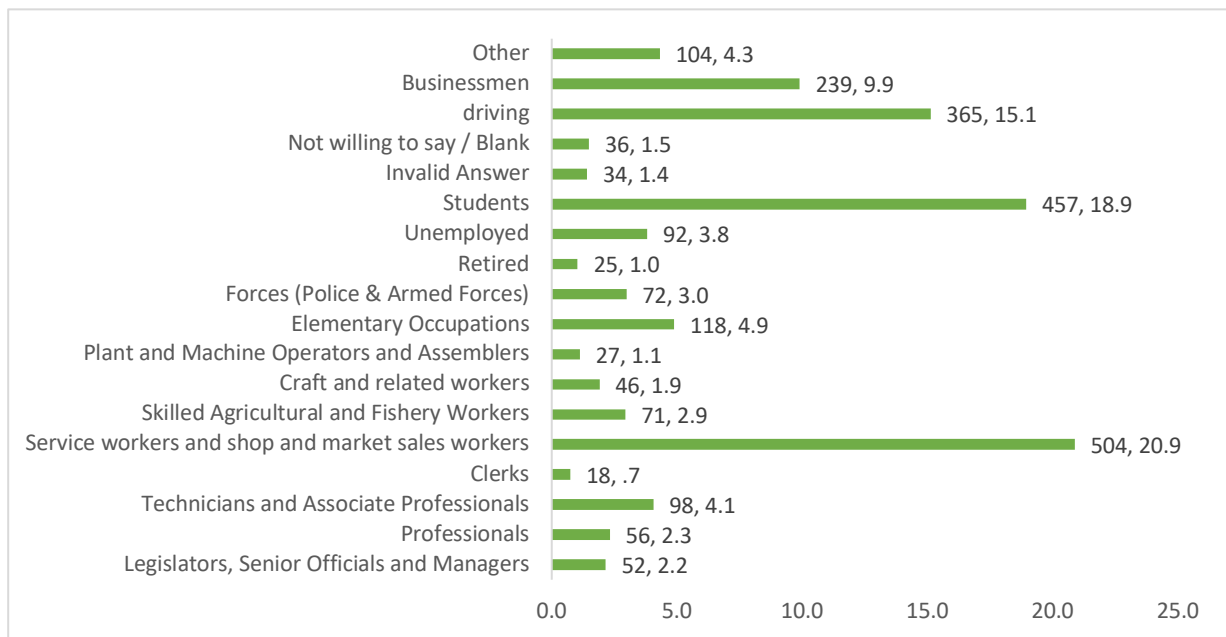


Figure 04: Occupation of respondents
Only males above 15 years of age

The above figure shows in detail, the distribution of study participants based on their occupation. The majority of respondents (20.9%) were service workers and shop/ market sales workers, while the lowest percentage (0.7%) were clerks. There was a considerably high percentage of students as well (18.9%), while 15.1% of the respondents were drivers.

3.3 Results obtained from the survey

3.3.1 Status of alcohol consumption among the study respondents

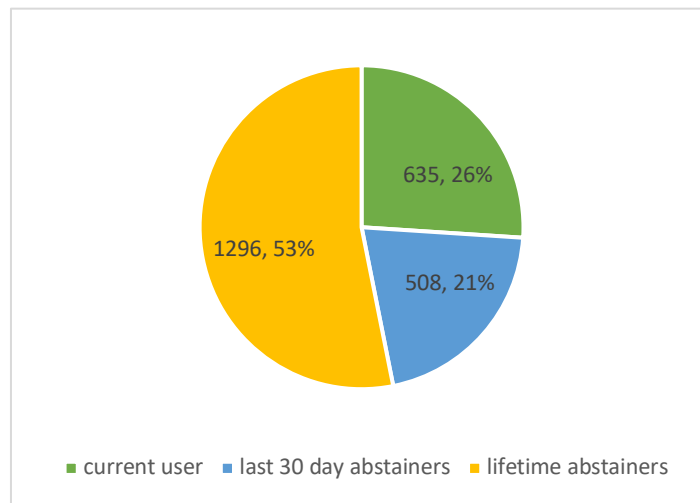


Figure 05: Status of alcohol consumption
Only males above 15 years of age

According to the survey findings, more than half of the respondents were lifetime abstainers (53%). Only 26% of the respondents were found out to be current consumers, while 21% had reported that they had not consumed alcohol during the last 30 days at the time of the survey.

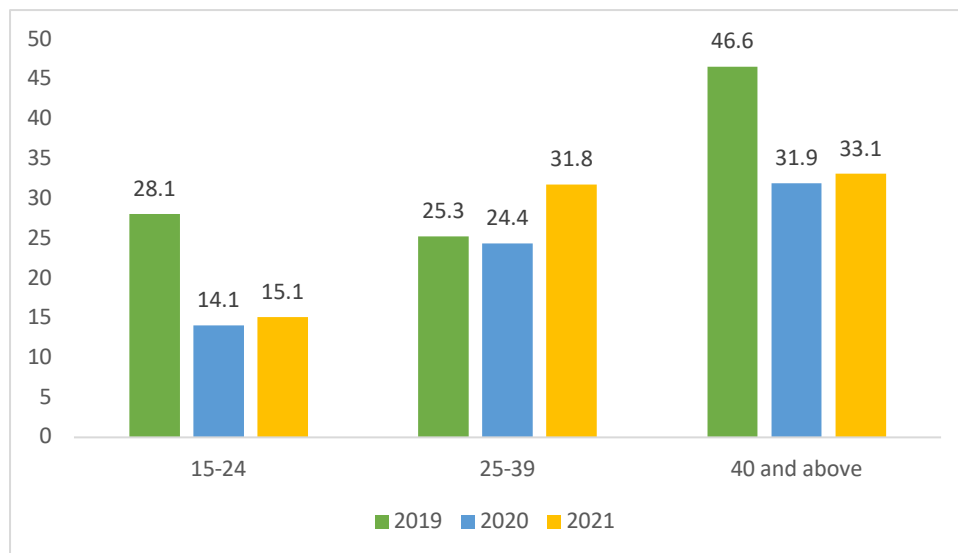


Figure 06: Comparison of alcohol among 3 consecutive years
Only males above 15 years of age

The above figure shows a comparison of the consumption of alcohol in the years 2019, 2020 and 2021. A significant increase in alcohol use in the age group 25-39 years can be observed in the year 2021 when compared to the previous years. In the other two age groups, alcohol use shows a decrease when compared to year 2019, but there is a slight increase when compared to year 2020.

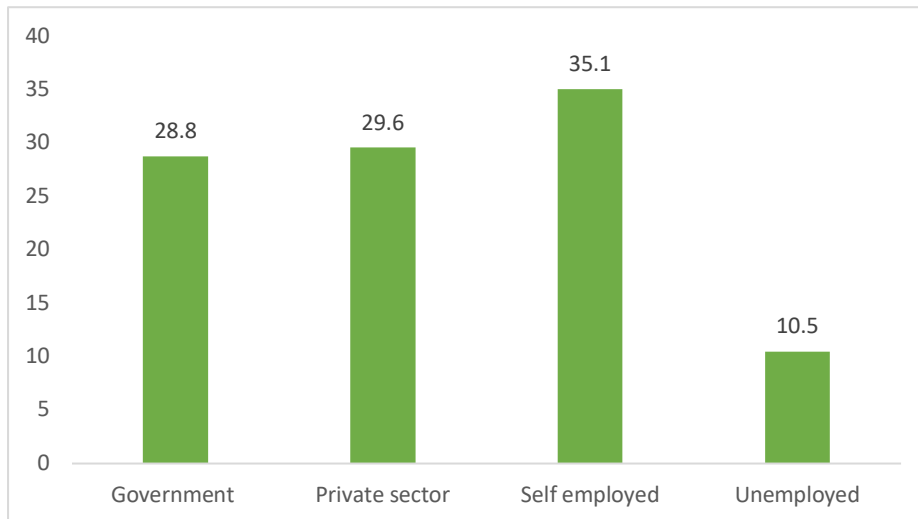


Figure 07: Alcohol consumption by occupation sector

Only males above 15 years of age

The participants who were self-employed represented the highest percentage in alcohol consumption (35.1%), while the unemployed group reported the lowest rate (10.5%). The participants from the cooperate sector also represented a considerably large percentage in alcohol consumption (29.4%).

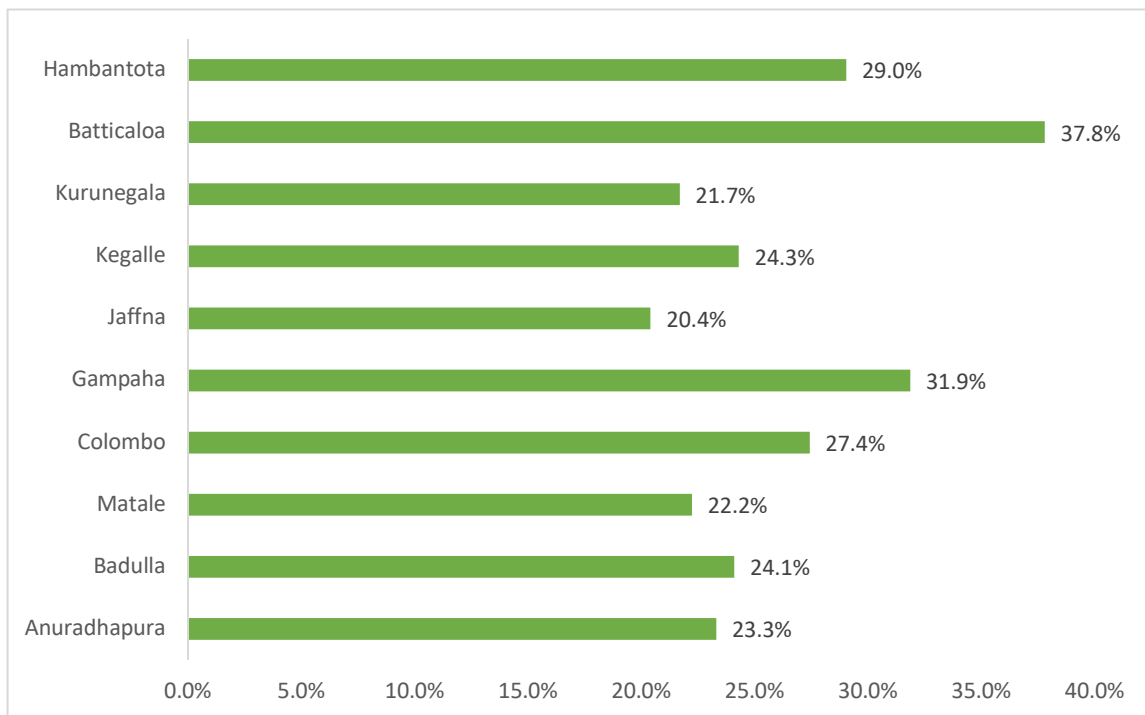


Figure 08: Status of alcohol consumption by district

Only males above 15 years of age

When considering the districts included in the survey, the highest percentage of alcohol users was reported from Batticaloa district (37.8%) while the second highest percentage was observed in Gampaha district (31.9%). The lowest number of alcohol users was observed in Jaffna district (20.4%).

3.3.2 Frequency of alcohol use among the study respondents

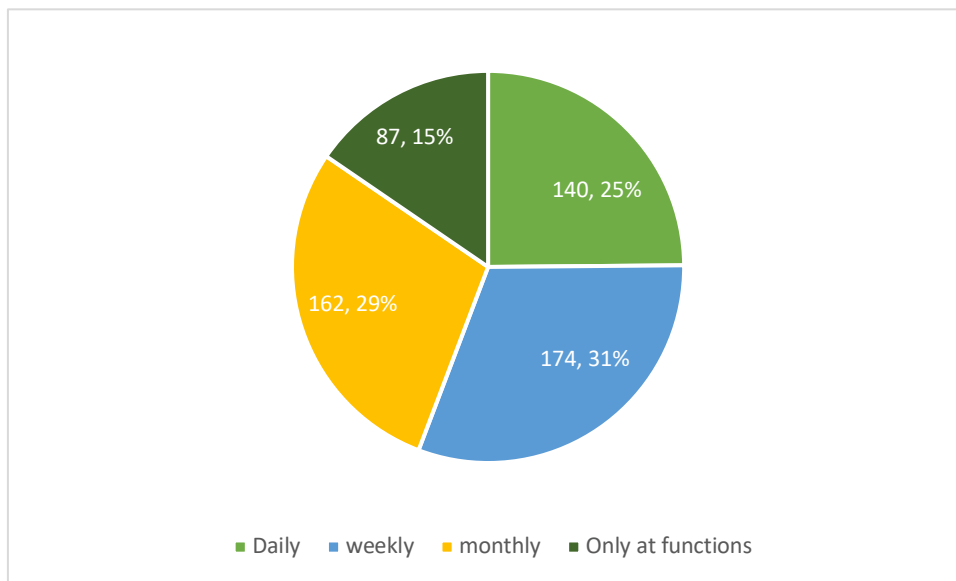


Figure 09: Frequency of alcohol use among current consumers

It was observed that the majority (31%) of the respondents were weekly users while the lowest percentage of respondents (15%) used alcohol products only at functions. From the participants, 25% reported that they consume alcohol daily, while 29% of them were monthly users.

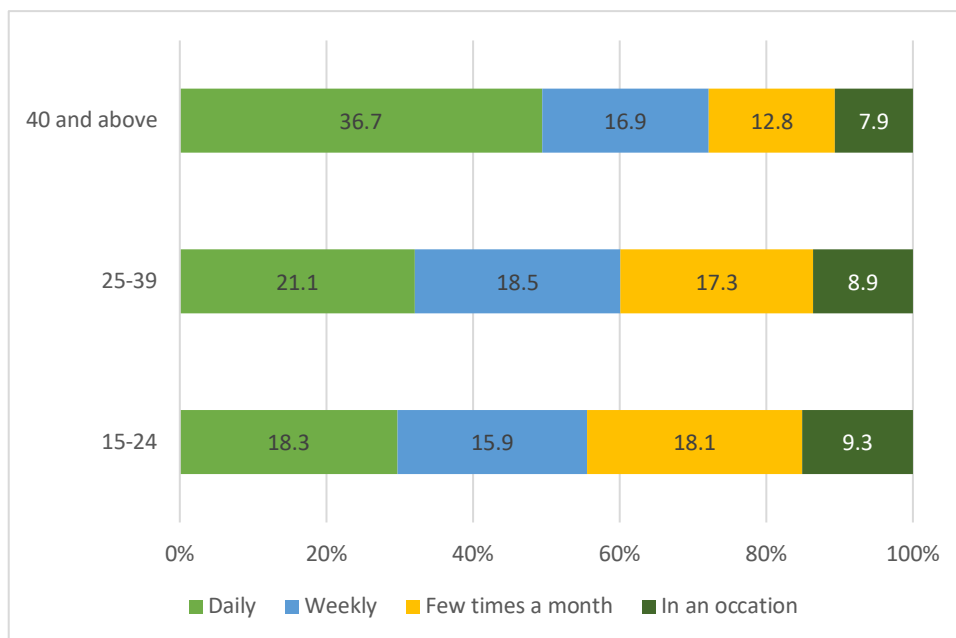


Figure 10: Frequency of alcohol consumption by age group
Only males above 15 years of age

In all three age groups, majority of the users were daily alcohol consumers. The age group 40 years and above showed the highest percentage of daily alcohol use (36.7%). In all the age groups, only very few percentages consumed alcohol only at occasions.

3.3.3 Types of alcohol products

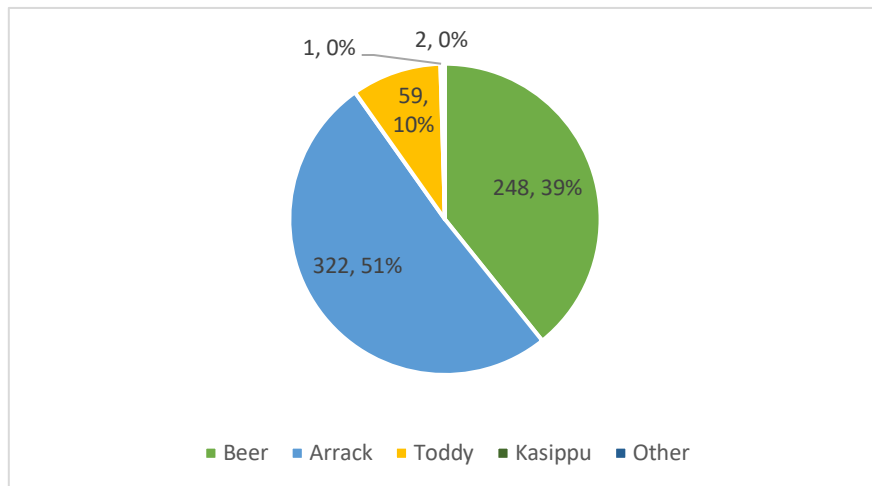


Figure 11: Alcohol consumption by type
Only males above 15 years of age

Arrack is the most popular type of alcohol product among the users as half of the study participants have reported the commonly consumed alcohol product as arrack (51%). The second most popular product is beer (39%), while only 10% consume toddy. Very few percentages have reported use of other alcohol products such as kasippu, which was not specified in detail as the consumption rate is very low.

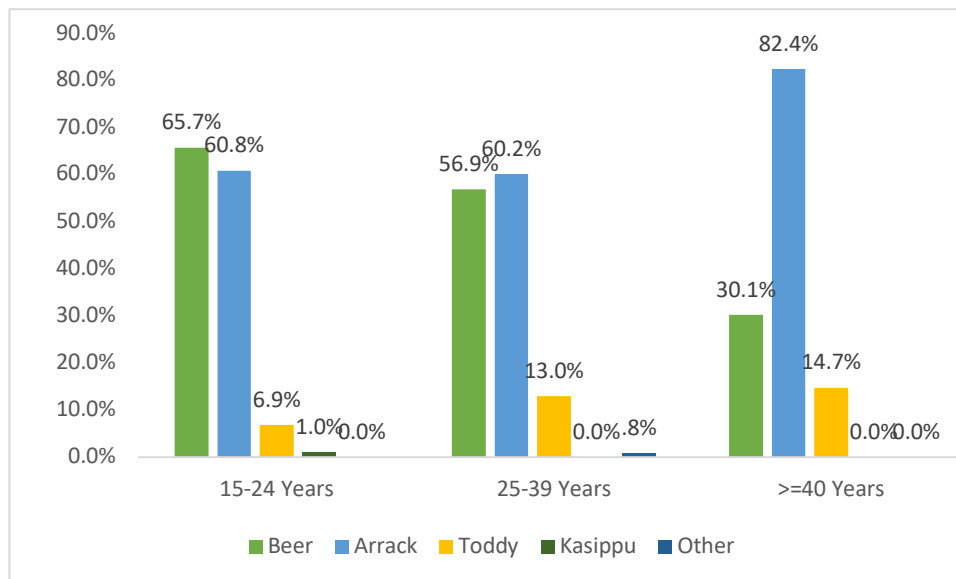


Figure 12: Types of alcohol products consumed by different age groups
Only males above 15 years of age

Arrack and beer seem to be equally popular among the age groups 15-24 years (beer 65.7% and arrack 60.8%) and 25-39 years (beer 56.9% and arrack 60.2%), while arrack consumption is very high among the individuals in the age group 40 years and above (82.4%). Kasippu is also consumed at a very low rate in all three age groups, but consumption of other types of alcohol products in the three age groups is almost negligible.

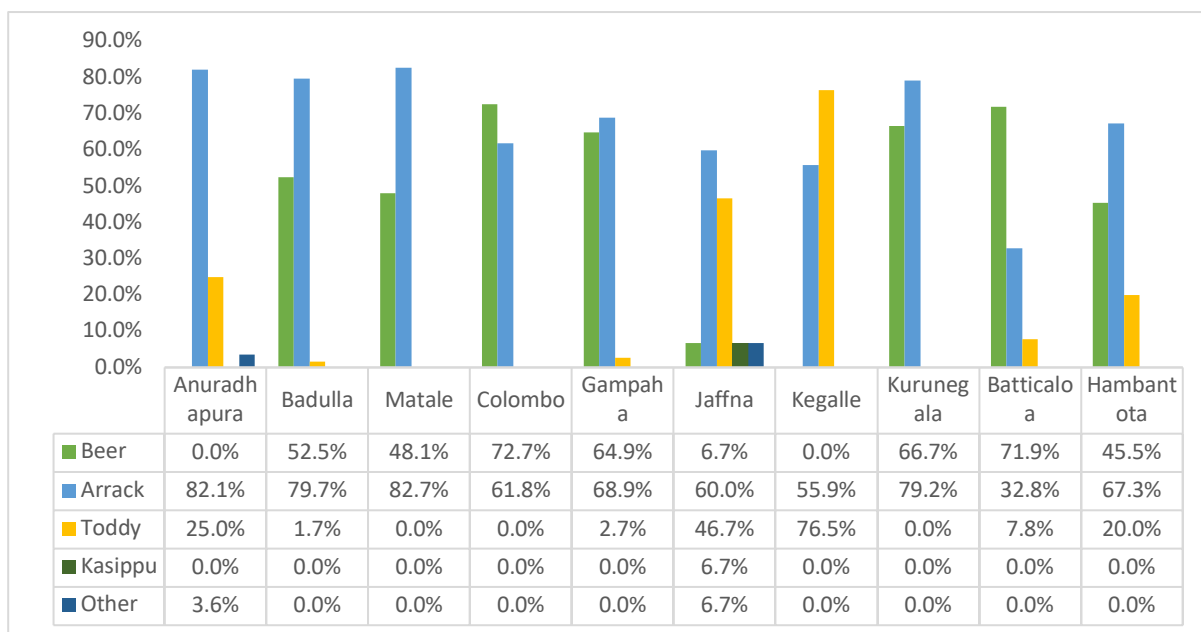


Figure 13: Alcohol products used by current consumers at district level
Only males above 15 years of age

The three main types of alcohol products identified in all districts are again arrack, beer, and toddy. From the study locations, toddy consumption is highest only in Kegalle district. All other districts showed a high consumption rate of arrack and beer with only slight variations. Beer consumption was highest in Batticaloa and Colombo districts.

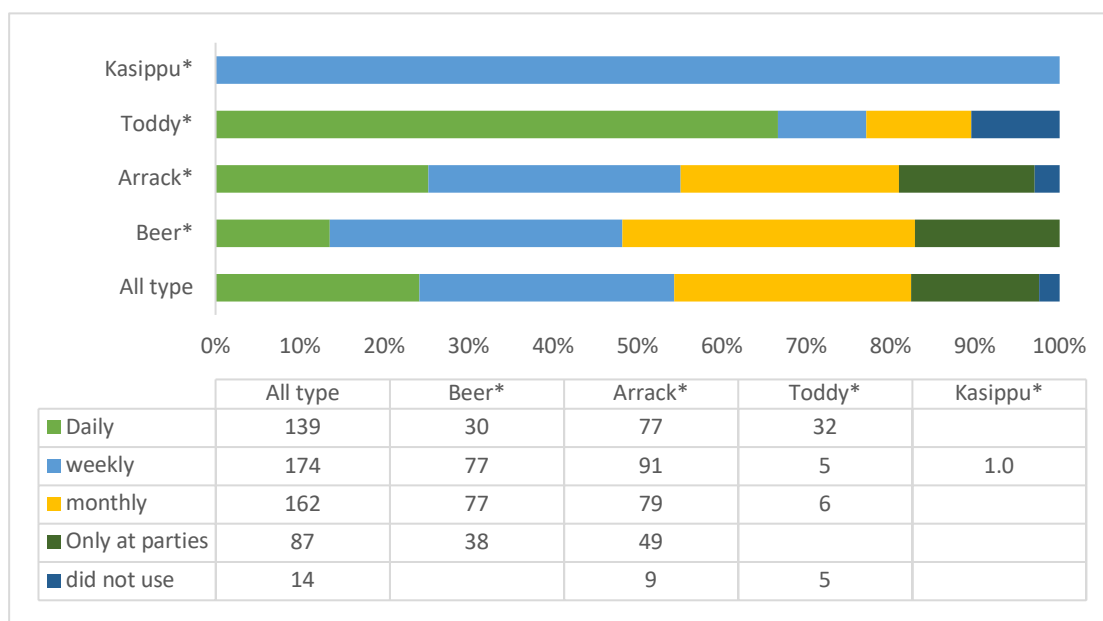


Figure 14: Frequencies of consuming different alcohol products
Only males above 15 years of age

The above figure is an indication of how often different alcohol products are consumed among the respondents. Kasippu was mostly reported to be consumed weekly, while other products obtained multiple responses. Toddy showed the highest daily consumption rate, while beer was reported to be the lowest.

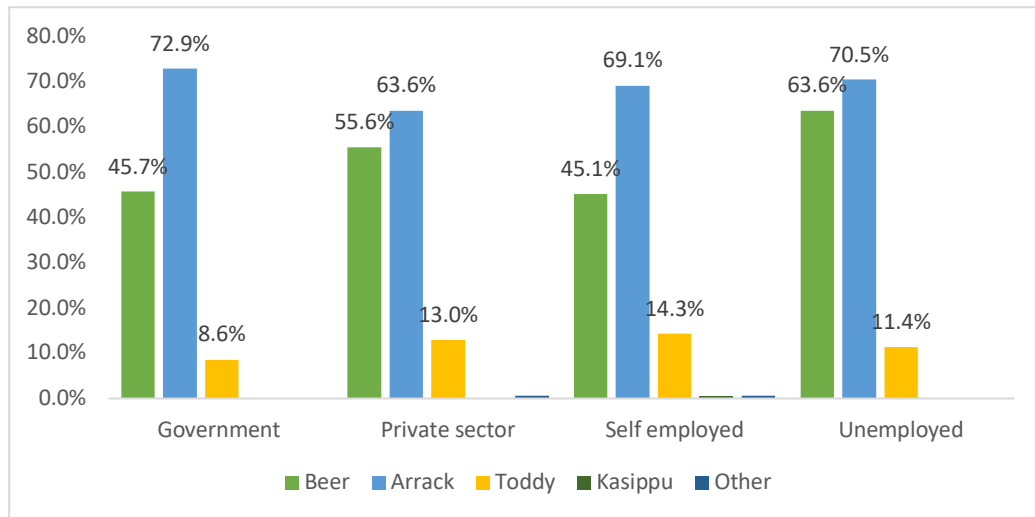


Figure 15: Consumption of alcohol products by occupational sector
Only males above 15 years of age

Beer and arrack remain as the most prominently consumed alcoholic beverage among individuals in all occupational sectors. Out of these two products, arrack was identified as the most used alcohol product among all sectors, while beer was the second most used alcohol product. Highest arrack consumption rate was shown in participants employed in the government sector (72.9%), while the highest beer consumption rate was observed in the unemployed group (63.6%).

3.3.4 Alcohol initiation

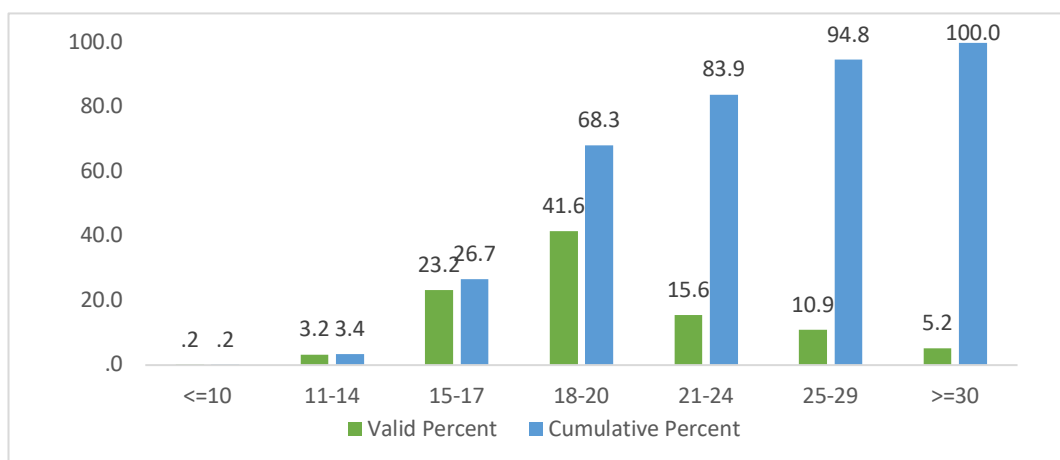


Figure 16: Alcohol initiation age
Only males above 15 years of age

Table 03: Initiation age by age group

Age group	N	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation	Std. Error of Mean	Skewness	F value
15-24	259	17.82	18.00	1.995	.151	.078	5.761
25-39	521	20.11	20.00	3.725	.107	.773	.000
40 and above	330	21.88	20.00	6.311	.134	1.491	
All	1110	20.10	19.00	4.627	.139	1.872	

The highest percentage of initiations (41.6%) was reported at the age range of 18-20 years. It is also clear that a significant amount of alcohol initiations is caused by the age of 24 (83.9%). Further, there is a decline in alcohol initiation after 24 years of age. This explanation is further justified from the statistical data represented in Table 03.

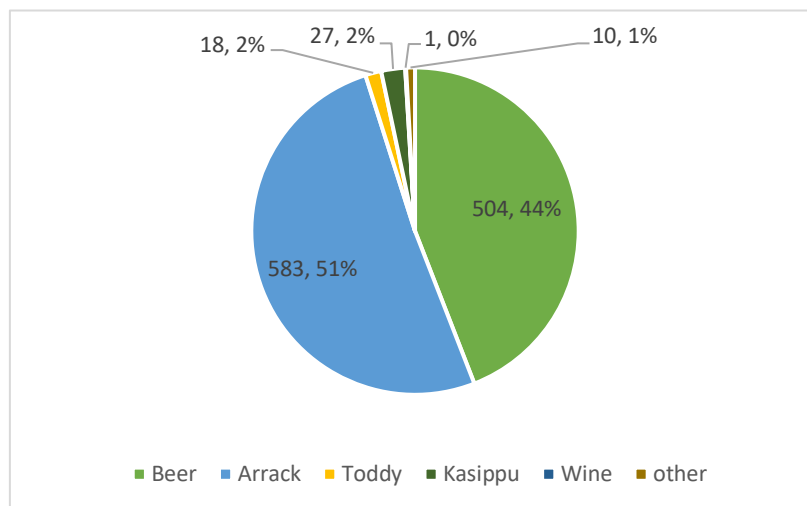


Figure 17: Type of alcohol product consumed at initiation
Only males above 15 years of age

At the time of initiation, the highest percentage of users (51%) had used arrack, while the second highest percentage of users (44%) had used beer. Consumption of toddy, kasippu and other alcohol products is very low.

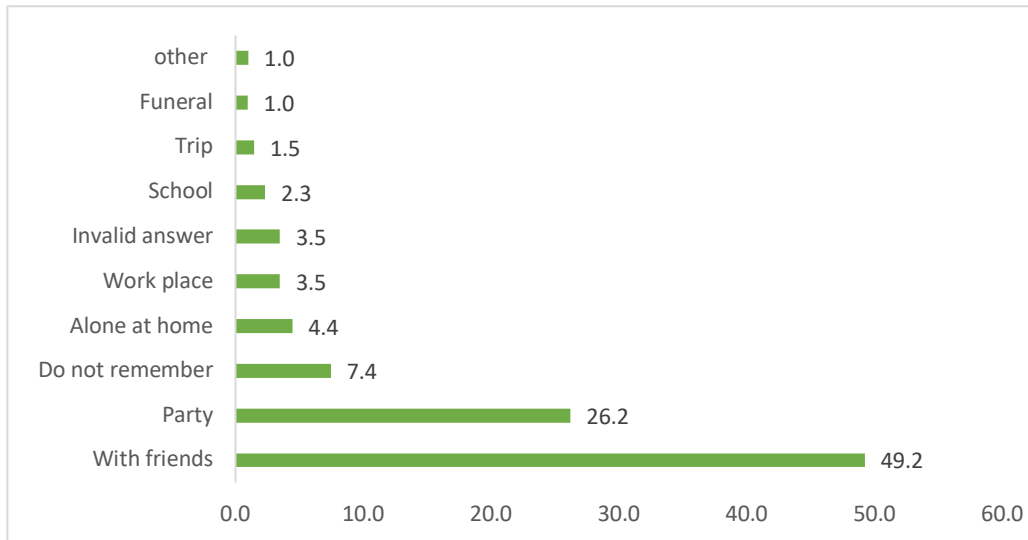


Figure 18: Alcohol initiation occasion
Only males above 15 years of age

The highest percentage of respondents (49.2%) has reported that initiation of alcohol use occurred with their friends, while several other reasons were given by other users. Parties was another common occasion (26.2%) which caused onset of alcohol use among the respondents.

3.3.5 Cessation of alcohol use

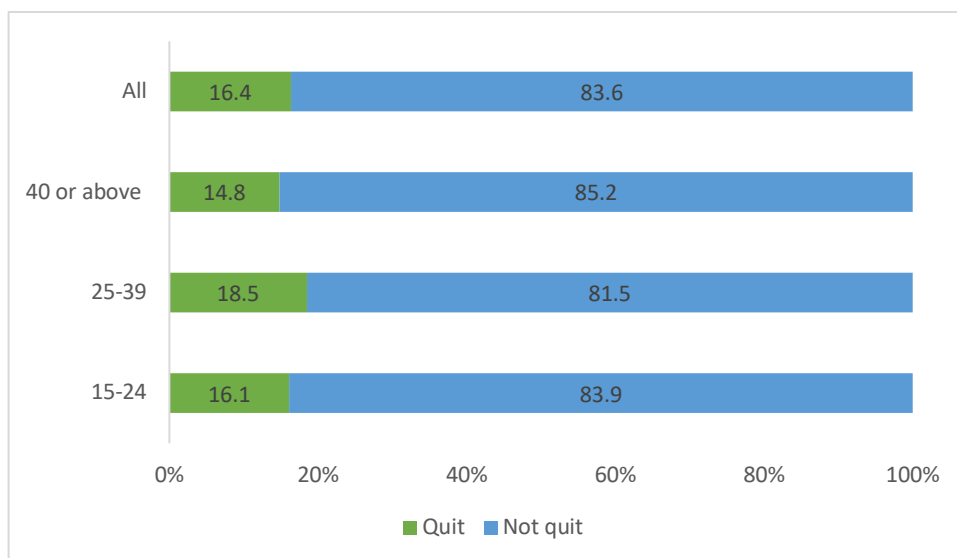


Figure 19: Quitting alcohol consumption
Only males above 15 years of age

From the respondents, the majority (83.6%) was unable to quit the habit, while only 16.4% of the current consumers have quit alcohol use at the time of the survey. In all three age groups, the percentage who were unable to quit the habit of drinking is quite high, compared to the percentage who have ceased alcohol use.

Table 4: Cessation of alcohol use by age group

	No. of respondents	Mean quit age	Std. Deviation	Min-Max
overall	141	33	13.674	16-73
15-24	19	19	1.300	17-21
25-39	63	27	5.194	16-38
40 or above	59	43	14.589	17-73

Table 04 presents the statistical data of the quitting age of alcohol consumption. According to the statistical analysis, the mean age for alcohol cessation is 33 years.

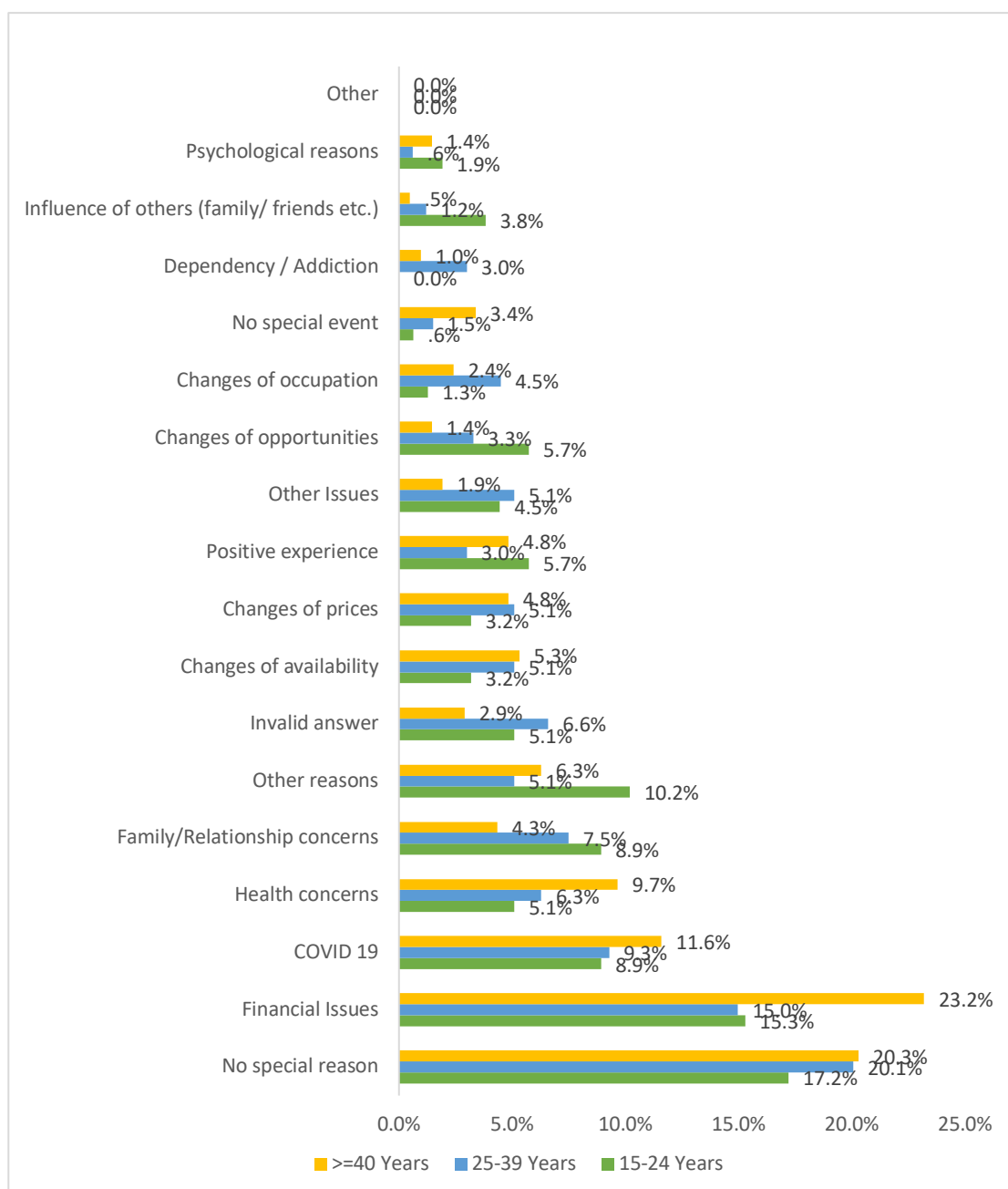


Figure 20: Reasons for quitting alcohol use
Only males above 15 years of age

During the survey, the users in all three age groups were asked about the reasons which caused them to change their alcohol consumption pattern in the six months prior to the survey. Financial issues were mentioned by majority of the respondents in the age group 40 years and above while no special reason was stated by the respondents in the other two age groups. According to the responses of the study participants, COVID-19 was also reported as an important reason for reducing alcohol use.

3.3.6 Expenditure on alcohol

Table 5: Monthly expenditure on alcohol for different age groups

	No: of respondents	Median (Rs)	Interquartile Range (Rs)	Min -Max (Rs)
Age group				
All current users				
15-24	114	3215.00	4000	300-50000
25-39	275	4950.00	6500	220-100000
40 and above	157	5000.00	8975	350-70000
Daily beer consumers				
15-24	9	8000.00	10800	3000-40000
25-39	16	11750.00	22350.00	1000-34800
40 and above	4	15250.00	19625.00	7000-30000
Daily arrack users				
15-24	9	8000.00	10800	3000-40000
25-39	16	11750.00	22350	1000-34800
40 and above	4	15250.00	19625	7000-30000
Frequency of consumption				
Beer				
Daily	29	11400.00	20500	1000-40000
Weekly	75	4000.00	4500	600-50000
Few times a month	73	2000.00	3930	300-40000
Only at functions	25	3000.00	5000	220-20000
Arrack				
Daily	73	7000.00	10115	440-4000
Weekly	90	5000.00	6603	500-50000
Few times a month	69	3000.00	4000	500-20000
Only at functions	35	2180.00	2500	500-7000

Table 5 represents data on monthly expenditure among current alcohol consumers based on the age group and frequency of consumption for arrack and beer. Median value of the monthly expenditure is highest among the age group 40 years and above (Rs.5,000.00).

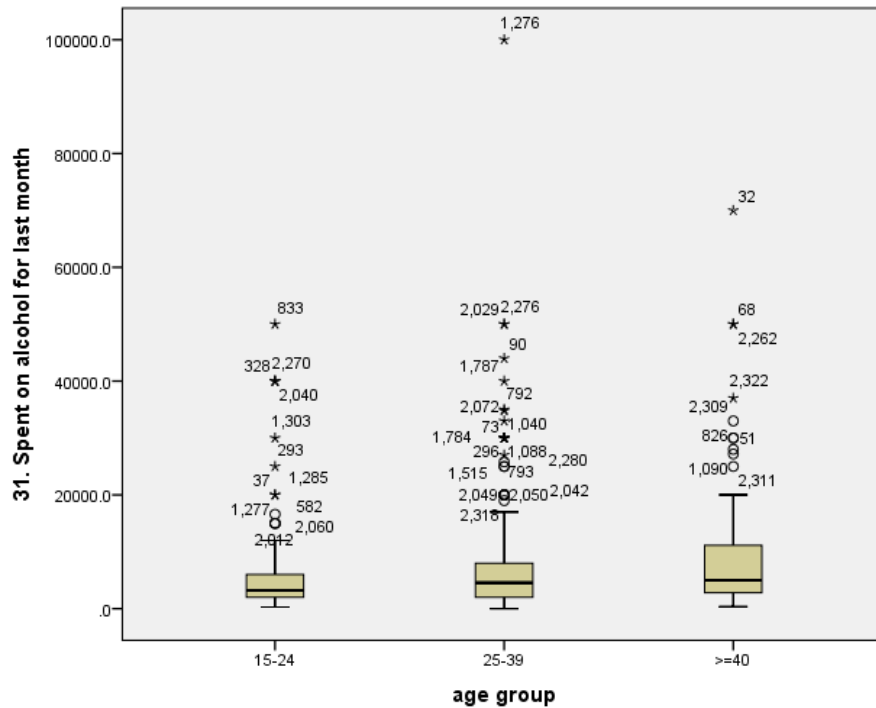


Figure 21: Monthly expenditure on alcohol by age group

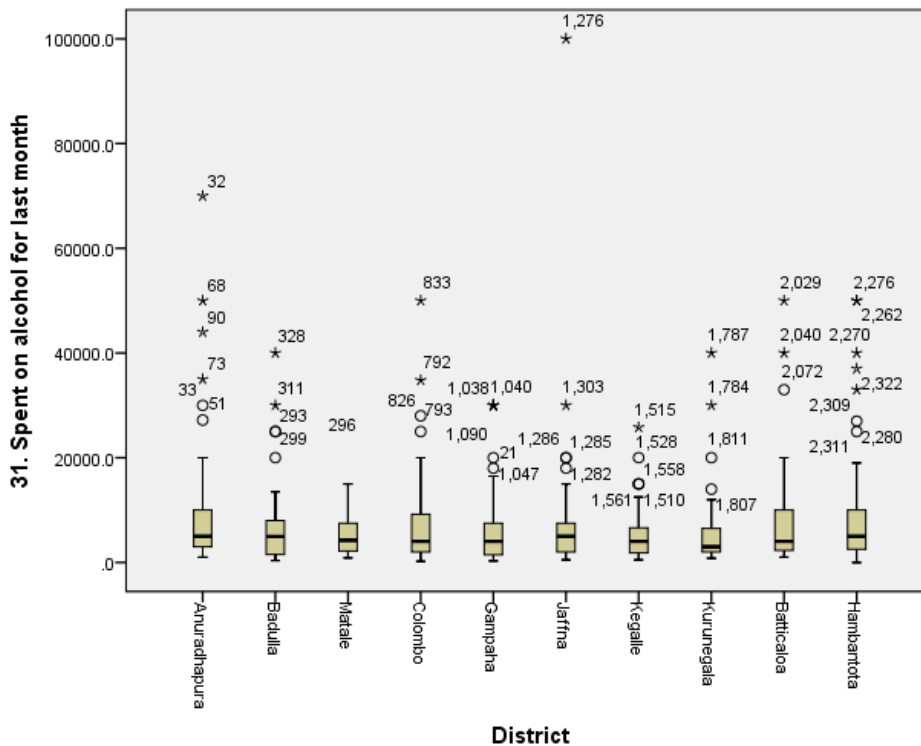


Figure 22: Monthly expenditure on alcohol by district

Expenditure on alcohol consumption in the last month prior to the survey for all current alcohol consumers in each district is shown in Figures 21 and 22 respectively. Among the group of daily alcohol consumers, the lowest average expenditure was observed from the Kurunegala district while the highest was reported from Anuradhapura and Jaffna districts.

3.3.7 Miscellaneous results

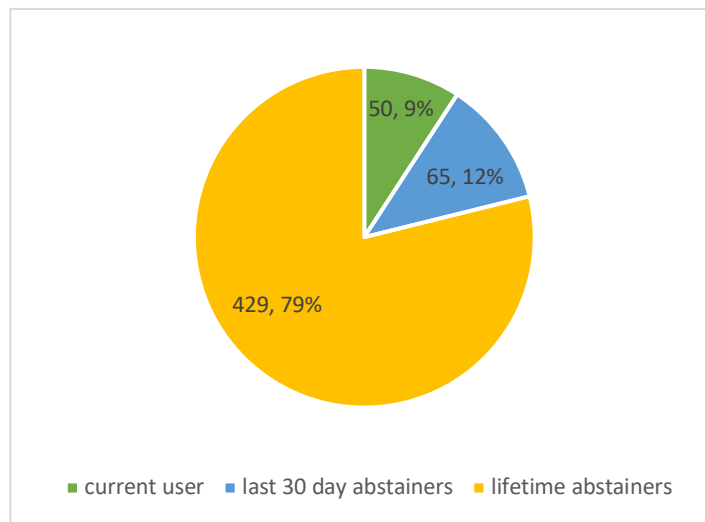


Figure 23: Status of alcohol consumption below 21 years
Only males above 15 years of age

In Sri Lanka, the legal age for consuming alcohol products is 21 years. However, through the results obtained from the survey, it was identified that there is still a percentage of 9% (n=50) under the age of 21 years who are current users of alcohol, even though the majority (79%) of this age group are lifetime abstainers.

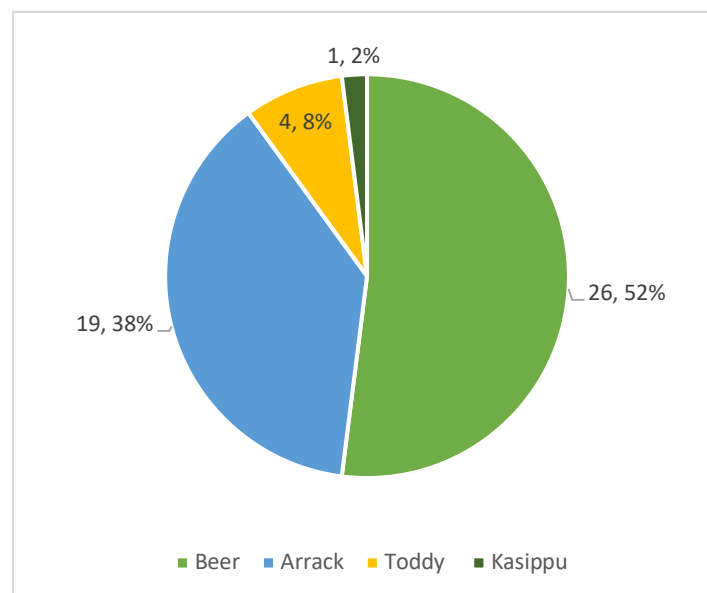


Figure 24: Type of alcohol products used by consumers below 21 years
Only males above 15 years of age

The majority (52%) of the current alcohol consumers below the age of 21 years have reported that they consume beer while the second most popular product (38%) was reported as arrack. Consumption of toddy, kasippu and other type of alcohol products within this age group is fairly low, compared to beer and arrack.

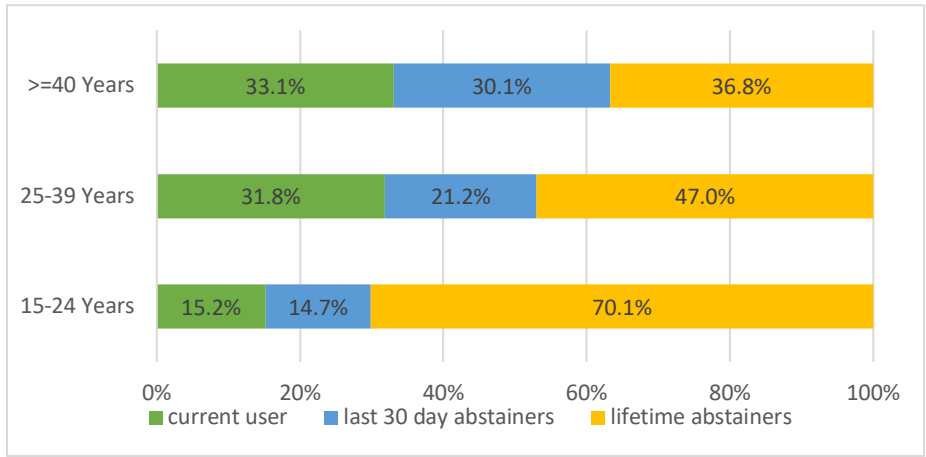


Figure 25: Usage of alcohol within the three age groups
Only males above 15 years of age

In all three age categories, lifetime abstainers were prominent. From the three age groups, the highest percentage of lifetime abstainers was present in the age group 15-24 years (70.1%), while the current users in this age group was reported to be lowest (15.2%). In the age group 40 years and above, lifetime abstainers were lowest, compared to the other two groups (36.8%).

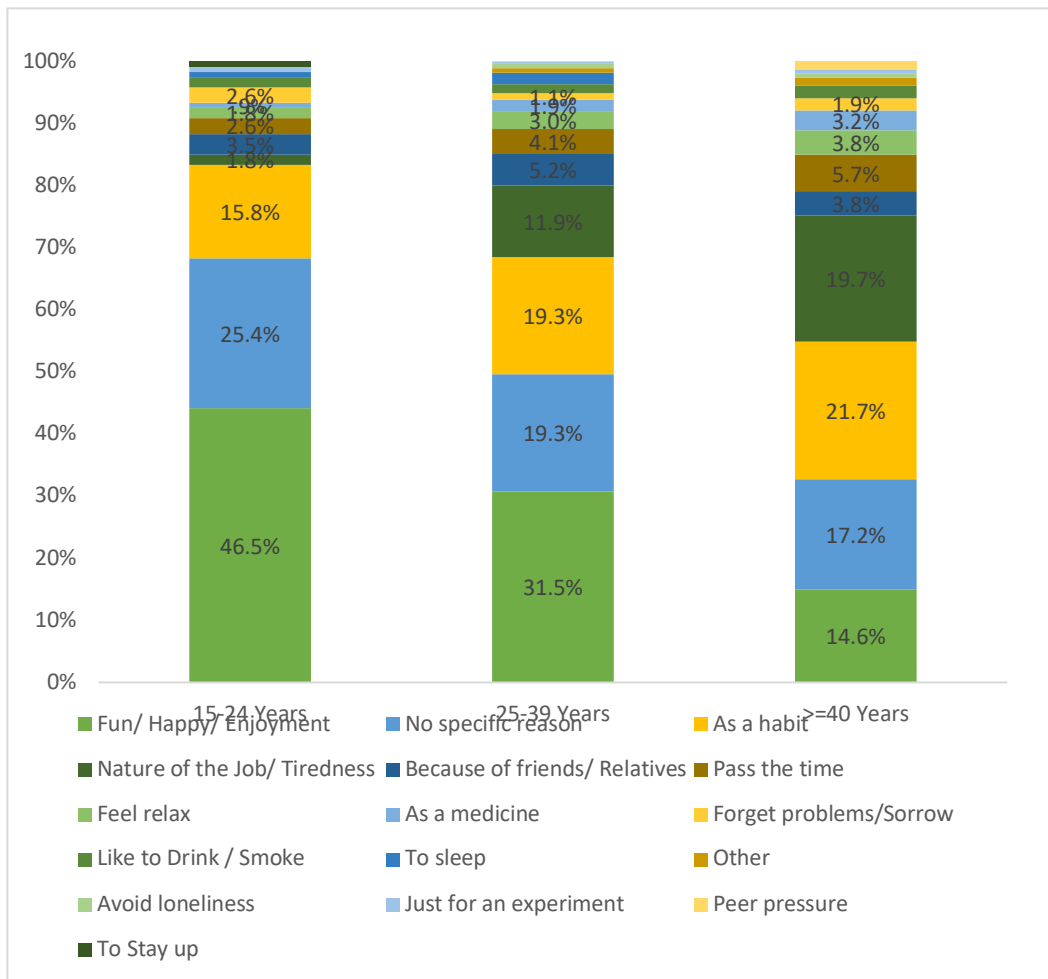


Figure 26: Reasons for alcohol consumption
Only males above 15 years of age

The graph shows that a high percentage in the age groups 15-24 years and 25-39 years have stated that they consume alcohol just for fun/ to enjoy themselves. A considerable percentage also consume alcohol for no specific reason. The reasons given by the respondents seem to be different from one another, making them controversial.

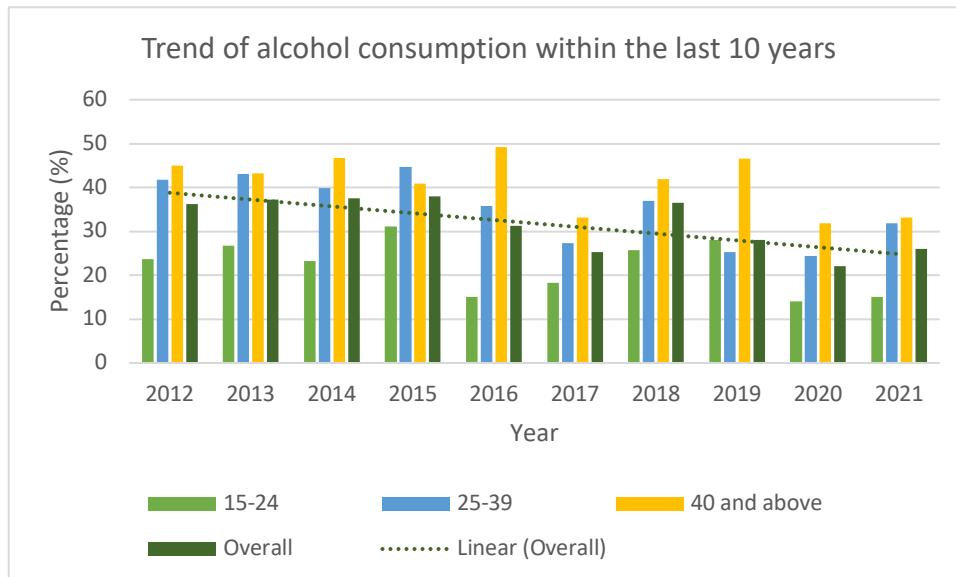
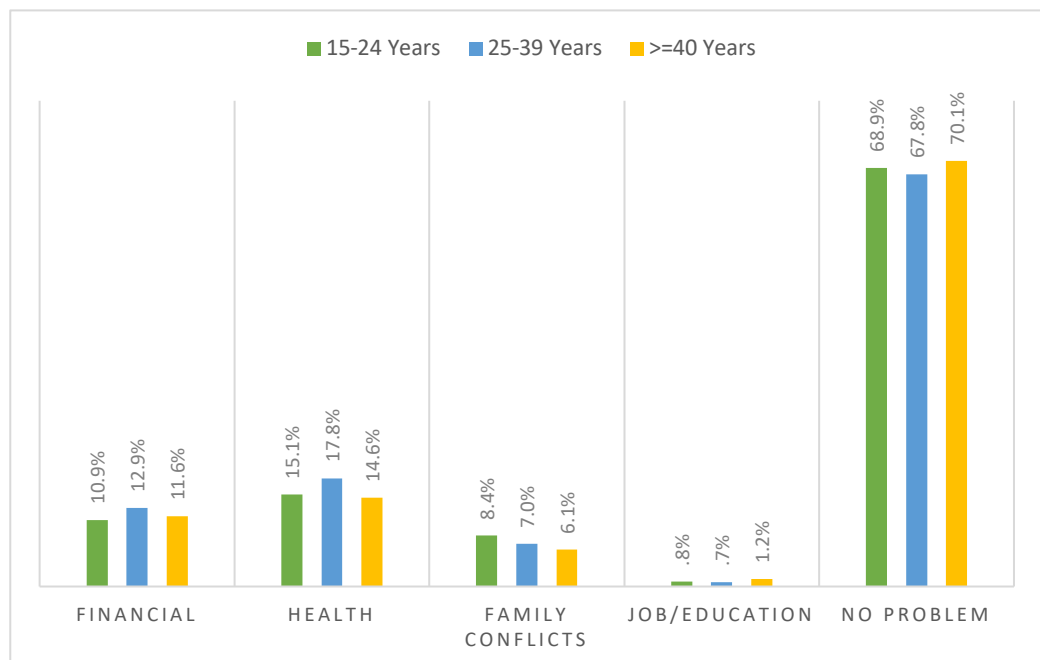


Figure 27: Trend of alcohol consumption within the last 10 years
Only males above 15 years of age

An overall decreasing trend in alcohol use can be observed during the past ten years.

Figure 28:
Problems faced by alcohol consumers
Only males above 15 years of age

According to the responses, majority in all three age groups have faced no



issues due to their alcohol consumption. Apart from that, health issues, financial problems and family dispute are the other main issues stated by the alcohol consumers.

Discussion

Alcohol has been identified as a main causal factor in 7 out of 10 deaths occurring in Sri Lanka. Therefore, the burden added by alcohol to the country's health system is quite high. As Sri Lanka is facing an economic crisis at present, alcohol has become an unnecessary burden on the country's economy as well (1/3 of a user's income is spent on alcohol). Domestic violence associated with alcohol use is also reported to be considerably high. Therefore, addressing this issue is a timely need for poverty alleviation and safeguarding human rights within the country. Implementation of effective evidence-based alcohol control policies and appropriate taxation systems is essential for Sri Lanka as a developing country since alcohol is an obstacle to development.

ADIC has been conducting trend surveys on alcohol consumption within Sri Lanka for many years, to identify the status of alcohol use within the country, and to use the data obtained through the surveys for effective implementation of alcohol control policies. The year 2021 had been a challenging year for the world as well as our country because of the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic. Amidst lockdowns, new guidelines established by government authorities and other various difficulties, ADIC was able to conduct the study successfully, revealing several important information on alcohol consumption trends within the country.

For the study, only the male population in the selected districts was included as alcohol use among females in Sri Lanka is relatively low. When obtaining study responses, the age, education level and occupation of the respondents were also taken into consideration. The majority of the respondents were lifetime abstainers, which indicates that more people are currently aware of the negative impact and health conditions related to alcohol consumption. Self-employed respondents and individuals from the cooperate sector reported the highest usage of alcohol products, which must be due to the ability to afford these products. In the meantime, the unemployed group have reported the lowest consumption rate. The unemployed group consisted of students, retired individuals and people who do not work at all. Therefore, financial barriers must have been the main reason for the low alcohol usage among the unemployed group.

When considering the district-wise comparison, the highest alcohol usage was reported in Batticaloa district, while the lowest usage was reported in Jaffna district. Regardless of the type of product, age of the respondents or the occupation, the majority of the current users were weekly users, while a considerably high percentage also stated that they consumed alcohol daily. This indicates that the users are spending a large sum of their hard-earned money on alcohol consumption, which has a direct impact on the economy and development within their families and the society as a whole.

Arrack and Beer are the most popular products among all types of users according to the study findings. Even at initiation of alcohol use, arrack was reported to be the most prominently used product. Arrack and Beer are commercially produced and advertised through media, which might be the cause of them being perceived as the most popular products. And most of the study participants had initiated alcohol use between the ages 18-20 years, either with friends or at social gatherings (e.g.: parties). These results are mostly consistent with the previous findings. Various reasons had been stated by the study participants for alcohol use, which are different from one another and quite controversial (e.g.: some use alcohol to stay up while some have mentioned it helps them to sleep).

When considering the responses obtained from the study participants regarding cessation of alcohol use, the majority (83.6%) has been unable to quit the habit, while only a small percentage has completely stopped alcohol use at the time of the study. The quitting was mostly due to financial

issues and COVID-19, while several other reasons were also mentioned by other respondents. This implies that most people are still not aware about the health issues related to alcohol consumption, which is a major risk factor for most non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Therefore, there is a strong need for implementation of more alcohol control strategies among the vulnerable groups to spread awareness about the negative impact of alcohol use.

The study findings further challenge the already established alcohol policies within Sri Lanka. National Authority on Tobacco and Alcohol Act No. 27 enacted in 2006 imposes the legal boundaries on selling alcohol and it is prohibited to sell alcohol products for individuals under the age 21 years. However, the study reveals that a percentage of 9% under the age of 21 years is current alcohol users, which proves the violation of the act that was already established for alcohol control. Alcohol sales is carried out even for underage groups, neglecting the rules established by the relevant authorities.

The trend survey on alcohol has revealed important findings on the alcohol consumption patterns in Sri Lanka. It is ADIC's expectation that this information would be shared and used among interested parties for effective policy formulation and activities related to alcohol control within the country. Also, attention should be focused on violation of alcohol control policies, which is crucial in addressing alcohol related issues in the communities.

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