

Campaign responses

CAMRA, The Campaign for Real Ale ran a campaign that encouraged their members to respond by email, answering questions 1-4 of the consultation.

Each person who emailed was counted as a separate campaign respondent. In total, 785 responses were received in this category. Sample answers were used (or adapted) for all of the responses. For example:

Q1. Is the weekly guideline for regular drinking as a whole, along with the explanation in the ‘Summary of the proposed guidelines’, clear and understandable?

- A) No. The advice looks to me to suggest that it's not safe to drink any alcohol at all, but doesn't tell me why. I understand that very heavy alcohol use does cause health problems, but there has been plenty of coverage in the media in recent years of sensible drinking having a good effect on the heart, and examples like this aren't recognised in the proposed guidelines.
- B) No. The proposed guidelines don't tell you how the decisions have been reached, even though they're much lower than the current guidelines. They're also much lower than other international weekly guidelines, despite other countries like Canada having revised their guidelines recently too. I don't understand what evidence there is to suggest I should be cutting down my alcohol intake to meet the proposed levels.
- C) No. I don't understand why the proposed guidelines are now the same for men and women, or why there isn't a daily recommended intake anymore. This is confusing as there is no advice on how much alcohol is recommended to drink each day. I won't be able to make an informed decision on my alcohol intake from this advice as I don't understand why these decisions have been reached.

Q2 Is it clear what the guideline - along with the explanation - means, for how you can seek to reduce long terms risks to your health from alcohol? Is the explanation for how the weekly guideline was chosen clear?

- A) No. The proposed guideline seems to suggest that there isn't a safe level of alcohol intake, but I have seen articles in the media that suggest otherwise. Drinking alcohol is a personal choice, and I feel that this wording is very negative and is designed to put people off drinking altogether, rather than letting us make an informed decision.
- B) No. The explanation says that the expert group took into account the risk of death from regular drinking and also the risk of diseases caused by alcohol. However it doesn't give a comparison to other diseases such as cancers that aren't caused by

alcohol. A lot of lifestyle choices carry a health risk but we each make our own decisions. How am I meant to make my own decision about the relative risks if I don't have a comparable benchmark?

- C) No. The proposed guideline and explanation doesn't explain why the limit for men and women has been made the same - so it's not clear at all. It's common knowledge that alcohol affects men and women differently, so I don't feel comfortable following this new advice without a better explanation.

Q3 Is it clear what the guideline - along with the explanation - means, for how you can keep your health risks within a low level, if you drink on only a few days each week?

- A) No. The way the proposed guideline is worded suggests that drinking will always lead to an increased risk of dying from long term illnesses, but not all types of illnesses have been linked to alcohol. This isn't mentioned anywhere in the suggested guidelines. I've read in the press that moderate drinking can be beneficial for a number of health problems, but I don't see this mentioned anywhere in the proposed advice, I don't think this is fair to consumers who want to make informed choices on their drinking.
- B) No. I understand that binge drinking is dangerous for personal health, and can put other people at risk too. However the suggested guidelines are a lot lower than before and now what I understood to be a reasonable amount of alcohol could now be thought of as 'heavy drinking', even though it would be within current guidelines. I don't understand from the proposed guideline and explanation why this has happened, and don't consider myself to be drinking dangerous levels of alcohol.
- C) No. The suggested advice only mentions heavy drinking, when most people who drink a couple of times a week do so responsibly. It is my understanding that the majority of problems caused by binge drinking are only relevant to certain groups of people - especially young males - so why aren't the guidelines on this targeted at them instead of advising everyone to rethink their drinking?

Q4. Is it clear what the guideline - along with the explanation - means? Is it clear how you could, if you wish, reduce your long term health risks below the low risk level set by the guideline?

- A) No. The proposed guideline and explanation don't offer alternative ways to cut down drinking other than avoiding alcohol completely. This ignores alternatives like drinking a lower strength beer than usual. The suggestion that there is no safe level of drinking goes against what I understand as being true from the previous

guidelines and press coverage of research that has been done, therefore I don't think the guideline should say this without providing evidence.

- B) No. The explanation says that people wanting to reduce their risk could choose to not drink at all - I don't think this a fair statement, and no evidence has been given to back it up. I don't think the suggested guidelines are fair, and have been produced with a motive to stop people drinking, rather than providing us with fair information to make decisions about our drinking. I'm less likely to follow the guidance if it says I shouldn't drink at all.
- C) No. I think the suggested guideline is very negative. For me, a large part of drinking alcohol is going to the pub and socialising, and it means I'm drinking in a safe environment. I'm more concerned about cut price alcohol in supermarkets, and that people drink it alone in their homes so can't keep track of amounts they drink - that is what the guidelines should be trying to tackle, rather than targeting people like me who just go for a pint in the pub. I'm less likely to follow the guidance if it says I shouldn't drink at all.