



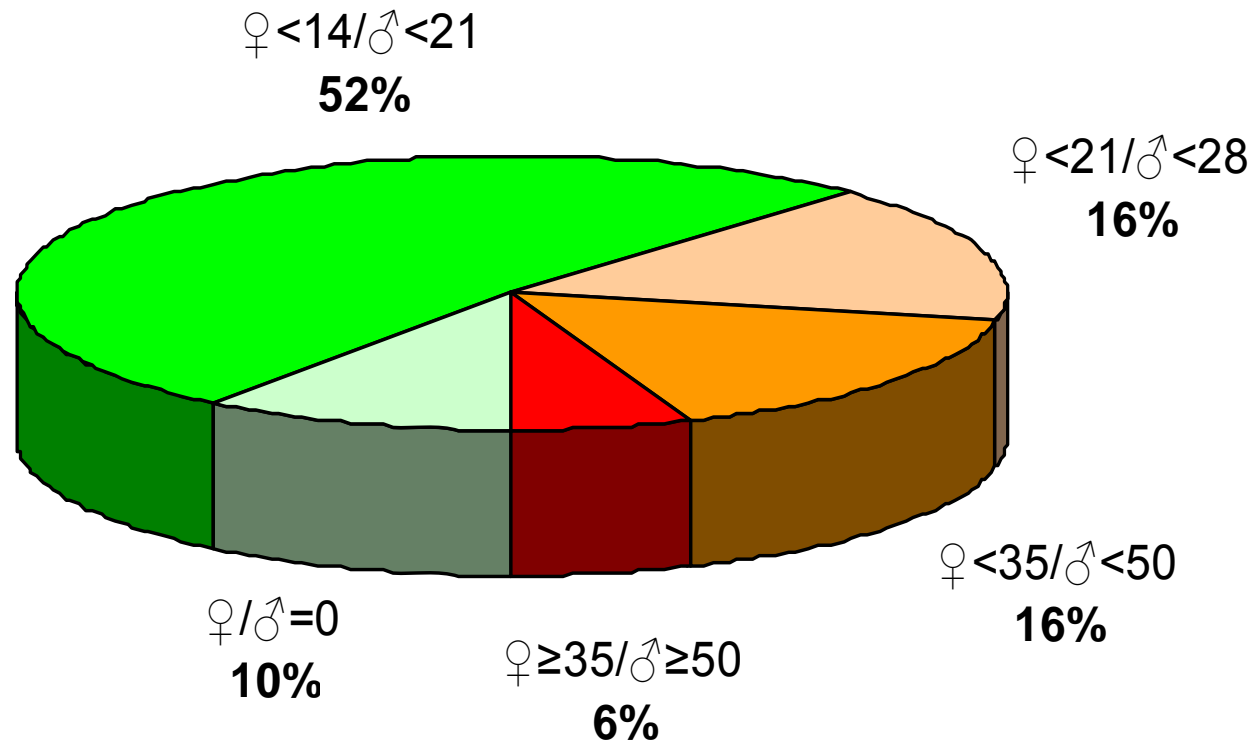
Understanding student drinking using individual and population based approaches

Bewick, B.M., Harrison, W., Barrass, C., Hill, A.J., Martin, C. and West, R.
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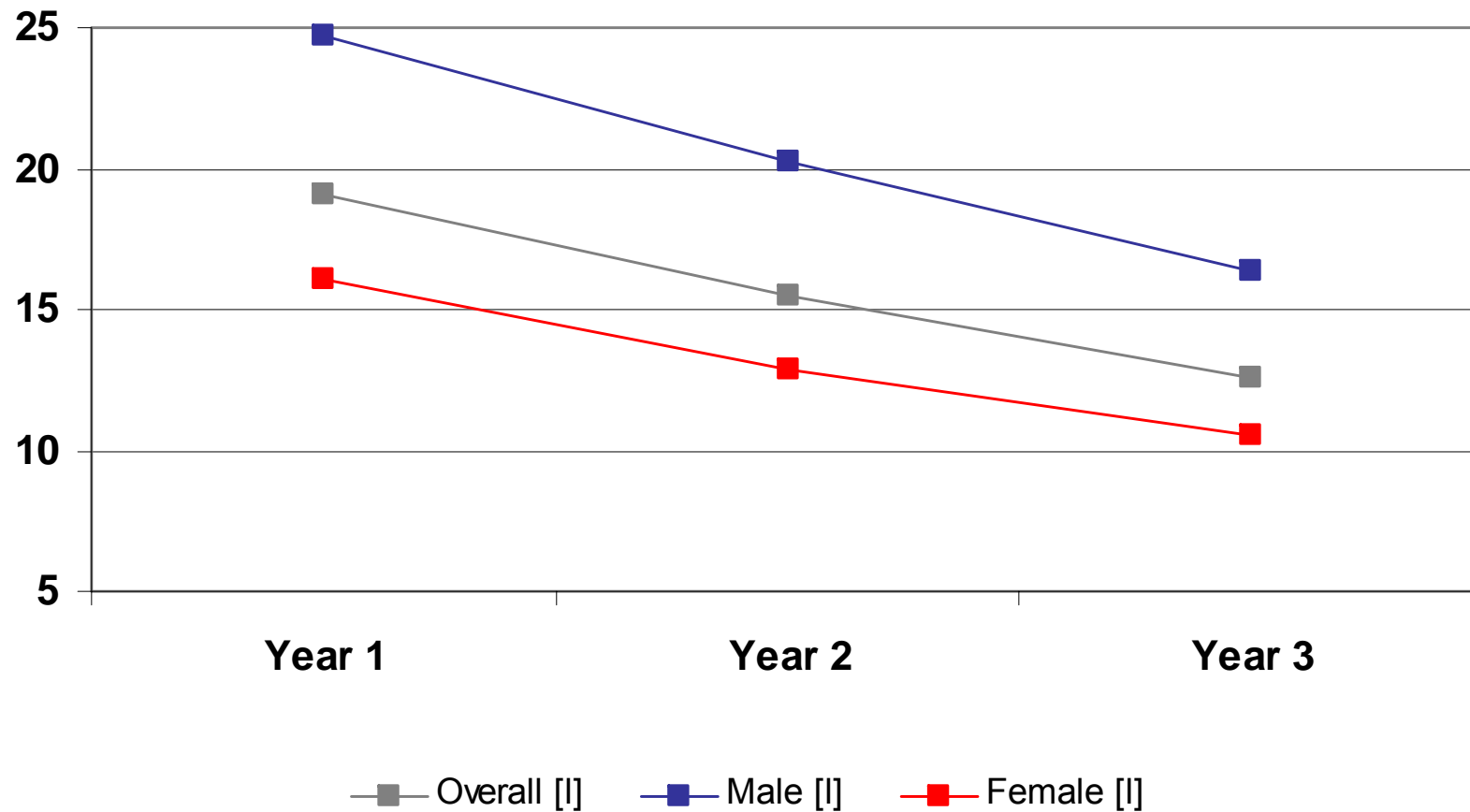
How much do students drink?

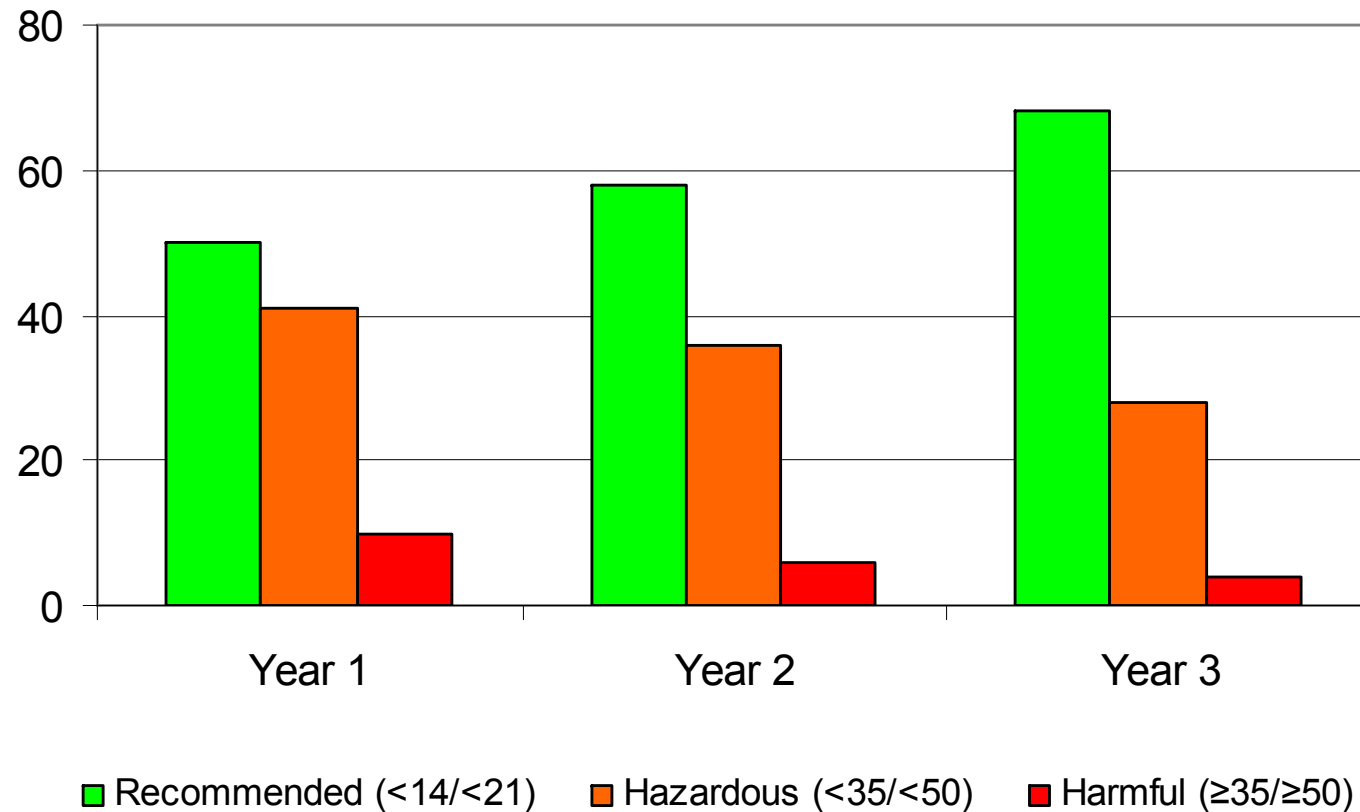


n=7542

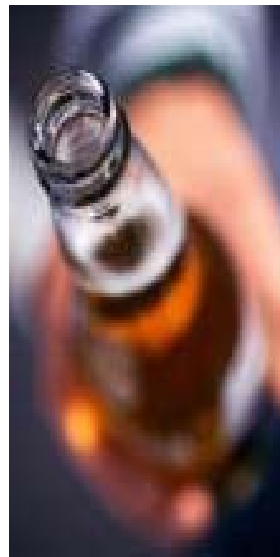
year 1 n=3068, year 2 n=2444, year 3 n=2030







Do distinct patterns of drinking exist?



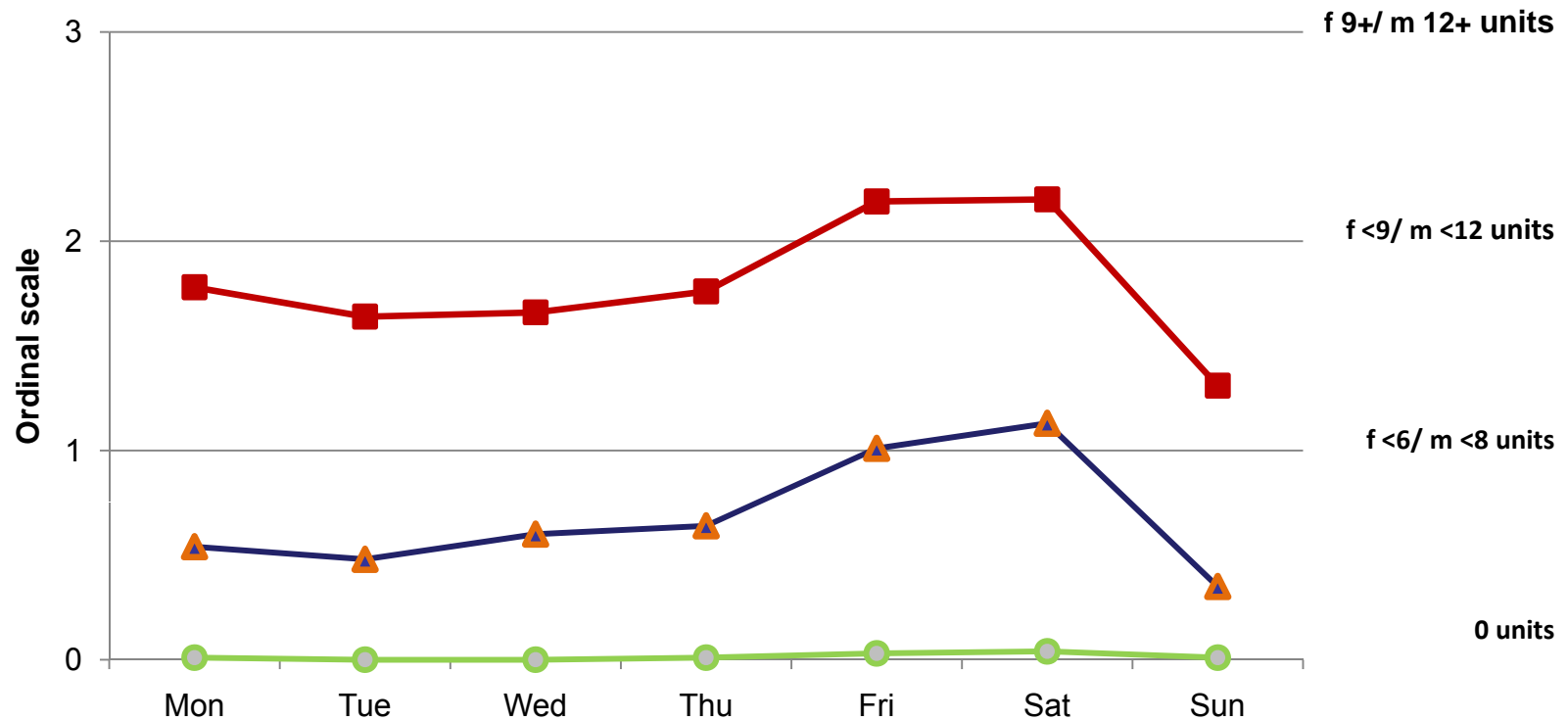


Setting: Student participants from seven UK universities

Participants: 6152 students (85% undergraduate, mean age 22 years)

Data analysis: Latent class cluster analysis





■ 3 Heavy Drinkers (n=580; 9%) ▲ 1 Moderate Drinkers (n=3546; 58%) ● 2 Light Drinkers (n=2026; 33%)



What does this mean for the individual?



Setting: One of three students from University of Leeds taking part in narrative interview study

Participant: 'Susan'

Aged 19 years

First year undergraduate living in halls of residence

Drinking 54 units over 'typical week'

Before coming to university lived in inner city suburb with parents, twin sister, and brother

Data analysis: Free Association Narrative Approach



‘Pen Portrait’

- Early alcohol experiences were from age 16 at “*house parties*”
- Sees drinking as an important part of socialising
- Typical night “*ends up in a mess*” with memory loss
- Believes “*my drinking is pretty standard*”
- Believes future relationship with alcohol will be different “*not for the rest of my life*”

- Found leaving for university stressful, lonely, and isolating
- Found it hard to adapt to new gained independence



Identity and adapting to change

Susan described a range of expected challenges she had faced during the transition to university (e.g. gaining independence, expectations of the course) BUT Susan related these to alcohol use



“First semester I just don't think I did very well becauseI mean at A' level everyone seemed to do well, on my course particularly, like English, history, the kind of subjects where you get really good at doing essays, doing arguments and that kind of thing.. Umm... maths biology, can't really say I did that... so I was never really that good at writing essays in general and then understanding what it was asking like, my first two assignments all seemed to be asking the same sort of argument... like 'discuss about this...' umm.. I guess I just didn't understand quite what it meant so I didn't, so it kind of just didn't work very well... umm...

....in first semester I was going out a lot more ,and the it started to not do very well and then it was like 'oh dear', I knew it wasn't just because I was going out cause I wasn't going out all of the time

...like I would be really hangover and feel like crap, and sometimes I did that in lectures last year but just don't want to do that this year cause its just not worth it..umm.. like you think it is at the time but I now know its not.. so..(sigh)”



Susan's narrative reflects a struggle in finding her own identity; wanting to "*fit in*" and feel "*accepted and liked*" as part of a group.

"It wasn't like bad, I was not on my own or anything, there were quite a few of us, so I think they would just find it funny, like, cause I was in a mess"

Susan described alcohol as a way to achieve 'desired self'

*"Usually if we were just like sitting together just chatting it would be like all sitting around staring at the floor like awkward, but when you're like out and drinking,, everyone, like, it's easier to talk to people and stuff..
Yeah, I mean if I was sober I wouldn't really, I wouldn't usually have enough confidence..."*



Low self-efficacy and dependency on others

Susan depends on others to inform her about her drinking and look after her when she is out. She also depends on other external factors to control her drinking (finances and time availability)

“... my housemate who I was with was like (to my home friends) like ‘you can’t go anywhere else, like you have to take Susan home cause I was like in too much of a mess to even try and work out where we should even have gone so ... that was just like ... cause even if we could have gone somewhere else, my housemate wouldn’t have let us, because I was like falling all over the place”



Lack of acknowledgement of negative effects

Susan's narrative reflected a difficulty talking about the consequences associated with getting drunk she avoided any connected feelings.

“... I was really, really drunk, but I can't remember any of this [the night out] but ... hey”

Susan goes on to describe how she was “in a mess” but that this didn't matter as she “wasn't that bad” and she was not “on her own her anything”



Drinking to excess is the norm

“... I think everything I have said is pretty standard... you know like generic student drinking....”



Shame and guilt about drinking

Susan's narrative suggests coping by avoidance and denial of consequences associated with her drinking.

"... I mean I do regret but as the same time like I have been to uni, stuff happens, like there is no point, thinking, like worrying about it, cause no, it's already happened, there's nothing you can do, you can't take stuff back.

.... What... like, just generally happens, what when I don't remember, quite a lot, I mean sometimes I just kind of forget stuff and then I am like, yeah I do remember that actually umm... I have not had that many really bad nights but... I have had a few like... (Pause)...yeah.

...sometimes I feel like urhh, if only I could just be sick and throw up the vileness inside of me"



Conclusions

- The latent class structure was informative with the model suggesting differing natural clusterings of trajectories of alcohol consumption over time that may be associated with characteristics of the student.
- By assessment of these characteristics, there may be opportunity to identify students who consume excess alcohol, and so permit targeting of social intervention.
- The experience of Susan adds additional weight to the potential problems faced by 'heavy drinker' students and the need to ensure effective prevention and intervention treatments.

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Thanks for listening



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