

Topic Guide

GROUPS THAT HAVE MADE A REDUCTION ATTEMPT

Hello everyone, welcome to this focus group session on alcohol. My name is XXX, I'm a researcher at the University of Bristol, this is XXX who is also a researcher at the University of Bristol. I'm going to lead this session, I'll talk for a few minutes first to explain the research and then I'll get us started on the first question. If you have any questions about us please feel free to ask at any time, but the aim for the group is for you all to have a discussion whilst we are more in the background. You don't have to answer any questions you don't want to and XXX is also here to provide any support in case anyone needs to leave or take a break for a chat at any point, so she might duck into a break out room but I'll stay here with the group the whole time. We also might make some notes whilst you're talking but it's just prompts for our data analysis later.

So the purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of people who drink at increasing and higher risk levels (over 14 units a week – that's 1.5 bottles of wine or 6 pints of beer). We're interested in your motives, strategies and goals for making an attempt to reduce drinking so our questions are framed around that. We've invited you all here because you have all indicated that you drink that amount or more, and in the last year at some point have attempted to cut down your drinking.

All the data we collect today will be anonymised, which means taking out all real names and locations. We will keep what you say here confidential, unless there is any risk of serious harm to yourself or others. In this case we will ideally speak to you in the first instance before we talked to anyone else. We ask that you don't discuss any identifying details about what we talk about today with others outside the group. We will wrap up the discussion at XX:XXpm/am. We are recording this session, and I might interject at points to repeat what someone's name is and what they've said for the sake of the recording to help us keep track when we listen back to it later.

Just to outline some general ground rules that might help us during the discussion – please only take phone calls if it's urgent and if you do mute yourself, feel free to snack and help yourself to food whilst we're talking. Otherwise, please keep your cameras on and yourselves off mute for easy group discussion. There are no wrong answers, and we'd love to hear your comments if your feelings and experiences are different to what everyone else is saying.

Are there any other ground rules that anyone would like to suggest? Or does anyone have any questions?

OK, I will get started on the questions, if any of them are unclear let me know and I'll see if I can explain more.

Research Questions:

- **Can you share with the group your name and something about the last time you drank alcohol?**

Prompts: What did you drink, where were you? Did you enjoy it? What did you enjoy about

it? What was the occasion? Is this a typical experience for you?

- You told us that you have all made an attempt in the past year to reduce your drinking or the side-effects from drinking (like hangovers), so that could have been a long-term reduction attempt or a short-term one like Dry January. **What were the reasons for making that attempt?**

Prompts: Why did you think about reducing your drinking? Did something specific happen? What persuaded you, if anything? What led to that decision?

- **How did you approach this? Were there any strategies you used to reduce your drinking or the side-effects from your drinking?**

Prompts: How did you try to do this?, Did you measure or assess your drinking? Some people make rules like not drinking on weekdays, substituting alcoholic drinks for weaker drinks/smaller sizes, not having alcohol in the house? Did you seek or receive any support from family or friends?

- We're interested in what kind of goals people set when they attempt to reduce their drinking or reduce the side-effects of drinking (like hangovers). **Did you set any specific goals or rules for yourself and if so, what were they?**

Prompts: Such as not drinking in the week or having a certain number of days where you didn't drink? Why did you set this kind of goal? Are there any other goals that you considered?

- **What did you consider, if anything, as "success" in your attempt?** How did you know if you had achieved your goal? *Prompts: Was it something personal? I feel better in the morning, or specific like I drink less than two bottles of wine a week? Or did you have no idea what success might look like? Were there any unintended consequences - did it increase other drug use? Highlight this is a safe space to discuss all drugs*

- If you were to go back and make the attempt again, is there anything you would do differently? **What were the good things about your attempt and what were the bad things about it?**

Prompts: Any different strategies or goals? What ended the attempt? How did it change the rest of your life?

DEBRIEF

1. Is there anything that we haven't talked about that feels important to say?
2. Does anyone have any questions?

That's the end of our questions. Thanks to each of you for taking part today and giving your time and experience to research, we really appreciate it. You will be emailed with your compensation. If you'd like to be sent a copy of the finished paper, please contact us and we can email it to you once it's published.

If you would like support with your drinking or drinking less alcohol you could get in touch with your GP or try visiting the following websites;

<https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/drink-less/>

<https://alcoholchange.org.uk/help-and-support/get-help-now>

If anyone would like to discuss anything further with any of us, or just wants to stay for a bit longer before leaving, we will remain here. Otherwise, thank you and you're welcome to leave when you're ready.

GROUPS THAT HAVE NOT MADE A REDUCTION ATTEMPT

Hello everyone, welcome to this focus group session on alcohol. My name is XXX, I'm a researcher at the University of Bristol, this is XXX who is also a researcher at the University of Bristol. I'm going to lead this session, I'll talk for a few minutes first to explain the research and then I'll get us started on the first question. If you have any questions about us please feel free to ask at any time, but the aim for the group is for you all to have a discussion whilst we are more in the background. You don't have to answer any questions you don't want to and XXX is also here to provide any support in case anyone needs to leave or take a break for a chat at any point, so she might duck into a break out room but I'll stay here with the group the whole time. We also might make some notes whilst you're talking but it's just prompts for our data analysis later.

So the purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of people who drink at increasing and higher risk levels (over 14 units a week – that's 1.5 bottles of wine or 6 pints of beer). We're interested in why people do or do not make attempts to reduce their drinking, or the side-effects from drinking, and whether there are any strategies or goals that are considered more acceptable than others. We've invited you all here because you have all indicated that you drink that amount or more.

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Research Questions:

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Prompts: What did you drink, where were you? Did you enjoy it? What did you enjoy about it? What was the occasion? Is this a typical experience for you?

- As researchers we are catching people at different time points in their lives alcohol drinkers who at this point have, and haven't reduced their drinking, and we want to know as much as possible about both. You have all told us that you have not made a recent attempt to reduce drinking and we'd love to know more about that. **Can you say a bit about why you haven't reduced your drinking?** *Prompts: Have you ever considered reducing your drinking previously? Did something stop you? Or is it just completely off your radar at the moment? I don't feel I need to or should, I'm happy with how much I drink, I wasn't aware I was drinking that much /at a level where it would be good to cut down a bit?*
- Given where you are at the moment (give examples from discussion, enjoying whiskey, feeling like drinking is totally normal etc), So you're feeling happy with your drinking and have no plans to reduce it, **is there something small or niggly, what might be a small reason for you to think about drinking less?** *Prompts: I can give some examples if that's helpful. Can you imagine something that might persuade you to drink less? Such as less hangovers, impact on work, personal awareness of how much you drink, advice from a GP or equivalent, a conversation with friends or family?*
- **Would you say there things that prevent you from drinking less?** Does it feel like there are any barriers to you trying to drink less? Anything that stops you? *Prompts: experiences you had that felt discouraging, things you would miss out on, important ways of celebrating or coping with a bad day, don't think that it would have a benefit or don't think you'd be able to*
- Sometimes when people reduce their drinking they use strategies, like not drinking on some days of the week, or when they attend events. **Are there any strategies that you have thought about? That seem easy or accessible? What makes a strategy feel difficult or inaccessible?** *Prompts: Some people make rules like not drinking on weekdays, substituting alcoholic drinks for weaker drinks/smaller sizes, not having alcohol in the house? What makes a strategy feel difficult or inaccessible? Or what kind of messaging have you seen that turns you off making an attempt?*
- Given what we've spoken about so far, are there any goals for reducing your drinking that might feel achievable? Something that feels easy or possible? *Prompts: What sort of goal might be acceptable to you if you were going to make an attempt? For example, not drinking on week-days, not drinking so much to get a hangover*
- What would you class as a "successful" reduction attempt? *Prompts: For this goal, that felt achievable, how would you measure success – less money spent, less empty bottles in recycling, realising you feel ok sober at events and have a good experience*

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Sometimes talking about drinking and feelings can bring stuff up, if you would like support with your drinking or drinking less alcohol you could get in touch with your GP or try visiting the following websites;

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