Road Safety Research Report No. 114
A Qualitative Study of Drinking and Driving: Report of Findings

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Independent Social Research

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Department for Transport commissioned qualitative research to provide in-depth understanding of the experiences, behaviour and attitudes of people who mix drinking and driving. The findings were to inform Department for Transport policy on drinking and driving, drink-drive campaigns, and quantitative surveys of drink driving.

Fifty respondents were interviewed in-depth in June 2009, in six areas of England, which varied in terms of region and urban/rural location. Respondents included 20 drivers stopped over the limit within the previous three months, as well as 30 people who had driven after drinking at least once in the preceding six weeks – 18 who thought they were probably over the limit and 12 who thought they were probably under. The sample was skewed in favour of men and younger drivers under 30, but women and older drivers were well represented.

A review of the relevant research was undertaken in parallel and the results are contained in a separate report (Hopkin et al., 2010).

Drinking and driving – conflicting cultures

Most respondents drank more than initially reported. Alcohol was an important part of most social occasions; they often reported a social pressure to drink. Many had a high regard for their driving skills and felt dependent on their cars, both practically and psychologically; other forms of transport were badly regarded by comparison. Both drinking and driving are default behaviours, and the resulting conflict poses a challenge to policy and campaigns.

Attitudes to driving after drinking

Respondents thought driving after drinking was a serious issue in theory. They tended to believe that they were largely compliant with the law; the spirit, if not the letter. They did not identify with terms like ‘drink driver’. Drink drivers were seen in narrow stereotyped terms as people who deliberately drove over the limit, were uncaring, dangerous and very drunk. When respondents felt they had – or might have – driven over the limit, they attributed their behaviour to the specific circumstances of the occasion, rather than seeing themselves as drink drivers. They supported action to regulate driving after drinking and to control drink drivers, but they do not identify themselves as targets for this.
Knowledge and beliefs about drinking and driving

Many respondents had only thin and patchy knowledge about the effects of alcohol on the ability to drive safely, the legal limit and how it is measured, and the penalties and consequences of driving over the limit. They also often seemed to have little thirst for more information or active motivation to make use of any that is available. They did not believe that they drive when they are unsafe, that they are likely to cause an accident, or that they will be caught by the police if they are over the limit. ‘Not knowing’ is also the easier option, especially if respondents do not feel that their behaviour is different from the norm. The lack of official guidance linking the legal limit to actual drinks contributes to a guessing game that many respondents engage in when mixing driving and drinking.

Respondents were mainly interested in how the legal limit relates to actual amounts drunk, but felt they had little information on this. ‘Two drinks’ was a widely used rule of thumb. Many knew that alcohol affects people differently and that its impact on an individual can vary, but this stock of information was tentative and influenced by myth and hearsay. Some respondents saw the limit as their ‘allowance’; the level they could drink up to.

Most respondents thought they would know if they were unsafe to drive. Feeling safe was often more important than the legal limit; many thought they would be safe beyond the legal limit. Respondents recognised gross signs of drink impairment, but tended to overlook more subtle ones.

Killing or injuring someone was the worst thing respondents were able to imagine as a result of them driving after drinking, followed by being caught or convicted, but most did not think any such outcomes were likely. Respondents thought they were least at risk of an accident after drinking if they drove short distances on well lit, uncomplicated and familiar routes. They thought they were least at risk of being stopped by the police if they drove short distances, and kept to back roads, away from drinking hot spots. Women and older drivers were less likely to think they would be stopped by the police, and respondents generally felt safe from being stopped during the day. The mandatory ban for drink driving was well known, but there was less awareness of other penalties, such as an 11-year endorsement on your driving licence.

There was not much awareness of the issue of driving while still impaired by alcohol from the previous night. Respondents generally thought there was little chance of being caught by the police the morning after.

Drinking after driving behaviour

In many instances, respondents drove after drinking when either the drinking was unplanned or the driving was unplanned. They often felt not in control of
circumstances that undermined their plans. Some do not even think about the potential conflict between driving and drinking when they go out.

Respondents were more likely to avoid mixing drinking and driving on occasions planned in advance when they expected to drink more than usual. Driving after lower levels of drinking was considered normal practice and was not a ‘big deal’ for most.

Rules of thumb used by respondents often lacked a reliable knowledge base, and were casually and inconsistently applied. There were often discrepancies between the way respondents wanted to say they behaved in relation to driving after drinking and the way they actually behaved.

Most respondents drank at home sometimes. Some said they were less inclined to watch how much they drink at home. They often drank at home when they thought there was little likelihood of going out in the car again, but they nonetheless reported doing so for all sorts of reasons; often short local trips that were unplanned.

Unplanned drinking in other people’s homes and in non-domestic settings often generated unplanned driving after drinking. Respondents were generally more sensitised to the drink-driving risk associated with drinking in non-domestic settings.

Driving after drinking frequency was often considerably underestimated by respondents. Obtaining a reliable picture of respondents’ driving after drinking behaviour was rarely straightforward. In the majority of cases it involved a forensic approach from the research team. For many respondents it became an exercise in facing up to how much and how often they drank and drove after drinking; confronting the weakness of their information and knowledge base, and the casualness with which they tended to apply it; exposing the flimsiness of their excuses about why they mix driving and drinking; and why they take risks with safety and with the law. Some found the process uncomfortable and there was a defensiveness to be overcome. However, respondents were generally supportive of policy to tackle drinking and driving and, at least in the short term, keen to re-examine their behaviour.

**Classifying people who drive after drinking**

The research identified four main respondent types, including the following:

- **Outlaws** – heavy drinkers for whom the legal limits and guidelines are not important. They have a high regard for their own skills and judgement (in terms of driving, being safe); follow their own convenience and desires; are easily influenced (appearances and keeping up were important); and are often emotionally impulsive. There is a strong association between Outlaws and
driving well over the limit. They may generate a disproportionate number of drink driving occasions.

- **Good citizens** – these respondents are marked by their cautiousness. They are often well-informed about legal limits and the possible effects of alcohol on driving, but in any case leave a wide margin of error. They rarely allow themselves to be knocked off course by other people or situations. Good Citizens do not produce many cases of driving over the limit; any they do will be marginal.

- **Ostriches** – this group is recognised by their low awareness of drinking limits and guidelines; their tendency to self-deception; and the likelihood that they will distance themselves from blame. Ostriches probably drive over the limit much more than they think, generate some cases where the driver is well over the limit and a lot of cases where the driver is slightly or moderately over.

- **Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde** – the final group is mainly identified by emotional impulsiveness, which makes them behave in very risky ways on occasion. They may be responsible for some extreme instances of drink driving, though, as a general rule, they may subscribe to responsible habits and ‘rules of thumb’. They may be ashamed of any lapse and see it as uncharacteristic.

The above respondent types are not clear cut and mutually exclusive. Each group included a range of respondents in terms of socio-demographic variables, such as gender, age and social class. The typology may help to develop strategy and communications aimed at the different sorts of people who drive after drinking.

**Drink-driving campaigns and publicity**

Drink-driving campaigns were not explored in-depth with respondents, but some tentative observations can be made. Respondents thought advertisements had high impact and were effective, but many did not identify personally with them. They were seen as a good thing, but for other people. One challenge to future campaigns is to create self-recognition as the first step in a fundamental shift in attitude and behaviour.

**Possible implications for policy and campaigns**

Broad, cross-government initiatives are needed, aimed at tackling the UK cultures of driving and of drinking. Specific policy and campaigns aimed at driving after drinking need to target and reflect the wide range of different types of people, occasions and settings associated with driving after drinking; so that individuals are better able to identify with key messages.

Clear and consistent information needs to be disseminated in different ways, targeted at different audiences, to support driving after drinking campaigns.
Good intentions, where they exist, need to be supported by imaginative policies aimed not just at drivers but at the companions they drink with (and drive with), those who supply them with alcohol, and the wider population.

Individualised marketing methods might be one approach to bringing about long-term behavioural change.

Future quantitative surveys of drinking and driving

The review of research suggested some gaps in nationally available statistics. These include: national figures on driving after any drinking and on driving when possibly over the limit; data to monitor changes in knowledge, awareness and beliefs (for example in terms of what behaviour is legal or safe); data on beliefs about the likelihood of various outcomes, such as being stopped and breathalysed, or having an accident; detailed information about recent occasions when people have driven after drinking; and information about whether respondents think they drive after drinking (and/or drink drive) more or less now than a year ago (or some other reference period), and why.

Options for collecting some, or all, of the above range from omnibus surveys to more costly bespoke surveys. Any survey design needs to take account of the potential barriers to collecting reliable and valid information. In measuring trends, there is a need for sample designs that allow changes of a specified magnitude to be identified with a given degree of confidence. There may be interest in exploring quantitatively – using multivariate methods – different types of people who drive after drinking. If so, exploratory secondary analysis using existing survey data might be one place to start.
1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The report

This is the report of findings from qualitative research into drinking and driving. The research was carried out with 50 respondents, including: 18 recently convicted drivers; 20 drivers who had, in their own opinion, driven over the limit in the six weeks prior to interview; and a further 12 people who reported having driven after drinking at least once over the preceding six weeks, but who believed that they were under the limit on any such occasion.\(^1\)

Individual in-depth interviews were conducted in June 2009 in six geographical areas across England. The project was conducted by Independent Social Research (ISR) on behalf of the Road Safety Research and Statistics Division of the Department for Transport.

The report also contains key findings from a review of recent research undertaken in parallel with the qualitative research, which has been published in full as a separate report (Hopkin et al., 2010).

1.2 Background and objectives

Since their introduction, drink-driving laws – together with enforcement strategies and advertising campaigns aimed at discouraging people from driving with more than the legal limit of alcohol in their blood – have been effective in tackling drink driving as a major cause of road accidents. There has been a long-term downward trend in the number of people killed and injured in accidents where a driver was over the limit; however, alcohol remains a significant factor in road accidents. In 2007, 6% of all road casualties happened when a driver had been drinking in excess of the legal limit for alcohol, and 14% of all those killed on the roads were in accidents involving a driver who was over the legal limit for alcohol.\(^2\)

In the light of this, the Department for Transport wishes to take a fresh look at road safety strategy and drink-drive campaigns, and this project was commissioned in order to provide new insights. In particular, it sought more in-depth understanding of the attitudes, behaviour and motivation of individuals who drive after drinking, whether or not they believe themselves to be over the limit. Key research questions in the brief covered:

1 During interviews we found that some respondents had received convictions for drink driving outside of the reference period.

2 Calculated from Road Casualties Great Britain: 2007 Annual Report (Department for Transport, 2008) and Reported Road Casualties Great Britain 2008: Provisional Estimates for Accidents Involving Illegal Alcohol Levels (Department for Transport, 2009).
• the characteristics, attitudes and motivations of individuals who drink and drive;
• the profile of their drinking behaviour;
• the purpose and pattern of drink-drive journeys;
• how people who drive after drinking perceive their own behaviour;
• how impaired, or not, they feel when making these journeys; and
• how the occasions when individuals pre-plan transport in order to avoid drink driving differ from those when they do not.

Specifically the research had three overarching objectives:

1. To review and collate existing research on the attitudes and behaviour of individuals who drive after drinking.
2. To explore qualitatively the attitudes, behaviours and experiences of individuals who drive after drinking.
3. To make recommendations for how the findings from this research could inform future quantitative surveys of drink driving.

1.3 Outline of method

1.3.1 The review of research

The research review was undertaken to provide background and context for the findings of the qualitative study as well as to inform its design. It began with a trawl for potentially relevant literature via the Transport Research Laboratory (TRL) library database, more than 20 selected websites\(^3\) plus two ‘Google’ searches. References supplied by the Department for Transport were also included in the initial list of more than 50 documents that were then scanned systematically to assess their relevance to the project.

Detailed examination of the smaller number of documents identified in this way was carried out systematically against an analysis framework developed in advance with the core research questions in mind. Examples of the main information categories in the analysis framework are given below, but see the separate report (Hopkin \textit{et al.}, 2010) for further details:

• prevalence and incidence of driving after drinking;
• who drives after drinking (socio-demographics/drinking behaviour);
• the circumstances under which people drive after drinking;
• timing – time of the week and day – of drive after drinking journeys;

\(^3\) For example, the Home Office, Department of Health, Health and Safety Executive, Scottish Executive, Welsh Assembly Government, and Road Safety GB.
The qualitative study

The qualitative research involved in-depth individual interviews that provided a confidential setting for detailed exploration of the patterns and circumstances of driving after drinking behaviour, and the reasons why it occurs.

Fifty in-depth interviews, each lasting up to an hour, were conducted with respondents in six areas of England, representing a spread in terms of region, degree of urbanisation and availability of public transport, as follows:

- main city/urban locality with good public transport;
- smaller city and surrounds – city locality with poor/average public transport;
- London suburb with good public transport;
- market town and rural surrounds with limited public transport;
- large village and surrounding large villages – rural area with limited public transport; and
• scattered and isolated housing in rural and urban areas with limited/poor public transport.

Respondents were selected to fill quotas based on three main variables: reported recent driving after drinking behaviour, gender and age. Across the sample as a whole, a range of respondents was also sought in terms of frequency of drinking, driving frequency and social class. Table 1.1 provides a summary of the achieved sample in terms of the main selection variables and further details are supplied in Appendix 1.

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<th>Driving after drinking behaviour</th>
<th>Achieved sample</th>
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<tr>
<td>Stopped and tested over the limit in the last 3 months*</td>
<td>14 men and 6 women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driven after drinking at least once in the past six weeks thinking they were (or might be) over the limit</td>
<td>10 men and 8 women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driven after drinking at least once in the past six weeks, but believe they were under the limit on any such occasion</td>
<td>6 men and 6 women</td>
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* A small number of respondents also revealed when interviewed that they had older convictions for drink driving.

In addition, the achieved sample included:
• 43 frequent drivers (4+ times a week);
• 10 frequent drinkers (4+ times a week); and
• 28 respondents ABC1 MRS Social Grades.

Recruitment was conducted by a specialist recruitment agency (Plus Four Market Research) using a variety of sources to identify respondents, including:
• existing respondent panels (no-one was included who had been involved in market research within the preceding 12 months);
• on street;
• court listings; and
• a small pool of convicted drivers (three) who had attended a recent driver training course and opted into the study following an approach from the training agency (TTC Group).

4 Defined by Market Research Society (MRS) Social Grade.
The letter of explanation given to the respondents who agreed to take part is presented in Appendix 2.

The interviews were wide-ranging and conducted with the main aim of understanding driving after drinking from the perspective of the respondent. A copy of the topic guide is contained in Appendix 3, but a brief summary of the main areas covered is given below:

- individual drinking patterns and driving patterns;
- narratives and accounts of recent occasions when respondents had driven after drinking;
- how respondents assessed their own driving after drinking behaviour;
- beliefs about the effects of alcohol on the ability to drive and signs of impairment;
- driving after drinking behaviour among peers or family;
- knowledge, awareness and beliefs about blood alcohol content (BAC), legal limits and penalties;
- perceptions of low-risk journeys after drinking;
- awareness of and reactions to recent drink-drive campaigns; and
- experience of and beliefs about the effects of drugs on driving.

To get respondents thinking about the topic in advance of their interview, they were asked to record – on a sheet prepared for the purpose (see Appendix 4 for a copy of the pre-prepared sheet) – key details of the most recent occasion on which they had driven after having at least one alcoholic drink. This information provided a starting point in the interview for eliciting detailed accounts of recent driving after drinking occasions. Respondents were asked about the most recent occasion because it would be relatively fresh in their mind and in order to ensure a cross-section of typical driving after drinking ‘stories’.

All interviews were audio recorded and fully transcribed. Their content was analysed systematically using an analysis framework based on the topic guide and on additional issues and insights that emerged during fieldwork.

1.4 Considerations for interpreting the qualitative research

The findings from the qualitative study help to paint a picture of how respondents see the world when it comes to drinking and driving, and what they perceive as the important factors that determine what they do and how they behave. By employing flexible methods of interviewing and a purposive approach to sample selection, this study can give an insight into the range of experiences, attitudes, understanding and behaviour both of sample respondents and, through cautious extension, other people
who drive after drinking. However, the findings do not allow for quantitative estimates of the percentage of people who think and behave in certain ways, and are not intended for use in this way.

1.5 Structure of the report

The rest of this report is arranged as follows:

- Section 2 outlines in brief the key findings from the literature review that are discussed in detail in Hopkin et al. (2010).

- Section 3 provides important context to the research by highlighting the central role played in respondents’ lives both by alcohol and driving. Evidence is presented that both drinking and driving are widely regarded by respondents as default options wherever socialising and/or travel are involved. Factors are described that explain and reinforce these patterns and dependencies, for example: perceived social pressure and convention surrounding the consumption of alcohol; the perceived flexibility, convenience and independence of driving compared with other forms of transport; widespread beliefs about a lack of genuine alternatives to driving; and inertia and lack of motivation when it comes to altering habitual patterns and behaviour.

- Sections 4 to 6 synthesise findings from the qualitative research specifically in relation to driving after drinking:
  - Section 4 deals with respondents’ attitudes to driving after drinking;
  - Section 5 looks at knowledge and beliefs that can have a bearing on how respondents’ view the world and the decisions they make, or indeed are equipped to make. These include, for example, respondents’ knowledge and beliefs about the effects of alcohol on their ability to drive, the legal limit, and the penalties and consequences of drink driving; and
  - Section 6 describes respondent behaviour in relation to driving after drinking; the occasions when they avoid mixing drinking and driving (and why) and the occasions when they do not.

- Section 7 continues with a description of some of the main types of respondent encountered in this research, defined in terms of their attitudes, knowledge and beliefs, social and psychological characteristics and attributes, and their propensity to drive over the limit. Four important types, or archetypes, are identified, each with potentially different implications for targeted policy and campaigns.

- Section 8 looks briefly at observations made spontaneously by respondents about recent drink-driving campaigns.

- The final section draws together and reflects on some of the key themes and findings of the research, both from a general policy perspective and from the point of view of carrying out future quantitative survey research on drinking and driving.
2 KEY FINDINGS FROM THE REVIEW OF RESEARCH

2.1 Terminology

In this report, the term ‘driving after drinking’ is used to refer to driving after drinking any quantity of alcohol, whether or not it is over the limit. ‘Drink driving’ refers to driving over the legal limit for driving, although because much of the literature is based on self-report surveys, in practice this involves driving when perceived to be over the limit.

2.2 Alcohol and road accidents

Studies of alcohol impairment have demonstrated that driving skills are impaired at less than an eighth of the current legal limit. The accident statistics for Great Britain show that, in 2007, almost 6% of road casualties and 14% of road deaths occurred in accidents in which a driver had been drinking in excess of the legal limit for alcohol; 22% of drivers killed in road accidents are in excess of the legal alcohol limit and 9% are well over twice the legal alcohol limit (Xu, 2009). Young drivers aged 17–24 have the highest rate of drink-drive accidents per mile driven and the rate declines with age. In the last 10 years the rate of drink-drive accidents per mile has fallen in all age groups except 17–24. Women are less likely than men to be involved in drink-drive accidents, and most convicted drink-drivers are men. Convicted drink-drivers are twice as likely to have a criminal record as others of the same age and gender.

2.3 Alcohol and daily life

Studies of drinking patterns and behaviour show that alcohol is an integral part of daily life in Britain – a survey in 2008 found that 10% of adults drink almost every day and 27% on at least three days per week (Lader, 2009). Drinking in excess of the recommended daily maximum is relatively common and becoming more so: a 2007 survey found that 41% of men and 34% of women do so at least once a week (Robinson and Lader, 2009). A large amount of alcohol is now drunk at home rather than in public places. Knowledge about measuring alcohol consumption is often inaccurate.

2.4 Prevalence of driving after drinking

Self-report surveys show that between one-fifth and two-fifths of drivers report driving within a few hours of drinking alcohol in the past 12 months. In Scotland there is some evidence of a decline between 2001 and 2007, but no recent information on trends elsewhere in the UK was identified. Most of those who drive
after drinking alcohol report this to be a rare event: in Scotland, in 2007, 48% said ‘once or twice’ during the year (Collins et al., 2008). For a minority, driving after drinking is more common: in England, in 2002, 14% said ‘once a month or more’ (Brasnett, 2002).

2.5 Prevalence of drink driving

Self-report surveys in Scotland in 2007 and 2001 found that 5% of drivers report driving at some time in the past 12 months when they thought they were over the legal limit for alcohol (Collins et al., 2008; Anderson and Ingram, 2001). Most drink drivers report this to be rare: just over 70% said ‘once or twice’ during the year in surveys in Scotland in 2007 and in England and Wales in 2002 (Collins et al., 2008; Brasnett, 2002). In these two studies a few reported drink driving more frequently; for example, 2% report driving over the limit ‘fairly often’ in Scotland in 2007 and 18% ‘once a month or more’ in England and Wales in 2002. One study in 2003 found that a small minority (1%) of heavy drinkers report that they drink-drive nearly every day (Dalton et al., 2004).

2.6 Who drives after drinking?

Those who drink alcohol more frequently are more likely to report driving after drinking and drink driving in the past year. More men than women drive after drinking and more men than women are drink drivers. The highest reported prevalence of driving after drinking in the past year is in the 30–59 age group (Collins et al., 2008; Anderson and Ingram, 2001). In contrast, the highest reported prevalence of drink driving in the past year is in the 17–29 age group (in studies in Scotland in 2007 and 2001, and England and Wales in 2002). One study in Scotland in 2007 found the highest number of driving after drinking incidents per driver in the past year to be among people over 60 (Collins et al., 2008). Driving after drinking is more prevalent among social grade AB and lowest among social grade DE, while drink driving is lowest among social grade DE but more similar across the other social grades.

2.7 Circumstances of driving after drinking

Surveys have found that driving occurs after drinking alcohol in a wide range of places, including clubs, pubs, restaurants, visiting family and friends. Collins et al. (2008) found that these tend to be ‘casual’ occasions rather than ‘serious’ nights out because drivers tend to plan alternative transport for the more ‘serious’ occasions. The drive after drinking alcohol tends to be on local, short journeys where the road is well known and drivers feel ‘safe’. Over half of driving after drinking occasions are in the evenings, but they also happen in daytime, late at night and on the morning after drinking. Drivers do not tend to recognise driving on the ‘morning after’ as drink driving.
2.8 Motivations of individuals who drive after drinking

Drive after drinking journeys are mainly made when drivers perceive that they are within the legal limit of alcohol consumption for driving. They are made when drivers feel that they are safe to drive, using their own definitions of ‘safe limits’. Unexpected events and changes of plan are not common explanations for driving after drinking. However, ‘circumstances’ are used to explain some driving that is marginally over the legal limit. Habitual driving after drinking and previous experience of driving after drinking without incident and without ‘getting caught’ also play a part in decisions to drive after drinking.

2.9 Attitudes towards planned and unplanned drinking

A qualitative study of men aged 17–29 in social grades C1 and C2 who drive after drinking provided interesting insights (Davies McKerr, 2007). For planned events, arrangements to avoid driving after drinking are made and drink driving is seen as less ‘forgivable’. However, on unplanned and spontaneous occasions it is seen as more acceptable to let events take their course; drink driving was often described as something that ‘happens’ to people rather than something they choose to do. These drivers do not accept responsibility for exceeding the limit on occasions when they do not intend to do so, and they expect credit for their good intentions.

2.10 Planning transport to avoid drink driving

In urban areas, public transport and taxis are seen as a reason to avoid drink driving. However, some studies found resistance to using public transport, particularly in rural areas, and the cost of taxis can be a deterrent. Cars are used for convenience and when planning to drink within personal ‘safe limits’, in some instances with arrangements for a designated driver.

2.11 Perceptions of own drinking and driving behaviour

The terms ‘drinking and driving’ and ‘drink driving’ are associated with drinking an amount of alcohol which is significantly over the legal limit for driving. Driving after drinking an amount of alcohol which is significantly over the legal limit is seen as ‘irresponsible’.

Drivers tend to have their own self-defined ‘safe’ limits for drinking before driving, which may be well below the legal limit. However, the boundary between ‘acceptable’ and ‘dangerous’ behaviour is not fixed – a couple of drinks more than this personal ‘safe’ limit.
2.12 Perceptions of laws and penalties

Various surveys show that there is widespread uncertainty about how the legal limit for drinking alcohol before driving is defined. The likelihood of getting ‘caught’ is perceived to be low and, as a result, the consequences of being ‘caught’ are not of great concern to people who drink and drive. Some of the penalties for drink driving are little known, including the criminal record.

2.13 Driving under the influence of drugs

Self-report surveys indicate that drug driving is far more prevalent among those under 40 than among older people; surveys in Scotland in 2005 and in the late 1990s found that 3–6% of drivers under 40 reported driving under the influence of illicit drugs in the past year (Myant et al., 2006; Ingram et al., 2000). Drug-driving journeys are often for social reasons and over short distances. However, for problem drug users, all driving is under the influence of drugs.

2.14 Implications for the qualitative research

The literature review produced wide-ranging insights into drink-drivers and those who drive after drinking, where, when and how often. These provided a sound base for developing the qualitative research in the second phase of the project. The results of the literature review contributed to the design of the qualitative research, particularly in relation to the sample selection and the coverage of the interviews.
3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH FINDINGS ON DRINKING ALCOHOL AND ON DRIVING

3.1 Key findings

Box 3.1: Key findings

- Most respondents drank more than initially reported, sometimes considerably more.
- They perceived alcohol to be an important part of most social occasions.
- They often perceived there to be social pressure to drink.
- Respondents often had a high regard for their driving skills.
- Many demonstrated widespread practical and psychological dependency on their car.
- In most respondents’ eyes, other forms of transport did not compare well with driving.

3.2 Drinking alcohol

Respondents seldom described themselves as heavy drinkers, although one or two said they were ‘binge drinkers’, meaning that they drank heavily on occasion, but very little in-between. Respondents tended to use terms like ‘moderate’, ‘light’, ‘casual’, ‘occasional’ and ‘social’ when talking about their drinking. They also often volunteered without prompting the information that they did not ‘need’ to drink or ‘have’ to drink. Even respondents who admitted to heavier drinking tended to distance themselves from the suggestion of over-indulgence or lack of control, by stressing that they did not ‘touch alcohol’ in the week, or that they ‘never drank alone’ or that they did not ‘keep alcohol at home’:

But there is the odd occasion when I do have a drink at home. It’s not arbitrary. When I fancy one I’ll have one. But it’s not like I rush home or anything, thinking I must have a glass of wine or a whisky. I don’t live like that. (Male, 37, convicted, city with good public transport)

A social drinker. I’m certainly not an alcoholic who drinks every single day as some people do. Like I say, social drinking, family, friends, pubs, clubs. (Female, 22, believes drove over the limit, scattered housing)
It was not possible to quantify accurately how often in a typical week respondents usually drank, or how much, but in many cases information volunteered over the course of an interview suggested much heavier use of alcohol than initially reported. In some interviews there was a very marked disjunction between first description and the pattern that later emerged.

For example, one fairly typical respondent said he was a light drinker, but it later transpired that, though he mainly drank at weekends, a normal Friday or Saturday night usually involved six or seven pints of beer or six or seven vodka and tonics. When drinking at home, he might drink half a litre of vodka on his own.

Respondents sometimes appeared to under-report their alcohol consumption in order to present themselves in a positive light to the researcher. Sometimes they seemed simply to be hiding the truth from themselves. This could be reflected in the language they used when talking about how much they drank that tended to gloss over or play down quantities. For example, they said they had ‘a quick drink’, a ‘swift half’, ‘one or two drinks’, or ‘a pint’. On probing, these descriptions often turned out to be highly euphemistic; for example, ‘one or two’ or ‘a couple’ meaning ‘three or four’, and ‘doubles’ rather than ‘singles’.

Respondents were also often apparently unaware of how much alcohol they drank in a normal week. Some of the reasons for this were that:

- certain kinds of drinks ‘didn’t count’, for example a swift beer from the fridge to quench thirst, cider or ‘alcopops’ (all considered by some respondents to be virtually soft drinks);
- certain events did not register, for example because drinking was not the main purpose of the occasion; and
- in some settings consumption was not accurately measured or monitored, for example because drinks were not individually paid for (and therefore ‘no one’s counting’).

One respondent said of her planned evening after the interview: ‘Tonight I won’t because it’s midweek and it’s not a blow out. I’m not going for a drink...’. However, she was going out with her boyfriend, not for ‘a drink’, but she would have a drink: ‘It’s just to be sociable. Me and my boyfriend, we don’t live together and it’s just a bit of me and him time’ (Female, 46, believes drove over the limit, city with good public transport).

Most respondents had heard of alcohol units and were aware of the existence of Government guidelines about weekly limits for men and for women. They often appeared to quite like the idea of units – as something straightforward that could be counted - but this was still an area of some confusion and uncertainty. Respondents were often unconfident about the number of units in their normal drinks. Some
respondents confused the Government’s safe drinking guidelines with guidelines for drinking and driving.

Perhaps most importantly, many respondents appeared to be simply uninterested or lack the motivation to assess their drinking in the way that they were encouraged to do during the interview.

One respondent said she used to be a ‘binge drinker’, but was now a ‘light drinker’. She said she only drank at weekends. She then added that three or four times a month she also goes out in the week with girlfriends. She then remembered (‘Oh that’s a lie!’) that she also regularly goes out for a drink with her boyfriend on Thursday nights. A normal amount during the week was four vodkas with coke. On a ‘blow out’ she said she hides half a bottle of vodka in her bag which she uses to keep costs down and drinks in addition to any other alcohol that she consumes in the course of the evening.

By the end of the interview, many respondents were prepared to acknowledge heavier use of alcohol than they had first reported, and it was a surprising – and not always comfortable – revelation to some.

As mentioned earlier, many respondents were swift to say they did not ‘drink alone’ or ‘drink alone at home’. They described themselves instead as ‘social drinkers’, which appeared in their eyes to be more socially acceptable and meant that they drank with other people (although not necessarily lightly).

Respondents mentioned a wide range of situations when they drank socially. These are covered in more detail in Section 5, but a few typical examples included:

- drinks after work with colleagues;
- with mates while watching a football match on television;
- dinner parties and meals out with friends;
- nights out with ‘the boys’ or ‘the girls’;
- quiet evenings in with a partner;
- popping in to see friends; and
- family lunches.

Alcohol on these occasions was often seen by respondents as normal, even axiomatic. They sometimes said that they felt they were expected to drink. In certain settings among certain groups, ‘not keeping up’ could be regarded as not an option, socially unacceptable, an implied criticism or even a sign of weakness. Some respondents said they felt that social pressures drove up the amount of alcohol they drank:
It’s normally when people offer it, they say ‘come on have a beer’ and I feel that I take it because I don’t want to be rude, sometimes against my better judgment. (Female, 45, believes drove over the limit, small city and surrounds)

I mean I’d probably go out and think, I don’t wanna drink anything but then, you know everyone’s pouring out, they’ve brought a bottle of wine, it’s like everyone’s having a glass, it’s rude not to. (Male, 33, convicted, London suburb)

Sometimes people are just on a roll and it’s flowing. You know, like everyone’s funny and everyone’s on one and then it sort of escalates. (Female, 29, believes drove over the limit, market town)

Younger respondents (male and female) and men were perhaps more likely to voice these kinds of sentiments, but it appeared to be a common issue for respondents irrespective of gender, life stage or social class.

3.3 Driving

Respondents differed in the length of time for which they had been driving. The majority had a ‘clean’ licence and, although some said they had had minor accidents while driving, involvement in major traffic accidents involving death or injury were uncommon. A few respondents had been booked for speeding offences and a few had older convictions for drink driving.

Some respondents were self-deprecating about their driving skills, for example they said they did not ‘always pay enough attention’ or ‘made silly mistakes’. One said she was ‘impatient’ with slow drivers on the road. However, on the whole, respondents spoke highly of their own driving skills, both generally and in terms of attributes such as:

• safety awareness;
• anticipation;
• observation; and
• handling/control of the vehicle.

Some respondents described themselves as fast drivers – including men, women and respondents of all ages – but this was almost always qualified to present an overall positive picture. For example, respondents said that they were ‘fast but safe’ or ‘fast but in control’. They sometimes used terms like ‘boy racer’ as short hand for fast and skilful driving:
**I am safe but fast. A competent driver – no one toots me.** (Female, 62, believes drove over the limit, London suburb)

**I’m a bit of a boy racer. I mean my friends used to call me Schumacher. And then they called me little Hamilton . . . But it’s a whole style of driving. It’s quite fast. It’s quite aggressive. It’s quite in and out, nippy, you know, pushing it to the limit. But it’s also quite safe.** (Female, 22, convicted, London suburb)

The sample was selected to ensure a good representation of frequent drivers and the majority reported driving their car at least four times a week and for a wide range of purposes, including:

- work;
- shopping;
- social and leisure activities; and
- other journeys.

**I’m in the car all the time. That’s my office. And even at weekends I’m out and about.** (Male, 37, convicted, city with good public transport)

**Yeah, I drive every day. I take my daughter to school every morning. I drive to work. I pick her up after school. I’m always in my car. In fact I’m probably in that car more than I am in my house.** (Female, 38, believes drove under the limit, city with good public transport)

Respondents sometimes said that they used their cars more often than they really needed to, especially for short, local trips that they could easily make on foot. This was often because it was perceived to be quicker and more convenient to use their car. However, some respondents also said that they used their car a lot because they felt they had little alternative. Respondents in areas remote from shops, services and social destinations, and where public transport was patchy or non-existent, particularly in the evenings or at night, were especially likely to perceive themselves to be dependent on driving. These included some respondents living in rural areas, as well as some urban dwellers:

**I use it loads. I’m totally dependent on my car. Because of where I live. To get anywhere from the house it’s half an hour walking. And that’s just not feasible because I have a mad life.** (Female, 46, believes drove over the limit, city with good public transport)

However, respondents often admitted that they were not really aware of local public transport options or were not particularly motivated to find out. Also, there was a fair amount of snobbery about public transport:
There is no way I would get on a bus, even in the day. I don’t like the smell of them. I don’t like the people that get on them. When I was a student, I was fine with the buses, but they are just not nice. There are lots of germs and people talk to you. Old people, tramps get on the buses. Drunks get on the buses as well, all fighting and I just think it’s not safe. I’d rather have my own car or get someone else to give me a lift. (Female, 27, believes drove under the limit, small city and surrounds)

Car sharing and taxis were mentioned as possible alternatives either to the car or public transport, but inconvenience, the need for prior planning (loss of spontaneity) and the expense of taxis were often perceived to be significant drawbacks. Taxis were also not always available at short notice or in some areas at certain times of day or night.

[Asked if he ever ordered a taxi] Not if I’ve driven. I’ve never felt that I’m too legless to drive home. (Male, 33, convicted, scattered housing)

In general, respondents had a strong preference for driving over other forms of transport, including being driven by someone else. Positive attributes of driving mentioned by respondents included flexibility and convenience, independence, personal control and privacy. Some respondents did not like the passenger role and said they were bad passengers. One respondent said he and his friends always drove independently on a night out because they all wanted to drive rather than be driven.

Some respondents said they simply liked or were ‘passionate’ about cars or ‘loved’ driving. Some took an active pleasure and pride in their status as car owners and as drivers. For example, one respondent said he owned an antique car (a Mini) and belonged to a car club; one described himself as a ‘motor-head’, a car enthusiast. One female respondent said:

I had a 1.9 turbo sport Audi for four years, that is just power. Fabulous. (Female, 46, believes drove over the limit, city with good public transport)

However, car enthusiasts were more likely to be males, while females were more likely to emphasise what driving offered them in terms of providing personal security (especially at night), freedom and independence:

I just would not feel safe walking home. I weigh it up. I think, well actually I’d rather take the risk and drive if I feel I can do it than walk and get – you know. (Female, 26, believes drove over the limit, large village)

I like it because it gives you freedom, you know, your own freedom. Independence. I know I can just get in and go wherever without having to rely on other people or trains or buses or anything like that. (Female, 35, believes drove under the limit, scattered housing)
### 3.4 Summary observations

This section highlights the fact that drinking and driving are both default options for most respondents. In general, to **not** drink or to **not** drive requires them to depart from their own normal (and generally preferred) behaviour. It also often means doing something different from the rest of their social circle as well as of UK society at large. There is, therefore, an inevitable conflict whenever or wherever drinking and driving feature together, and this presents one of the most important challenges to drinking and driving policy and to campaigns.
4 ATTITUDES TO DRIVING AFTER DRINKING

4.1 Key findings

Box 4.1: Key findings

- Respondents were often against drinking and driving and thought it was risky and dangerous.
- Many were in favour of the law banning or regulating it.
- Respondents often thought they were largely compliant with the law; the spirit, if not always the letter.
- They did not readily identify with terms like ‘drink driver’.
- Drink drivers were widely caricatured as people who deliberately drove over the limit, were uncaring, dangerous and, usually, very drunk.
- When they felt they had taken risks, respondents were likely to attribute it to the specific circumstances of the occasion, rather than seeing themselves as drink drivers.
- Narrow stereotypes of drink drivers could be a barrier to self-recognition for some respondents.

4.2 General views on driving after drinking and on the law

Most respondents said they subscribed to the main messages of campaigns against drink driving delivered by governments over the past 30 years. They said that they thought driving after drinking was potentially risky and could lead to accidents in which people were injured or killed.

A majority were broadly in favour of a law regulating driving after drinking, although a few complained generally about the ‘Nanny State’ and state regulation of behaviour in different areas of life.

Some respondents thought it would be a good idea to ban driving after drinking altogether because it would send out clearer messages to drivers, be easier to observe than the current system and easier to enforce:

*It is confusing for people – is it ten units, is it five? You know people don’t always know the law . . . the one way to finish it completely is if nobody was allowed to have any drink and drive. It would not stop it, but it would*
get around that grey area of confusion. (Female, 45, believes drove over the limit, city with average or poor public transport)

Respondents did not tend to see themselves as being on the wrong side of the law very much, if at all, when it came to driving after drinking. Although, in some instances, this seems likely to be true, in others it plainly was not.

4.3 Views on drink drivers

Most respondents did not regard themselves as a ‘drink driver’, including some who had had a recent conviction or driven when they thought they were over the limit. Drink drivers were widely caricatured as people who do not care, who cause accidents, and who deliberately, intentionally, habitually and frequently drive over the limit. The term was associated often with floridly drunk drivers; people who were ‘incapable’, ‘paralytic’ or ‘falling out of the car legless’.

Someone who drinks and drives to me is someone who stumbles out of the pub, you know, rocking all over the place, fumbling around for their keys. (Male, 37, convicted, city with good public transport)

Drink-driver conjures up for me someone who’d go down the pub tonight, have three or four whiskeys or a bottle of wine, a couple of lagers and get in the car and drive . . . I don’t see someone that’s had the odd nip or the odd glass of wine get in the car and drive home as a drink driver. (Male, 44, believes drove over the limit, city with average or poor public transport)

He will drink and get into a car no matter what . . . it doesn’t matter to him, it’s casual, it’s like it’s not wrong, it’s like going to a shop and buying a sandwich, very easy to do. (Male, 26, convicted, large village)

A drink driver? Obviously if somebody has killed a child and you see that caption in the paper of a drink driver . . . I always see them as somebody who’s totally over the limit, not somebody who’s maybe had two or three pints and has killed somebody. (Female, 45, believes drove over the limit, city with average or poor public transport)

The respondents were more likely to say someone was a drink driver if they had actually been convicted of driving over the limit, even if only slightly over. One or two respondents who had been convicted in recent months said that they had not previously applied the term ‘drink driver’ to themselves, but now felt that they probably should.
The respondents did not tend to regard themselves as drink drivers for a mixture of reasons, for example because:

- they saw themselves as reasonably compliant with the law on driving after drinking, or at least with its spirit;
- they felt that they rarely set out deliberately to flout the law;
- they saw themselves as being caring rather than uncaring;
- they believed that, even if they drove while over the limit, they did not drive when they were unsafe to drive; and
- they said that when they did drive over the limit it was unintentional, the result of a relatively rare loss of judgement or of simple human error, or justified or explained by specific circumstances (beyond their control):

*I mean obviously if I knew to the degree that I was silly or uncontrollable, then I wouldn’t have drove I would have seen what other options were available. But I had to come home. I’ve got dogs. I’ve got . . . Do I? Don’t I?* (Female, 22, believes drove over the limit, scattered housing)

*My dad had had a stroke and my mum rang to tell us and I basically went round there and that was after I’d been out drinking. I really didn’t think about it at the time because my mum was upset and you just get in the car and you go, don’t you? . . . Obviously I reflected afterwards and thought ‘you know if you’d got stopped you’d been in big trouble’. (Female, 45, believes drove over the limit, city with average or poor public transport)

However, respondents often appeared defensive throughout much of the discussion of their driving after drinking behaviour. The process of being interviewed at length gave them an opportunity to reflect and, at the end of the hour, some were less complacent about their own driving after drinking behaviour than they had been at the outset:

*Probably, if you’d have asked me before I’d have said no, but, yeah, I am [someone who drinks and drives]. . .* (Female, 38, believes drove under the limit, city with good public transport)

*I’d say a drink driver is someone who repeatedly drinks more than the law and drives, even when they know that they are over the limit and – I’m pretty much describing myself!* (Male, 37, believes drove over the limit, market town)
In terms of socio-demographics, the most common stereotypes of drink drivers were:

- young (usually male) drivers into very heavy drinking (drinkers who drive);
- older (also usually male) drivers with a lot of experience of both driving and drinking, who started driving (and drinking) prior to drink driving legislation and who were felt to have a consequent disregard for the law; and
- ‘business men’ and ‘white van man’.

Women were almost never mentioned as typical ‘drink drivers’, and female respondents sometimes said they thought that being female offered them some degree of protection against being stopped by the police even if they knowingly drove over the limit.

4.4 **Summary observations**

The difficulty that respondents have in identifying themselves as potential targets for drink-driving policy and campaigns is a key challenge. Although respondents supported action to regulate driving after drinking and to control drink drivers, they did not necessarily relate to it at a personal level.
5 KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEFS ABOUT DRINKING AND DRIVING

5.1 Key findings

Box 5.1: Key findings

- Most respondents said that they thought they would know if they were unsafe to drive.
- Feeling safe was often more important in decision making than the legal limit and many thought they would be safe beyond the legal limit.
- Respondents recognised gross signs of drink impairment, but tended to overlook more subtle ones; both in themselves or others.
- Most respondents knew little about how the legal limit is measured – the methods (apart from breath testing) or the units of measurement.
- They were mainly interested in how the legal limit relates to actual amounts drunk, but often felt they had little information to allow them to do so.
- ‘Two drinks’ was a widely used rule of thumb.
- Many respondents were aware that alcohol affects people differently and that its impact on a given individual can vary from occasion to occasion, but this stock of information was often tentative and influenced by myth and hearsay.
- Some respondents thought of the limit as their ‘drinking allowance’; the level they could drink up to.
- Killing or injuring someone was the worst thing respondents were able to imagine as a result of them driving after drinking, but most did not think that it was likely to happen.
- They also did not want to be caught or convicted, but, again, many did not think it was likely.
- Respondents thought they were least at risk of an accident after drinking if they drove short distances on well lit, uncomplicated and familiar routes.
- They thought they were least at risk of being stopped by the police if they drove short distances and kept to back roads away from drinking hot spots.
- Women and older drivers were less likely to think they could be stopped by the police, and respondents generally felt safer from prosecution during the day.
• The mandatory ban for drink driving was well known, but there was less awareness of other penalties, such as a criminal record lasting more than 10 years.

• Many respondents probably drive in the morning while still impaired by alcohol from the previous night.

• Driving the morning after drinking was an issue about which there appeared not to be much awareness.

• Respondents generally thought there was little chance of being caught by the police the morning after.

5.2 Signs of impairment

Although respondents recognised that the ability to drive safely is affected by alcohol consumption, many said that they thought that an impaired ability to drive would be evident to them and that if they felt ‘alright’, they probably were. This did not necessarily mean that they thought they would be under the limit (see Section 5.3); indeed, many respondents seemed to think that there was some latitude between the legal limit and their own personal safe limit for driving and that they could have more than the legal limit of alcohol in their blood without affecting their driving.

Probed about signs of impairment they would look out for in someone else who was planning to drive, many respondents mentioned familiar, but nonetheless, quite extreme symptoms, such as:

• people staggering around;

• not able to put the key in the car door;

• with unfocused eyes;

• needing help to walk; and

• not talking properly.

Slurring his words and he’s a bit wobbly on his feet, then you might have the question whether you should be getting into the car with him or not. (Male, 34, believes drove over the limit, London suburb)

Signs of impairment in themselves that respondents said they would take notice of when driving were also fairly dramatic and included:
• loss of coordination;
• blurred vision; and
• inability to concentrate.

Yeah I mean obviously if my vision was wrong, well not normal, then obviously I’d say that something, the alcohol had had an effect on my body. Obviously feeling out of body, giddiness, eye vision, depending on how much you’d drunk your head, how you was feeling. (Female, 22, believes drove over the limit, scattered housing)

Slurring my words. A bit wobbly on my feet. My eyes glazing over a bit. Squinting. I ramble. Laughing and joking too much. The normal bits and pieces. (Male, 37, convicted, city with good public transport)

Some respondents conceded that alcohol could give them false confidence in their ability to drive (‘beer goggles’), but this fact did not seem to be used much by respondents to challenge their own assessment of their ability to drive after a few drinks:

If alcohol does affect your reactions it affects your driving and it probably affects your reactions that little bit but you don’t notice. (Male, 23, convicted, small city and surrounds)

You think you’re OK with one drink and perhaps you’re not. They say your responses are a few seconds slower, but obviously you don’t think that do you when you get in the car? (Female, 38, believes drove over the limit, large village)

I wouldn’t say I go up to the pub with the intention of having too much to drink, but you sort of have one and get the taste and then you have another and get the taste. You know, alcohol stimulates you like that and you want more. But I know I don’t really want to walk home so I will take that chance in getting in the car. (Female, 45, believes drove over the limit, small city and surrounds)

I know the risks, where you don’t know the risks when you’re drunk, but you know the risk you’ve taken when you sober up. Everyone knows that. It’s just that risk you take because you’re not thinking straight are you? (Male, 34, believes drove over the limit, London suburb)

Feeling ‘safe to drive’ was a powerful factor influencing respondents who drove after drinking. Although staying within the legal limit was sometimes seen as an ideal target, in many cases it appeared to carry less weight than whether a respondent felt they were safe:
I wouldn’t get in a car if I didn’t feel that I was safe to drive. Like I won’t use a mobile phone whilst driving. I wouldn’t do anything which jeopardizes my well-being or another person’s well-being. (Male, 37, convicted, city with good public transport)

I just know in my own mind if I’ve had too many to be able to take the risk to drive. I do tend to count during the course of the night, I’ve done that for quite some time now on Saturdays. Even if I count and say I’ve had six halves I tend to still feel totally in control of all my faculties, even though I’m over the limit. (Female, 45, believes drove over the limit, small city and surrounds)

The truth is, coming right out, I do drink and most of the times I’ll probably drive home, because I never really see myself as drunk and reckless. So I think I am capable of actually getting myself home, which I have been doing all my life really. (Male, 33, convicted, scattered housing)

An exception to this was where respondents felt that there was a real risk of them being stopped by the police – which was not often:

But it’s a known fact where I live not to drink/drive when the football’s on. If there’s any big games on, Manchester United versus whoever . . . (Male, 26, convicted, city with good public transport)

5.3 The legal limit

Individual respondents appeared to have little comprehensive information about factors that affect alcohol concentrations in the blood (BAC – blood alcohol concentration), and found it difficult to picture in terms of drinks or even units.

In terms of measuring alcohol levels, breath-testing was common knowledge, but blood and urine testing were less well-known. Few respondents had any idea of the units of measurement for different methods or the legal cut-off points, though convicted respondents who had been on drink-driving courses were sometimes better informed.

Most respondents said that they did not feel much the wiser when this information was shown to them. The definitions (80 mg (milligrams) of alcohol per 100 ml (millilitres) of blood; 35 µg (micrograms) of alcohol per 100 ml of breath; and 107 mg of alcohol per 100ml of urine) were seen generally to be of little practical meaning or relevance. One respondent said that ‘It might as well be Swahili’:

The first thing I think is that they sound like they’re all medical terms by the sound of it. I didn’t understand any of it to be honest. I didn’t understand any of it. I think when they’re doing that kind of thing they’ve
got to break it down into everyday English, break it down into pints or glasses of wine. (Male, 34, believes drove over the limit, London suburb)

Respondents were generally more interested in knowing how many drinks (or alcohol units) they could have – were ‘allowed to have’ – and still be under the limit, and they frequently asked for clarification during interviews.

Many operated a pragmatic rough rule of thumb; ‘two drinks’ was commonly cited and some even thought that this was the official guideline. A small number of respondents who said they had actively looked for official guidance complained that it did not appear to be readily available. This seemed both strange and unfair; they wanted a better idea of where they stood and did not understand why something so important was so hard to find. Some assumed that they just had not looked in the right place. Some respondents thought there was generally insufficient information widely available to help drivers make sensible and informed choices:

For home consumption, bottles and cans have what the number of units are in them. But honestly after that how those units track back to the drink drive limit is another one. Where that maps on to the 80 milligrams I have no idea. Where one unit gets me to I wouldn’t have a clue . . . Just a really clear message would almost be the way forward. One of these will put you over the limit. (Male, 35, believes drove under the limit, market town and surrounds)

It’s not black and white and it should be black and white because you’re playing with people’s lives. (Male, 26, convicted, large village)

Respondents often knew or believed that the same amount of alcohol could have different effects on different people. Most could point to variations in tolerance among their friends and family:

In reality, well it all depends on the individual. Some people just can’t handle drink, some people just can’t handle one. (Male, 27, believes drove under the limit, city with good public transport)

Some people were said to be able to ‘take’ their drink, perhaps because of their larger size or because they were ‘practised’ drinkers. Factors frequently mentioned by respondents as affecting the impact of alcohol on different drinking occasions included:

• how quickly and how much alcohol had been drunk;
• how much had been eaten before drinking;
• how much water had been drunk after or while consuming alcohol;
• body size;
• whether the drinker had been ill, was taking medication or was under stress; and
• the amount of time since alcohol had been drunk (whether the alcohol had had
time to enter the blood stream and whether it had had time to leave it).

In describing practical strategies that they personally had used or thought might help
to reduce concentrations of alcohol in the blood when drinking, respondents were
most likely to mention drinking on a full stomach, drinking plenty of water or soft
drinks at the same time as alcohol – separately or as mixers – and drinking slowly.
They often talked about ways of ‘lining the stomach’ before going out:

I always have something to eat anyway otherwise I always think you get
drunk really quick. (Female, 38, believes drove under the limit, city with
good public transport)

In general, a large part of respondents’ stock of information about the effects of
alcohol and the legal limit appeared shallow, tentative and infused with a certain
amount of myth and hearsay.

5.4 Consequences and penalties

The worst consequence of driving after drinking that most respondents said they
could envisage was personally injuring or killing someone. However, this did not
often seem to respondents to be a very likely outcome in their case, although they
often thought it was a good idea to feature fatal accidents in anti-drink-drive
campaigns in order to scare other people:

Oh . . . yeah, it’s horrible. I hate it, but it does make you think about it,
don’t it? And everyone I know goes, ‘Oh I hate that advert.’ (Female, 38,
believes drove under the limit, city with good public transport)

Most respondents were also very averse to the idea of being stopped by the police.
They did not want to go to court, they did not want the embarrassment of a
conviction and they did not want to lose their licence. Some respondents said that
they could not envisage their lives without the use of their car, for some it would
have profound impact on their ability to do their job and earn a living:

There is a social consequence having a criminal record and things. (Male,
27, believes drove under the limit, city with good public transport)

However, being stopped and convicted was often not thought to be very likely to
happen, unless respondents lived or drank in areas where the police were known to
be very vigilant:
This area police activity isn’t a common occurrence. It’s certainly not – I know this is stereotyping now, but like you hear of London, Brixton, constant activity, constant criminal activity, so therefore you know that someone is always going to be about. (Female, 22, believes drove over the limit, scattered housing)

I am really aware of like where police are and stuff like that. (Female, 22, convicted, London suburb)

Respondents who thought they were least likely to be stopped included:

- people who said they drove mostly in the day time;
- those who had had no previous dealings with the police (and who did not really know anyone else who had); and
- people who thought they did not fit the profile of a drink driver (e.g. women and older drivers).

Low-risk journeys mentioned by respondents from the point of view of safety when driving after drinking included:

- quiet roads;
- familiar roads;
- well-lit roads;
- roads without too many twists and turns;
- not necessarily back roads;
- urban rather than rural roads; and
- short journeys.

Low-risk journeys from the point of view of not being caught over the limit were considered to include:

- short journeys;
- back roads; and
- roads away from known and popular licensed venues.

I certainly wouldn’t of gone on the motorway or anything like that. Which, so that, so that’s the mental calculation I was possibly borderline. (Female, 30, stopped over the limit, city with good public transport)

Oh yes, certainly. I mean if I’d had like a drink I would stay very local. I mean where we are at the moment, if I was generally just driving on this
estate you can drive slightly slower without drawing attention to yourself because it is a residential, it is a residential, it’s a slow area. (Female, 22, believes drove over the limit, scattered housing)

Knowledge about the penalties of being convicted of drink driving was variable, with recently convicted drivers naturally being among the best informed. Most respondents knew that there was an automatic ban and that it would be for a minimum of 12 months, although some thought the ban was not automatic and that they would get points on their licence first:

*I just assumed it was points.* (Female, 30, stopped over the limit, city with good public transport)

*I think if you’re quite a bit over the limit you get arrested. You probably will get three points and probably a fine. Obviously if you were arrested when you were well over the limit, I imagine they might be caught for that, but to be honest I don’t really know.* (Female, 26, believes drove over the limit, large village.)

Most respondents also thought that there would be a fine, probably linked to the amount by which they were over the limit. Knowledge was weaker about the possibility of a custodial sentence, and about receiving a drink-driving endorsement that would stay on their licence for 11 years. The last came as a shock to some respondents:

*I haven’t really looked into it, I’ve sort of, I’ve shoved it in a closet in the back of me mind, you know. 11 years, flip . . . To have it on your licence for 11 years!* (Female, 30, stopped over the limit, city with good public transport)

Very few respondents were aware that they could be charged for being drunk in charge of a vehicle. This was particularly electrifying for some respondents and revealed new possibilities to them for getting caught; for example, when sleeping off the effects of alcohol in the back of the car or simply walking to their car with the keys in their pocket.

### 5.5 Summary observations

Many respondents had only a thin and patchy knowledge base about the effects of alcohol on the ability to drive safely, the legal limit and how it is measured, and the penalties and consequences of driving over the limit. They also often seemed to have little thirst for such information or active motivation to make use of any already available. This could be because they do not believe that they drive when they are unsafe and because they do not think that they are likely to cause an accident or be caught by the police if they are over the limit. However, ‘not
knowing’ is also the easier option, especially if respondents do not feel that their behaviour is different from the norm and when there are other competing calls on their attention. The lack of official guidance linking the legal limit to actual drinks seems likely to reinforce the guessing game that many respondents engage in when mixing driving and drinking.
6 DRIVING AFTER DRINKING BEHAVIOUR

6.1 Key findings

Box 6.1: Key findings

- Respondents were more likely to avoid mixing drinking and driving on occasions planned well in advance when they thought they would be drinking more than usual.

- However, driving after lower levels of drinking was considered normal practice and was not a big deal for most.

- Some respondents gave little thought to how much they drank when they were driving, but it was more usual for them to operate a rough rule of thumb (often ‘two drinks’).

- Rules of thumb often lacked a reliable knowledge base, and were casually and inconsistently applied; respondents often found it hard to stick to their rule of thumb.

- There were often discrepancies between the way respondents wanted to say they behaved in relation to driving after drinking, and the way they actually behaved.

- Most respondents drank at home sometimes and some said they did so more than they used to, mainly for reasons of cost.

- They sometimes said they were less inclined to watch how much they drink at home.

- They often drank at home when they thought there was little likelihood of going out again, but they nonetheless reported driving after drinking at home for all sorts of reasons; often short local trips that were unplanned.

- Unplanned drinking in other people’s homes and in non-domestic settings often generated unplanned driving after drinking.

- Respondents were generally more sensitised to the drink-driving risk associated with drinking in non-domestic settings.

- As might be expected, the frequency of driving after drinking was often considerably underestimated by respondents.

- Respondents reported many instances of driving after drinking when either the drinking was unplanned or the driving was unplanned.

- Respondents often seemed to feel that they were not in control of the circumstances that undermined their plans (not to drink or not to drive).
• Some respondents do not plan or even think about the potential conflict between driving and drinking when they go out.

• Initial reports by respondents often significantly underestimated the frequency with which they drove after drinking (just one drink).

• Initial reports of the amount drunk when driving, generally and on specific occasions, also appeared to be significant underestimates.

• Underreporting resulted from social desirability bias, recall error, definitional problems (what ‘counted’ as drinking and what counted as ‘driving after drinking’), and problems with assessing the amount of alcohol consumed.

• Some respondents simply did not pay much attention to how much they drank.

6.2 Introduction

This section describes the driving after drinking behaviour reported by respondents. As mentioned at the start of this report, 32 respondents were selected on the basis that they had driven after drinking at least once in the preceding six weeks, including 20 who thought they were over the limit and 12 who thought they were not. The remaining respondents had all received convictions for drink driving in the preceding three to six months.\(^5\)

Respondents were asked about their general patterns of driving after drinking: the occasions and circumstances when they usually or typically drive after having had (even just one) drink.

They were also asked in detail about one or two specific recent occasions when they had driven after having had at least one drink.\(^6\) Interviewers probed for information about the day of the week and time of day, the occasion, location or setting, and anyone else who was with the respondent at the time. Respondents were asked about whether they knew they were going to drink, whether they had planned to drive afterwards, the amount they drank and whether they thought afterwards that they were over the limit and/or safe to drive. They were also asked what they thought the likelihood was that they would be stopped by the police and be breathalysed.

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5 Most were convictions received in the preceding three months, but a few were between three and six months.

6 Including one story prepared by respondents in advance of the interview as a pre-task (see Section 1.3).
The evidence set out in this section is drawn from the interviews as a whole and from the narrative accounts of specific occasions. A summary of the first account provided by each respondent – 50 in total – is given in Appendix 5.

6.3 Avoiding driving after drinking

Respondents sometimes avoided driving altogether if they were planning to drink. For example, they said that they used public transport, they took taxis, they appointed designated drivers, and they chose to drink in places that they could easily walk to, or they arranged to stay over at a friend’s house until the next day.

They also said that they sometimes abstained completely from drinking, for instance if they were the designated driver or there was no alternative means of getting home other than driving. A few respondents said they preferred not to drink at all rather than have to limit their drinking to one or two glasses because they could not see the point of having just a few.

The times when they were more likely to avoid driving altogether included occasions that were planned well in advance, such as a big night out, a weekend ‘session’ or a major celebration, such as a birthday, engagement, Christmas party or anniversary. They were also more likely to make alternative arrangements when going out with other people so they could share the cost of a taxi, travel together on public transport or appoint someone else as the designated driver.

Although there were occasions when respondents avoided mixing drinking and driving, it was also normal practice to combine the two. It was not widely regarded as unusual, momentous or a ‘big deal’ by the respondents in this study.

6.4 How much alcohol?

A few respondents said that they never gave a second thought to how much they drank when they were driving:

*It’s not part of the way I’m thinking, and it’s not something at the forefront of my mind. I am not responsible in that sense that I’ll go out somewhere and think, ‘Oh no, I mustn’t drink and drive’. I’ll just think, ‘I’m going to drink, and if by the end of the night I feel like I can drive then I’m going to drive, and if by the end of the night I feel like I can’t drive then I won’t drive’. (Female, 22, convicted, London)*

Most, however, said that they did think about how much they drank when they were driving. They often gave a ‘rule of thumb’ that they said they operated; for example ‘two drinks’ (see Section 5). However, evidence from the interviews, and from respondents’ stories of recent occasions when they had mixed driving after drinking,
suggests that these rules often lacked the underpinning of a reliable knowledge base and tended to be casually and inconsistently applied.

The respondents drank more than they meant to for various reasons, for example because they got caught up in the spirit of the occasion or the mood of the group:

“It all depends on how the night’s going. If I’m standing and I’m a bit bored and I see them all really hyper, then I’ll try and drink. I’ll drink one after the other just to try and speed it up a bit so I can join in.” (Male, 21, believes drove over the limit, small city and surrounds)

“Last Saturday night I went to a restaurant. I went to pick up my other half and his friend because they were drinking in the pub. His friend has had some bad news so he wanted to get drunk so I dropped them at the pub and stayed with them and had a vodka and tonic and then I left them saying ‘I will pick you up at 8pm’. I picked them up at 8pm and they said ‘oh just come to the restaurant’ but they begged and begged and begged me to come out. We went to a restaurant and the restaurant was asking if I wanted a drink so I did have a vodka and diet coke. Then later on the restaurant said ‘oh these are complimentary shots’ and that’s difficult when drinks are complimentary.” (Female, 27, believes drove under the limit, small city and surrounds)

They drove when they had drunk more than their rule of thumb because, for example:

- they needed their car for work the next day;
- they did not want to leave their car in a car park overnight;
- there were no taxis or buses;
- their designated driver had gone home or had drunk too much; and
- they wanted to sleep in their own bed.

For example, one respondent had an argument with his wife after a stressful week at work and drove off from home after having been drinking in the pub after work (but not driving). Yet another said he drank more at a Christmas party than he had intended and, though he initially decided to leave the car in the car park and get a taxi home, in the end he decided to drive because he ‘felt fine’. One respondent said that she had to drive when she had not expected to in order to collect her friend’s child from hospital.

Plans to limit the amount of alcohol drunk were often described by respondents as difficult to stick to, for example because of perceived social pressures and the excitement of the occasion itself, especially after a couple of drinks:
I haven’t planned anything, those spontaneous nights that happen occasionally . . . Because you get carried away. That’s the whole idea. How can you not have a spontaneous night? It’s spontaneous, isn’t it? You can’t plan it. It just happens. It’s just one litre, two litre, three litre, ten. So you don’t really plan it. It just happens. I’m not proud of it, like I said. (Male, 34, believes drove over the limit, London suburb)

Yeah because I was driving and I just, I don’t, I can’t believe I’m saying it, I don’t drink and drive. I don’t do it. So, and I knew I wasn’t gonna drink anything because I had to drive home but, you know everyone was saying, you know, ‘Have a drink,’ you know, ‘leave your car here. It’ll be okay we’ll get it in the morning.’ Okay, fine. But then, because afterwards I felt okay, I just thought, oh I’m fine, you know, I’ll drive home. (Male, 33, convicted, London suburb)

On the whole, the respondents appeared to believe that they were careful about mixing drinking and driving, and even when there was evidence to the contrary they sometimes seemed blind to it.

6.5 Where and when respondents drank

Respondents drank alcohol in their own homes, at other people’s homes and in various non-domestic settings.

6.5.1 At home

Some respondents said that they normally had a supply of alcohol at home, while others said that they only ever had alcohol in the house if they had brought it in to drink themselves the same day, if they were expecting company or if there was drink left over from an occasion such as a dinner party (although they sometimes said they had a bottle of something that was being saved for a special occasion):

No, I never really keep any sort of drink in the house. I’ve got the odd bottle of wine stashed away in the cupboard or a bottle of Jack, do you know what I mean? But it’s not really (the same) . . . (Male, 26, convicted, city with good public transport)

Most said that they drank at home at least sometimes, but there was wide variation in terms of reported frequency – from less than once a week to four or more times a week. Some respondents said that they drank at home more often than they used to because it was a way of saving money in the current financial climate:

To me it is a cost issue. I do go out with the girls sometimes, but it has been very hard financially so I need to make savings. (Female, 37, believes drove over the limit, London suburb)
It’s that little bit more now with the price of beer going up, maybe a little bit more now. (Male, 27, believes drove under the limit, city with good public transport)

The respondents said that they drank alcohol with their evening meal, especially at weekends or on special occasions such as birthdays and anniversaries. Dinner parties, Sunday lunch with family or friends and weekend barbecues in the garden were also frequently mentioned occasions when respondents drank alcohol at home. They also reported drinking – sometimes alone – while relaxing watching television, listening to music, talking and generally pottering around. Many said that they drank in the evening after work or when daily chores were finished in order to mark the end of the day, and to relax and wind down:

Like tonight I’ll probably get home from school, give her a bath, do the homework, tea, chill out for a bit. Put her in bed. Boyfriend will probably go out. And then I’ll open a bottle of wine. (Female, 38, believes drove under the limit, city with good public transport)

Friends dropping by for a visit to watch a match, at the start of a night out or for a planned ‘night in’ provided more reasons to drink at home:

If it is to relax I’m normally sat in front of TV with a bottle of red. If we’re going out it’s a few quick shots to get going, like for instance on Saturday night we went out and got a taxi into town and we all had some vodka and quickly drank them before the taxi was outside. (Female, 27, believes drove under the limit, small city and surrounds)

Many respondents appeared to drink more at home than initially implied. They often said that they were less likely to watch the amount they drank at home, especially if they were not intending to go out again and did not have to get up for work the next day. And they also sometimes said that it was harder to keep track of the amount they had drunk at home, for example because of using non-standard measures and refilling their glass before it was empty. There were exceptions to this, however; one respondent thought it was easier to monitor drinking at home because you knew how much you had bought in and you knew when the bottle was empty:

If you open up a bottle of wine with your partner, having a drink, you know you’ve poured a glass or two glasses and you know when the bottle is empty. When you’re out and about, because the bottle is just there, in fact usually there’s a bar or a table full of drinks, it’s pour, pour, pour and no-one ever thinks ‘I’ve had three glasses or four glasses’. (Male, 44, believes drove over the limit, small city and surrounds)
6.5.2 Other people’s homes

Occasions when the respondents said they drank in other people’s homes tended to mirror those when they said they drank in their own. They said they had alcohol (even if just one drink) when:

- friends invited them round for dinner or other meals;
- there was a family get together or celebration, often Sunday lunch;
- they went to a party;
- they got together at a friend’s to watch football or other sport;
- they spent the evening just hanging out or watching a video;
- they played bridge or cards; and
- they got together for a drink before going out for the evening:

Standard rule of thumb since we’ve been sort of like 19/20, take round a four-pack and then we shoot from there, ‘cos then while you’re out you only have to buy maybe six drinks at most. (Male, 25, believes drove over the limit, city with good public transport)

6.5.3 Non-domestic settings

Drinking in non-domestic settings reportedly took place mainly on licensed premises: pubs, restaurants, clubs and bars, and sports clubs. The respondents also mentioned drinking on trains and airplanes, on picnics or in the open air generally (e.g. in parks), at the theatre, and at venues hired for special occasions and celebrations. Examples given of the kinds of occasions when respondents drank outside a home environment included:

- a drink at their ‘local’;
- after work drinks with colleagues and mates;
- leaving dos or Christmas parties;
- after playing, or while watching, sport;
- ‘big nights out’ with friends;
- family occasions and religious celebrations;
- meals out with friends or a partner; and
- weekend pub lunch.

Say if I found out I’m finishing work early I’d phone a couple of friends or one of my brothers, find out what time they’re finishing, go home, quick wash, quick change, then go and meet them. Drink, maybe two drinks, then arrange what to do later on. (Male, 27, believes drove under the limit, city with good public transport)
If the two of us of a Sunday afternoon drove down to a pub and we had a pub lunch, I’ll have a beer, yeah . . . that would be the one or two out in the garden maybe. (Male, 34, believes drove over the limit, London suburb)

6.6 When and why they drove after drinking

6.6.1 Driving after drinking at home

Many respondents said they would be less likely to drink at home if they thought they would be going out again, especially in the car:

*No never. Because when I drink at home I’m deliberately in for the evening. I’m not drinking at 5 o’clock in the afternoon when I might have to nip to the post office or to Tesco. When I have a drink in the evening it’s a Friday or Saturday evening when it might be 8, 9, 10 o’clock at night. I’m already relaxed for the evening. I’m out of my outerwear which I go outside in and I’m relaxed for the night . . . So when I’ve done everything and everything is behind me, at that point I’ll have a drink.* (Male, 37, convicted, city with good public transport)

Drinking at home reportedly signalled the intention to settle in for the evening or the day, and the respondents often struggled at first to think of occasions when they would drive after drinking at home (after having even just one drink). One respondent said that to drink at home if you knew you were likely to be driving simply seemed irresponsible.

However, probing often revealed a range of circumstances when respondents said they did drive or had driven after drinking at home. Examples included:

- popping out to the shops in the evening for something (e.g. more alcohol, cigarettes, something for supper);
- collecting a takeaway;
- taking a visitor home;
- going round to check on an elderly relative;
- picking up children from somewhere, or a partner or a friend (sometimes in an ‘emergency’);
- accepting a spontaneous invitation to go out;
- going to the shops or a garden centre at the weekend after a beer or glass of wine with lunch; and
- having a drink before an evening out.
Yeah, I mean maybe I’ve not planned to have many drinks and somebody’s turned up and I’ve had to get some more beer and I’ll say, ‘Well I’ve only had one, I’ll go . . .’ (Male, 27, believes drove under the limit, city with good public transport)

My partner needs picking up because she’s had too much to drink and her friends have said ‘can you come and get her’. Or a friend has phoned me last minute and said ‘my car has broken down and something has happened’ and you tend to think ‘I’ve only had one drink, I’m OK’ and you get in the car . . . a lot of that happens. (Male, 44, believes drove under the limit, small city and surrounds)

We always seem to have alcohol lying around in the house as in the fridge or left over from some party. So sometimes when I’m getting ready to go out with friends maybe I’m driving in the car to theirs or picking them up and we’re getting together in one specific place and then going in a taxi somewhere, maybe I’ll have a couple of halves of lager before I go. (Female, 45, believes drove over the limit, small city and surrounds)

Many examples provided by the respondents were for unplanned trips that they said they did not know they were going to be making, or had not anticipated, before they had a drink. On the whole, respondents felt they were likely to be under the limit and – if not – were definitely safe when they drove after drinking at home. They also tended to say that any trips they made were likely to be on local roads, familiar routes and quiet routes.

6.6.2 Driving after drinking in other people’s homes

Respondents said they were more likely to avoid driving after drinking at other people’s homes if the occasion was pre-planned and they expected to drink a lot. They said they either limited the amount they drank or avoided driving. However, they also mentioned times when they drank more than they meant to and when their alternative travel arrangements fell through.

As with drinking at home, they often found it difficult at first to think about unplanned occasions when they drove after drinking at someone else’s home, mainly because they tended to overlook more casual events. For example, times when they dropped round to see a friend and were offered a beer, or shared a glass of wine with other mums when collecting children from play dates.

6.6.3 Driving after drinking in non-domestic settings

Occasions when respondents drank in non-domestic settings were often those that respondents were most sensitised to think about in terms of drink driving. Again, they were more likely to try to avoid driving after drinking for events planned well
in advance where they expected to drink more than usual, such as big nights out clubbing or going to bars. However, the respondents also gave many examples of times when they either drank or drove when they had not intended to and ended up doing both:

On Friday I got a phone call after work ‘We’re down so-and-so bar, come down and meet us’, ‘No, I can’t tonight I’ve just finished’, ‘pop down, pop down’ and you get down there and before you know it you’re saying to yourself ‘I’m not going to have a drink because I’ve just finished work, being at work since **** knows what hour’ and someone says ‘here’ and that’s your one drink and you think ‘Right, one for the road, that’s it.’ It gets to about 10.30pm and you’re still sat there sipping your drink away because you know you’ve been at work all day and then the next one comes and you feel guilty because someone has bought you a drink. You’re thinking ‘I can’t leave it, no-one else wants it,’ so you drink it, but on the last occasion I realised that I’d never been aware – I’ve been aware of the volume of rum – but I never thought about cider until I realised when somebody said to me ‘Do you realise that’s 5%?’ I went ‘Go away!’
(Male, 44, believes drove over the limit, small city and surrounds)

6.6.4 Driving the morning after

Driving over the limit the morning after drinking the night before seemed to be a fairly regular occurrence for some respondents:

I’ve woke up on mornings and I can’t even see myself in the mirror and I’ve drove to football . . . I don’t think it’s a great thing but I don’t mean to hurt anyone. (Male, 26, convicted, large village)

A few were very conscious of the risk:

You’re still drunk the next day, it doesn’t, you know, you get home at 4 o’clock in the morning and then you get up at 12 and you decide to have some breakfast and you’ll go for a drive. You’re still like you were the night before really, doesn’t make any difference. You’re still over the limit.
(Male, 33, convicted, London suburb)

However, many respondents had given it little thought:

I’ve gone to work before after having a party and I’ve had to go out on a Sunday because an urgent referral has been made and I’ve had to go and do an assessment, so possibly I have been over the limit. (Female, 45, believes drove over the limit, small city and surrounds)
Some did not believe that alcohol could remain in the body long enough to impair driving ability the next day, or they thought they could counteract the effects with ‘a good breakfast’:

*A lot of things have been thrown at us over time that make people think ‘oh, I can’t do this, I can’t do that’ and they’ve been proven to be totally wrong, scaremongering tactics and what have you.* (Male, 44, believes drove over the limit, small city and surrounds)

*If I have been drinking and I come in say at 3am, I would say probably the alcohol has worn off me by say 6am . . . I don’t feel like I’m still intoxicated . . .* (Male, 21, believes drove over the limit, small city and surrounds)

*If I’m driving in the morning after a hard night, I’d say nine times out of ten it’s to get a breakfast. So down the café, have a breakfast, then probably after the breakfast you’re all right ’cause you’ve got the food consumption in you.* (Male, 23, convicted, small city and surrounds)

There was a fairly widespread assumption that, even if still over the limit, drivers would be unlikely to be stopped by the police first thing, especially en route to work:

*I probably am, but because it’s first thing in the morning you don’t expect to be stopped. Well I never expect to be stopped anyway. But because I’m usually in my work clothes and going to work, and I drive well – I don’t speed. Like I said, I don’t draw attention to myself. I don’t think of it. I just get on with it.* (Male, 34, believes drove over the limit, London suburb)

However, in one area the respondents said that the police were well tuned in to morning after drink drivers and that they tended to be on the lookout, for example, for people retrieving their cars from pub car parks the morning after.

### 6.6.5 How often

The majority of respondents responded fairly quickly to a question about how many times a month, on average, they drove after having at least one drink and, as would be expected, there was some variation between respondents in the answers they gave. However, many revised their estimate upwards on probing, in some cases considerably altering their first answer:

*Once a month. Maybe more if I stop and think about it actually . . . Well I’m just trying to be clear in my mind now. Festivals, parties, dinners and meals out. The odd occasion that I’ve stopped at a pub on the way home to have something to eat. I’d say 12 to 20.* (Male, 37, convicted, city with good public transport)
Including the times that they drove after having at least one drink, a fair number of the respondents in this sample eventually reported doing so at least once or twice a week; often associated with regular fixtures, such as playing evening football (a drink afterwards), a regular night out with a partner, and social events at the weekend.

As well as being ‘top of the head’ and often not carefully thought through, the respondents’ first estimates tended to be focused more on instances where they had drunk amounts that they thought might have put them over the limit, than on any (in their view) more minor occasions. For example, one respondent said that he had driven, on average, once a month over the past year after having had just one drink. When the probe ‘after even just one drink’ was repeated, he reacted as if he had heard the question for the first time:

Oh definitely then. I thought you meant really like three or four, when you’re borderline. Well that happens quite a lot then. Even if I go round to my mum’s and I have a beer, just one can with dinner and then I’ll drive home. Is that what you mean? Well that happens quite a lot because you think it’s just not going to register is it, just having that one. I go round my mate’s just round the corner and have a can round there. If I’ve got the car I’ll drive back. It’s just a can. It’s not four or five cans. It’s just a can. So yeah, that happens quite a lot. (Male, 34, believes drove over the limit, London suburb)

The respondents found it relatively easy to recall memorable events, such as big nights out and birthday celebrations, but not events that made less impact or were more routine.

6.7 Summary observations

Obtaining a reliable picture of respondents’ driving after drinking behaviour was rarely straightforward. In the majority of cases, it involved a forensic approach from the research team that often turned into something of a journey of self-discovery for the respondent. For many it became an exercise in:

- facing up to how much and how often they drank, and drove after drinking;
- confronting the weakness of their information and knowledge base, and the casualness with which they tended to apply it; and
- exposing the flimsiness of their excuses to themselves about why they mix driving and drinking, and why they take risks with safety and with the law.
Some respondents found the process uncomfortable and there was a great deal of defensiveness to be overcome. However, it was not an uphill battle in the sense that the respondents were generally supportive of policy to tackle drinking and driving, and, at least in the short term, they seemed keen to re-examine their behaviour.
7 CLASSIFYING PEOPLE WHO DRIVE AFTER DRINKING

7.1 Key findings

This section outlines four respondent types identified by the qualitative study that are of potential relevance to drink-driving policy and campaigns (Box 7.1).

**Box 7.1: Key findings**

The main respondent types described include:

- **Outlaws** – heavy drinkers for whom the legal limits and guidelines are not important. They have a high regard for their own skills and judgement (in terms of driving, being safe); follow their own convenience and desires; are easily influenced (appearances and keeping up were important); and are emotionally impulsive.

- **Good Citizens** – these respondents are marked by the cautiousness of their approach. They are often well-informed about the legal limits and the possible effects of alcohol on driving, but in any case leave a wide margin of error. They rarely allow themselves to be knocked off course by other people or situations, and take personal responsibility for their decisions and behaviour.

- **Ostriches** – this group is recognised by their low awareness of drinking limits and guidelines; their tendency to self-deception; and the likelihood that they will distance themselves from blame.

- **Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde** – the final group is mainly identified by emotional impulsiveness, which makes them behave in very risky ways on occasion. However, as a general rule they may subscribe to responsible habits and ‘rules of thumb’. They may be very ashamed of any lapse, and see it as uncharacteristic.

7.2 Key dimensions or factors

As the interviews and analysis progressed, the impression emerged of a number of broad types of respondent differentiated by a combination of their attitudes, knowledge, and beliefs and behaviour in relation to driving after drinking. By working through the interview data, 10 dimensions or factors were identified, some already discussed in earlier parts of this report, that appeared to be more or less important in distinguishing between respondent types:
A Qualitative Study of Drinking and Driving: Report of Findings

1. **Attachment to drinking/drinking levels** – how much and how frequently people drink, their attachment to drinking, and its importance to them on social and other occasions.

2. **Attachment to driving (their own vehicle)** – such attachment was fairly high generally among respondents in this sample. This factor covers practical as well as emotional/psychological attachment to driving, and difficulty countenancing other forms of transport or being a passenger.

3. **Knowledge and understanding** – of the legal limit for drinking and driving, and of guidelines (as well as the effects of alcohol on the ability to drive).

4. **Awareness of own drinking level** – and knowledge about the alcohol content of drinks.

5. **Easily influenced (versus tending to stick to own rules and plans)** – covering wanting to keep up with other people and being swayed on a whim or by the spirit of an occasion.

6. **Following own convenience and desires** – the extent to which the individual prioritises their own interests and preferences in a given situation.

7. **Emotional impulsiveness and instability** – that can overthrow plans and intentions and lead to risky behaviour.

8. **Regard for own skill and judgement** – not only in terms of driving, but also assessing own ability to drive after drinking.

9. **Risk-taking versus caution or anxiety** – preparedness to sail close to the wind in terms of breaking the law, getting caught and general safety.

10. **Acceptance of personal responsibility** – for being properly informed, for drinking levels, for decisions to drive after drinking and so on.

### 7.3 Main respondent types

Based on the above factors, four main types of respondent were identified that seemed to describe important sections of the study sample. The intention was less to produce a comprehensive typology of mutually exclusive categories than to pinpoint potentially useful archetypes that might be a basis for targeting drink-driving policy and campaigns.

The four groups – described in detail below – were labelled as follows:

- Outlaws;
- Good Citizens;
- Ostriches; and
- Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde.
Respondents were recognised either as ‘pure’ types or as hybrids (with one type possibly dominant). It is also possible that other key factors and other types could be described.

The main characteristics of the four main respondent types are summarised in Table 7.1; key defining characteristics are in bold:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Outlaw</th>
<th>The Good Citizen</th>
<th>The Ostrich</th>
<th>Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>Attached to drink, heavy drinkers</strong>&lt;br&gt;2. Strongly attached to driving&lt;br&gt;3. Level of awareness of limits and guidelines is unimportant (the limits and guidelines are not seen as important)&lt;br&gt;4. Usually quite aware that they drink a lot (possibly only when probed)&lt;br&gt;5. Easily influenced – appearances and keeping up are very important&lt;br&gt;6. Follow own convenience and desires (high self-esteem)&lt;br&gt;7. Emotionally impulsive&lt;br&gt;8. High regard for their own skill and judgement&lt;br&gt;9. High risk-takers&lt;br&gt;10. Quite likely to accept full responsibility for drive after drink behaviour, but may not</td>
<td>1. Drinking is not very important in their lives (they will stop when necessary)&lt;br&gt;2. May or may not be attached to driving, but, if so, they will stick to the rules&lt;br&gt;3. Usually well-informed of the key points with regard to limits and guidelines – enough to ensure they comply&lt;br&gt;4. Usually completely aware of their own drinking level&lt;br&gt;5. Not easily influenced by others or the occasion&lt;br&gt;6. Do not give high importance to their own convenience and desires&lt;br&gt;7. Not impulsive&lt;br&gt;8. Own skill and judgement immaterial, they do not see it as a matter for boasting&lt;br&gt;9. Not risk-takers – cautious – may be anxious&lt;br&gt;10. Accept responsibility for what they do in relation to driving after drinking and its consequences</td>
<td>1. May be moderately or highly attached to drink&lt;br&gt;2. Probably at least average attachment to driving (which is quite high)&lt;br&gt;3. <strong>Low understanding or awareness of the limits and guidelines, does not challenge common rules of thumb, not motivated to find out</strong>&lt;br&gt;4. Only low or moderate awareness of their own drinking level (or semi-deliberate self-delusion or denial)&lt;br&gt;5. Moderately or highly influenced by others or the occasion&lt;br&gt;6. Moderate to high importance attached to own convenience and desires&lt;br&gt;7. Low to moderate impulsiveness&lt;br&gt;8. Level of regard for their own skill and judgement may be low to high&lt;br&gt;9. Low to moderate conscious risk-taking&lt;br&gt;10. Do not accept responsibility for their driving after drinking behaviour</td>
<td>1. Drink levels may be low to high, but high on occasions&lt;br&gt;2. Moderately to highly attached to driving their own vehicle – probably quite averse to alternatives&lt;br&gt;3. Knowledge of limits and guidelines may be low to high, sometimes ignores them though&lt;br&gt;4. Low to moderate awareness of their own drinking levels&lt;br&gt;5. <strong>Highly influenced by others and the occasion, at least often they are</strong>&lt;br&gt;6. Follow their own convenience and desires&lt;br&gt;7. Highly impulsive&lt;br&gt;8. Moderate to high regard for their own skill and judgement&lt;br&gt;9. Moderate to high risk-takers&lt;br&gt;10. Do not accept responsibility for their driving after drinking behaviour (though may be ashamed)&lt;br&gt;<strong>These respondents may be quite inconsistent – the emotional impulsiveness is key</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Table 7.1: Four main respondent types (key defining characteristics are in bold)
7.3.1 Outlaws

Outlaws are usually heavy drinkers, well aware of how much they drink, but with a disregard for legal limits and the guidelines. Outlaws have a high opinion of their own driving skills and a strong attachment to driving. They tend to please themselves although they can also be easily influenced by their peers and be emotionally impulsive. They are risk-takers who are prepared to take the consequences of their decisions; they do not blame others.

7.3.1.1 Driving after drinking behaviour

There is a strong association between Outlaws and driving well over the limit. They may generate a disproportionate amount of drink-driving occasions.

Example

One Outlaw was a young 22-year-old woman from a high-income family who had been driving her own car since she was 17. She enjoyed an active social life involving a great deal of heavy conspicuous drinking with friends very similar to her. This respondent had been convicted of drink driving, but regarded it as ‘no big deal’ because all of her friends were also ‘on bans’. She has been regularly driving her car unlicensed since her conviction a few months previously ‘though only on back roads’ (Box 7.2).

Box 7.2: Drinking and driving story – paralytic at the club

She went to a party in a club. She drove there. She never thinks twice about whether or not to drive when she goes out, though she drinks a lot. This time she drank even more than usual, for reasons tied in with her emotions. She had expected a boyfriend to join her there, but when he did he was with another girl. She went to the bar a lot so as not to look like a ‘loner’; an unusual situation for her because she is usually a ring leader and the centre of attention:

*I managed to get completely and utterly paralytic through the course of the night . . . I completely embarrassed myself in front of him . . . I felt emotionally bruised and beaten up.*

Friends tried to stop her from driving at the end of the evening:

‘You’re really drunk and you can’t drive.’ And I was like, ‘No, I’m fine, I’m fine, I’m fine, I’m fine.’
A final sight of her boyfriend with the other girl caused her to ‘flip out’:

\[\ldots \text{And I jumped in my car and I just literally drove off, like boy racer driving.}\]

She was quickly stopped by the police, and feels she might have had a bad accident otherwise. She still takes a certain pride in the incongruousness, as she sees it, of someone as classy as her being arrested, drunk and disorderly:

\[I \text{ was wearing like a little dress and I looked really ladylike and quite glamorous as well.}\]

She is proud of the fact that for court she researched what she had to do, got a good ‘brief’ and the right kind of character references, and thus ‘minimized the damage’ to get only a 16-month ban, when for the amount she was over the limit it ‘should have’ been 20 months.

### 7.3.2 Good Citizens

In contrast to Outlaws, Good Citizens are typically marked by the cautiousness of their approach in relation to driving and drinking. They are often unusually well-informed about legal limits and the possible effect of alcohol on driving, but in any case leave a wide margin of error. These respondents rarely allow themselves to be knocked off course by other people or situations, and take personal responsibility for the decisions they make and their own behaviour. Their objectivity is also reflected in the fact that they tend not to be particularly attached either to driving or drinking.

#### 7.3.2.1 Driving after drinking behaviour

Good Citizens do not flirt with the limit and are well-informed and responsible; they do not therefore produce many cases of driving over the limit and any they do will tend to be marginal.

**Examples**

The Good Citizens in this study included a single man in his 30s who had been convicted of drink driving in his teens and whose own solid business as a plumber now takes him all over the country in his van; a 27-year-old self-employed railway engineer whose work involves strict rules on drinking before work and sometimes breath tests with a limit about a third that for drink driving; and (Box 7.3) a well-informed, young middle-class professional man who works in the city and has a wife and young child at home towards whom he feels a great sense of responsibility.
Box 7.3: Drinking and driving story – a drink after work to be sociable

They had all been working later than usual in the office, it had been a hot day and they went to a city bar that, like all the other bars nearby, was ‘rammed full of city workers’:

*It had been getting warmer and there is more of an allure. You think, well I may as well just make the most of it.*

He had a beer, but knowing he was going to drive he looked to see what was on offer that had the lowest alcohol by volume and picked one at the weaker end:

*It would be something like, you know, Green King IPA would be about 3.5% which by current standards is quite weak. I’d always work on the basis that 6’2” about 14½ stone I could have a couple of those. I’ve got an hour-and-a-half train ride home and then get in the car and drive back. You know I can fairly safely say that I’m going to be ok to do that and not be pushing the upper limits.*

He said, ‘hand on heart’, that he has not run the limit even close in recent years:

*Again I’m sounding awfully dull and responsible, but I absolutely love my wife and my daughter and I don’t like the idea of potentially having a crash or something happening there and not being around selfishly to see them and everything else.*

7.3.3 Ostriches

Ostriches are recognised mainly by their low awareness of the drinking limits and guidelines, and their tendency to rely on hearsay ‘rules of thumb’. They can be self-deceiving about the amount they drink, they distance themselves from responsibility and they tend to blame others – or indeed general circumstances – for any bad decisions. Ostriches tend to be conformists and pay lip service to the law on drinking and driving, even if they do not put themselves out much to ensure they ‘do their bit’.

7.3.3.1 Driving after drinking behaviour

Ostriches probably drive over the limit much more than they think. They probably generate some cases where the driver is well over the limit and a lot of cases where the driver is a little bit or a moderate amount over.
Ostriches can be a danger to themselves and others because the universe they inhabit is often false, but not one they challenge. They do not see themselves as they really are because it does not suit them to do so.

Examples

Ostriches in the sample included a social care worker in her mid-thirties with two children who said she was careful about mixing drinking and driving, but who regularly used her car after having a drink. She drank spirits for the most part, including at home, in order to relax. She recognised that she could possibly be over the limit sometimes because it was difficult for her to know how much she had drunk. At home and with her friends she tended to pour spirits straight from the bottle into a tumbler. She knew it probably was not a very good idea to drive after she had had a drink, and she felt guilty, but the car was ‘so convenient’. The occasions she described when she had driven after drinking were excused in terms that focused on her own comfort and convenience at the time (Box 7.4).

Box 7.4: Drinking and driving story – they persuaded me to come out, and it was windy so . . .

She was having a drink alone at home, at the end of the day, just chilling. She had already had a Jack Daniels at home. Not sure how much because you can not really measure at home. Her children were out at a birthday party in the nearby community centre. They rang and urged her to join them: ‘Oh mum, come, come . . .’

It was already late and she wanted to get there before the party finished, also it was windy. So although it was not far she took her car:

*So while I was there as usual you have the odd drink that was offered, just a shot of Jack Daniels. There is no optics, it’s just free-flow . . . I had I think one or two of them.*

She feels she takes care if she knows she is driving, usually:

*I make sure I eat first so my head isn’t light . . . drink some water afterwards as well just to bring it down.*

She feels she is doing wrong to drive after drinking, but she thinks she is usually safe to drive, just about:

*If I was to drink to the point where I’m no longer standing I wouldn’t get behind that wheel.*
But says she feels ‘ashamed’:

*I judge myself.*

When she drove home after the party, she felt the risk of being stopped, but thought that it was lower because she is not the ‘usual suspect’, she is not a young male in a sporty car, and she is careful to stay within the speed limits:

*Every time I see the police drive past me I say please don’t look at me.*

Another example of an Ostrich was a man in his late thirties; a frequent driver who lives alone and works in IT. He claimed to drink only rarely — but had a large collection of bottles of whisky, a drink he said he uses to help him sleep. He says his advice to himself when he is driving is one small drink: ‘a half of shandy or something like that – but I know I really shouldn’t have anything’. However, the story he told appeared to reveal a different approach in practice, based on following his inclinations and then making a judgement that he must be okay to drive because he ‘felt okay’ (Box 7.5).

**Box 7.5: Drinking and driving story – just the token amount, on a religious festival**

He went to his friends’ parents’ house nearby to mark a Jewish religious holiday, and stayed for much of the day, including dinner in the evening. When he set off in the car to go there he did not think about anything to do with drinking and driving, because:

*I was just thinking about having like the token amount that you normally have.*

It was a nice day and they sat outside:

*Not drinking as such. In fact not drinking . . . I wasn’t drinking excessively, but I was obviously drinking enough to be over the limit . . . You give prayers. And you have wine and a bit of whisky.*

On a journey sheet he filled out he wrote that he had two drinks. In the interview he says he had ‘a couple’ of whiskies, and clarifies:

*Probably four whiskies and then a bit of wine . . . It wasn’t pub measures, let’s just say that.*
He also had desserts with some alcohol in them, which he thinks may have caught him out:

*Fruits are terrible because they retain the alcohol.*

He stresses that this was over several hours. He was stopped on his way home because he had a brake light not working, and was breathalysed and found to be over the limit:

*The problem is the law is arbitrary . . . If you’re a microgram, or whatever they call it over, you’re over. So it’s a very, very fine line between being over and being under.*

*Even now I still can’t believe I was over the limit. I can’t believe it.*

*I didn’t feel any different then to what I am feeling now.*

7.3.4 **Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde**

Exaggerated emotional responses caused by drinking, combined with the key trait of impulsiveness that is one of this group’s most important defining characteristics, sometimes propels these types into highly risky behaviour that they may nevertheless regard as untypical.

7.3.4.1 **Driving after drinking behaviour**

Dr Jekyll and Mr Hydes are probably responsible for some of the more extreme cases of drunk driving; even if not proportionately as many as Outlaws. In their ‘baseline mode’ (as Dr Jekyll) they may be more like Good Citizens or Ostriches.

**Examples**

One respondent in this category was a building site supervisor in his mid-thirties on the point of moving in with his steady partner. He claimed to drink very little and rarely to drive after drinking (even just one drink), but he recognised when questioned carefully that he probably overlooked a lot of occasions when he did both at a fairly low level. His general demeanour with regard to driving and drinking was cautious and almost straight-laced, but from time to time (not very often) he appeared to ‘break out’ and indulge in extreme drink-drive behaviour which afterwards he could barely comprehend and found difficult to face. When he started telling the story below (Box 7.6), his voice immediately changed from a normal speaking level and became barely audible. When this was pointed out to him he still was unable to raise his tone above a whisper.
He went out after work for a Christmas celebration and it turned into a ‘drinking session’. He is very quiet while telling the story. He lost count of how many drinks he had, then at two in the morning he drove home:

*I just wanted to go home. And when I want to go home, I want to go home.*

*The tube was finished. I wouldn’t know what buses to get from there. I didn’t have no money for a cab. The car was 30 seconds away. I had the car keys in my pocket. It’s a no-brainer really.*

*I knew I was drunk. I knew it, but I just wanted to go home and get home as quick as I possibly could. I never sped. I remember that. Because I didn’t want to draw attention to myself. But I know that I was drunk. I wasn’t proud of myself at all.*

He emphasised that he felt very ashamed about this incident, as indeed was apparent from his demeanour.

Another example of a social type D respondent was a self-employed man in his thirties, living with a partner and three of the four children they have between them. Until he was banned following the incident described in Box 7.7, driving was essential to his work and from passing his test aged 17 he had never had more than ‘a couple of parking tickets’ on his record. He was having financial difficulties before the incident and feeling under stress. He was a fairly habitual drinker. He managed his life in part by having a regular night (Thursday) for drinking on his own in the pub near to his house, so that he would not be driving afterwards.

*Box 7.7: Drinking and driving story – storming off after a row*

It had been a particularly stressful week, and he walked to the pub as usual on Thursday after work. He stayed a particularly long time on this occasion, about four-and-a-half hours:

*And they were going down pretty quick.*

He went home late then started to eat his meal. He and his partner began to discuss one of the children who was having problems at school:
That turned into an argument and I said, ‘I’ve had enough . . . I’m off’, you know. And I got into the van and drove off. I felt OK to drive but I was obviously clearly well over the limit.

He drove down the motorway. Meanwhile his partner, anxious about him, was calling him on his mobile. He finally pulled onto the hard shoulder and answered his phone, and his wife said:

*Come home, this is silly, let’s sort it out . . .*

He agreed to come home, but at that point a passing police patrol tapped on his window, wanting to check if he had broken down. However, as soon as he opened his window they suspected he had been drinking. In his own words, he ‘blew 90’ – a very high reading. He believes the police had some sympathy for him and allowed a little time for the reading to come down before a second test at the station, so he avoided a longer ban.

Since his conviction he has been made bankrupt. He now has a perspective on the extent of the pressures he was under at the time, including the divorces he and his partner were both going through. The difficulties posed by his ban only became apparent to him over time. He is someone who needs his ‘personal space’, which he used to keep not only through his pub evenings, but by spending a lot of his working life driving alone in his van. Now he constantly has to get lifts and is feeling very claustrophobic.

### 7.4 Summary observations

The respondent types identified in this research are not necessarily clear-cut and mutually exclusive, but overlap with one another. The different groups included a wide range of respondents in terms of socio-demographic variables, such as gender, age and social class. The typology is of potential value in helping to develop strategy and communications aimed at the different sorts of people who drive after drinking.
8 DRINK-DRIVING CAMPAIGNS AND PUBLICITY

8.1 Introduction and key findings
It was beyond the scope of this study to explore in any depth respondent reactions to recent drink-driving campaigns. Therefore, the results reported in this section should be treated with circumspection, however, a few important findings emerged that are described in what follows (see Box 8.1).

Box 8.1: Key findings

- Spontaneous recall and awareness of recent THINK! advertisements was high.
- Respondents thought they had high impact and were effective.
- Many respondents did not identify personally with the advertisements; they were a good thing, but for other people.

8.2 Views on recent drink-driving advertisements
It was not a central objective of this research to explore responses to specific drink-driving campaigns, but respondents were asked towards the end of the interview if they could recall any recent advertisements aimed at discouraging driving after drinking. Where they could, some discussion of their views ensued.

Many respondents commented spontaneously on the recent ‘Crash’ and ‘Barman’ advertisements. A few had heard radio advertisements, and some mentioned ‘Kill Your Speed’ or other safe driving advertisements that they wrongly recalled as being about drink driving:

_I think I remember one where – I don’t know actually, because they all merge together with mobile phones and motorcyclists._ (Male, 37, stopped over the limit, city with good public transport)

_Oh yeah, there’s a child being pushed against a tree or something isn’t there? No, the coming back to life from, you know, being hit by a car._ (Female, 35, believes drove under the limit, scattered housing)

Respondents generally thought that shocking drink-driving advertisements like ‘Crash’ were necessary, effective and gave out powerful messages. They said that they highlighted key issues in attention-grabbing ways. However, shock
Advertisements sometimes had the effect of switching respondents off, quite literally in some cases:

_I don’t know, because a lot of things you just switch off. You know, it’s doom and gloom . . ._ (Female, 46, believes drove over the limit, city with good public transport)

_Well a lot people turn them over don’t they?_ (Female, 38, believes drove under the limit, city with good public transport)

The respondents often thought the ‘Barman’ campaign was well made and ‘different’. They said that it caught the attention, though not everyone appeared to understand it. The radio version was quite likely to be recalled by respondents who drove a lot and listened to their car radio. One person said that hearing the advertisement in her car made it seem more immediate and relevant.

Several respondents noted that advertisements tended to feature young men drinking in pubs and bars. Consequently, they did not always identify personally with the messages, key characters, or the featured occasions or settings:

_I mean to be honest one where they’d really do well is getting a gang of, you know, women in professional jobs like myself, you know you go out for dinner and have a glass of wine. I bet, you know that would make women think a bit more because it makes you relate to the situation better._ (Female, 30, stopped over the limit, city with good public transport)

### 8.3 Summary observations

A key challenge to future drink-driving campaigns is to create self-recognition as the first step in what needs to be a seismic shift in attitude and behaviour in relation to driving after drinking.
9 IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 Introduction

The findings from this qualitative study are highly consistent with the key messages from the literature review (Department for Transport, 2010) that was conducted in parallel, and this lends them added weight.

The research has sought to understand drinking and driving from the viewpoint of those who try to combine two activities that are fundamentally at odds with one another. It was predicated on the conviction that, in order to change people’s behaviour, it is first essential to understand their perspectives; how they see and construe the world.

Drinking is deeply rooted in UK culture, and there is a real and perceived pressure to drink that reinforces the inclination to do so. The drinking culture co-exists in the UK with a driving culture. Real and perceived alternatives to driving are not yet prominent, and there is still a high degree of psychological and emotional attachment to driving.

Drinking alcohol and driving cars are therefore default options for most respondents, and this creates a tension in many of their lives. However, this is a tension they do not necessarily:

- recognise clearly;
- see as a problem;
- want to do anything about; and
- have knowledge, skills and strategies to deal with.

A key issue is the narrow way in which drink driving is stereotyped by respondents. By defining drink driving in terms of extremes – and by linking it to certain kinds of drivers, occasions and settings – many respondents are more easily able to overlook their own risky behaviour.

There is also little intrinsic motivation for respondents to become more self-aware because doing so might point to the need for them to change comfortable habits and routines, and to be more proactive and vigilant on the occasions when they normally mix drinking and driving. Moreover, their current habits and routines are often reinforced by those of their friends and family – making it difficult for them to break away.

There was widespread ignorance, misunderstanding and misconception about the amount of alcohol in different drinks, the effects of alcohol on drivers, and the legal
limit for driving. This represents both a considerable barrier to behaviour change for the well-intentioned and a loophole for those with more feeble or inconsistent resolve – and simply a vacuum for the unaware or disengaged. The respondents probably break the law more than they would if they were better informed and had a better understanding of these factors.

It is important that reliable and accurate information about the effects of alcohol on driving, the legal limits and the law on drink driving is widely available. However, it is also essential to recognise that many respondents are unlikely to actively seek out, absorb and implement such information and advice just because it is there. This rational model of information gathering bears little resemblance to how most people operate. In any case, there is likely to be some resistance (even if only subliminal) to information that brings with it the responsibility to change; especially in a context that respondents already pay lip-service to.

9.2 Possible implications for policy and campaigns

Specific policy or campaigns aimed at driving after drinking need to be backed by broad cross-government initiatives aimed at tackling both the drinking and driving cultures.

A new generation of drink-driving campaign, and a new lexicon for communication, is indicated. This should target the self-awareness and attitudes not only of those who drive way over the limit, but also those responsible for the potentially large percentage of low and medium level drink-drive occasions – irrespective of age, gender or social class. Drink driving is associated with a wide range of different types of occasions and settings, and these need to be reflected in order to help individuals to identify with campaign messages.

More ubiquitous, clear and consistent information needs to be disseminated in different ways, targeted at different audiences, in order to support broader driving after drinking campaigns.

Behaviour in respect of driving after drinking is often surrounded by broadly good intentions. However, people are vulnerable to societal pressures and circumstance, and do not always behave as they feel they should. Imaginative policy is needed to support good intentions where they exist, including collective policies aimed not just at drivers, but at the companions they drink with (and drive with), those who sell or supply them with alcohol, and the wider population.

Consideration might be given to the potential of individualised marketing methods, similar to those that have proved effective in encouraging more use of sustainable travel alternatives. These could be used to engage intensively and at the individual level with people (for example, in geographical areas where drink driving is known to be problematic) in order to raise their awareness of any risky behaviour, and to
encourage and facilitate changes in their behaviour with information about travel alternatives, safe drinking strategies and so on. A similar approach could also be deployed with people who offer or sell drinks to drivers. The possibilities of such an approach could be explored and piloted in areas where individualised marketing is already being used to meet other objectives.

9.3 Implications of the research for future surveys of drinking and driving

Reliable and up-to-date data on driving after drinking behaviour are important to inform policy, to track trends and to provide a means of assessing the impact of drink-driving initiatives.

The review of relevant research carried out as part of this project suggests some key basic gaps in nationally available statistics, including:

- National figures on any driving after drinking and on driving when possibly over the limit – ever and number of occasions, for example in the 12, 6 or 3 months before interview (with accompanying demographic data).
- Data to monitor changes in knowledge, awareness and beliefs in terms, for example, of what is legal and what is safe when mixing driving and drinking; and the penalties for drink driving.
- Data on beliefs about the likelihood of various outcomes, such as being stopped and breathalysed, and having an accident.
- Information about recent occasions when people have driven after drinking, collecting quantitative data about occasions similar to that gathered in the qualitative research – for example, about when driving after drinking occurred (day of the week, time of day, the nature of the occasion); journey details (how far, what kind of roads); how much alcohol was consumed (collected in a detailed way to allow accurate estimates of the amount of alcohol consumed to be calculated); who was in the car; whether the respondent thought they were over or under the limit and safe or unsafe to drive; and (if they thought they were over the limit) why they drove.
- Information about whether respondents think they drive after drinking and/or drink drive more or less now than a year ago (or some other reference period), and why.

Options for collecting information of the kind listed above range from survey questions placed at intervals on a national omnibus survey (e.g. the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Omnibus) to more resource-intensive alternatives, such as repeat bespoke surveys, including longitudinal research designs and diary approaches to data collection.
A longitudinal diary study over a period of years with survey data collected at regular intervals could help to identify changes in driving after drinking behaviour associated with lifestyle factors, changing responsibilities and maturity, for example, as well as the impact of campaigns and other interventions.

The qualitative research reinforces the well-understood difficulties associated with obtaining reliable and valid survey data on drinking and on driving after drinking. These include, especially:

- a reluctance to acknowledge and report behaviour that is socially unacceptable or proscribed (social desirability bias);
- problems with remembering occasions (or amounts) and placing them in the right time-frame (recall error); and
- difficulties in accurately applying standard measures to reported behaviour (e.g. describing the amount of alcohol consumed in terms of alcohol units consumed).

These potential sources of measurement error need to be carefully addressed in any commissioned quantitative research, applying well-researched principles to the questionnaire and survey design. Consideration also needs to be given to sample design requirements in order to be able to compare respondent groups (e.g. defined in terms of demographic characteristics such as age and gender) and to allow for relatively small changes over time to be identified with a reasonable degree of confidence.

Beyond the collection of basic data on driving after drinking behaviour, there may be interest in a quantitative segmentation exercise; using multi-dimensional statistical methods and techniques to identify and explore the characteristics of different groups of people who drive after drinking, and estimating the relative size of the different groups. The qualitative research suggested four main types, defined in terms of various factors or dimensions that seemed to emerge from the data as important and these could provide a starting point for such an exercise. The possible resource implications of this option would need to be carefully assessed against any likely benefits. Some exploratory secondary analysis of existing survey data might be a useful starting point.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX 1

Summary of respondent characteristics

<table>
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<th>Area</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>London suburb with good public transport</td>
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<tr>
<td>Smaller city and surrounds – city locality with poor/average public transport</td>
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<td>Scattered and isolated housing in rural and urban areas with limited transport</td>
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<tr>
<td>Large village and surrounding large villages – rural area with limited transport</td>
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<td>Main city/urban locality with good public transport</td>
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<th>Driven a car in the last year after having one drink or more</th>
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<td>A fair number of times</td>
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<th>Driven recently (past six weeks) when thought over the limit*</th>
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<th>Tested over the limit/banned in the last three months†</th>
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(continued)
## Qualitative Study of Drinking and Driving: Report of Findings

### Area

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* Includes some respondents also stopped and tested in last three to six months, but driving while waiting to go to court.
† Includes a few drivers stopped and tested over the limit in the previous six months, and one driver stopped in the last three months and banned for refusing to be tested.
APPENDIX 2

Respondent letter

June 2009

Dear

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this important piece of research, commissioned by the Department for Transport in order to get a better understanding of when and why people might choose to drive after they have had (even just one) alcoholic drink. The findings from this project will feed into government policy as well as contributing to publicity and information strategy. The research is being carried out by Independent Social Research (ISR).

You have agreed to participate in an interview in your own home, or elsewhere if you prefer. This will be an informal conversation exploring where and when you tend to socialise (as well as other times when you may have a drink, for example work functions) and the occasions when you might drive afterwards.

The interview will last about an hour, and will be carried out in strict confidence by Wendy Sykes, John Kelly or Carola Groom from ISR. It will be tape recorded, with your consent, so that there is an accurate record of the conversation for analysis purposes. Audio recordings will be kept secure and only accessed by the researchers and transcribers working on this study. They will be destroyed once the project is complete. At no stage will the findings from the research be linked to your name or other characteristics that could identify you.

Before the interview, it would be helpful if you could spend 5 minutes filling in the Journey Sheet that you have been given or sent. This will provide information about one or more recent occasions when you drove after having an alcoholic drink, and will give a focus to part of the interview.

This research is highly valued by the Department for Transport, and we hope you look forward to contributing your experiences and views. If you have any specific questions about the research or its purpose, please don’t hesitate to get in touch with Wendy Sykes at ISR (0208 883 4142) or with Rebecca Rhodes at the Department for Transport (0207 944 2134).

If, for any reason, you need to change the appointment please get in touch with your recruiter (see details overleaf). You will receive £30 from ISR in recognition of the time given to the study.

Thank you for your help.

Yours sincerely
APPENDIX 3

Interview topic guide

Qualitative study of driving after drinking: final topic guide
12.6.09

FULL VERSION

PART 1 (10 MINUTES MAXIMUM)

Background

- Age, employment status and details
- Family/household composition
- How long lived in area
- Household car ownership and personal access to a car

Drinking patterns (KEEP IT BRIEF AT THIS STAGE)

- Check that they drink alcohol.
- What sort of a drinker are they, what words would they use to describe themselves?
- How often do they drink?
- When do they drink, what sorts of occasions?
- What are their favourite drinks on different occasions?
- And how much do they drink (probe carefully for descriptions in their own terms)?

Driving patterns in a typical week

- How long have they been driving/had a licence?
- How often do they drive a car?
• Describe (briefly) the driver journeys they make by car in a typical or normal week, for:
  • work;
  • shopping;
  • leisure (sports, hobbies, etc.);
  • social; and
  • other.
• What about journeys they make less regularly – occasional trips out, work journeys?
• What sort of driver are they, what words would they use to describe themselves?
• Explore how far they think of themselves as sensible, competent, responsible, experienced, safe. What evidence do they offer to support their views?

PART 2 (15 MINUTES)

Driving after drinking – personal stories

Journey sheet
Ask them to talk about the occasion reported on the journey sheet. Encourage a narrative recounting every aspect of the journey. We want to hear how they tell the story; to understand it from their point of view. Avoid giving the impression of being judgemental. Don’t push them to justify their actions, but probe to establish all the details of the story, including:
• Factual details about the occasion, the journey (or journeys) involved – the occasion could have involved several stages of drinking and several stages of driving – how much they drank and who they were with at different points, and who was in the car with them.
• Their perception/construction of the event – how it appeared and felt to them at the time; their thoughts, decisions and motivations at different stages.
• How far this occasion was ‘typical’ or ‘normal’ for them?
• How far their drinking was planned or unplanned?
• How far the driving after drinking was planned or unplanned?
• Go through the other parts of the journey sheet, for example finding out if they believe they were over the limit, how far they feel they were safe or not safe to drive, etc.

Another recent occasion (if there has been one) when they have driven after drinking

• IF RESPONDENT HAS BEEN CAUGHT OVER THE LIMIT IN THE PAST THREE MONTHS (SEE RECRUITMENT CRITERIA), ASK ABOUT THAT OCCASION IF NOT ALREADY EXPLORED ABOVE.

• IF RESPONDENT HAS DRIVEN IN THE LAST 6 WEEKS WHEN THEY THOUGHT THEY COULD BE OVER THE LIMIT, ASK ABOUT THAT/ONE SUCH OCCASION IF NOT ALREADY EXPLORED ABOVE.

• IF RESPONDENT HAS DRIVEN IN THE LAST 6 WEEKS WHEN THEY THOUGHT THEY WERE DEFINITELY UNDER THE LIMIT, ASK ABOUT THAT/ONE SUCH OCCASION IF NOT ALREADY EXPLORED ABOVE.

• Again ask them to tell the story in their own terms, encouraging them to give all factual details, but also importantly to describe the situation as it appeared to them at the time.

PART 3 (15 MINUTES)

Drinking at home

• How much of their drinking during a normal week takes place in their own home?

• When, what and how much do they drink at home:
  • during the week?
  • at weekends?

• Do they drink alone, with their partner/other household members, with friends (when)?

• How would they describe the different kinds of occasions when they drink at home (e.g. entertaining at home, drink after work to relax, getting in the mood for a night out, celebrating Friday night with the family, etc)? Probe for examples and accounts.

• Is the amount they drink at home on a given occasion something they tend to monitor particularly? How? How easy is it to monitor compared with drinking in, say, a pub or restaurant? What if any is the motivation to monitor drinking at home?

• Compared with 12 months ago, do they tend to drink at home more often than they used to, rather than going out? Why?
• Do they ever take the car out after they have had even just one drink at home (e.g. a glass of wine)? Under what kind of circumstances? Introduce scenarios as relevant to see how they relate to them and to probe out live examples.

• How often does this happen? And would they tend to know when having a drink that they might be driving later, or not? Explore different types of scenario they mention.

• If they take the car out after drinking when they hadn’t planned to, what thoughts, if any, might go through their head? Explore how, if at all, they would reason and process the decision?

• If they have planned in advance to drive after drinking, explore how, if at all, they would reason and process the decision. And how, if at all, do they tend to take this into account in their drinking? Does it affect:
  • what they drink?
  • how much?
  • how quickly they drink?
  • do they have any strategies to minimise the effect of the alcohol/keep themselves under the limit? What?

Drinking at other people’s homes

• How much of their drinking during a normal week takes place at other people’s homes?

• How would they describe the different kinds of occasions when they drink at other people’s homes? Probe for examples and accounts. Possibly use scenarios to explore details.

• On these occasions, how far would the drinking tend to be planned or unplanned? Probe for examples.

• Do they ever end up driving after they have had even just one drink at someone else’s home (e.g. a glass of wine)? Under what kind of circumstances? Introduce scenarios as relevant to see how they relate to them and to probe out live examples.

• How often does this happen? And would they tend to know when having a drink that they might be driving later, or not? Explore different types of scenario they mention.

• If they drive after drinking when they hadn’t planned to, what thoughts, if any, might go through their head? How, if at all, would they reason and process the decision?
• If they have planned in advance to drive after drinking, how, if at all, would they reason and process the decision? And how, if at all, do they tend to take this into account in their drinking? Does it affect:
  • what they drink?
  • how much?
  • how quickly they drink?
  • do they have any strategies to minimise the effect of the alcohol/keep themselves under the limit? What?

Drinking elsewhere

• How much of their drinking during a normal week takes place outside of their own or other people’s domestic settings?
• How would they describe the different kinds of occasions when they drink outside of the environment of their own or people’s homes? Probe for examples and accounts. Possibly use scenarios to explore details.
• On these occasions, how far would the drinking tend to be planned or unplanned? Probe for examples.
• Do they ever drive a car after they have had even just one drink out somewhere (e.g. a glass of wine)? Under what kind of circumstances? Introduce scenarios as relevant to see how they relate to them and to probe out live examples.
• How often does this happen? And would they tend to know when having a drink that they might be driving later, or not? Explore different types of scenario they mention.
• If they drive after drinking when they hadn’t planned to, what thoughts, if any, might go through their head? How, if at all, would they reason and process the decision?
• If they have planned in advance to drive after drinking, how, if at all, would they reason and process the decision? And how if, at all, do they tend to take this into account in their drinking? Does it affect:
  • what they drink?
  • how much?
  • how quickly they drink?
  • do they have any strategies to minimise the effect of the alcohol/keep themselves under the limit? What?
PART 4 (20 MINUTES)

Driving after drinking – personal patterns

- Think back over the preceding discussion, how often in the last year would they say they have driven a car after having had an alcoholic drink – even just one?
- How often (times per week/month) on average would they say that they drive after drinking any alcohol at all?

Morning after drinking

- Do they ever drive first thing in the morning after drinking the night before?
- When was the last time? Probe for details of the occasion.
- Did they think about:
  - whether they might be over the limit still?
  - that their driving might be impaired?
  - that there was a possibility they would be stopped and tested?
  PROBE ALL ANSWERS FULLY FOR REASONS.

Social role as driver after drinking

- Who does the driving if they have been drinking with their partner/other household members? How is the role assigned? Why? On what basis?
- If out drinking with friends, how is the role of driver assigned? Why? On what basis?
- What happens if they are the ‘driver’, but have doubts about whether or not they are over the limit?
  - How do they assess whether or not they are over the limit or not?
  - How do they assess their level of alcohol impairment?
- How far would they feel they could back out of their role/any arrangements they have made to drive?
- How far would they worry about how much someone else had had to drink if they were the designated driver for the group?
- In practice, how far would they be likely not to get in the car with someone who could be over the limit – even if only just? Probe response fully.
Perceptions of their own driving after drinking behaviour

• How far do they think of themselves personally as:
  • someone who ‘drinks and drives’?
  • a ‘drink driver’?
• What do those terms conjure up for them personally?
  • what sort of people?
  • on what sort of occasions/journeys?
• Thinking about the driving after drinking occasions they have described, what terms would they use to describe their behaviour? How would they have thought about it at the time?

Social comparisons

• How do they think their driving/drinking behaviour compares with that of their:
  • friends/family?
  • work and other colleagues (if relevant)?
• How far do they consider themselves to be ‘normal’ compared with their friends and others with whom they mix?
• How do they think their ‘social group’ compares with others in terms of driving after drinking behaviour?
• Ask them to describe whom do they believe are the ‘worst’ groups? How do ‘they’ behave?

Knowledge of drinking guidelines

• If someone is planning to drive after drinking, what advice would they offer them about:
  • the ‘safe’ amount to drink if driving?
    Probe type of drink and amount in respondent’s own terms;
  • ways of minimising the effects of any alcohol they drink?
• How far is this advice that they apply to themselves?
• What is the advice based on?
• Do they know about any guidelines for drinkers who will be driving? Explore their knowledge/beliefs in their own terms.
• If they mention upper limit number of drinks, probe for:
  • type of drink
  • number and size of glass.
• Tell them about the THINK! Guidelines (no amount of alcohol is safe) and probe their response.
• What do they think of them?
• Does it make them think about changing their own behaviour?
• Why (not)?

**Blood Alcohol Content (BAC)**

• Have they ever heard the term ‘Blood Alcohol Content’?
  • What about BAC?
• Do they know what the legal BAC limit is for driving?
  • Or how it is measured?
• What do they think affects BAC?
• How, if at all, do these beliefs influence their drinking behaviour when they know they are going to be driving?

**TELL THEM IF THEY DON’T KNOW, USING PREPARED STIMULUS.**

**Signs of impairment**

• Aside from what they know/believe about safe limits in terms of number of drinks consumed etc., how, if at all, do they know when they are going to be able to drive without causing an accident or endangering themselves, their passengers or other road users? What are the signs they go by, if any?
• And what about the signs in someone else who has been drinking?

**‘Low risk’ journeys**

• Thinking of the kinds of occasions they have described when they have driven after drinking alcohol, which do they think of as being the lowest risk in terms of:
  • having an accident?
  • getting caught?
• How far do they weigh up the risks of having an accident or getting caught when they drive after drinking more than a certain amount of alcohol?

Alternatives to driving

• Rather than drive after drinking, do they ever consider:
  • using public transport?
  • taking a minicab?
• What do they think of the real possibilities of these alternatives?

Consequences and penalties (accidents, being caught, being banned, etc.)

• Refer back to the examples they have given of personally typical driving after drinking occasions. For each, ask:
  • What is the worst thing they can imagine happening as a consequence of them driving after they have had too much to drink? Probe any they mention, for example:
    • accidents and injury;
    • getting caught and the feelings surrounding the detection process;
    • penalties of conviction.
  • What do they think is the most likely consequence of driving over the limit (including ‘nothing’)? Probe why they say that.
  • How far do they really worry about any negative consequences? Why (not)?

• Use possible consequences stimulus (focus on any they have not already mentioned) and for each ask:
  • Had respondent ever thought about the consequence?
  • How likely respondent thinks it is to happen in practice?
    • When and on what sort of occasions/journeys?
  • How much they worry about it?
• How far do they know about the penalties of being in charge of a vehicle while over the limit (not just driving or intending to drive)? Is it a surprise? What other response do they have? Probe in full.

• NB. ASK PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN STOPPED/CONVICTED about their experiences and the consequences, and how they felt at the time.
Drinking and driving publicity and advertising campaigns (BRIEFLY – NOT AD TESTING SO MUCH AS EXPLORING PERSONAL CONSTRUCTIONS)

• Do they tend to notice drinking and driving campaigns or not? Why?
• Can they remember any recent publicity or advertising that they have seen?
  • Probe for descriptions:
    • Perhaps show one or two recent advertisements (WHICH ONES?).
    • Who do they feel are the main target audiences? Why?
    • Explore the extent to which they personally relate to the advertisements (or not) and why?

Drink and drug driving

• Do they or any of their friends ever drive after they have had a drink and also:
  • taken prescription or over-the-counter medication that could interact with the alcohol (e.g. some antihistamines)?
  • smoked or eaten cannabis?
  • taken other recreational drugs (ask what)?
• Can they describe the last occasion? Probe for details. How typical is it?
• What do they know or believe about the combined effects of alcohol and recreational drugs? Do they tend to cancel each other out or amplify the effect?

Drinking and driving as a current issue

• How important a health and safety issue do they think drinking and driving is for society as a whole?
• Compared with say 10 or 20 years ago, do they think that it is more or less under control?
• Do they think more could or should be done, or not?
• What (more) do they think could or should be done?

FINAL COMMENTS. THANKS. END
APPENDIX 4

Journey sheet

Research on driving after drinking alcohol

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research. Before the interview, we’d like you to take 5 minutes to make brief notes about the most recent occasion – in the past 6 weeks – when you drove a car after having an alcoholic drink.

We are interested even if you had only one drink:

1. What day of the week was it?
2. And what time of day?
3. What was the occasion?
4. Where did you go?
5. Who was with you in the car?
6. Did you plan/ know you were going to have a drink?
7. Did you plan to drive afterwards?
8. What were the roads like, e.g. how busy were they?
9. How many drinks did you have?
10. Do you think you were technically over the limit or not?
11. Did you feel that you were safe to drive?
12. Did you think about the possibility of being breathalysed? If so, what did you think about the risks?

Please note below any thoughts that you have had while filling in this sheet that you want to bring up in the interview.
APPENDIX 5

Summary of most recent driving after drinking stories
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male (M)/Female (F)</th>
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<tr>
<td>M 53 Small country town</td>
<td>Drove a mile home after drinking in the pub with friends</td>
<td>A regular planned occasion, but usually a taxi is booked to take them home, though the car is driven there</td>
<td>Yes – there was a mix up, the taxi came too early then another could not be ordered</td>
<td>Two-and-a-half pints of beer – ‘about’</td>
<td>Unclear, but he felt that he was possibly over after two-and-a-half pints</td>
<td>Possibly not stopped</td>
<td>‘The car was there’ so he ‘jumped in it’ this once and drove the one mile home. Usually he does plan and go to the trouble of ordering a taxi in advance</td>
<td>A former publican who describes himself as a ‘classic binge drinker’ on weekends</td>
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<tr>
<td>M 26 Small country town</td>
<td>Driving home from the pub after ‘pre-stag night’ drinks with old friends</td>
<td>A special occasion, but the drinking and driving was planned</td>
<td>Two pints of Fosters – which is his preferred drink now he is cutting down</td>
<td>He thought two pints of normal lager was the ‘accepted’ limit</td>
<td>Unclear</td>
<td>Stopped and taken to the station, but he was under by the time a blood test was taken</td>
<td>The incident scared him as it seemed a bad way to start his married life. Now he thinks the law is too unclear to be able to follow properly, and that it is too strict to allow people to enjoy themselves when out even in a civilised fashion. He will now stick to one drink ‘or drink shandy’</td>
<td>He appears to be at the stage of reducing the amount of drinking and driving he does, but still probably exceeds the limit on regular occasions. He was an even heavier and more consistent drinker when younger. He blames the qualities of Stella in particular for past bad behaviour, including violence</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>F 26 Small country town</td>
<td>Driving home from the pub</td>
<td>Normal, but she planned not to drink because she is trying to lose weight</td>
<td>‘About’ three bottles of Becks</td>
<td>She does not pay much attention, but thought she was probably over – not enough to make her get a taxi</td>
<td>Probably not stopped</td>
<td>She thinks about the risk of being over the limit, but other factors can outweigh it. The walk was too far ‘in heels’, and she liked her car too much to leave it in a car park frequented by drunks</td>
<td>She was fairly honest about her significant drinking and driving habits</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Small country town</td>
<td>Driving home after a night clubbing</td>
<td>Normal, but designated driver system broke down because the group split up</td>
<td>Yes, he volunteered to drive his friend’s car because he was the one who ‘felt okay’</td>
<td>12 pints and several shots</td>
<td>The important thing is that you feel safe and able to concentrate</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>They were seen urinating in the car park, so the police followed and stopped them. He was tested at double the limit and banned</td>
<td>His attitude is confused – he agrees drinking and driving are obviously bad, but also feels he suffered the full weight of the law when he was ‘okay for driving’. He feels the reading, at twice the limit, was ‘not too bad’. They were followed because they were stereotyped as big stocky skinheads, whereas they were fetching their own car and being ‘normal type of lads’</td>
<td>One drink gives him a headache so he has to go ‘all out or nothing at all’. He has never had a crash and feels he was no risk to himself or anyone else because he is a ‘switched on’ driver who concentrates</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Small country town</td>
<td>Driving from the street to a car park before walking home after a night drinking in a pub</td>
<td>Normal, but her intentions as to drinking seemed to change at the least suggestion</td>
<td>Yes, she planned to drink lemonade until the first suggestion she might have wine and walk home</td>
<td>The equivalent of a bottle of wine</td>
<td>There is no evidence that she has developed a rule of thumb as yet, but she followed her friend’s advice that she was too impaired to drive home</td>
<td>Probably</td>
<td>Not stopped</td>
<td>She told the story as an account of her deciding not to drive after drinking – and did not focus on the fact she drove a few hundred yards to the car park. Had someone not volunteered to walk her home she would probably have driven home</td>
<td>She describes herself as a weekend binge drinker, which means ‘way more than she should’ on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights, and sometimes at other times. She starts drinking before she goes out to save money</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Small country town</td>
<td>Regular darts night with his father</td>
<td>Normal, planned</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Two halves then moved on to soft drinks</td>
<td>If driving, never more than one pint of lager or two halves of shandy</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Not stopped</td>
<td>He is very careful about staying within the law, though on planned occasions he will drive after a small amount of drinking. He drinks slightly more if not driving, and there is a possibility (though not clear) of morning after transgression.</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Small country town</td>
<td>Drove to collect her son who said he was at risk of being beaten up</td>
<td>It was described as an exceptional occasion, but may be typical of her life</td>
<td>Yes, she was not intending to go out</td>
<td>Unclear, but she felt there was a risk of being banned if she was stopped</td>
<td>Unclear, but family obligations override any concern about the law</td>
<td>Possibly</td>
<td>Not stopped</td>
<td>She drove because she ‘panicked’, and ‘is not proud of it’ – but she would rather be prosecuted for drink driving than her son suffer violence.</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>Small country town</td>
<td>Fetching son who had missed last bus and train home</td>
<td>Unusual and unplanned</td>
<td>Yes, had been drinking her usual nightly 2 glasses of wine, thinking she would not be going out</td>
<td>One-and-a-half glasses of wine</td>
<td>She was unsure, thought one glass okay, but also she ‘felt okay’</td>
<td>Probably not, but did wonder</td>
<td>Not stopped</td>
<td>Feels that her thought processes, going by the fact that she felt okay, was ‘naughty’, but she also felt the chances of being stopped and then tested were remote.</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Gone to pub with her husband for a cricket club event to drive him home afterwards – he drinks more than her</td>
<td>Normal, does not plan to drink necessarily, but knows she generally will</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Estimates 4 halves of lager</td>
<td>Not for staying under the limit: knows she probably often drives over, but not too much</td>
<td>Thinks probably she was</td>
<td>Not stopped</td>
<td>She takes a risk on regular occasions, sure she is safe to drive if she has 3 pints or less. She feels unlikely to be stopped except around Christmas when she might take care or use alternatives</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Drink in a bar with friends after work</td>
<td>Normal, but unplanned, and says at first he did not intend to drink</td>
<td>Yes because pressured by friends</td>
<td>Says 2 ciders</td>
<td>One drink is ok – but also he tends not to analyse it, though he plans to avoid driving if he knows he will be drinking a lot. A meal helps, also. Goes by feel</td>
<td>Only afterwards, when he thought possibly</td>
<td>Not stopped</td>
<td>He only thought of being over the limit after he got home. Had he had 3 not 2, he would have still driven, but been more anxious about it. The thought of being stopped did not occur to him as it was</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Drank in a pub, walked home, then stormed off in his van after a row with his partner</td>
<td>Unusual and unplanned, though he is a fairly heavy drinker</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Unclear – he had been drinking quickly for four-and-a-half hours</td>
<td>Two pints ok (he has revised this to nil since required to go on a course)</td>
<td>Not thinking at the time, but aware he was over</td>
<td>Stopped and banned – just avoided a lengthier ban</td>
<td>He used to think food helps. He still thinks there is a difference between over the limit and unsafe to drive – still would ‘feel safe on 4 or 5 pints’. He still thinks cocaine made him safer to drive if he had been drinking</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Drank at a concert with partner then drove home some hours later</td>
<td>Normal, but had planned to drink soft drinks</td>
<td>Yes because the soft drink choice was poor</td>
<td>1 bottle of Stella</td>
<td>Up to 2 glasses of wine mixed with lemonade, several hours before driving – or 1 glass of wine – or 1 pint of beer</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Not stopped</td>
<td>He does not like alcohol much, has only recently been introduced to a few things he does like. He is very firm about resisting the pressure to drink more, and very cautious not to risk driving over the limit</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Drinking at a friend’s house, then drove home, then towards hospital</td>
<td>Unusual in that she would not have intended to drive (would have stayed over), but was then called to fetch a friend’s child from hospital</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2 glasses of wine with a gap of 1–2 hours</td>
<td>2 glasses over 2 hours should be OK – normally her rule is 1</td>
<td>Not at time</td>
<td>Had an accident on ice, tested positive and banned</td>
<td>She thought she was being responsible, had calculated ‘your body gets rid of a unit an hour’. ‘I should’ve been OK and it’s the government guidelines that I’ve got issues with now’ – she is resentful of the outcome</td>
<td>She is a youth worker and thought she was applying the cautious rules she teaches others. She wishes she had thought to ask for a blood test. She used to be a ‘binge drinker’ in her youth</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Went to a friend’s after work, had one drink and drove home</td>
<td>Normal, planned</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1 shot of vodka</td>
<td>Inconsistent – claims she never drinks and drives now, then tells stories of doing so</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Not stopped</td>
<td>She expressed confused beliefs about one’s ‘state of mind’ for driving. She claims to be very careful, but this story, the pre-task, was not typical of her normal drinking or drink-driving behaviour. She told several other stories, 2 of which are given here</td>
<td>She was banned a while ago when she tested positive the morning after drinking. She drinks a lot and has received counselling for it</td>
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<td>M 23</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Impromptu – followed friends to pub, then drove back</td>
<td>Relatively common occasion, but driving unplanned when he set off</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1 Stella</td>
<td>Thought you were ‘allowed’ 1 pint</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Not stopped</td>
<td>He means to stick to the law usually, but feels he would be ‘safe’ up to 4 pints otherwise</td>
<td>At 16 or 17 he drank most heavily every night, experimenting with different drinks</td>
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<tr>
<td>M 21</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Drinking with a friend on a Friday evening, then drove home</td>
<td>Not much indication. He normally goes out more to clubs than pubs, and drinks vodka and ‘alcopops’, etc. Probably planned</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>3 pints</td>
<td>Sort of, but he has little idea of the limit and behaves according to the mood of the occasion – may change to ‘alcopops’ if driving, then tries to ‘pull himself together’ and drive carefully</td>
<td>No. Thinks you would be OK after 5 pints or 4 vodkas</td>
<td>Not stopped</td>
<td>He knows or suspects he may often drive over the limit, but thinks ‘it’ll be all right’, and if he is driving carefully nothing will happen. Training to be a driving instructor – in the interview he reflected more than he has been used to on the risks and penalties for him personally . . .</td>
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<tr>
<td>M 18</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Drank impromptu in the college car park with friends, then drove</td>
<td>Normal; though he did not know in advance he would meet and drink with friends – it happens often</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Quarter litre or more of Bacardi from a shared bottle</td>
<td>Now, one drink. Before – virtually no thought about it</td>
<td>Only thought about being ‘OK’ to drive – that is capable</td>
<td>Had an accident, tested then banned</td>
<td>He claims his drinking habits (regularly finishing a bottle of spirits in the open air between 3 or 4 friends) are so normal for young men in his community (Sikh) that he would never have thought it an issue. He drove around a lot purely for fun</td>
<td>Made to go on a course and he has learned: the limit is lower than he thought, is affected by being small. etc. However, he has not taken in much detail, and he noted that others drank a lot more than him</td>
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### Male (Male) / Female (Female)

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<td><strong>F</strong> 62 Urban Restaurant</td>
<td>Normal; planned</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Bottle of wine between 4</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Unsure; didn’t think</td>
<td>Not stopped</td>
<td>‘We are not drinkers per se.’ ‘I’m an invisible person on the road.’ She was not ‘incompetent’</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>M</strong> 30 Urban (London) Drove home after a pub lunch with friends in the country</td>
<td>Normal and planned</td>
<td>Not except in minor details</td>
<td>Two halves of real ale</td>
<td>One pint of bitter or similar, with a gap before driving</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Not stopped</td>
<td>He thinks very carefully about what and when he is going to drink if he is driving, choosing the lesser strength beers rather than premium lagers, for example. This was a ‘one off’</td>
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<td><strong>F</strong> 39 Urban After drinking at home, she answered a call to join a party at a community centre</td>
<td>Normal, but not planned in advance</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>An unknown drink at home, then 1 or 2 Jack Daniels while out</td>
<td>Stop while you still feel OK; eat first; have water</td>
<td>Unsure; did not think</td>
<td>Not stopped</td>
<td>‘If I was to drink to the point where I’m no longer standing, I wouldn’t get behind the wheel.’ ‘Every time I see the police drive past me I say please don’t look at me.’</td>
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<td><strong>M</strong> 34 Urban Pub after work</td>
<td>Normal, but impromptu</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2 or 3 bottles of beer</td>
<td>2 or 3 is fine, definitely under. Also he had a big lunch</td>
<td>Thought under</td>
<td>Not stopped</td>
<td>Did not feel drunk; did not think he was over; did not think he would be stopped</td>
<td>'Other people get stopped, I don’t.’</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>A birthday party at a club</td>
<td>Not totally unusual because her male friend came with someone else – not to look like a ‘loner’</td>
<td>She drank more shots – she still lost count</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Definitely over</td>
<td>Stopped: banned for 16 months</td>
<td>Impulsive and emotional; she did not care about rules</td>
<td>‘All’ her peers are banned</td>
<td></td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Office Christmas party</td>
<td>Slightly unusual, but a foreseen occasion</td>
<td>Yes. He thought he would not drink, but was persuaded to on the basis that he would leave his car. But he ‘felt OK’ so drove home</td>
<td>Aperitifs, wine with a meal, then liqueur</td>
<td>Only not to drive if you do not feel fine – if ‘staggering around’</td>
<td>Did not think</td>
<td>Stopped: banned</td>
<td>Shocked at the outcome. He feels it is not his fault – others should have stopped him, or his mistake was thinking the big meal made it OK</td>
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<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Urban (London)</td>
<td>Drove away from a club after drinking heavily on a first date</td>
<td>Unusual and the level of drinking was unplanned</td>
<td>Yes – he drank more to keep up with his date</td>
<td>Unclear, but he admits to having a hangover the next day and was banned for 14 months</td>
<td>Believes 2 drinks is the legal limit – shots or pints</td>
<td>Thought he was possibly over, but safe to drive</td>
<td>Stopped and banned for 14 months</td>
<td>He blames his drinking on not wanting to lose face in front of a date who turned out to be a heavy drinker. He blames a slow driver he had to overtake for causing him to be stopped. He is not a drink driver because he does not drive when he is out of control</td>
<td>Most of his friends would not even have 1 drink and drive, normally</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Urban (London)</td>
<td>Leaving a gig where he had been DJing</td>
<td>Normal, planned</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2 or 3 doubles of Jack Daniels</td>
<td>He believes a shot is 1 unit, and the limit is 1 unit every hour – if he is driving he tries to keep to that</td>
<td>He thought it was debateable</td>
<td>Not stopped</td>
<td>Although he knows this was a risk, he does think carefully and make calculations, and there is a clear distinction between the drinking he did on this occasion and how he prefers to drink if he is not driving – which is to drink very fast, to get the effect</td>
<td>From a non-observant Muslim background, he was initially wary of alcohol and used other drugs instead. Now he uses it quite clinically to get intoxicated, which he sees as its point. However, he is very careful about drinking and driving, using information from the internet. He drinks up to half a litre of Jack Daniels at a time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Outer London (Harrow)</td>
<td>A night out at a restaurant with friends from the Sind community</td>
<td>Planned and a regular pattern, every month or 2 months, though the venue might change</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Two-and-a-half glasses of red wine</td>
<td>He never drinks more than 3, and anyway after 2 hours ‘it washes out of your system’. However, he thinks you may be over the limit after more than 2</td>
<td>Probably, technically</td>
<td>Not stopped</td>
<td>He is fairly sure his habits are so moderate, and he is such a careful driver, that the outcome will not be severe enough to be worth worrying about. This is partly because of his experience of what happened when he did test over the limit once (he was not taken to court)</td>
<td>He does drink every night, at least 1 glass of wine – as well as the ‘boys’ nights out’ described. He never drives very far, and does not expect to see the police that often. 3 drinks can make him ‘drowsy’ though</td>
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<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Friend's house for a religious festival</td>
<td>Fairly normal, planned</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>A ‘couple’ of whiskies (possibly 4, large), a ‘bit’ of wine, alcohol in the dessert</td>
<td>Vague. Over several hours and he felt fine, he was sure that should mean he was OK. It is the fruits that are terrible . . .</td>
<td>Thought under</td>
<td>Stopped: awaiting court</td>
<td>He never thought he would be stopped. Now he cannot believe the outcome. Very embarrassed, he feels he was 'not drinking as such. In fact not drinking at all.'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Family restaurant for a birthday</td>
<td>Fairly normal, planned</td>
<td>Yes, she planned not to drink, but changed her mind on a whim when asked what she wanted</td>
<td>2 halves of lager with lemonade ‘tops’</td>
<td>2 drinks before moving on to soft drinks</td>
<td>The thought did not even register, she would assume under</td>
<td>Not stopped</td>
<td>If having a proper ‘drink', do not drive. However, lesser occasions do not count</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Out with her partner for her own birthday – coming back from the pub restaurant</td>
<td>A planned special occasion, adjusted when they decided not to eat at the pub</td>
<td>Yes. Planned to get taxi home at the end of the evening, but left early</td>
<td>2 ciders</td>
<td>Normally 1 drink only, but thought 2 was 'safe enough'</td>
<td>You think about it when you get in your car. Worried when stopped</td>
<td>Stopped over the limit: awaiting court hearing</td>
<td>Ashamed and devastated: ‘I felt I’d really let myself down.'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Calling at friends, and having a drink there, before driving home to get ready for a party</td>
<td>Unplanned, but not unusual</td>
<td>Did not expect to drink at that stage</td>
<td>2 glasses of wine</td>
<td>2 glasses of wine, or a pint of beer, is fine</td>
<td>Not thought anything, sure she was under</td>
<td>Not stopped</td>
<td>‘I wouldn’t drink to excess where I was like falling out of the car . . . If I didn’t feel alright to drive I don’t think I would’ve drove.'</td>
<td>She would never have even 1 drink if her child was in the car though</td>
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<td>Male (M)/Female (F)</td>
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<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Drank in pubs most of the day, then drove home</td>
<td>Slightly unusual, but admits to driving over the limit on a few occasions</td>
<td>No – thought as he got in the car he probably should not, but ‘there you go’</td>
<td>Unclear – 4–6 pints at least</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Knew he was over, but ‘it wasn’t an issue’</td>
<td>Crashed and tested over the limit</td>
<td>Laughs it off</td>
<td>Several friends and family been banned at various times. He does think drink driving is bad, but never at the point where he is getting in his car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Meeting his brother in the pub after work, on a Friday</td>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Slight inconsistency – 1 or 2 beers</td>
<td>Up to 2 is OK</td>
<td>Not thinking about the possibility of being stopped</td>
<td>Not stopped</td>
<td>After 2 drinks only, by the time you get to the police station you are OK. He is more concerned about damaging the car than getting stopped or anything, and jokes he might drink more if he had an older car</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Drinks after a cricket match, in the bar</td>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2 bottles of Budweiser</td>
<td>1 is OK, you start pushing it after that</td>
<td>Worried about being stopped, there was a chance he was over</td>
<td>Not stopped</td>
<td>He worries fleetingly, at the point of driving, because losing his licence would be a big blow, but drinking after sport is ‘etiquette’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>A colleague’s leaving do after work</td>
<td>Unusual – he had forgotten it was happening, and did not have time to take the car home and come back again</td>
<td>Once he decided to go without going home first, intentions do not change</td>
<td>1 Kronen­berg and another lager bought for him</td>
<td>2 is probably OK unless he felt ‘worse for wear’</td>
<td>With 2 drinks ‘it’s always in the back of your mind’</td>
<td>Not stopped</td>
<td>If he felt worse for wear he would have had to leave the car, he supposes – but for security reasons he does not like to leave his car overnight in the centre of town</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Visiting friends during the day, and stayed for an impromptu barbecue</td>
<td>Unplanned, and slightly unusual</td>
<td>Yes. Did not think she would be drinking</td>
<td>2 glasses of wine</td>
<td>Not sure about units, etc. She goes by feel, not drinking ‘too much’. After having second that was it, ‘no more’</td>
<td>It was on her mind, also the safety of driving with her daughter in the car</td>
<td>Not stopped</td>
<td>It is safer to drive than walk after dark, she felt safe ‘within myself’. She does not expect to encounter police normally in local, rural roads</td>
<td>She often chooses to drink ‘alcopops’ on other occasions and assumes they are weaker than wine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Impromptu glass of wine after helping sister move, then drove home</td>
<td>Exceptional, and the drinking unplanned</td>
<td>Yes, she had no thought of drinking when she set off</td>
<td>1 glass of wine, but ‘more than a pub measure’</td>
<td>No, do not drink and drive as a rule</td>
<td>At the point she got in the car she was suddenly ‘very worried’</td>
<td>Not stopped</td>
<td>It was the mood of the occasion, but very unusual for her and when she drove she became worried – though she did not expect to see any police on the short drive home</td>
<td>Had her children wanted to ride home with her she would have been more worried, and might have thought more in advance about whether to drink or whether to drive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>In a private holiday estate in Spain, drank out then walked home, then drove out later to look for children</td>
<td>Extremely rare</td>
<td>Yes, had no thought of driving during the rest of the night until children failed to return when promised</td>
<td>2 large glasses of wine</td>
<td>No, do not drink and drive as a rule</td>
<td>Her anxiety was all about where the boys were, not about drink driving</td>
<td>Not stopped</td>
<td>She would not expect there to be any police in the complex anyway, unless she had an accident . . .</td>
<td>She has ‘no idea’ what the Spanish law is concerning drink driving</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Rural/ leafy commuter village</td>
<td>Going out for a meal in a pizza restaurant with his wife, after work</td>
<td>Taking the car for the very short journey was unusual – done to save time</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>One 330 ml bottle of Nastro Azzurro beer</td>
<td>Only 1, if driving – in fact, he could not think of another occasion when he had drunk at all then driven. It would have been ‘years ago’. He tries to keep drinking and driving occasions separate</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Not stopped</td>
<td>Though he is fairly sure he was under the limit, he is still concerned that he does not understand as much as he would like about the limit and guidelines. He is very anxious to avoid ‘something terrible’ happening</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Work’s family day at a country park</td>
<td>Unusual, and had not thought he would be drinking – in other respects planned</td>
<td>Yes – first he had a drink, then his wife asked if he was driving back and he agreed it was his turn</td>
<td>‘1 pint of bitter - he thinks ‘fairly strong’</td>
<td>Though he is very cautious by nature, he admits to not knowing enough, and sometimes ‘going by how he feels’, but he thinks 2 drinks would be getting into a ‘grey area’</td>
<td>No, but still slightly anxious</td>
<td>Not stopped</td>
<td>He is quite anxious and precise, but remembers being a little more wild in his youth. He has never been stopped, but friends have been banned. His work involves being on call sometimes at weekends and that makes him cautious and aware of his drinking</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Rural/large village</td>
<td>Driving home from his brother’s, weekday night, after watching football on TV</td>
<td>Normal and planned – though he says the drinking was not planned as it was not a ‘big game’</td>
<td>Yes as regards drinking, though he did not think about it much</td>
<td>2 bottles of ‘Carlsberg or Stella’ or similar</td>
<td>He thought 2 beers were OK – in the past he may have had a bit more ‘if he felt OK’</td>
<td>No, not at the time</td>
<td>Stopped for having a faulty brake light, tested positive and banned</td>
<td>In some ways he feels hard done by, but he is determined to learn by it. Though he is not driving now, before his case came up he bought a self-test kit which he still uses regularly and is finding out about the effects of different drinks that way</td>
<td>From next May, when he can drive again, he will monitor everything very carefully</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Extreme outer London</td>
<td>Out at a club with friends, then driving home</td>
<td>Normal, but the plan was for another friend to drive</td>
<td>Yes because his friend went away after a row with his girlfriend, he was ‘forced’ to drive</td>
<td>2 glasses of champagne</td>
<td>He felt ‘merry’, but not like he was ‘drunk and over the limit’ so he was fairly sure he was OK</td>
<td>Thought probably not, but it was in the back of his mind</td>
<td>Stopped in south London for a ‘routine check’ and breathalysed – found ‘slightly over’ and banned</td>
<td>Though he is greatly inconvenienced by the ban he is still quite laid back and philosophical. It is difficult to tell how honest he is in the interview or with himself about his drinking. He says he hardly drinks, only the occasional champagne</td>
<td>He has been in trouble with the police in the past for minor matters, but is not happy to have joined ‘the drink-drivers’ club</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Outer London/ Surrey borders</td>
<td>Clubbing with a friend on the friend’s birthday</td>
<td>Planned a few days in advance and normal, but he ended up drinking more than he intended</td>
<td>Yes, as to the amount of drinking</td>
<td>A champagne cocktail and 3 spirit drinks</td>
<td>2 drinks is more or less OK – but you are safe to drive up to about 4 - if you are not showing obvious signs such as slurred speech. It is very difficult to know what the actual limit is, he thinks</td>
<td>Yes, but still safe to drive</td>
<td>Not stopped</td>
<td>He did not consider an alternative because taxis are difficult and expensive, there was nowhere safe to leave his car there, the roads were quiet and so on. He felt he could drive carefully and avoid attention, e.g. by turning his music down</td>
<td>Note, this occasion was after he was stopped over the limit a few months ago, and taken to court, but let off with a fine and penalty points because he had assembled lots of good character references. So this time he agrees he should have thought extra hard, but ‘people do take risks’. He now thinks that the ban is only automatic for those who are over by a much greater amount than he was. He feels he has passed his wild youth and is now a much more moderate drinker, and into training and keep fit</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Urban, smaller town</td>
<td>Left pub to collect his daughter when his partner was delayed</td>
<td>Fairly normal, but driving was further than he had intended</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>One-and-a-half pints of beer</td>
<td>More or less 2 pints is the limit and you have to watch they are not very strong</td>
<td>No, but the thought was in his mind</td>
<td>Not stopped</td>
<td>He seems to be quite cautious, but he did take the car to the pub on the way home and had ordered a second pint – he says he might have left the car there. When he got the call he ‘had to collect her’ – there was no alternative. So he left the second pint half drunk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Urban, smaller town</td>
<td>Stopped at the pub on the way home from a car boot sale</td>
<td>Normal, but spontaneous – felt thirsty</td>
<td>Unclear</td>
<td>Half a lager</td>
<td>If I know I feel alright, 2 pints, 3 at the most</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Not stopped</td>
<td>She admits she may have driven having drunk over the limit on occasion, but none recently. She would not ‘be silly’, e.g. drive after about 9 pints. ‘If I feel pissed I don’t bother [driving]’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Urban, smaller town</td>
<td>Drinking with a friend who was upset, and ‘spiked’ his drink</td>
<td>Normal, except for the spiking</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2 pints, 1 of which had an unknown amount of vodka added</td>
<td>Unclear, says he does not drink drive very often, and usually only 1 drink</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Stopped: given an extended ban</td>
<td>Although his friend did not turn up to admit in court to the spiking, he still thinks it is fair what happened overall, as drink driving outcomes can be so serious</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Urban, smaller town</td>
<td>A drink in the city before catching the train home and picking up his car</td>
<td>Normal, but spontaneous – he had been working hard with colleagues</td>
<td>Yes from when he left his car in the morning</td>
<td>Deliberately chose one of the weaker bitters – so that he could have 2</td>
<td>2 drinks is reasonably safe if they are not too strong</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Not stopped</td>
<td>The time taken to travel back to his car by train contributed to his feeling of safety. He feels he is quite cautious and drinks a lot less than when he was younger – being married with a small child, and having a responsible job, all change you</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Urban, smaller town</td>
<td>She drank in 3 pubs, then drove, though she does not yet have a full licence because her ‘designated driver’ had passed out</td>
<td>Normal, but the plans were disrupted</td>
<td>Yes – she made efforts to get money for a cab, but all in vain</td>
<td>4 pints</td>
<td>She had virtually no experience, but thought more than 2 drinks was very risky as to the limit. She did however think about it, and decided she was ‘fit’ to drive in terms of safety and not drawing attention to herself</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>She was stopped because she had not put her lights on – also because of her L plates – she tested positive and was banned for 20 months</td>
<td>She admits to being a binge drinker, to excess at the weekends. By that she means about 5 pints then a vodka</td>
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<td>However, he does still feel the pressure to drink ‘measure for measure’ in a social situation, e.g. after sport</td>
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<td>37</td>
<td>Urban, smaller town</td>
<td>He says he had 1 drink, and some cannabis, then much later in the day he crashed his car</td>
<td>Unusual – he had just been offered a new job, so drank in the morning afterwards</td>
<td>Unclear, there were many circumstances in the day, and he still claims he only had 1 drink</td>
<td>1 beer</td>
<td>No evidence of any particular rule of thumb</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>He was breathalysed because he appeared under the influence, then refused to do another test and was banned for that. He says the first test was negative</td>
<td>He admits that prior to that there would be occasions when he drove when probably over the limit</td>
<td>Admits to being intermittently a heavy drinker – up to a bottle of whisky a day plus some lager</td>
</tr>
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<td>F</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Rural, village</td>
<td>Drove to the garage to get cigarettes then to her boyfriend’s parents, after a drink at home</td>
<td>Normal and planned</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1 glass of Bailey’s - half to three-quarters of a ‘small tumbler’</td>
<td>If driving, ‘1 small glass of wine’</td>
<td>She did not think about it at the time</td>
<td>Not stopped</td>
<td>She thinks because she is not used to drinking much at present, probably not much alcohol might put her over the limit. She probably felt safer knowing the route, and that she was unlikely to encounter the police</td>
<td>Though she describes herself as not being used to drinking, when she is not driving she says at one point that up to 8 glasses would be normal for her</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>Rural, village</td>
<td>Drove home from the pub after a weeknight drink after work</td>
<td>Normal and planned</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1 pint of lager</td>
<td>It used to be you could drink a pint of beer, now it is less clear. Now he says his 'normal' rule is if you drink don’t drive</td>
<td>Thinks he possibly was. He ‘doesn’t trust the law’</td>
<td>Not stopped</td>
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He was banned twice ‘when he was young’. He says once was after 1 pint and the second time was for driving while disqualified. He drives about 30,000 miles a year. Drinks most nights, but not ‘heavy’