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Three in four people in **A&E** at weekend are there because of **alcohol**;   
70 per cent of people are admitted to **emergency** units at the weekend as a result of drinking  
  
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Three in four people in **accident and emergency** units at the weekend have been admitted because of **alcohol**, new figures have shown.

The new research, which was carried out at an **A&E** unit in the North East of England shows the huge burden that excess drinking places on the NHS.

Young men aged between 18 and 24 made up the bulk of the admissions, with most there because they have been injured in fights or falls, **alcohol** poisoning or because they were suffering mental health problems.

"The financial burden of **alcohol** is dramatic, yet the response of governments has been woefully inadequate"Dr Clifford Mann, President of the College of **Emergency** Medicine

Dr Jim Connolly of the Department of **Emergency** Medicine at the Royal Victoria Infirmary in Newcastle carried out breath testing of**A&E** attendees during four weeks in 2012-13.

The **alcohol**-related attendance rate varied substantially from four per cent to 60 per cent on weekdays, but rose to 70 per cent at the weekend. Based on the figures, researchers calculated that it costs each **emergency** unit around £1 million a year just to treat drink related problems and injuries.

"This indicates a significant NHS burden if all such **emergency departments** in the UK are sustaining similar demands associated with**alcohol** related attendance," said Dr Connolly.

"Although older people may cost more per patient, younger people as a group are more costly to the NHS because they have more**alcohol** related attendances.

"Our results suggest that **emergency departments** would benefit from routinely providing staff to cover the night and early morning shifts, particularly at weekends, to cope with the high proportion of **alcohol** related attendances at these times."

Dr Connolly also found people who didn't live in the city twice as likely to test positive than local residents, suggesting that city centres attract revellers from elsewhere, while hospitals and other public services in city centres pick up the tab.

Hospital admissions for disease and injuries associated with **alcohol** has risen 100 per cent between 2003 and 2013 and 21,000 deaths each year are directly caused by **alcohol**.

Dr Clifford Mann, President of the College of **Emergency** Medicine, warned that **alcohol** was currently cheaper than bottled water and said that many young people were risking their health by 'preloading' on cheap drink before going out to bars and clubs. He has called for a minimum pricing of 50p per unit

"The pattern of **alcohol** intoxication has changed significantly in the past 10 years. No longer do people set out sober, in the early evening, to attend licensed establishments where they consume **alcohol**.

"Instead the phenomenon of 'preloading' has become endemic. In consequence, people, especially young people, purchase relatively cheap but potent forms of **alcohol** and drink large quantities at home, either alone or with friends, before setting out much later in the evening to continue imbibing **alcohol** in pubs and clubs into the early hours.

"The economic, social, and medical consequences of current **alcohol** strategies create a compelling argument for improved legislation and regulation of **alcohol** sales. Currently it is perfectly feasible to purchase a volume of **alcohol** that represents a safe weekly maximum for less than £10. **Alcohol** at this price is cheaper than bottled water.

"The financial burden of **alcohol** is dramatic, yet the response of governments has been woefully inadequate."

The team carried out breath testing of **A&E** attendees during the same 4 weeks in 2012-13 to find out who had been drinking.

The research was published in the **Emergency** Medicine Journal .