KAM

DRINKING DIFFERENTLY

HOW GLP-1 MEDICATIONS IMPACT ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

In partnership with

drinkaware

Drinking Differently

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Following our previous research into how GLP-1 medications are changing eating behaviour, KAM partnered with Drinkaware to explore another key question for hospitality and drinks brands: how are these medications affecting alcohol consumption?

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METHODOLOGY:

Unless otherwise stated, the data in this survey is based on results from an online survey carried out in February 2026 with a nationally representative sample of 1,000 UK adults (over 18 years old) and additional questions asked of 207 UK adults who are either currently taking or have previously taken GLP-1 medication.

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INTRODUCTION TO GLP-1 MEDICATION

A new wave of weight loss drugs is reshaping how the UK thinks about health, eating out, and even the drinks we order.

Once reserved for diabetes care, GLP-1 medicines like Wegovy and Mounjaro are now in the headlines - and in handbags - across the UK. They've been hailed as game-changers for tackling obesity, but they're also sparking big conversations about cost, access, side effects and how they might reshape industries from food retail to hospitality.

Whether obtained via the NHS or privately, GLP-1 medications are becoming an established part of weight management and diabetes care. Their impact is likely to extend beyond clinical use, influencing areas such as consumer behaviour and service provision.

- **Feel full for longer**
- **Digestion slows down**
- **Appetite shrinks**
- **Blood sugar kept steady**

GLP-1 (glucagon-like peptide-1) medicines mimic a natural hormone your body releases after eating. The result? You feel fuller for longer, digestion slows down, your appetite shrinks, and your blood sugar stays steadier. This combination makes you less hungry and less likely to overeat. (1)

In a country like the UK, where over one in four adults lives with obesity (2) and the associated costs to the NHS run into the billions (3), these drugs represent a potential shift in how we think about public health. The government is already exploring the idea of prescribing them to unemployed individuals living with obesity, as a possible lever for wider societal change (4).

(1) Science Direct: GLP-1-based medications: Mechanisms involved in obesity treatment, 2025
(2) Gov.uk: Obesity profile: short statistical commentary, May 2025
(3) nesta.org: The economic and productivity costs of obesity and excess weight in the UK, 2025
(4) Diabetes.co.uk: Unemployed could receive weight-loss jabs to return to work, says Health Secretary Wes Streeting: 2025
(5) Review: Frontiers in Endocrinology: 2024

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WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Usage continues to grow... 10% UK adults say they are using a GLP-1 medication, a significant increase from just 7% six months ago.*

62% Of UK adults say they know what GLP-1 medications are used for. This has DOUBLED in just 6 months*

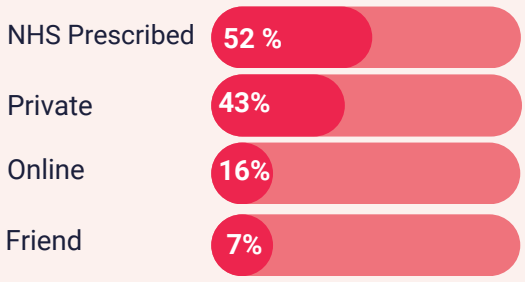
25% Have heard of GLP-1 medications but don't know much about them.

10% Of UK adults say they are currently using GLP-1 medications - up from 7% just 6 months ago*

54% Of current users have been taking the medication <6 months.

28% Of those who don't currently use them would consider using them for weight loss in the future.

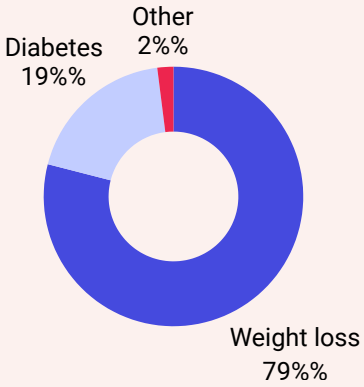
WAYS OF OBTAINING GLP-1



Awareness of GLP-1 medication is now widespread across the UK population, with most adults having at least heard of them.

With the number of UK adults using this medication continuing to grow, understanding how these drugs influence everyday lifestyle habits including the way people eat, drink and socialise will be critical to anticipating how consumer behaviour may evolve.

REASONS FOR USING GLP-1



*KAM - Feeding the GLP-1 Generation - Sept 2025

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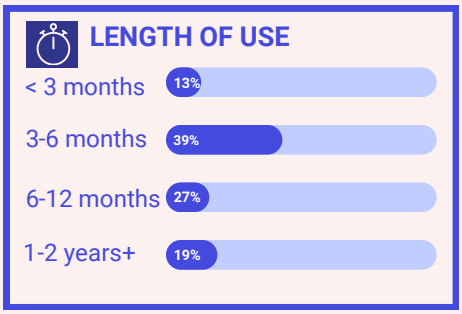
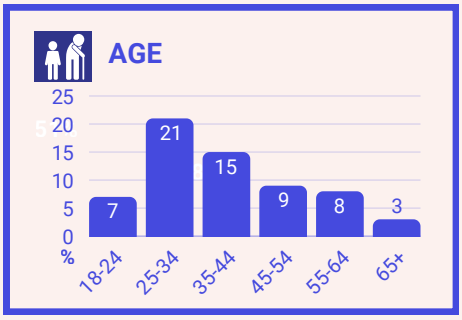
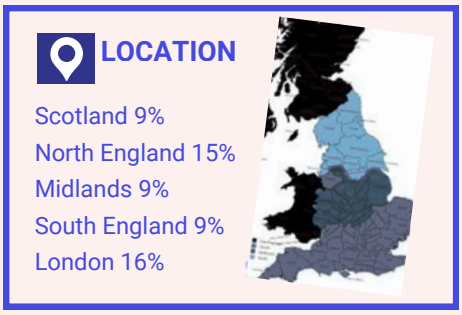
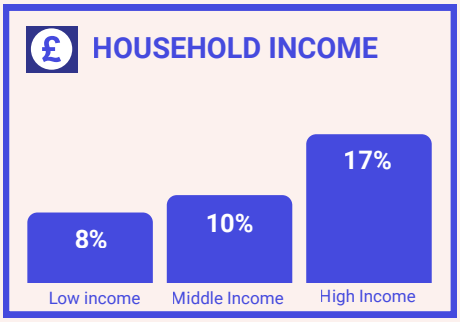
SAY HELLO TO THE GLP-1 GENERATION

% of UK adults who say they are currently using GLP-1 medication









GLP-1 medication use spans a broad cross-section of the UK population, but a few clear patterns are emerging. Uptake is strongest among younger and mid-life adults, particularly those in their late twenties to forties. These are also some of the most socially active age groups when it comes to eating and drinking out, meaning any behavioural changes linked to GLP-1 use are likely to be visible in hospitality settings.

Usage is fairly balanced between men and women but adoption is currently skewed towards higher-income households. For hospitality businesses these are the consumers with relatively high spending power.

Finally, GLP-1 users are currently geographically spread across the UK, indicating that the potential impact is not limited to specific cities or regions.

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THE DRINKING RESET

One of the behavioural shifts associated with GLP-1 use is reduced alcohol consumption. Users report drinking alcohol less frequently and consuming fewer units per week after starting the medication. While the scale of change varies between individuals, the overall pattern is clear: alcohol plays a smaller role in the weekly routines of many GLP-1 users.

29%

After starting GLP-1, alcohol consumption frequency falls from 3.1 days per week to 2.2 days per week. This represents a **29% reduction in drinking frequency.**

16%

Average alcohol units fall from 4.3 units per week to 3.6 units per week. This represents a **16% reduction in alcohol consumption overall.**

"Before, having a drink felt habitual… since using GLP-1 drugs, that pull has significantly reduced."

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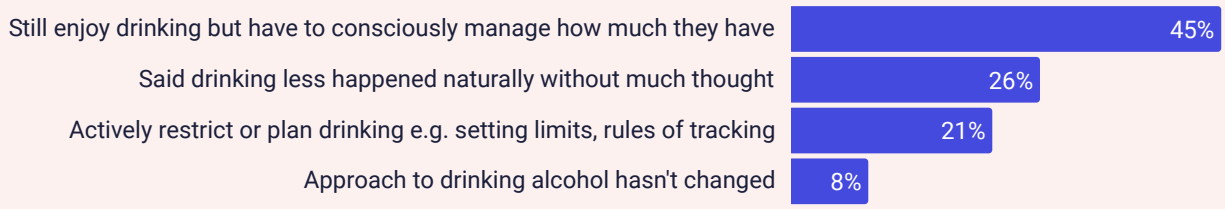
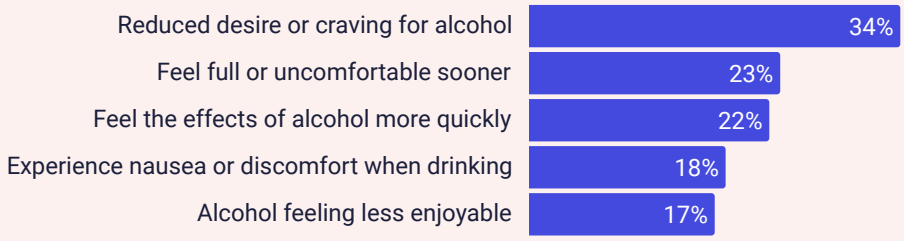
HOW CONSUMING ALCOHOL FEELS DIFFERENT

Approaches to drinking alcohol



Changes in how user's body responds



Users report reduced cravings for alcohol, as well as changes in tolerance and enjoyment. Some say they feel the effects of alcohol more quickly, while others experience physical discomfort such as nausea when drinking.

GLP-1 medication can make alcohol less appealing, potentially contributing to a natural reduction in consumption for 1-in-4 users. The majority however, say reduction in drinking is more of a conscious, active decision.

> "I feel satisfied with smaller amounts, sometimes I don't finish a drink."

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DRINKS CHOICES AND CONSUMPTION HABITS

Lighter drinks, smaller serves and alcohol-free alternatives become more appealing for many users, and there seems to be a tendency to move away from richer, creamier and carbonated drinks.

How have their drinking habits changed while using GLP-1 medication?

48% Drinking less often

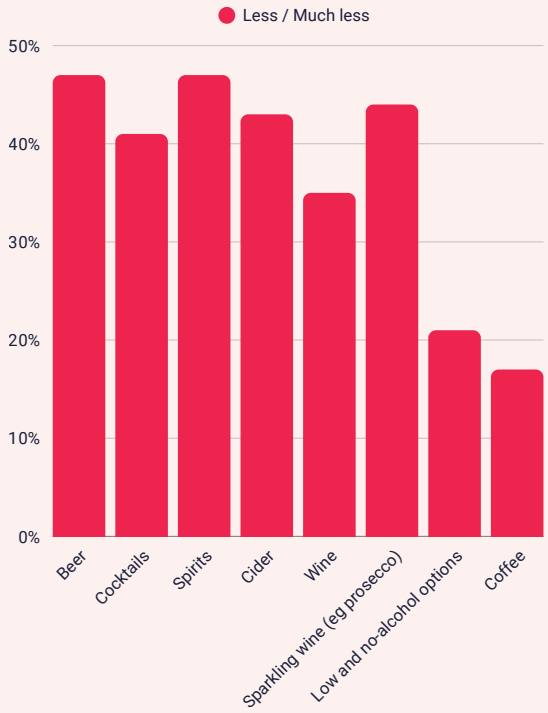
45% Drinking smaller amounts

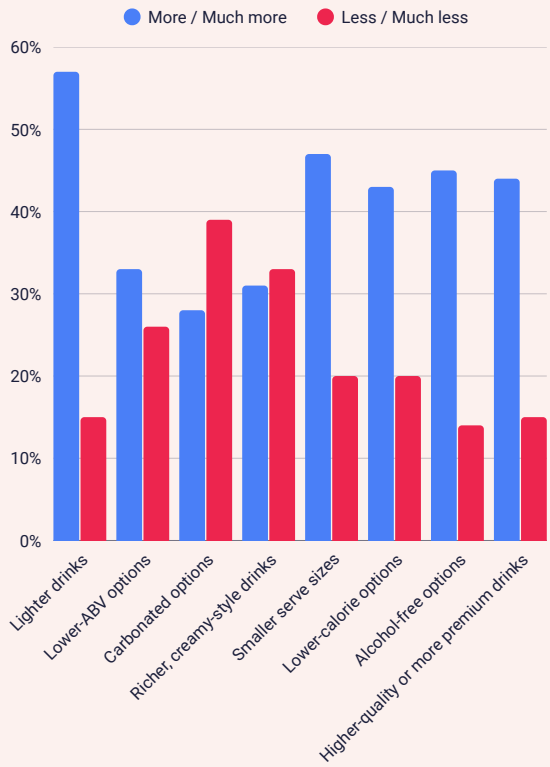
29% Drinking more slowly

27% Having more aclohol free days

6% Don't drink alcohol at all anymore

Do people using GLP-1 medication consume more, the same or less of the following types of drinks, compared with when not taking the medication?





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WHAT DRIVES CHANGES IN DRINKING HABITS

A combination of physiological and psychological factors appear to contribute to changes in drinking habits, while taking the GLP-1 medication. Reduced cravings, physical discomfort when drinking alongside a much stronger focus on health goals all contribute.

Which of the following contribute to changes in drinking habits, while taking the GLP-1 medication? (Top 5)

"It took away any desire for a drink."

"I feel satisfied with much less."

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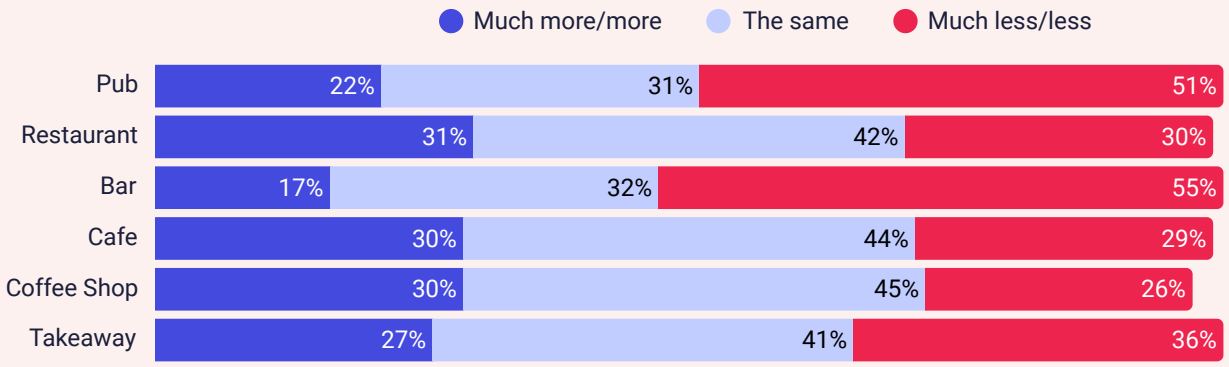
THE IMPACT ON HOSPITALITY

On average users are spending **30% less on alcohol for personal consumption in a visit to a hospitality venue** while on the drugs… and **22% less on alcohol bought for personal consumption in the off-trade per week.**

Do users visit the following more often, the same or less often compared with when they're not taking GLP-1 medication?



Changes in alcohol consumption may influence where people are socialising. Despite signals that alcohol is still central to most people's enjoyment of social occasions, users are spending less on alcohol when on GLP-1 medication. For hospitality businesses, these changes highlight the importance of understanding how drinking occasions may evolve.

"I still enjoy a drink socially, but I'm more mindful about what I have. Overall, my drinking feels more controlled and intentional than before."

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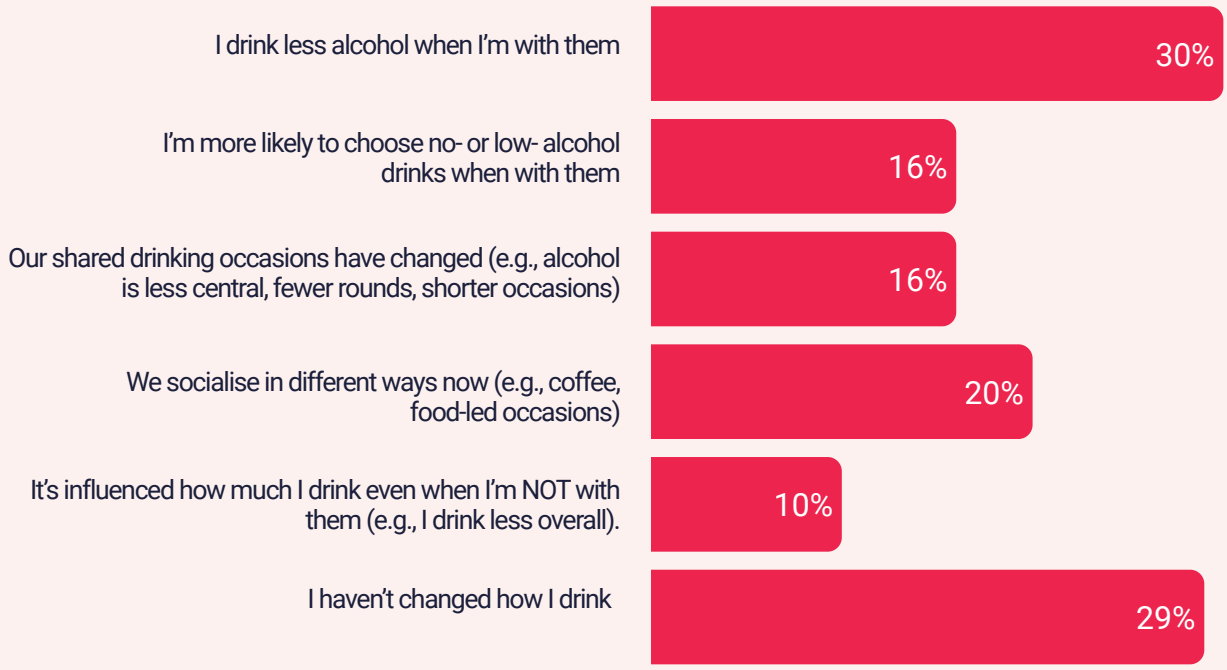
THE GLP-1 RIPPLE EFFECT

46% of UK adults know someone who has taken GLP-1 medication at some point.

Non-users report seeing changes in how people they know who are using GLP-1 medication now interact with alcohol. Because drinking is a highly social activity, changes in behaviour often ripple beyond the individual. Friends, partners and households may adapt their own drinking habits when socialising with someone using GLP-1 medication.

How have the drinking or socialising habits changed for people who know GLP-1 users?



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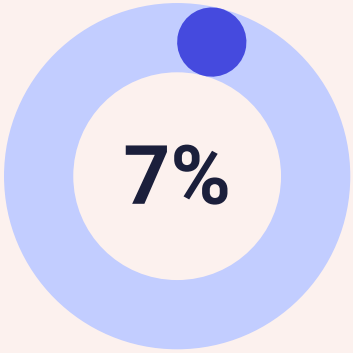
INFORMATION AND ADVICE

Despite the rapid rise in GLP-1 use, guidance around alcohol consumption remains inconsistent with 1-in-10 receiving none at all. Many users say they would welcome clearer information about how alcohol interacts with these medications.

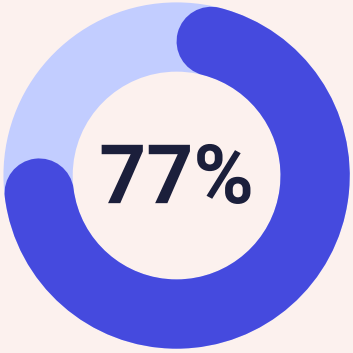
What guidance have users received about drinking alcohol while on GLP-1 medication:

Said they had received clear guidance

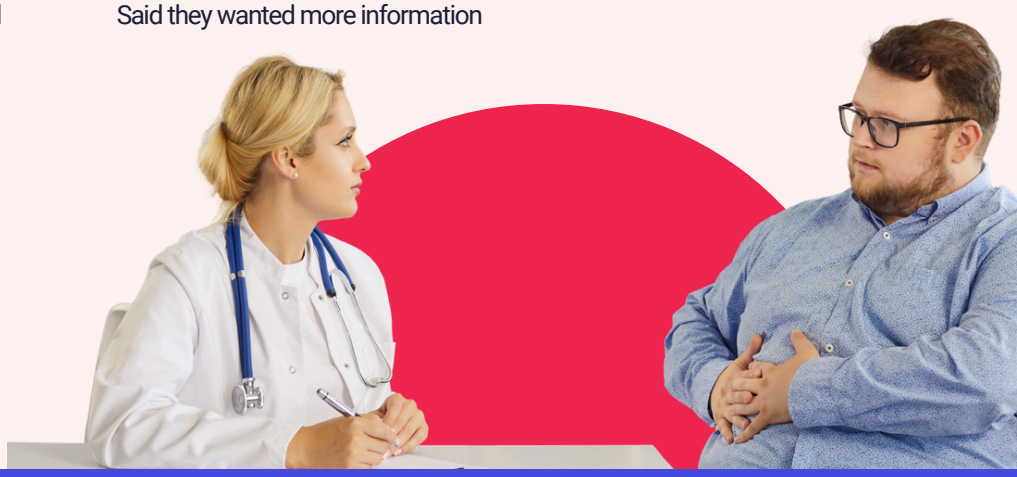


Said guidance was unclear / impractical

Claim to have received no guidance at all



Said they wanted more information



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IMPLICATIONS FOR HOSPITALITY

Less alcohol doesn't mean the occasion disappears

Although GLP-1 users report drinking less frequently and consuming fewer units, alcohol remains an important part of social occasions for most of them. In fact, a majority of users still say alcohol is central to their enjoyment of going out. Drinking occasions are evolving. Venues that create compelling social experiences, atmosphere and reasons to gather will continue to attract these consumers, even if the number of alcoholic drinks consumed per visit is lower.

Quality can replace quantity

Many GLP-1 users report drinking less, but when they do drink, they are more selective about what they choose. This opens an opportunity for operators and drinks brands to focus on premiumisation and quality over volume. Higher-quality serves, distinctive cocktails, craft drinks and elevated alcohol-free options can help venues maintain value even if overall consumption declines. But also, options which are "lighter", "less creamy", "less carbonated" are all things which many users lean towards.

The rise of mixed drinking occasions

As GLP-1 use spreads, social groups are increasingly likely to include a mix of drinkers, lighter drinkers and non-drinkers. Venues that cater well to mixed drinking occasions, offering appealing low- and no-alcohol options alongside traditional drinks, will be better positioned to meet these evolving expectations. Rather than replacing alcohol, these options expand the overall experience for the whole group.

Low and no continues to move into the mainstream

Interest in lower-ABV and alcohol-free options grows among GLP-1 users, particularly when alcohol feels less appealing physically. For hospitality operators, this presents an opportunity to treat low and no alcohol drinks as a core part of the menu rather than a niche alternative. Well-designed, premium non-alcoholic drinks help venues retain spend and maintain the sense of occasion.

The impact extends beyond the user

GLP-1 use doesn't just influence the person taking the medication. Because eating and drinking are social activities, behavioural changes often ripple out to partners, friends and wider social groups. This means the potential impact of GLP-1 medications is larger than the number of users alone might suggest. For hospitality venues, designing experiences that work well for the whole group, including lighter drinkers, will become increasingly important.

Health-conscious consumers are still hospitality consumers

Many GLP-1 users report a stronger focus on health and wellbeing while taking the medication. However, although visits to pubs and bars are reduced, visits to restaurants, café and coffee shops are not impacted overall. This doesn't mean withdrawing from hospitality occasions. Instead, these consumers may seek different types of experiences, for example lighter drinks, balanced menus, flexible portion sizes or venues where the social experience is as important as the food or drink itself. Operators that respond to these changing expectations will be well placed to attract a growing segment of health-conscious consumers.

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SUMMARY

The increasing use of GLP-1 drugs in the UK is beginning to influence not only the drinking habits of those taking them, but also the behaviour of the people they socialise with. This presents a timely opportunity for the hospitality sector to evolve its offer to reflect, and benefit from, changing consumer expectations.

Emerging evidence from our research shows that many GLP-1 users are consciously moderating their alcohol intake - drinking less frequently and choosing smaller quantities when they do drink. This appears to be driven largely by intentional decisions around health and wellbeing rather than by side effects alone.

Early indicators suggest a secondary impact on wider social groups. Some non-users report that they also moderate their intake when socialising with someone on a GLP-1 drug. This includes choosing lower-strength or alcohol-free drinks or shifting towards social activities where alcohol is less central. These insights support our own findings from the Drinkaware Monitor, that social context strongly shapes drinking habits.

As GLP-1 drugs become more widespread, they may accelerate a broader cultural shift towards moderation. Hospitality and drinks businesses can play an important role in supporting and responding to this shift. Our insights point to clear, practical opportunities to make moderation easier through innovation – such as expanding low- and no-alcohol options, offering smaller serve sizes as standard and increasing availability of lower strength products across categories. These changes would not only cater to people using GLP-1 drugs but could normalise and promote moderation for a much larger group of people who are, or could benefit from, drinking less.

Annabelle Bonus, Director of Research, Strategy and Impact at Drinkaware

About Drinkaware

Drinkaware is the UK's leading alcohol charity. For 20 years we have provided governments, industry, communities and individuals with trusted expertise on alcohol harm and behaviour change. Our mission is to help people make informed decisions about drinking and to reduce the harm caused by risky consumption.

Drinkaware offers a scalable, low-cost prevention model that supports healthier drinking behaviours and eases pressure on the NHS by reducing avoidable harm. A core pillar of our strategy is reinforcing moderation as a cultural norm. We do this by raising awareness of moderation techniques and sharing robust insights into UK drinking trends.

We are uniquely placed to work in partnership with industry to understand changes in consumer drinking habits and develop creative approaches that meet people where they are. By collaborating, we can accelerate positive change across the UK's drinking culture in a way that benefits consumers, businesses and public health.

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