

Alcohol specific hospital admission for those aged 16 and under

NWPHO Monthly - March 2007

Alcohol specific admission

- Alcohol specific admissions are those where alcohol is a contributing factor in all cases.
- Examples include alcohol poisoning, alcoholic gastritis and alcoholic liver disease.
- Alcohol specific hospital admissions provide a relative measure of the direct impact of alcohol on health.
- The HES (Hospital Episode Statistics) dataset includes hospital admissions, but not outpatient or Accident and Emergency data.

Sara Hughes
Dan Dedman
Karen Tocque

North West Public Health
Observatory,
Centre for Public Health,
Liverpool John Moores
University,
Castle House,
North Street,
Liverpool,
L3 2AY

Tel (0151) 231 4454
Fax (0151) 231 4515

nwpho-info@ljmu.ac.uk

Key Messages

- Rates of alcohol specific hospital admission among those aged 16 and under are increasing, and are doing so faster for females than males. Females are experiencing higher rates of admission than males in all regions.
- Regions in the north of the country experience higher rates of admission for those aged 16 and under than those in the south; rates in 2004/05 in the North West were two and a half times higher for females and almost four times higher for males than in London.
- In the North West, rates differ widely between local authorities; in 2004/05 the highest admission rate for those aged 16 and under was over 18 times greater than the lowest.
- These data should be used to support the urgent need for local initiatives aimed at reducing and preventing the harm caused to young people by alcohol.

Introduction

At age 16, the majority of school children will have tried alcohol and many will be consuming it on a regular basis. While moderate consumption is unlikely to cause health complications for most teenagers, heavy use of alcohol can often have harmful consequences such as alcohol-related illness, accidents and violence that may require medical attention. NWPHO data recently published in the Independent on Sunday¹ are presented here to highlight rising levels of alcohol specific hospital admission among those aged 16 and under, and to emphasise a north / south divide in rates per 100,000 population. Data have been obtained from the Hospital Episode Statistics (HES) dataset.

Levels of hospital admission

In 2004/05 a total of 5,717 young people aged 16 and under were admitted to hospital for an alcohol specific condition in England. There were more female admissions than male (57% female), a pattern that occurred consistently across all regions. For both males and females, rates per 100,000 population were highest in the North West and North East and lowest in London and the East of England, with considerable variation between the highest and lowest regions (Figs 1 & 2). For instance, rates in the North West were over two and a half times higher for females and almost four times higher for males than in London. In general, rates of alcohol specific hospital admission increased between 2002/03 and 2004/05, and by a greater percentage for females (24%) than males (10%). The exceptions to this trend were for the West Midlands and London, where falls in rates were recorded for males. For females, the largest percentage increase was found for West Midlands (38%) and for males, the South West (28%).

Figure 1: Male alcohol specific hospital admission rate per 100,000 population (16 and under)

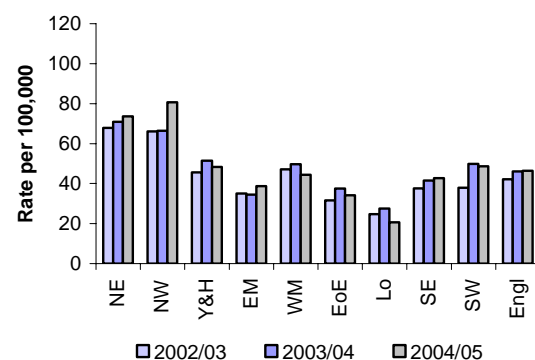
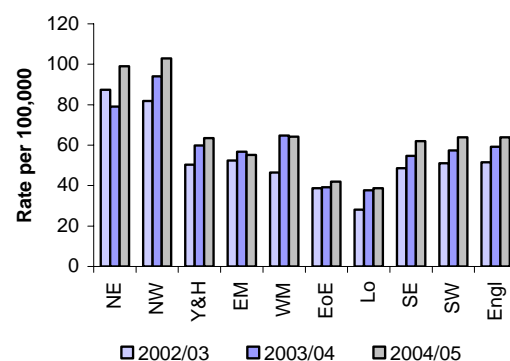


Figure 2: Female alcohol specific hospital admission rate per 100,000 population (16 and under)



While numbers for those aged 16 and under are too small to be presented for each local authority, rates of alcohol specific hospital admission for those aged 17 and under are available from the Local Alcohol Profiles for England for 2002-05². Since rates for both age groups correlate significantly³, the geographical distribution by local authority is likely to be the same for 16 and under as it is for 17 and under.

Local authority variation in the North West

Within the North West, there were considerable differences between local authorities in the rate of alcohol specific hospital admission for those aged 16 and under (Figs 3 & 4). For both males and females, the highest admission rate (Copeland) was over 18 times higher than the lowest⁴. In general, those local authorities that experienced higher rates of admission for males were also the ones that had greater rates of admission for females. However, some differences did emerge. In particular, West Lancashire had a relatively low rate for males but a high rate for females, while both Barrow-in-Furness and Pendle experienced a relatively high rate for males but a low rate for females. Furthermore, while the majority (77%) of local authorities had a higher rate of admission for females than males, just under a quarter had a lower rate for females⁵.

Figure 3: Male alcohol specific hospital admission, rate per 100,000 population (16 and under); North West, 2004/05.

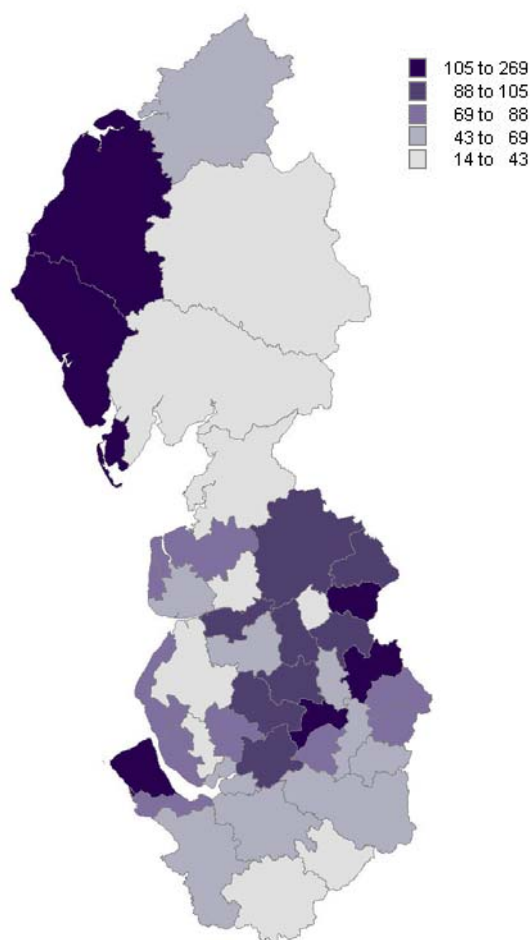
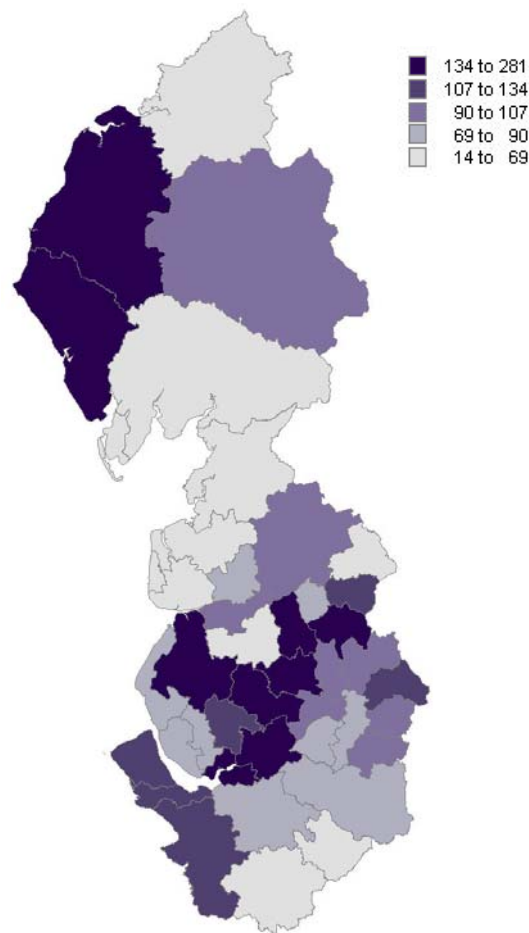


Figure 4: Female alcohol specific hospital admission, rate per 100,000 population (16 and under); North West, 2004/05.



¹ Owen J and Bignell P. Revealed: Britain's 12-year-old alcoholics. 18 February 2007. Independent on Sunday.

² http://news.independent.co.uk/uk/this_britain/article2281379.ece

³ www.nwph.net/alcohol/lape

⁴ For 2004/05 data: males, $r^2 = 0.68$, $p < 0.001$; females, $r^2 = 0.71$, $p < 0.001$.

⁵ Since numbers of alcohol specific admission are less than 5 for some local authorities, those with the lowest rates cannot be disclosed.

⁵ Barrow-in-Furness, Blackpool, Carlisle, Fylde, Pendle, Rochdale, Salford, South Ribble, Wirral, Wyre.