

Results of quantitative study

2.1 Sample

Selected tables from the study are included below. We had 151 female and 155 male respondents.

The respondents were from 11 districts, with nearly a quarter (71) of them coming from the district of Colombo. The age, occupation and educational characteristics are given in the following table.

130 (43%) of our respondents told the interviewer that they had no employment. Probably most of these are housewives who don't count themselves as 'employed'.

26 respondents (9%) had never been to school, and 85 (28%) had less than 6 years of schooling. The extent to which this corresponds with the ability to read and write, we do not know. The literacy rate of Sri Lanka is estimated 90.2%¹.

Table 1 Respondents by age, occupation and education

		Percentage (n=306)
Age	15-25 yrs	23
	26-40 yrs	40
	41-55 yrs	27
	Above 56 yrs	10
Occupation	Daily paid job	29
	Small business	13
	Clerk or equivalent	09
	Not employed	43
	Self employed	07
Education	Never been to school	09
	Grade 1-5	28
	Grade 6-10	37
	Passed G.C.E.O Level	27
Total		100

1. Source: <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ce.html#People>

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Table 2 Financial characteristics of the sample

	Less than Rs. 500	Rs. 501- Rs. 1000	Rs. 1001- Rs. 2000	More than Rs. 2001	Total
Weekly income (n= 306)	58.5 %	13.4%	16.3%	11.8%	100.0
Weekly expenditure (n= 306)	63.7%	13.4%	14.1%	08.8%	100.0
Savings (n= 306)	96.1%	01.6%	00.7%	01.6%	100.0
Amount in debt (n= 306)	86.6%	01.6%	02.9%	08.8%	100.0

2.2 Alcohol use

Twenty percent (61 subjects) of those sampled consumed alcohol more than twice a week – less than half this number using it daily. Only 3 women used alcohol daily. Among 52 persons who used alcohol once a week or less there were 8 women. Sixty three percent (193 subjects – 140 women and 53 men) had never consumed alcohol.

The frequency of use, when examined in relation to level of education, showed that the highest proportion of daily drinkers was among those with least (formal) education. This proportion declined with increasing level of education.

Table 3 Frequency of alcohol use

	Percentage (n=306)
Daily	08
2-6 days per week	12
Once a week or even less	17
Never	63
Total	100

Drinking Location

When those who consume exclusively at ‘a place where alcohol is sold illegally’ are added to the numbers who do so at an illegal setting as well as a bar or at home the total is over 50 %.

Table 4 Drinking location

	Percentage (n=61)
A place where alcohol is sold illegally	41
At the bar	20
At home	16
Other	10
Illegal and bar	10
Illegal and home	02
Bar and home	02
Total	100

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Table 5 Type of alcohol used

Type of Alcohol	Percentage (n=61)
Anack	20
Beer	03
Kasippu	33
Other	03
Anack and beer	10
Anack and kasippu	18
Anack and other	02
Anack, beer and kasippu	08
Anack, beer and other	03
Total	100

Type of Alcohol Used

Of the 61 frequent (twice a week or more) users only two reported drinking beer. In the further breakdown into daily versus 2-6 days a week users, 60% of daily users use kasippu exclusively and another 20% use kasippu as well as some other alcoholic drink. For other frequent drinkers, the percentages using kasippu are 14% and 28%. Removing the kasippu outlets should make a big difference to the daily drinkers and their wives and children.

2.3 Money spent on alcohol

Expenditures on alcohol, we found in our qualitative study, are underreported for several reasons. This is not only due to people wanting to hide their true consumption. The reported expenditures in the questionnaire study

showed that 19 subjects spent more than Rs. 100 per day on alcohol, 9 of whom reported an income of less than Rs. 500 per week. Thus the reported expenditure on alcohol among almost half the number of daily drinkers exceeds their reported income. This 'inconsistency' may simply be due to deliberate or unwitting misreporting. But there is, in addition, much greater 'unnoticed' alcohol expenditure due to a variety of other reasons that we elicited in the qualitative study – which is described later.

A little over 7% of men said that their alcohol expenditure was greater than their income. This is a small percentage but still a frightening statistic for the families concerned and for those interested in helping the worst-off families uplift themselves. A similar number of men will probably be spending close to or nearly all of their income on alcohol alone. Together this constitutes over 10% of our sample. The proportion of this severely compromised population is likely to be higher than 10%, when we take into account the identified underreporting of

Table 6 Expenditure on alcohol

	Amount	Percentage (n=61)
Daily	Less than Rs 50	44
	Rs 51 -Rs 100	25
	More than Rs 101	31
Monthly	Less than Rs 500	53
	Rs 501 -Rs 1000	13
	Rs 1001 -Rs 2000	21
	More than Rs 2001	13
Total		100

alcohol expenditure. These expenses are probably in the abjectly poor or poorest families. So any ‘development’ efforts that want to help the worst off cannot leave the alcohol issue untouched. If they do, they run the risk of helping those who are ‘easier’ to help whilst probably leaving out of their purview the most deprived and alcohol-compromised families. And we found that these constitute quite a significant number.

2.4 Behaviour after alcohol use

We asked about the perception that alcohol leads to boisterousness and fights. Almost 80% of respondents reported that when people are ‘drunk’ they have more fights and clashes than at other times. This perception was reported mostly by those who never consumed alcohol (89%), while 64% of daily drinkers and 36% of those who drank 2-6 days per week said the same – referring to their own behaviour when drunk.

When only 64% of daily drinkers claim that they become aggressive and while boisterous and 89% of abstainers say that

people become aggressive the discrepancy can be put down to the daily drinkers not being sensitive to or deliberately not reporting their own aggressiveness after alcohol. Only a minority (36%) of those who drank 2 to 6 days a week say that they become more aggressive when drunk. This could be due to the fact that more of the ‘alcohol-related’ aggression and violence is committed by (the far fewer) daily drinkers. Or those who drank 2 – 6 days a week were even more keen than the daily users (perhaps identified ‘problem drinkers’) to conceal any problems on their part.

A less threatening question was whether people became more noisy or less so when they were drunk. This was asked before the question of aggressive behaviour. A slightly larger proportion of respondents (82%) said yes. Once again, it was the abstainers who mostly said so (90%). Again there were fewer (68%) of daily drinkers and fewest (42%) of people drinking 2 – 6 days saying this. Since ‘making more noise’ has no great connotation of ‘misbehaviour’ the lower report of noisiness too by the 2 – 6 days-a-week drinkers is probably more valid. We can assume that they are probably less in the habit of becoming noisier or becoming aggressive after alcohol use.

Table 7 Drunken behaviour-fighting

Behaviour	Daily or frequent drinkers ¹ Percentage (n=61)	Abstainers or infrequent drinkers ² Percentage (n=245)
More fights	48	87
Less fights	21	05
No difference	31	08
Total	100	100

1 When you are “drunk” how do you behave?
2 When people are “drunk” how do they behave?

Table 8 Drunken behaviour-noisiness

Behaviour	Daily or frequent drinkers ¹ Percentage (n=61)	Abstainers or infrequent drinkers ² Percentage (n=245)
Less noise	21	07
More noise	53	89
No difference	26	04
Total	100	100

1 When you are “drunk” how do you behave?
2 When people are “drunk” how do they behave?

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This difference is relevant to understanding the ‘causes’ of alcohol-induced disinhibition and aggressiveness. In this sample we found the phenomenon commoner in the daily drinkers than the 2 – 6 days-a-week drinkers. This may be because the daily drinkers have been drinking longer. It may take longer to graduate to the state of becoming ‘disinhibited’ after alcohol. Daily drinkers have probably been drinking for longer and so have had more time to ‘learn’ this behaviour. Or it may be because the daily drinkers were older (more than 65% over 25 years of age versus 42% over 25 years among the others) and therefore had anyway more authority to be loud or aggressive.

2.5 Subjective effect of alcohol

Our questionnaire did not try to separate the ‘chemical’ from other effects of alcohol, but asked people how they felt after alcohol use or what they believed people experienced after drinking alcohol. About half (157 or 51%) said they or others felt more happy after alcohol while 39% (120) gave ‘less happy’ as the experience. Less than 10% said there was no effect. ‘More happy’ as the feeling experienced after drinking alcohol was more commonly given by more frequent users (66%) while lower proportions of occasional users (58%) and abstainers (45%) said so.

Over 16% of daily users reported that they felt less happy after drinking alcohol. Nearly half of never-users believed that people felt less happy after drinking alcohol. Whether the latter were referring to people feeling ‘unhappy’ that they had consumed alcohol rather than finding the experience itself unpleasant is not clear.

Table 9 Subjective effect of alcohol- more or less happy

Behaviour	Daily or frequent drinkers ¹ Percentage (n=61)	Abstainers or infrequent drinkers ² Percentage (n=245)
Less happy	12	46
More happy	66	48
No difference	23	06
Total	100	100

1 After you drink alcohol how do you feel?

2 What does a person feel after drinking alcohol?

A large number (237 or 77%) said that alcohol led to more crying and talking about problems than the non-alcohol state. Over 80% of occasional and never users said people cry more after alcohol use while only 56% of daily drinkers and 47% of 2 – 6 days a week drinkers said so. Once again, the 2 – 6 days-a-week drinkers do not fall in-between the daily drinkers and the occasional or non-users.

Table 10 Subjective effect of alcohol- crying or grumbling

Behaviour	Daily or frequent drinkers ¹ Percentage (n=61)	Abstainers or infrequent drinkers ² Percentage (n=245)
Cry or talk about problems less	13	07
Cry or talk of problems more	51	84
No difference	36	09
Total	100	100

1 After you drink alcohol how do you feel?

2 What does a person feel after drinking alcohol?

Finally, we asked directly about the pleasantness or unpleasantness of the act of drinking alcohol as well as that of ‘being drunk’. The act of drinking was rated as a pleasant and easy experience by 98 subjects (32%) while ‘being drunk’ was reported as pleasant and easy by just 42 (14%). The change from pleasant to unpleasant between the ‘act of drinking’ and ‘being drunk’ was found among all levels of consumption, but the least change was among daily drinkers. Fourteen daily drinkers of 25 (56%) had reported the act of drinking as pleasant and easy while 12 reported that being drunk too was so. In all other levels of consumption, there was a much larger proportion that changed their assessment. Of those who consumed alcohol once a week or less as many as 63% (33 of 52) said that the act of drinking was an unpleasant or uncomfortable experience while 41 of them (79%) reported that being drunk was unpleasant or uncomfortable.

2.6 Image of alcohol users

Fifty nine percent of respondents rated alcohol users as less attractive than others and 20 % found them more attractive – with a similar number seeing no difference. Perhaps unsurprisingly, among those who reported drinking twice a week or more (including daily) a smaller proportion (34%) thought alcohol users were less attractive than others and 33% thought that they were more attractive. Sixty five percent of abstainers and occasional users thought users were less attractive.

Alcohol users were rated stronger than the others by 97 and weaker or inferior to others by 150 (49%). Among frequent users 57% thought they were stronger and 23% that they were weaker. The proportions being in the opposite direction among the abstainers and occasional users. On enjoyment of life, the majority rated alcohol users lower than the others 62% versus 23%. The opinion of 48% of frequent drinkers was that users enjoyed life more while 34% still felt that they enjoyed life less than non-users.

Table 11 Evaluation of the act of drinking alcohol

Behaviour	Daily or frequent drinkers ¹ Percentage (n=61)	Abstainers or infrequent drinkers ² Percentage (n=245)
Is pleasant and easy	59	25
Is unpleasant and difficult	23	65
Neither pleasant or unpleasant	18	10
Total	100	100

Table 12 Evaluation of being “drunk”

Behaviour	Daily or frequent drinkers ¹ Percentage (n=61)	Abstainers or infrequent drinkers ² Percentage (n=245)
Is pleasant and easy	31	09
Is unpleasant and difficult	43	83
Neither pleasant or unpleasant	26	07
Total	100	100

1 When you are drinking alcohol how do you feel?

2 What does a person feel, when drinking alcohol?

1 When ‘drunk’ how do you feel?

2 What does a person feel when ‘drunk’?

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Table 13 Image of alcohol user-attractiveness

In age	Daily or frequent drinkers ¹ Percentage (n=61)	Abstainers or infrequent drinkers ² Percentage (n=245)
Less attractive	34	65
More attractive	33	18
No difference	33	18
Total	100	100

The majority of frequent users (29 vs. 21) felt that alcohol users enjoy life more rather than less, compared to non-users. This is in keeping with the common perception that alcohol use is ‘fun’. The relatively small majority is rather surprising, especially since this is among a group regularly and frequently using alcohol.

Abstainers and occasional users on the other hand felt overwhelmingly (170 vs. 42) that alcohol users in fact enjoyed life less than non-users. This is quite contrary to the perception that alcohol use promotes fun and enjoyment and that abstainers are killjoys.

Table 14 Image of alcohol user-strength

In age	Daily or frequent drinkers ¹ Percentage (n=61)	Abstainers or infrequent drinkers ² Percentage (n=245)
Stronger than others	57	25
Less strong (more submissive) than others	23	56
No difference	20	19
Total	100	100

On one characteristic alone, a clear majority of even the daily or frequent gave a ‘negative’ opinion about alcohol users. This was on whether alcohol users were less intelligent or more intelligent than the others.

The combined totals for all 306 of the sample showed that 151 (49%) thought users were less intelligent while 21 (7%) said they were more so. This was the characteristic with the starkest reported difference. Even among the 61 daily or frequent users, a clear majority (23 against 11) thought that alcohol users, namely they themselves, were less intelligent than ‘non-users’.

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Table 15 Image of alcohol user-enjoying life

In age	Daily or frequent drinkers ¹ Percentage (n=61)	Abstainers or infrequent drinkers ² Percentage (n=245)
Enjoys life more	48	17
Enjoys life less	34	69
No difference	18	14
Total	100	100

Table 16 Image of alcohol user-intelligence

In age	Daily or frequent drinkers ¹ Percentage (n=61)	Abstainers or infrequent drinkers ² Percentage (n=245)
Less intelligent	38	52
More intelligent	18	9
No difference	44	39
Total	100	100

2.7 Comment

Each of these findings calls for much discussion and speculation, especially regarding possible causality among these associations. Even more discussion is possible about the direction of any possible causality. Are alcohol users less intelligent and less attractive than others, as the majority of our respondents seem to think? If indeed they are, does the alcohol use cause or result from the characteristic?

More significant perhaps is that the proportions who gave opinions about any of the characteristics concerned were very similar between daily users and those who used alcohol 2–6 days a week. And their opinions diverged widely from the others. The ‘others’ were the occasional alcohol users (once a week or less) and the abstainers. Abstainers and occasional users appear very close to each other in all their evaluations.

In fact, the occasional drinkers and abstainers had close to identical proportions holding the same opinion on nearly all of the preceding parameters. So we combined the results of abstainers and occasional users into one column. The opinions of daily and frequent users (2 to 6 days a week) too were combined for the same reason.

The terms ‘alcohol user’ and ‘abstainer’ are frequently and readily used in Sri Lanka. This terminology creates a division along an artificial line, it appears. The more ‘natural’ line appears to be between the occasional user and non-user population on the one hand and the frequent (daily and twice week or more) users on the other.