BACKGROUND

• In the UK, the Chief Medical Officer\(^\text{1}\) has reported that a consumption higher than 14 units of alcohol per week increases the risk of alcohol abuse and associated disorders in individuals.

• During the last decades, many studies have focused on the processes underlying alcohol usage and have shown greater cognitive and attentional biases for alcohol-related stimuli in heavy drinkers compared to light drinkers.\(^2\)

• Recently, holistic processing tasks were proposed as a novel method to explore alcohol consumption.\(^3\) However, to our knowledge, only one study has directly investigated it.

AIM

• The present study aimed to examine whether heavy drinkers (HDs) and light drinkers (LDs) differ on alcohol-related stimuli processing toward the analysis of the inversion task.

• Moreover, this study aimed to investigate whether HDs and LDs differ on reporting cognitive and attentional biases for alcohol-related stimuli.

METHOD

Thirty-eight native English-speakers from the UK (male=25, mean age= 29.69 years, range 18-60 years old) completed the experiment online via Testable (www.testable.org).

The two groups of participants were classified as LDs (weekly unit count: 1-4 units) and HDs (weekly unit count: 14-40). Participants were asked to complete the following tasks:

- **Rough Estimation Task (REST)**
- **Dot Probe Task**
- **Inversion Task**

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

• These results indicate that alcohol-related stimuli were prioritised in HDs, but the reduced inversion effect for such stimuli is inconsistent with the hypothesis that alcohol-related stimuli were holistically processed. To our knowledge only one study previously explored alcohol consumption in relation to holistic processes, therefore further investigations are needed to overcome these conflicting results.

• Moreover, this study confirmed cognitive biases for alcohol-related stimuli in HDs reporting a distorted perception of availability of alcoholic cues in the surrounding environment.

• Surprisingly, HDs and LDs did not differ on reporting attentional biases investigated through the dot-probe task. Future inclusion of eye-movements measures might increase the reliability of the task itself, allowing to identify attentional biases more easily.

REFERENCES

1. https://www.nhs.uk/