



The feasibility and effectiveness of a web-based alcohol intervention in UK university students

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Background: National context

- ▶ The Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy for England (2004) has a focus on tackling the harm caused by alcohol consumption among young people.
- ▶ It is a minority of 18-24 year old binge drinkers who are responsible for the majority of alcohol-related crime and disorder (Safe. Sensible. Social, 2007).
- ▶ The UK Royal College of Psychiatrists (2003) highlighted the extent of alcohol misuse amongst the student population as an area of concern.



University of Leeds: UNIQoLL

- ▶ Approximately 90% of students consume alcohol.
- ▶ At year 1 approximately 50% of students are within weekly sensible drinking guidelines (i.e. ♀ < 14 / ♂ < 21 males).
- ▶ Approximately 5% of students are drinking at levels associated with high levels of health risk (i.e. ♀ > 35 / ♂ > 50)



Background: e-health, alcohol and social norms

- ▶ Health behaviour change using the internet is still in the early stages of development but there is increasing interest in its application.
- ▶ Information on the feasibility, utility and effectiveness of web-based interventions is limited (Ritterband et al., 2003; Evers et al, 2005).
- ▶ Pre-post results provide some evidence that personalised feedback interventions may be able to reduce unit quantity, maximum consumption per occasion and the frequency of heavy drinking
- ▶ The level and quality of evidence available is relatively poor and therefore further evidence from randomised control trials is needed.



e-UNICAL: Aims

To investigate the feasibility and effectiveness of delivering an electronic feedback and social norms intervention designed to decrease UNiversity students' Consumption of ALcohol



e-UNICAL: survey content

- ▶ CAGE screening test for alcohol dependence
- ▶ Average number of alcoholic drinks consumed per occasion
- ▶ Number of alcoholic drinks consumed in the last week



e-UNICAL: Student engagement

- 68% UNIQoLL participants expressed interest
- 1075 invited to take part
- 541 gave consent & completed pre
- n=509 were consumers of alcohol



Demographics

- ▶ 69% Female
- ▶ 49% Final Year
- ▶ Mean age 21.3_±3.7

Baseline characteristics

- ▶ 55% ≥ CAGE score of above 1
- ▶ 48% > ♀14/♂21 units per week
- ▶ 6% ≥ ♀35/♂50 units per week



e-UNICAL: Personalised feedback

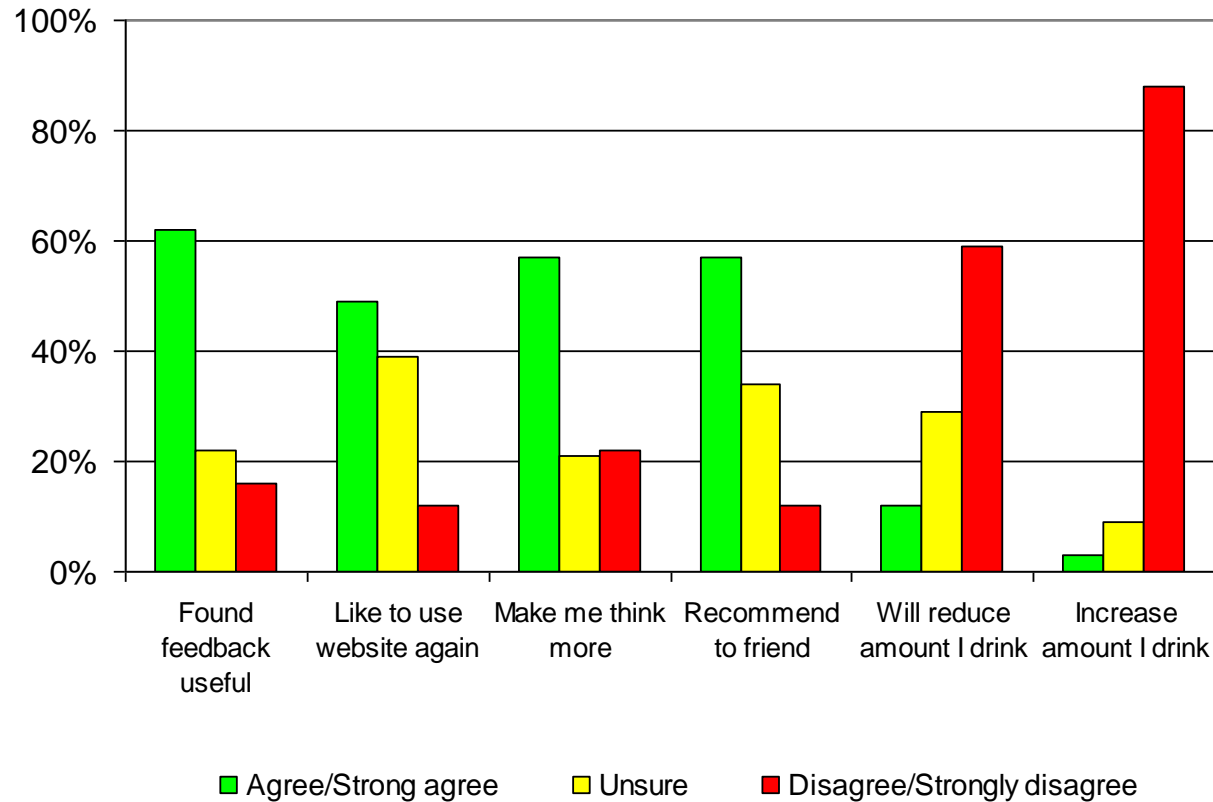
- ▶ Alcohol consumption
 - Units consumed per week
 - Number of alcohol free days
 - Binge drinking behaviour

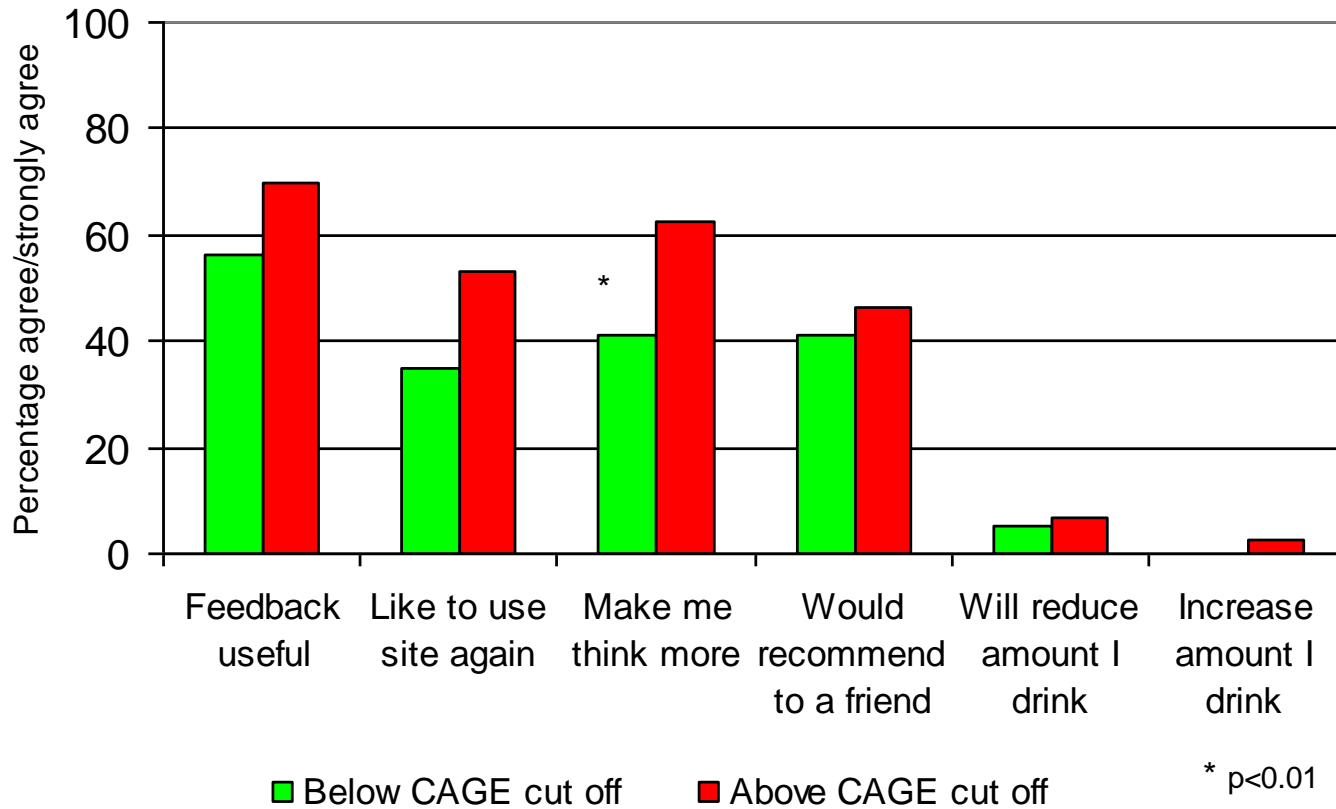
- ▶ Social norms
 - The percentage of students who drink less than them
 - Perceived negative effects of alcohol perceived by other students who consume a similar amount of alcohol.

- ▶ Information on support services

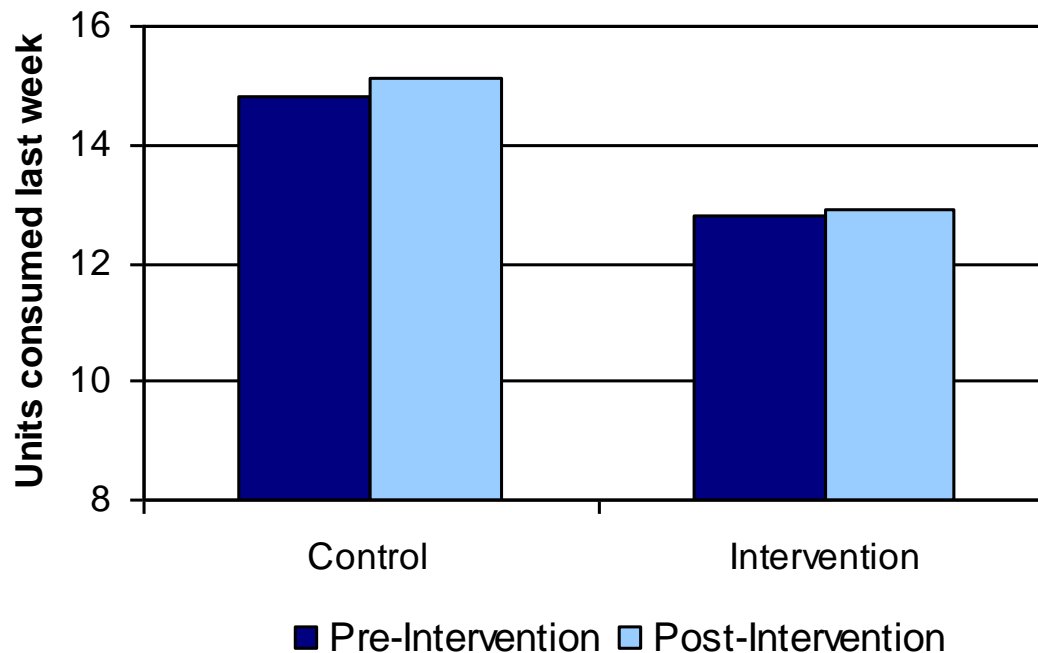


What did students think?

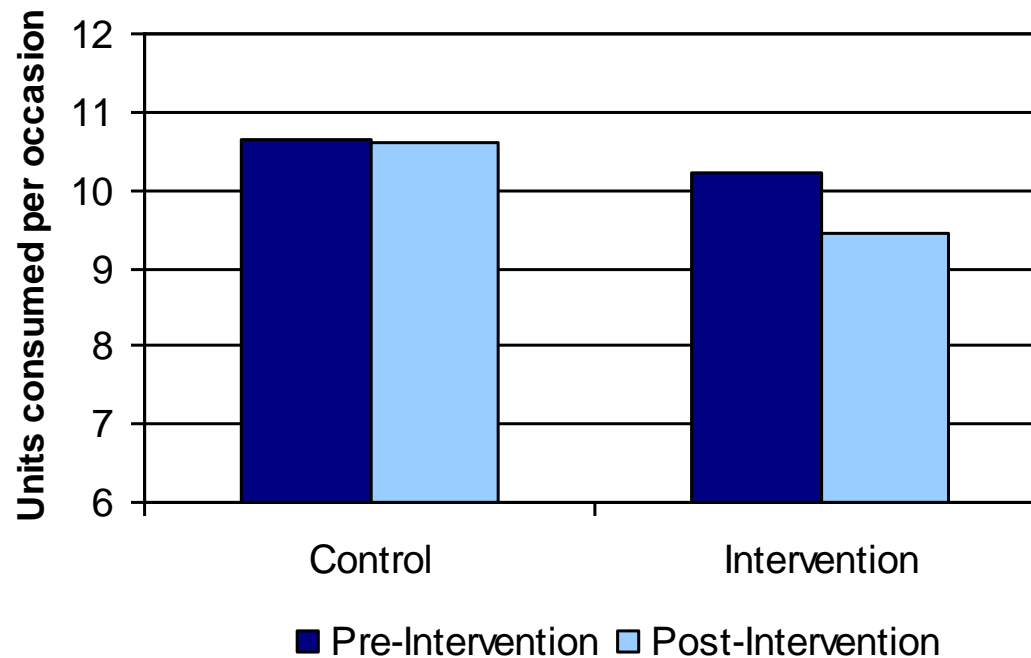


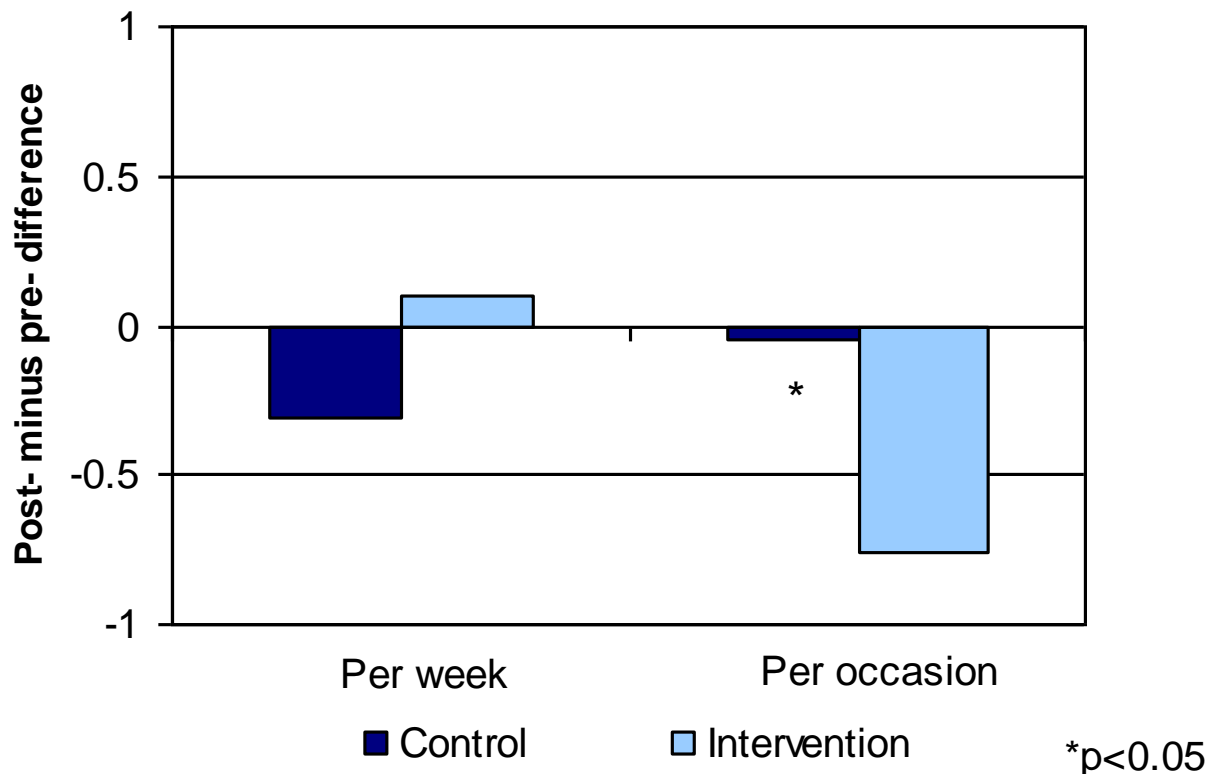


Was there a change in consumption per week?



Was there a change in consumption per occasion?



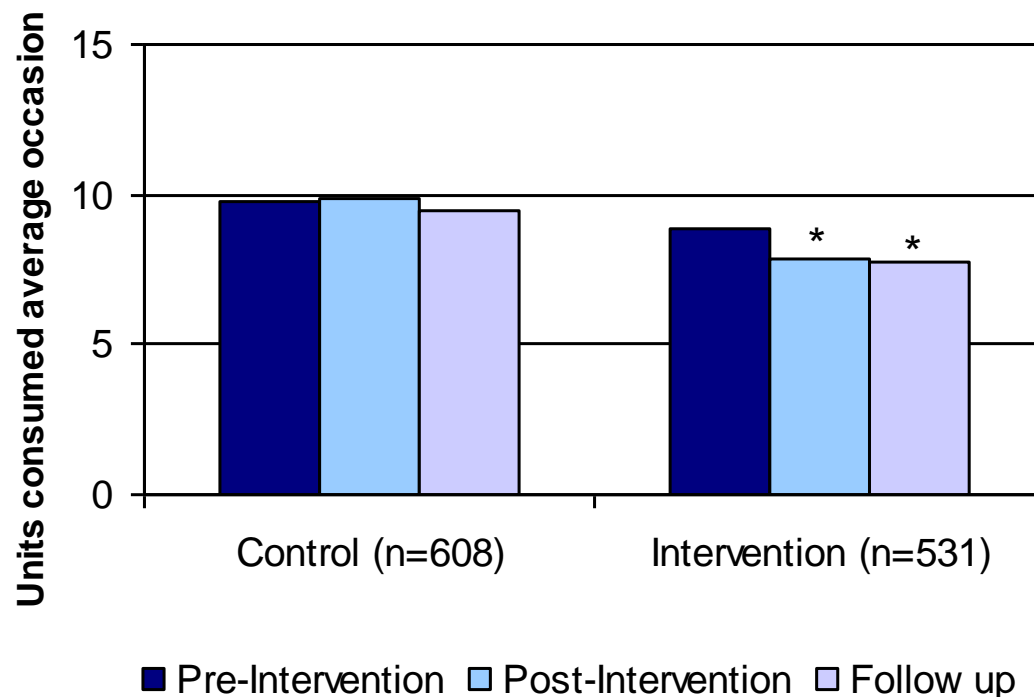


e-UNICAL phase II: Main study

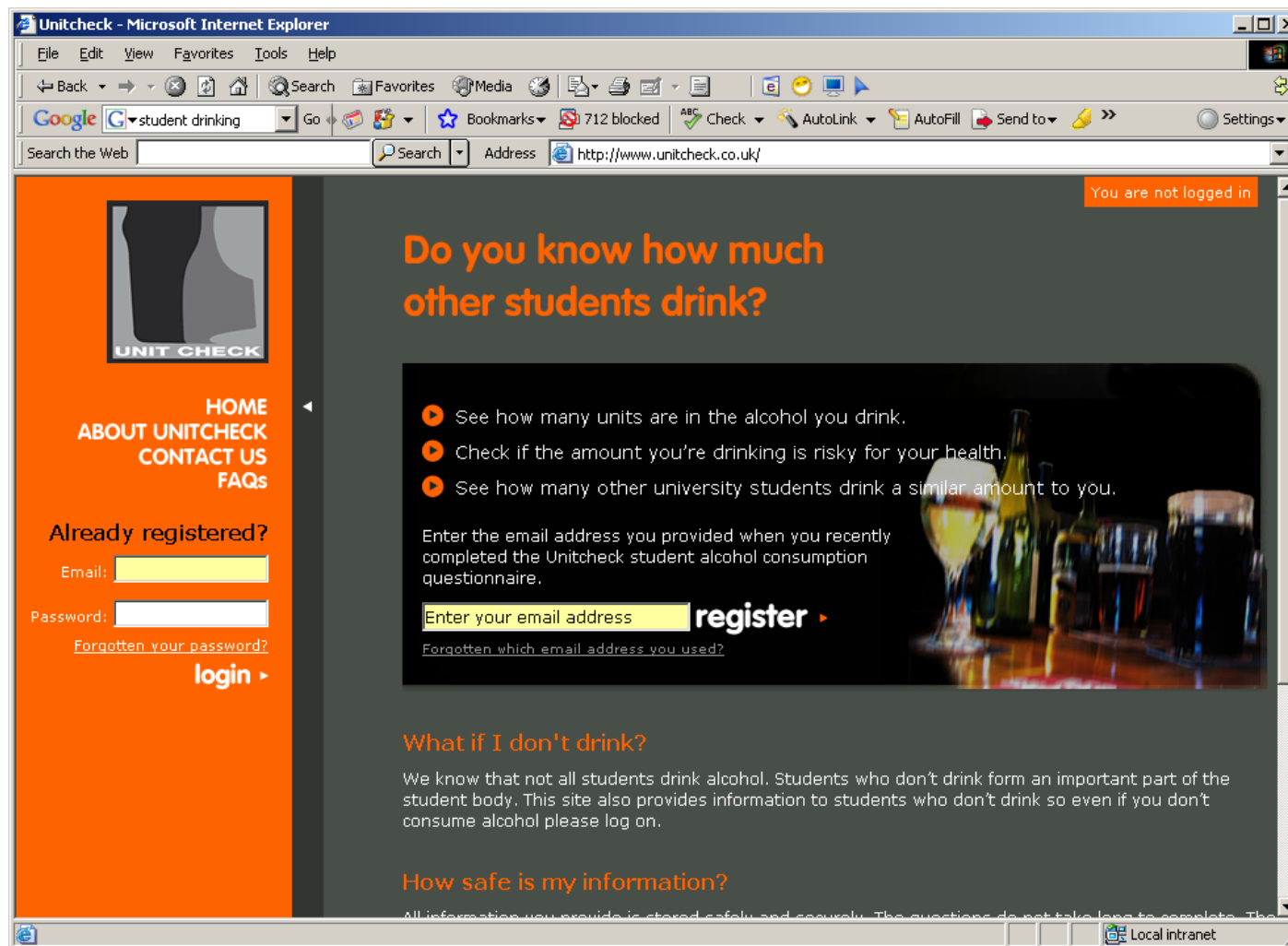
- ▶ Recruit larger numbers (n=1139)
- ▶ More detailed recording of consumption
- ▶ Investigate the relationship between consumption and other behaviours
- ▶ Incorporate 3 month follow-up



e-UNICAL phase II: Preliminary results



Will the intervention work outside of the UoL?



The screenshot shows a Microsoft Internet Explorer browser window displaying the Unitcheck website. The browser's address bar shows the URL <http://www.unitcheck.co.uk/>. The website has a dark grey background with orange accents. On the left, there is a vertical orange sidebar with the Unitcheck logo and navigation links: HOME, ABOUT UNITCHECK, CONTACT US, and FAQs. Below these links are login fields for 'Email:' and 'Password:', a link for 'Forgotten your password?', and a 'login >' button. The main content area features the heading 'Do you know how much other students drink?' in orange. Below this is a list of three bullet points: 'See how many units are in the alcohol you drink.', 'Check if the amount you're drinking is risky for your health.', and 'See how many other university students drink a similar amount to you.' A photograph of a bar with bottles and glasses is visible in the background. Below the list, there is a registration form with a text input field containing 'Enter your email address', a 'register >' button, and a link for 'Forgotten which email address you used?'. At the bottom, there are sections for 'What if I don't drink?' and 'How safe is my information?'. The browser's taskbar at the bottom shows the 'Local intranet' icon.

Thanks for listening



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