

# **“ALCOHOL STRATEGY”**

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- **Introduction**

## **Alcohol**

- **Key role in Irish social and cultural life**
- **Key role in Irish economy**
- **Health benefits of low alcohol consumption**

## **However Alcohol is not an ordinary commodity**

- **A drug of dependence**
- **An intoxicant**
- **Can impair motor skills and judgement**
- **Cause of much individual and societal harm**

# Alcohol consumption in Ireland

- **2008 Average rate of consumption of pure alcohol per adult 12.4 litres**
- **In 20 year period 1988-2008 consumption per adult increased from 10.1 litres to 12.4 litres or an increase of 23%**
- **Between 2007 and 2008 alcohol consumption per adult decreased by 7.5% probably due to people having less money due to the recession but also maybe due to an increase in cross border shopping**
- **During this 20 year period beer consumption decreased by 11% and spirit consumption by 4%**
- **However wine consumption increased by 313% and cider by 365%-admittedly from a very low base.**
- **We, Irish are among the highest consumers of alcohol in the world!!!**

# Patterns of drinking (Slan survey)

- **As well as per capital consumption patterns of drinking also can cause alcohol related harm and again we in Ireland are risky and problematic drinkers!**
- **It is estimated that 250,000 people are alcohol dependent**
- **10% of drinkers drink more than the recommended weekly limit (21 standard drinks for men, 14 for women)**
- **28% engage in weekly binge drinking (consuming at least 60g of alcohol on a single occasion)**
- **A European study in 2006 showed that 54% of respondents in Ireland consumed at least five drinks on one occasion at least weekly. European average was 28%**

# Alcohol use among young people

- **2006 HBSC study showed that over half of schoolchildren aged 16 or over reported ever having been drunk**
- **Only minor differences between boys and girls**
- **18% of 16 year old boys and 11% of girls reported having been drunk at least 10 times**
- **Heavy drinking in adolescence is related to problem alcohol use in adulthood**
- **People who begin drinking before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence at some time in their lives than those who have their first drink aged 20 or older**
- **The American Medical Association (2002) stated that an adolescent need drink only half as much as an adult to experience the same negative effects and even occasional binge drinking can damage the young brain.**

# **Alcohol related harm in Ireland**

**Alcohol misuse associated with many serious health and social problems and negative consequences of alcohol use impact on all facets of society**

- **Heart disease**
- **Strokes**
- **Accidents**
- **Assaults**
- **Family problems**
- **Violence**
- **Public disturbances**
- **Anti-social behaviour**
  
- **Alcohol-related harm not only confined to the minority of heavy drinkers.**  
**Problems such as aggression, injuries, violence, and poor work patterns are accounted for by the much greater number of low-medium who drink to excess on occasion.**

- **Alcohol and the problems associated with drink driving have been well documented.**
- **It is now clear that there are connections between alcohol consumption and criminal violence**
- **Garda pulse data for the years 2003-2007 show that that total number of drunkenness, public order and assault offences increased by 30% .**
- **Typical profile of a drunken, public order or assault offender was that of a male under 24.**
- **The 18-24 age group accounted for two fifths of offences**
- **Under 18's accounted for 17% of offenders**
- **While we have little research here in Ireland about the extent of the problems associated with key issues such as alcohol and the family, the work place or the issue of alcohol harm to people other than the drinker we do know that there are significant problems there too.**



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