

*Reducing alcohol harms in Ireland 2023:
Back to the future.
A clinician's view.*

Prof Frank Murray MD

Ireland scorecard in the global alcohol landscape

- **Ireland has done very well: PHAA 2018**
- Ireland is potentially stepping backwards: Sale of Alcohol Bill.
- No one responsible for alcohol sales and harms Ireland.
- No organization responsible for alcohol harms in Ireland.
- Voices of patients/others harmed not adequately heard
- Little public anger re alcohol harms.
- Alcohol treatment services inadequate.
- No alcohol clinical programme in HSE.
- Irish low risk alcohol guidelines outmoded and not evidence-based.
- Awful spectre of childhood drinking and drunkenness in Ireland.
- Powerful lobbying of alcohol industry.
- Alcohol industry does not pay for the financial costs of alcohol consumption.

Boy (13) drowned while trying to save friend

THE IRISH TIMES

Thu, May 2, 2019

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Boy (13) drowned while trying to save friend, inquest hears

Boy (13) drowned while trying to save friend

A group of two boys and one girl had met up before school on the date in question and gone to a field next to the River Lyreen, just outside Maynooth.

One of the three brought two bottles of gin, which they mixed with an energy drink, the inquest heard.

The group ate and talked and drank at the spot at Laraghbryan. The girl (13) said she does not recall the details of what happened next, but remembers the other two reaching for her to help her out of the river.

“Oisín reached too far and fell in,” she said. She said she was holding his hand but she could not hold on and he floated down the river.

“Oisín looked so panicked, I remember him spinning around and the current taking him,” she said.

The third teenager said the two boys were trying to rescue the girl from the banks of the river when Oisín fell in.

“Oisín lost his grip and slipped in. I brought [the girl] back to the bank and looked up and he wasn’t there. I grabbed her phone to call an ambulance,” he said.

Blood alcohol level 235mg%

THE IRISH TIMES

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Car drove over boy (15) with toxic alcohol levels lying on road, inquest hears

Driver tells of shock on returning to scene in Co Clare after car felt a 'bump'

Blood alcohol level 161mg%

Public Health (Alcohol) Act, 2018.

- Minimum unit *pricing* (MUP)
- Limited regulation of *marketing and advertising*
- Limited regulations of *sale, supply and consumption*
- *Separation* of alcohol from ordinary commodities
- Regulation of *sports sponsorship*
- Health *labelling* of alcohol products, including cancer warning

MUP in Scotland was associated with a 13% reduction in deaths wholly attributable to alcohol consumption

	Effect estimate, % (95% CI)	Effect estimate, N per year (95% CI)	p value
Deaths			
All deaths	-13.4% (-18.4 to -8.3)	-156 (-243 to -69)	0.0004
Deaths from chronic causes	-14.9% (-20.8 to -8.5)	-186 (-253 to -119)	<0.0001
Alcoholic liver disease	-11.7% (-16.7 to -6.4)	Not estimated	<0.0001
Alcohol dependence syndrome	-23.0% (-36.9 to -6.0)	Not estimated	0.0093
Deaths from acute causes	6.6% (-13.7 to 31.8)	10 (-3 to 23)	0.55
Hospitalisations			
All hospitalisations	-4.1% (-8.3 to 0.3)	-411 (-908 to 86)	0.064
Hospitalisations for chronic causes	-7.3% (-9.5 to -4.9)	-622 (-880 to -364)	<0.0001
Alcoholic liver disease	-9.8% (-17.5 to -1.3)	Not estimated	0.023
Alcohol dependence syndrome	7.2% (0.3 to 14.7)	Not estimated	0.039
Alcohol psychoses	-7.2% (-12.9 to -1.1)	Not estimated	0.019
Alcohol misuse	-2.1% (-13.2 to 10.5)	Not estimated	0.73
Hospitalisations for acute causes	9.9% (-1.1 to 22.0)	146 (-65 to 357)	0.076
Acute intoxication	3.9% (-11.0 to 21.2)	Not estimated	0.63

Table 1: Change in primary outcomes from controlled models associated with the implementation of alcohol minimum unit pricing legislation

(95% CI -18.4 to -8.3; p=0.0004)

Wyper GMA et al. *Lancet* 2023; 401: 1361–70

Hospitalisations wholly attributable to alcohol consumption decreased by 4%

	Deaths wholly attributable to alcohol consumption	Hospitalisations wholly attributable to alcohol consumption
Sex		
Males	-14.8% (-18.7 to -10.7)	-6.2% (-10.0 to -2.3)
Females	-12.0% (-20.5 to -2.6)	3.1% (-2.8 to 9.3)
Age group		
16-34 years	Not estimated	3.0% (-6.2 to 13.3)
35-64 years	-10.0% (-14.7 to -5.0)	-4.8% (-9.4 to 0.2)
≥65 years	-26.7% (-35.6 to -16.5)	-2.8% (-9.2 to 3.9)
Deprivation decile		
1 (Most deprived)	-21.6% (-31.8 to -10.0)	-6.8% (-11.9 to -1.3)
2	-17.5% (-27.5 to -5.9)	-4.5% (-10.8 to 2.3)
3	-33.6% (-43.4 to -22.1)	-6.3% (-11.3 to -1.0)
4	-19.3% (-29.4 to -7.7)	-6.9% (-11.4 to -2.3)
5	-9.7% (-27.2 to 12.2)	11.9% (-0.5 to 25.7)
6	-6.3% (-28.7 to 23.1)	-0.7% (-9.8 to 9.2)
7	-2.8% (-23.2 to 23.2)	0.7% (-7.6 to 9.7)
8	-9.2% (-28.3 to 14.8)	-1.2% (-8.1 to 6.4)
9	-2.9% (-23.5 to 23.2)	0.3% (-8.3 to 9.7)
10 (Least deprived)	-8.2% (-22.1 to 8.1)	-2.0% (-16.8 to 15.5)

Data are effect estimates, % (95% CI).

Table 2: Change in outcomes from controlled models associated with the implementation of alcohol minimum unit pricing legislation, by subgroup

(-8.3 to 0.3; p=0.064)

Effects were driven by significant improvements in chronic outcomes, particularly alcohol-related liver disease

MUP reduced deaths and hospitalisations wholly attributable to alcohol consumption in the four most deprived deciles in Scotland.

Deprivation decile		
1 (Most deprived)	-21.6% (-31.8 to -10.0)	-6.8% (-11.9 to -1.3)
2	-17.5% (-27.5 to -5.9)	-4.5% (-10.8 to 2.3)
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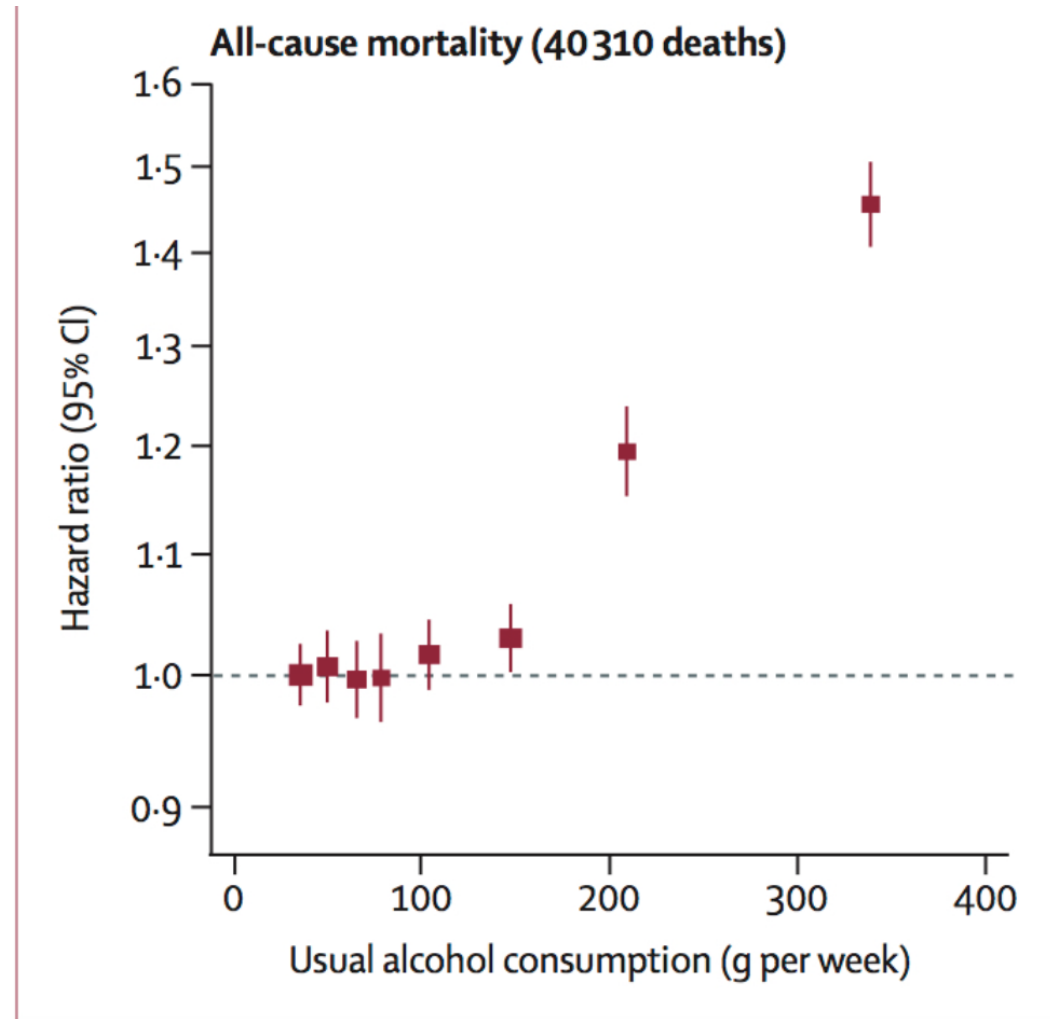
Powerful social justice argument for MUP

Sale of Alcohol Bill – a threat to progress

Sale of Alcohol Bill

- Easier to get a license
- Longer sales hours
- Online sales: inadequate protections for underage individuals
- Enforcement and monitoring

Alcohol use increases mortality



Future years of life lost due to alcohol

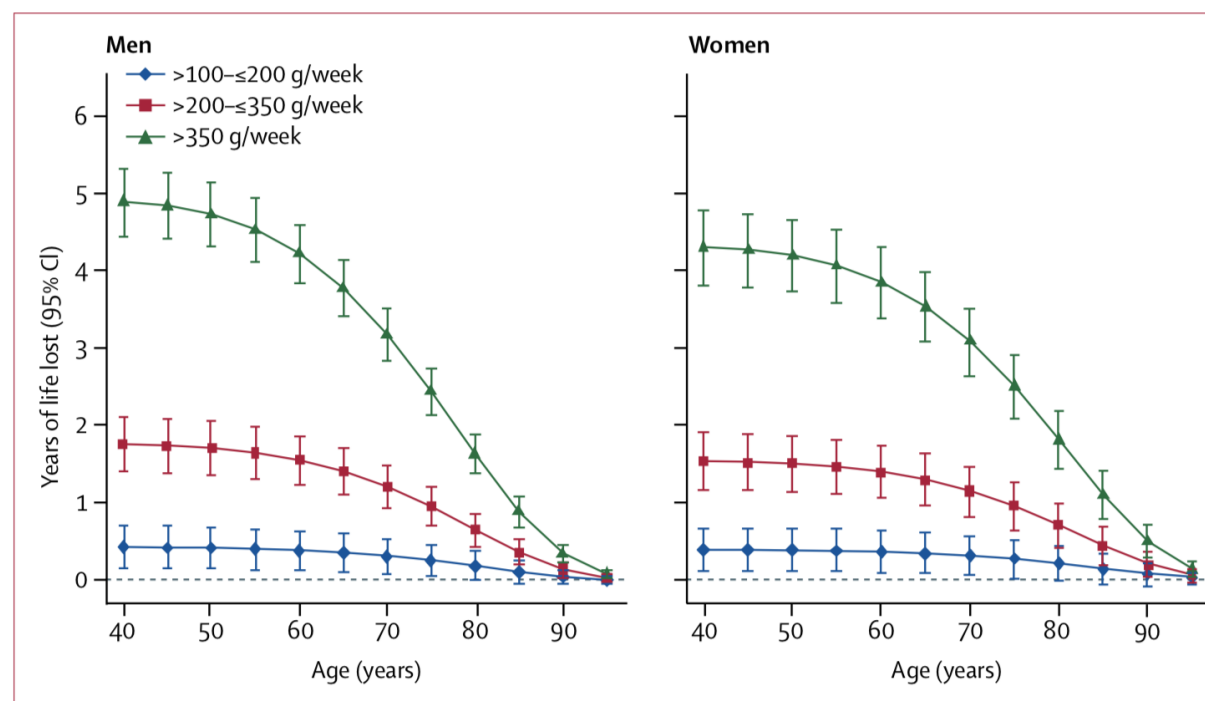


Figure 4: Estimated future years of life lost by extent of reported baseline alcohol consumption compared with those who reported consuming >0-≤100 g per week

Lancet 2018

Low risk alcohol consumption guidelines: Ireland and UK differ.

Irish guidelines outdated and not evidence-based.

• Ireland

- Men **17**
- Women **11**

884/572 standard drinks
per year

• UK 2016

- Men **11**
- Women **11**

Important task to undertake modernization

Standard (alcoholic) Drinks.

Most adults unaware!

Most underestimate consumption!

Beverage	Serving size	ABV	Grams of alcohol	Number of standard drinks
Beer	Pint	4.3%	19.5	2.0
Wine	Bottle (750 ml)	12.5%	75.0	7.5
Cider	Pint	4.5%	20.4	2.0
Vodka/gin/rum	Pub measure (35.5 ml)	37.5%	10.7	1.0
Vodka/gin/rum	Bottle (700 ml)	37.5%	210.0	21.0
Whiskey	Bottle (700 ml)	40.0%	224.0	22.5
Cream liqueur	Bottle (700 ml)	17.0%	95.2	9.5
Alcopops	Long neck bottle (275 ml)	4.0%	8.8	1.0

Reproduced from *A standard drink in Ireland: what is the strength?*¹⁸

Naggin 200ml
Shoulder 350ml

Alcohol consumption in Ireland 2022

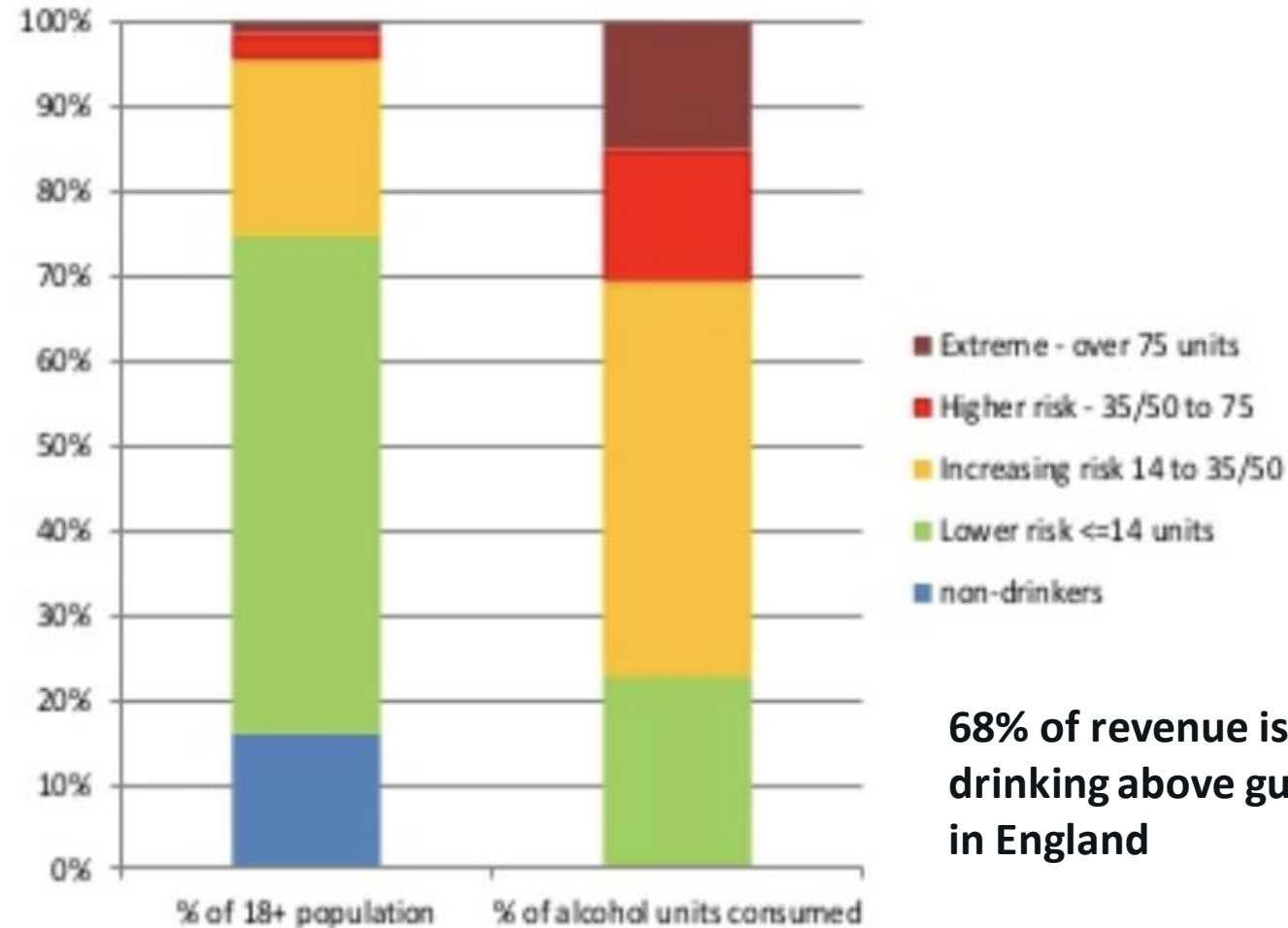
- **806** Standard Drinks per *capita* >15 years per year
- **1075** Standard Drinks per *drinker* per year
- i.e. average drinker in Ireland consumes almost **twice** the UK low risk guideline levels
- Low risk limits: 572/884 in Ireland

Annual alcohol use in Ireland is enormous



Who drinks what?

Quarter of population consumes three quarters of alcohol!

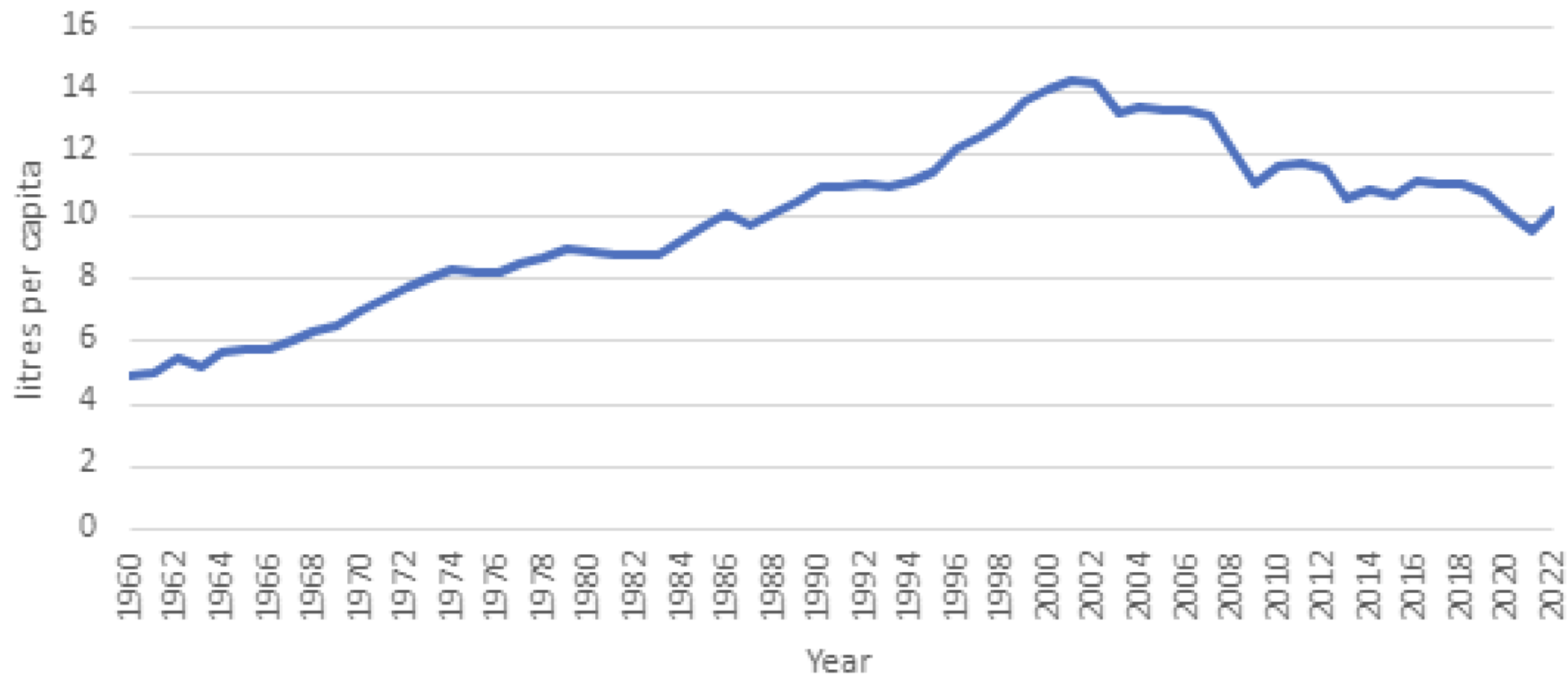


68% of revenue is from those drinking above guideline levels in England

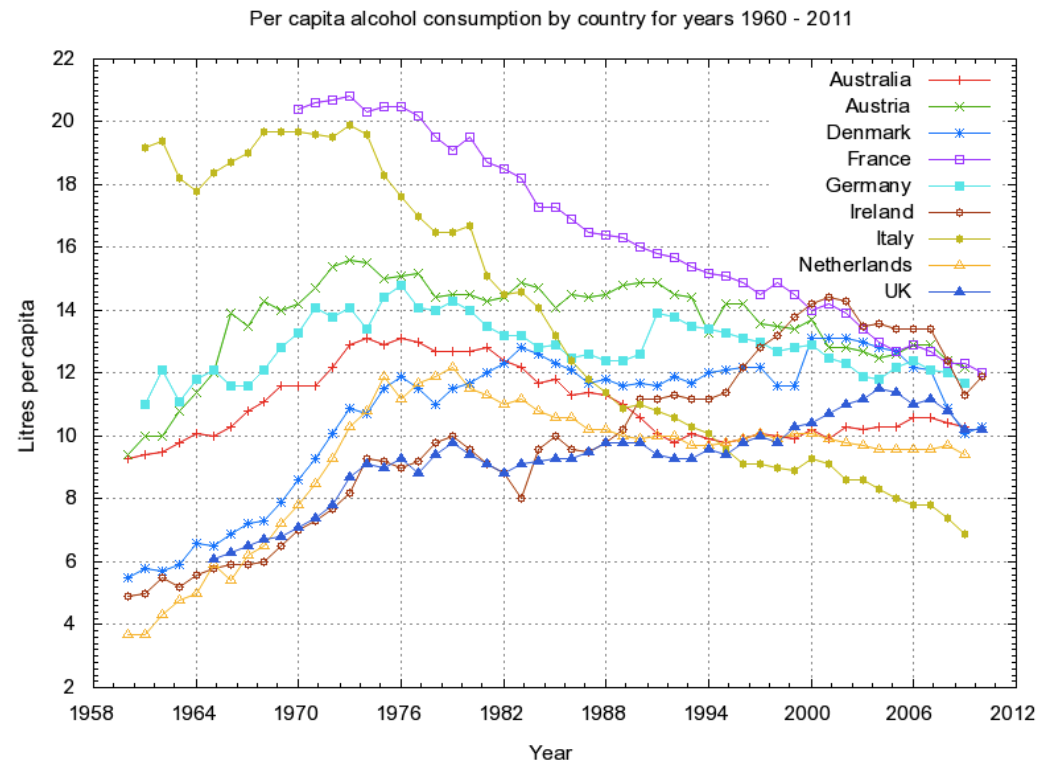
Consequences of alcohol use in Ireland

- 15% of Irish population have an Alcohol Use Disorder
- 4 deaths from alcohol per day, 1547 annually
- >11% of health care budget
- >€3.7 billion costs to society, likely twice that amount if including harm to others

Alcohol consumption per capita > 15y. Ireland.



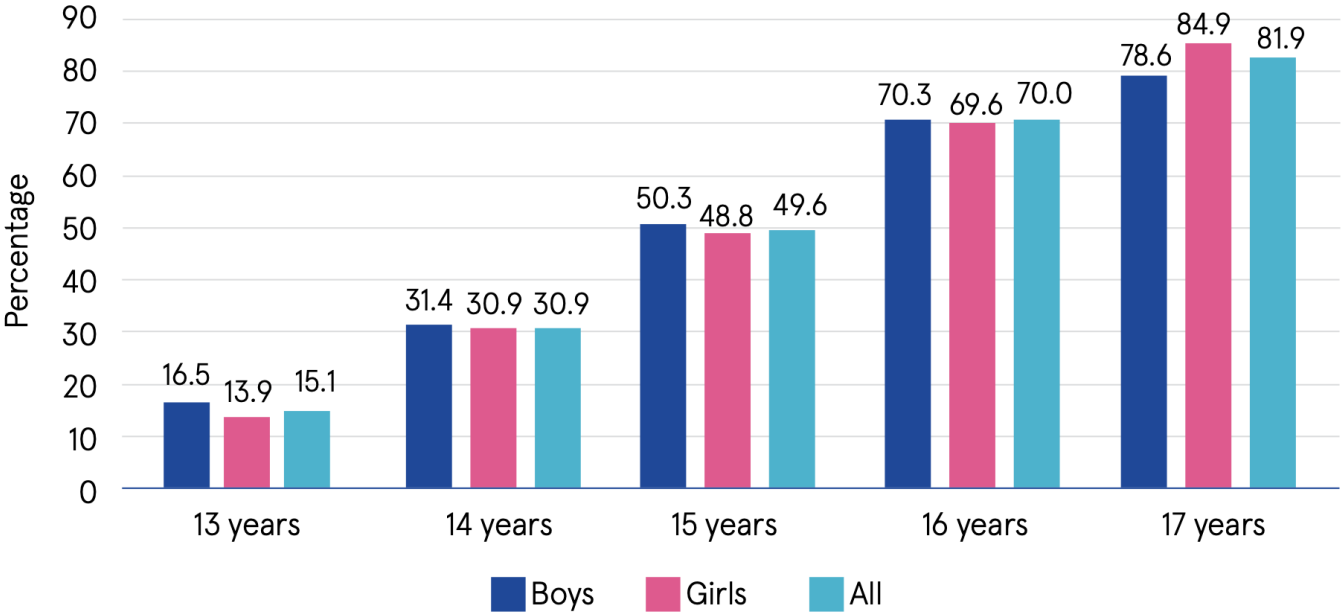
Per capita consumption of alcohol 1960-2011: OECD



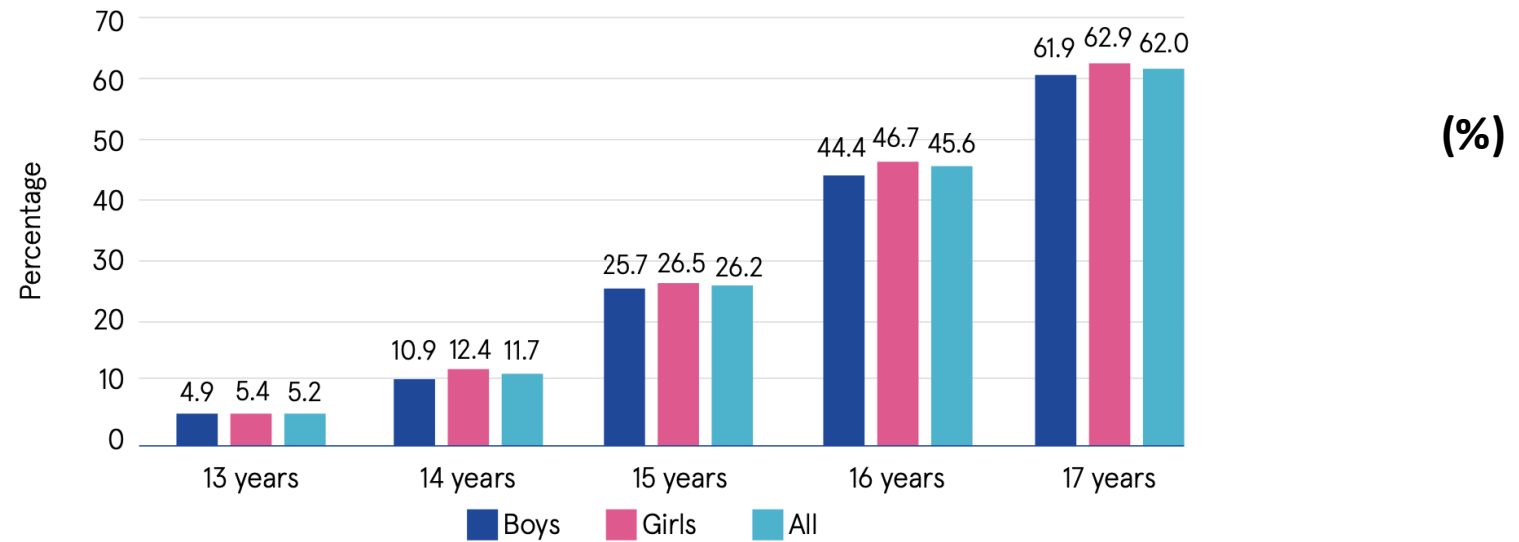
Children drinking alcohol and getting drunk

- A child protection issue
- Levels high in Ireland
- Widespread acceptance despite recognized harms

Schoolchildren: ever consumed an alcoholic drink in their lifetime



Most children in Ireland have been drunk or really drunk (%) by age 16 or 17 years



Alcohol use in pregnancy in Ireland

- Alcohol consumption in pregnancy: **no safe limit**
- FASD incidence unknown in Ireland, but estimated to be **third highest globally** by WHO..5%

1547 deaths in Ireland attributable to alcohol

Table 1. Total deaths from all causes, attributable to alcohol in 2019 in Ireland.

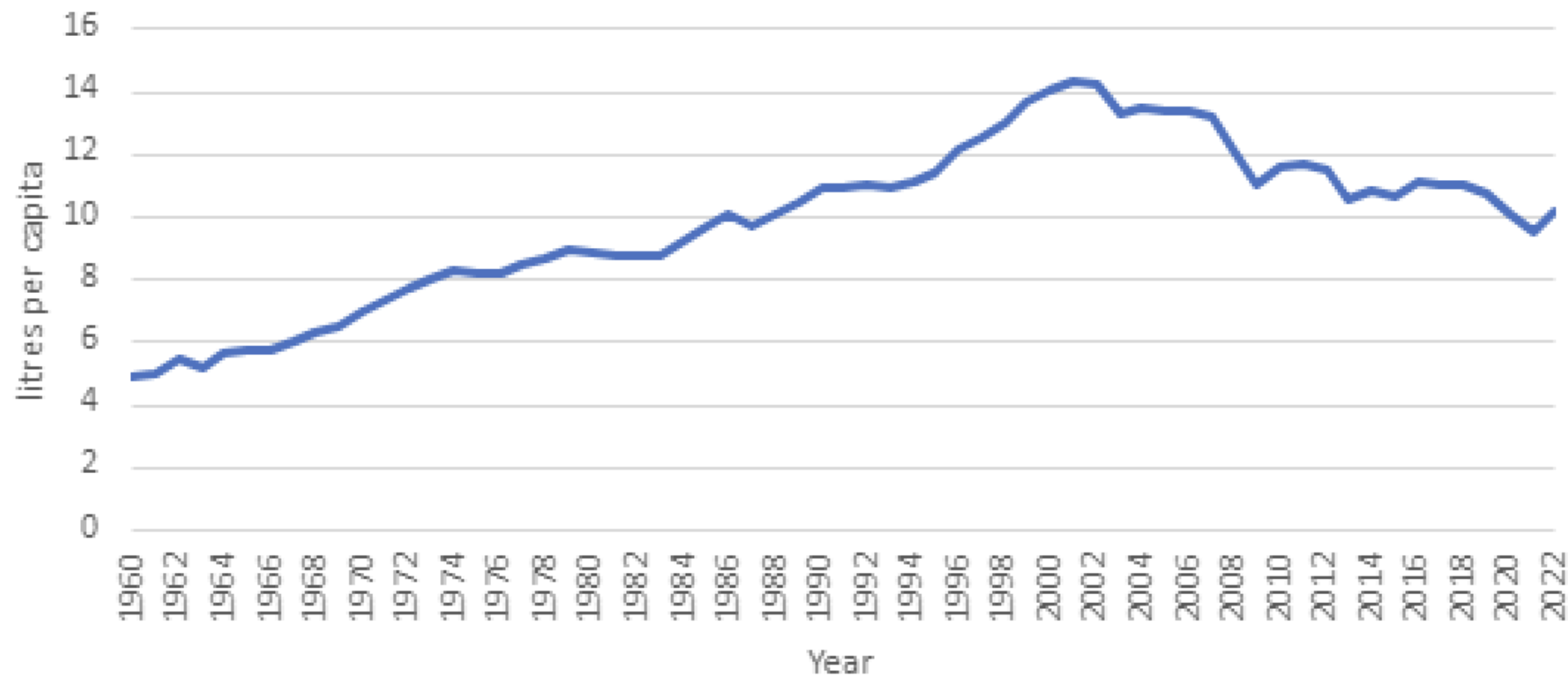
Sex	Age	n (95% Uncertainty Interval)	Rate per 100,000	% of total deaths
All	All	1543 (1237 – 1860)	31 (25 – 38)	4.77 (3.86 – 5.75)
Male	All	1104 (896 – 1327)	45 (37 – 55)	6.6 (5.37 – 7.93)
Female	All	439 (295 – 599)	18 (12 – 24)	2.81 (1.86 – 3.79)

The above deaths translated into losing a total of 62,237 DALYs (Disability-Adjusted-Life-years) attributable to alcohol in 2019.

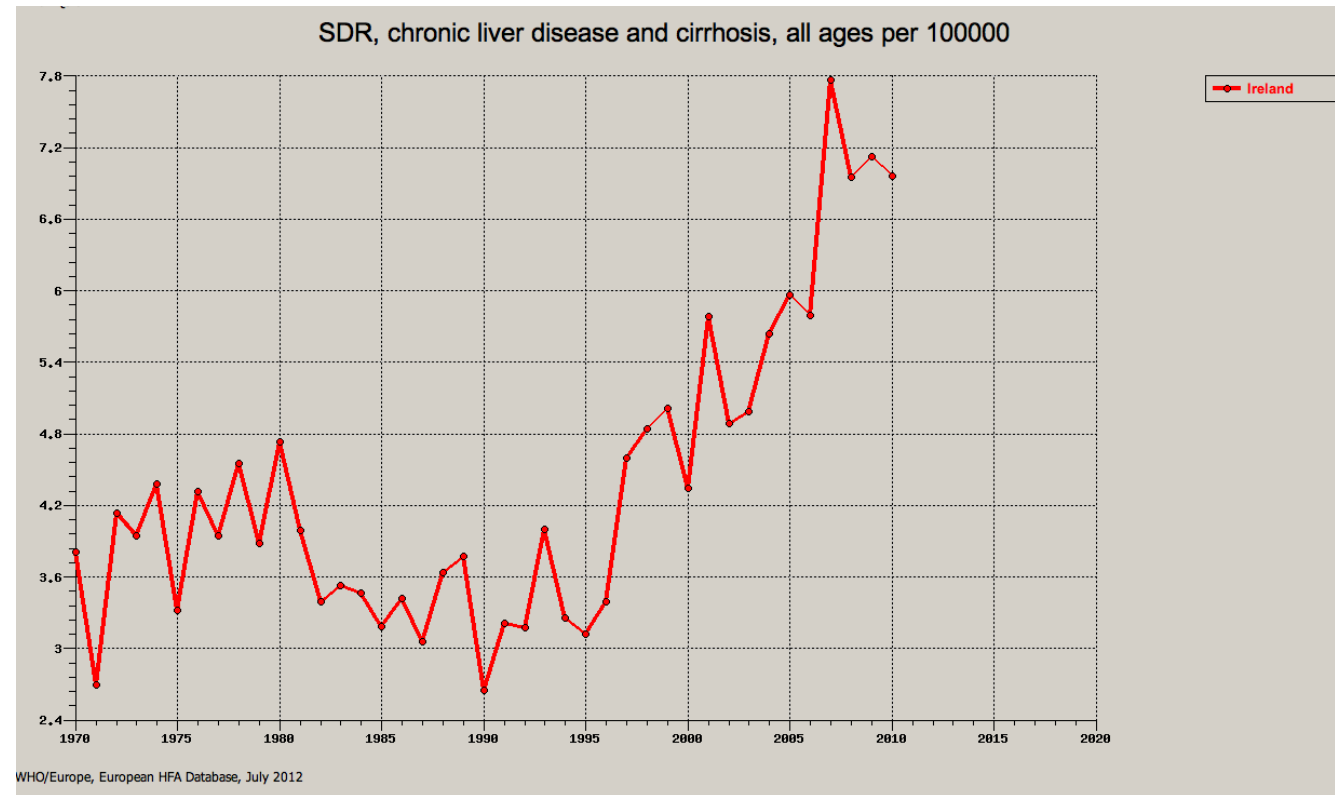
**5% of all deaths in Ireland in 2019 were
attributable to alcohol**

Zubair Kabir

Alcohol consumption per capita > 15y. Ireland.



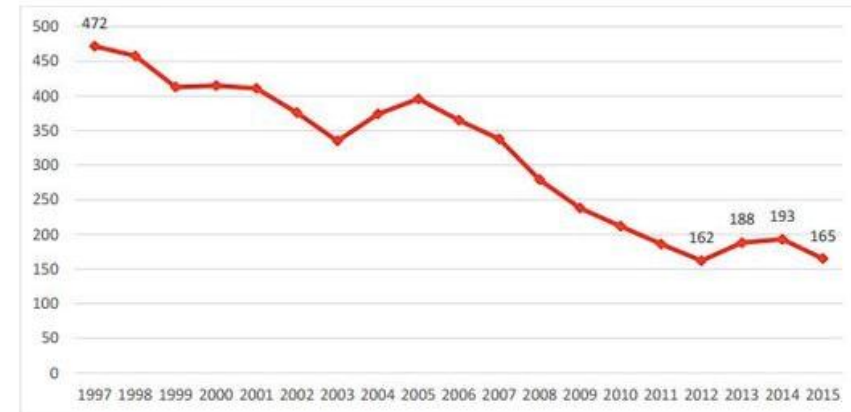
Death rate due to cirrhosis in Ireland triples



Contrast with road deaths

- 187 road deaths in 2016
- Dramatic fall in road deaths
- Lots of outcry/media coverage
- Statutory agency RSA

Fatalities by year, 1997-2015



We need a statutory agency in Ireland responsible for minimizing alcohol harms

The alcohol industry needs to pay for alcohol harms

- Not the taxpayer!

Revenue from alcohol taxes is far less than costs of alcohol to society

- Healthcare, productivity, mortality.

	Income	Cost
• France	4 billion.	102 billion. (OFDT)
• Germany	3 billion.	60 billion. (dhs.de/suechte/alkohle)

'ges lgage ners

Derville Rowland, deputy governor of the Central Bank for consumer and investor protection, said the regulator will continue to "scrutinise" lenders to make sure they are supporting borrowers who need help or wish to switch product or provider.

She said banks and other lenders "must be proactive, responsive and coordinated, and that expectation was reinforced at today's meeting".

Welcomed discussions

Banking and Payments Federation of Ireland chief executive Brian Hayes, the lobby group for the sector, welcomed discussions with the Minister and said the organisation is working closely with the Department of Finance, the regulator and other stakeholders on the issues raised.



High spirits **Jameson sales up 10% globally to a record 10.7m cases**

■ Jameson was among the top performing brands in French conglomerate Pernod Ricard's international spirits stable last year, with sales of the Midleton, Co Cork-made whiskey jumping another 10 per cent to a record 10.7 million cases. PHOTOGRAPH: AIDAN CRAWLEY/BLOOMBERG

Inflation down as ECB ponders rate rise

Effective evidenced-based policies to reduce alcohol harms

- Not widely implemented
- Implementation defect disorder!

Why is evidence not converted into policy and practice?

- Multinational alcohol companies
- Vested interests
- Ambivalence
- Many people want to be able to consume alcohol

- Much activity in Ireland around alcohol/pub

European Association for Study of Liver 2023



POLICY STATEMENT

EASL Policy Statement Reducing Alcohol Harms 2023



Reduce population-level alcohol consumption

All European Countries to implement a strategy to reduce alcohol-related harms

- Reduce affordability - Minimum Unit Price, Excise duties. Inflation- and effectiveness-linked
- Ban on alcohol marketing and sponsorship of sports and events
- Licensing system for alcohol sales. Health-oriented.
- Enforce drink-driving legislation
- Mandatory Health Warnings on alcohol products and mandatory ingredient and nutrition labelling



xx grams xxx kJ/ xxx kcal	DRINKING ALCOHOL CAUSES LIVER DISEASE
	THERE IS A DIRECT LINK BETWEEN ALCOHOL AND FATAL CANCERS
Visit www.askaboutalcohol.ie	

Recoup the cost of alcohol harm from the alcohol industry

Levy on alcohol industry akin to 'polluter pays' recommended



EASL recommends

All European countries implement a **strategy** to reduce alcohol-related harms.

A robust **mechanism and infrastructure** for the implementation of these measures should be established nationally to ensure effective coordination and independence from the alcohol industry.

Need to focus on *gap* between evidence and implementation of effective measures to reduce population-level alcohol consumption

Initiatives to consider to reduce alcohol harms in Ireland

- **Statutory authority** to reduce alcohol harms. Like RSA (Road safety Authority)
- Break link between **alcohol and sport**
- Focus on reducing **children drinking/drunkenness**
- **Levy** alcohol industry to pay for downstream costs of alcohol

Thank you