

# Dying for a Drink.

Ireland's problem with alcohol.

Prof Frank Murray MD

Chairman, Alcohol Action Ireland.



# 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

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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%**

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Thu

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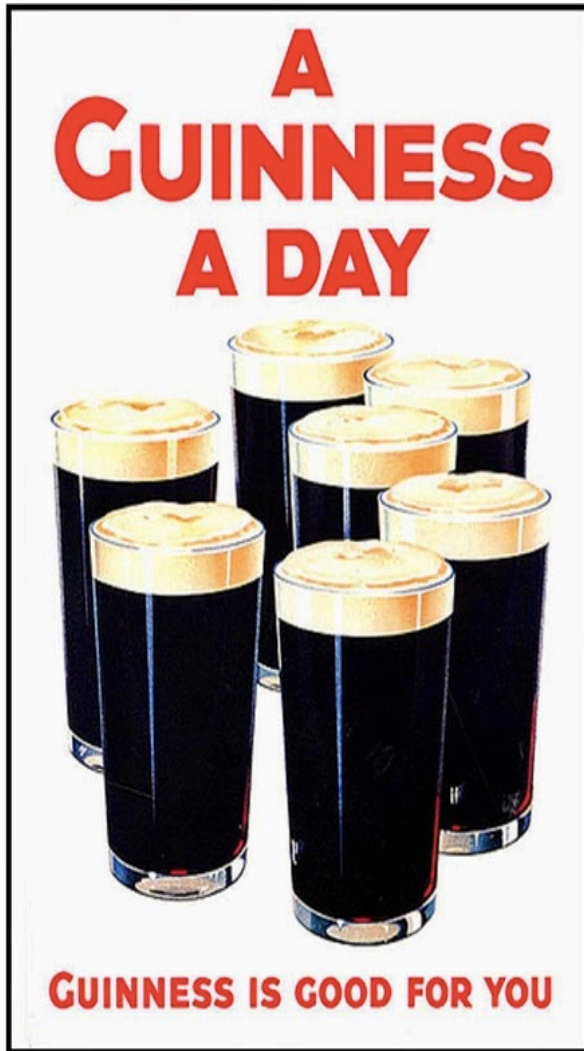
Courts > **Coroner's Court** | Supreme Court | High Court | C

## 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%**

# Mythology and misinformation





ROYAL COLLEGE OF  
PHYSICIANS OF IRELAND

There is an **urgent crisis**  
in Ireland as a result of  
**alcohol** consumption

# Alcohol consumption per capita: Ireland 1960-2012





# So how do Irish people consume alcohol?



# Most alcohol is consumed as part of a binge

## IRISH DRINKING IN 2013



# Most young adults binge drink

## IRISH DRINKING IN 2013

**75%**  
of alcohol consumed is  
part of a binge session



**65%**

of 18 – 24 year-old drinkers  
consume more than six standard  
drinks [binge] on typical occasion



**61%**

is the extent we underestimate  
our alcohol intake



**€50.6  
million**

total spend on alcohol  
in a week



# Most people underestimate their alcohol intake

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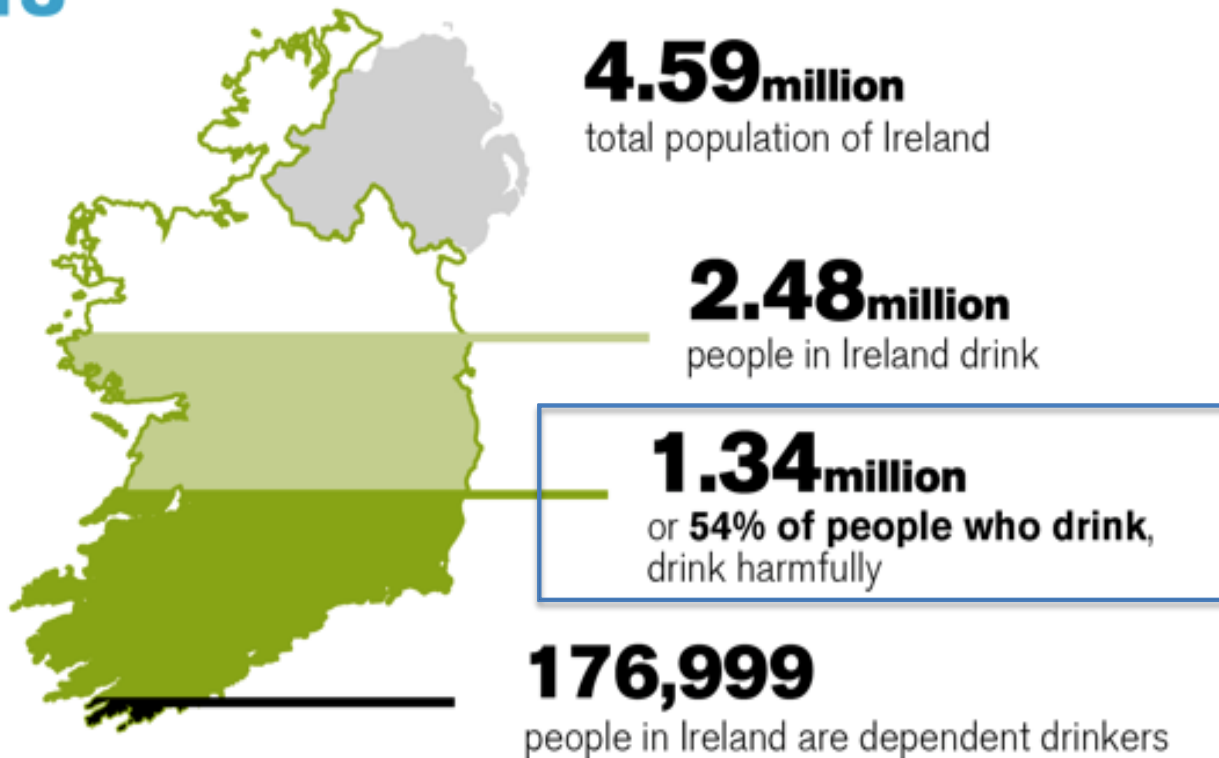
**€50.6 million**

total spend on alcohol in a week



# The MAJORITY in Ireland who use alcohol drink dangerously

## HARM FROM OUR DRINKING IN 2013





**Standard drinks:**

- 1,202 per year
- 23 per week
- UK low risk limits 11 per week

# WHO ranks Ireland second in binge drinking

- Ireland binge in previous 30 days **39%**.
- Austria first of 194 countries **40%**.
- U.K. **28%**.



# The European Schools Project for Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD) Survey. 2019. 15-16 year olds



March to June 2019

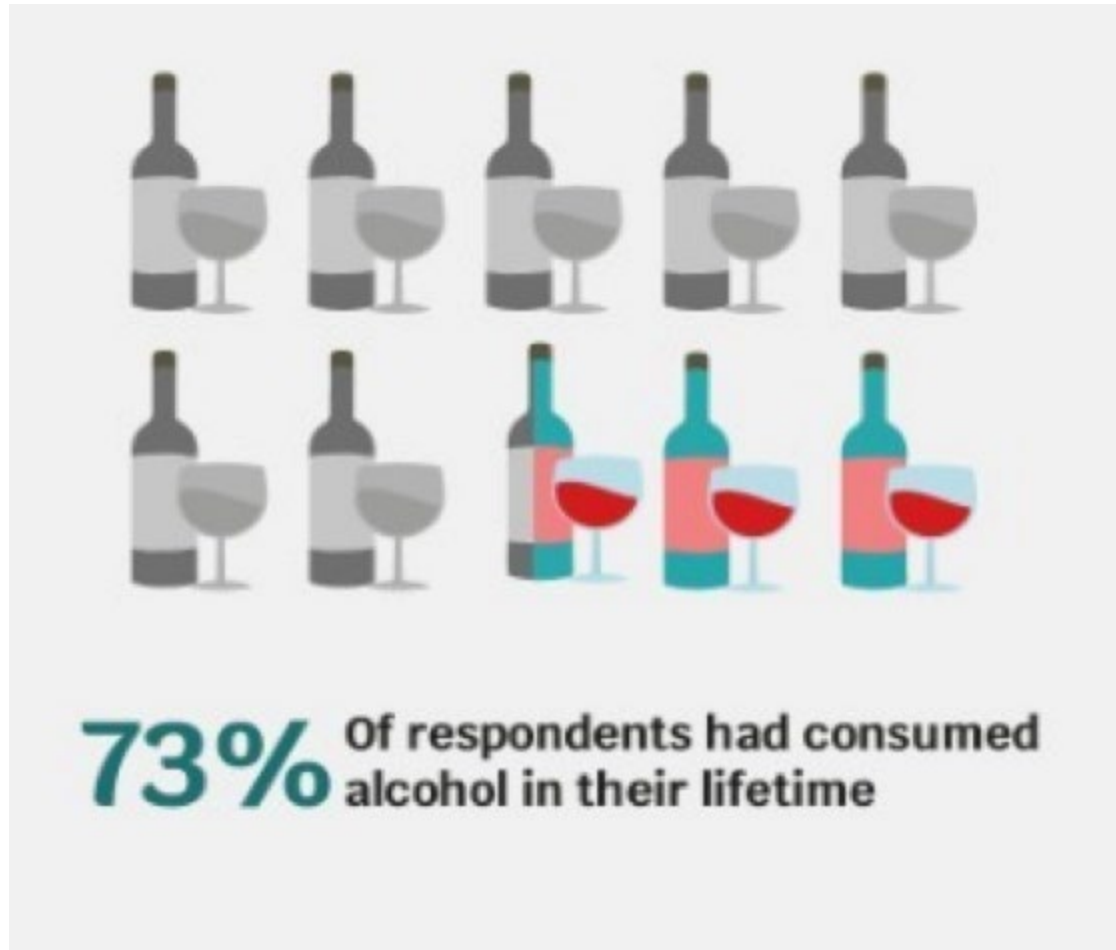


## Most frequent reasons for alcohol use

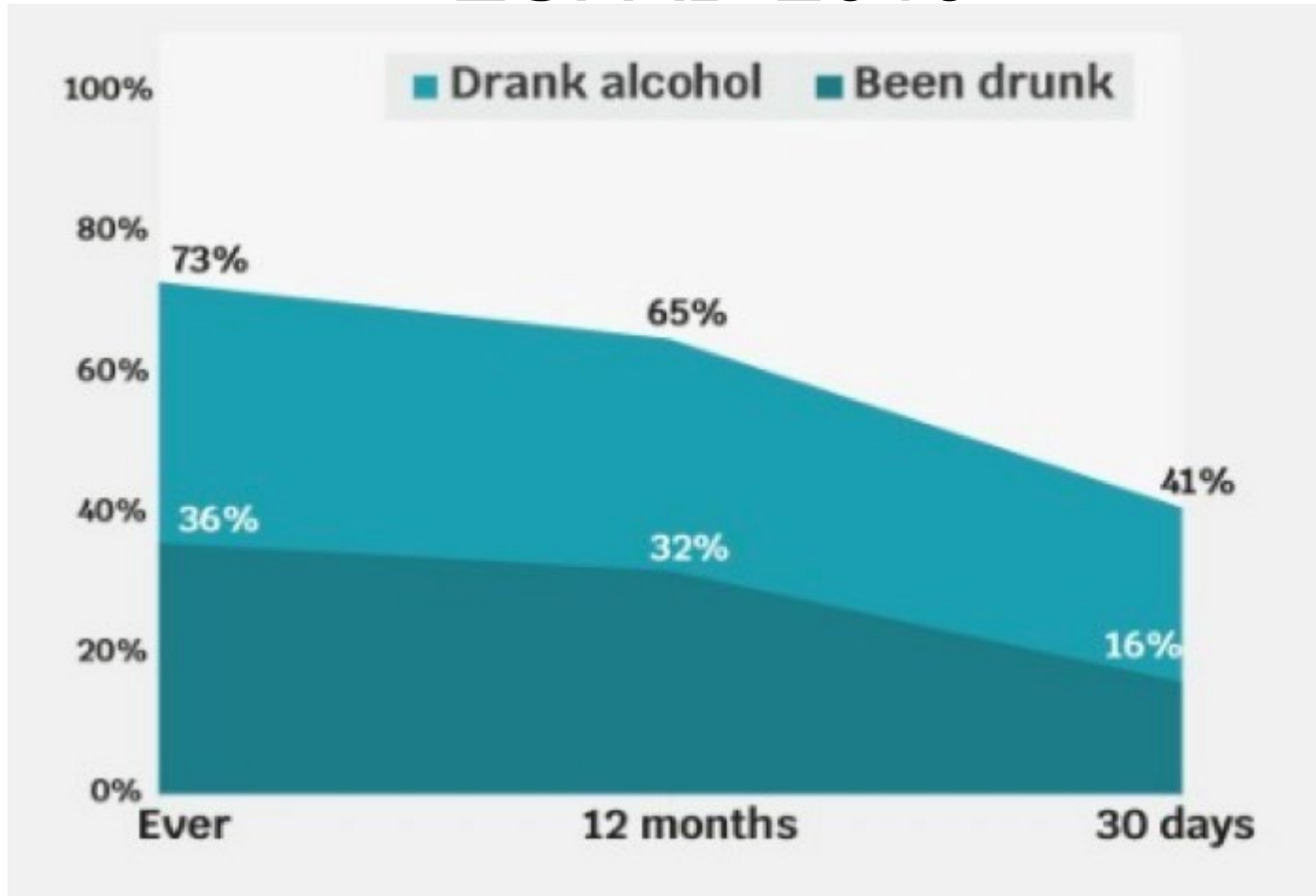
- “to make social gatherings more fun” (49%)
- “helps me to enjoy a party” (48%)



# 73% had used alcohol aged 15 and 16 years



# ESPAD 2019



16% reported having been drunk in the previous 30 days

29%

Drank 5+ drinks on one occasion in the last 30 days

# Age of first trying alcohol

Age of first trying alcohol	Male		Female		All	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Never	308	32.2	322	32.2	630	32.6
12 years or younger	160	17.1	105	10.5	265	13.7
13 years old	98	10.5	98	9.8	196	10.1
14 years old	162	17.3	222	22.2	384	19.9
15 years old	189	20.2	233	23.3	422	21.8
16 years or older	18	1.9	19	1.9	37	1.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>935</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>999</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1934</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 3.11: Age of first trying alcohol by gender**

# Age first got drunk

Age of first getting drunk	Male		Female		All	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Never	565	61.1	587	59.5	1152	60.3
12 years or younger	22	2.4	9	0.9	31	1.6
13 years old	46	5.0	25	2.5	71	3.7
14 years old	102	11.0	113	11.4	215	11.3
15 years old	164	17.7	228	23.1	392	20.5
16 years or older	25	2.7	25	2.5	50	2.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>924</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>987</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1911</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 3.12: Age of first getting drunk by gender**

## Consequences of alcohol in last year

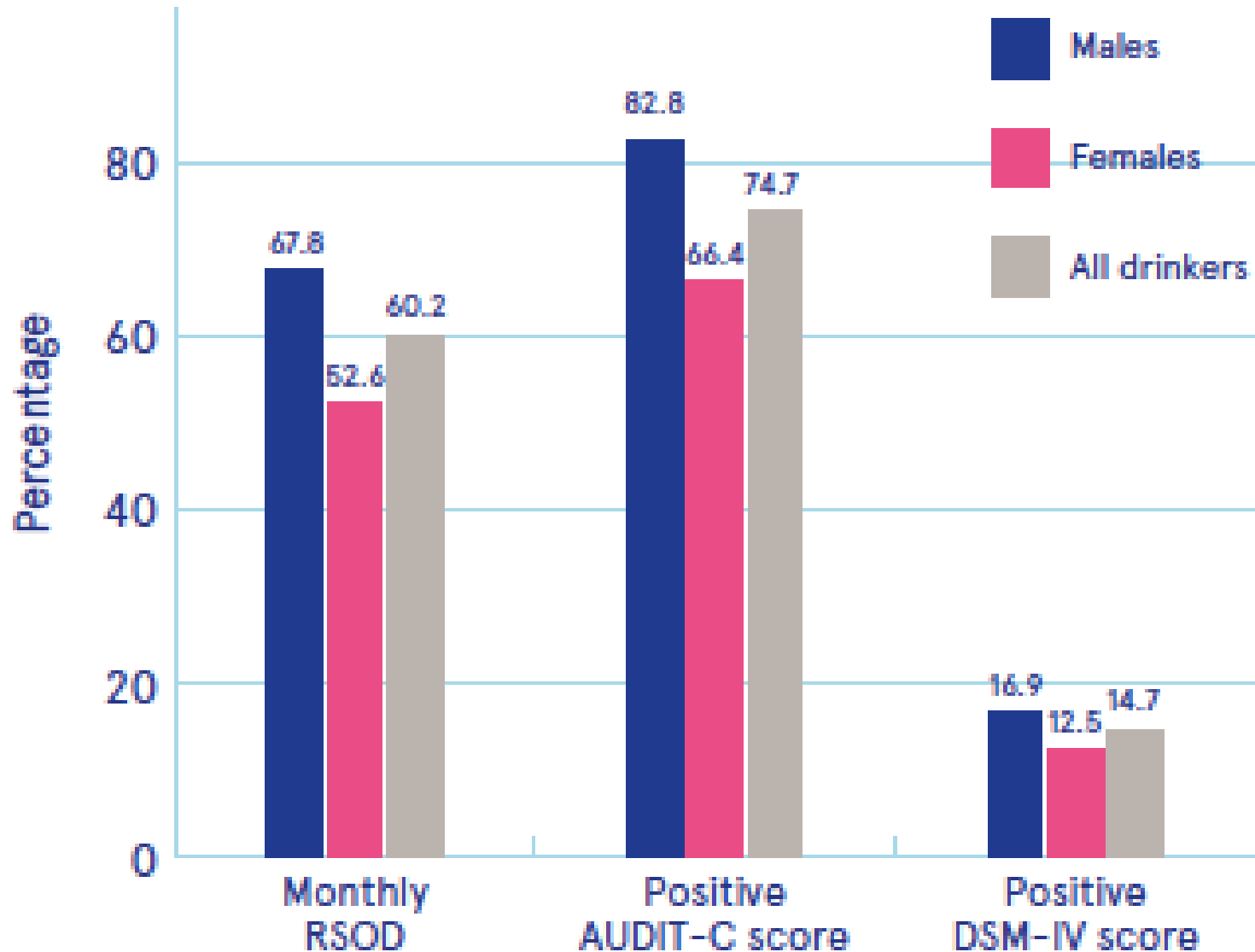
Experienced consequences of alcohol use in the last 12 months	Male		Female		Total		Chi-Square Test
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Involved in a fight	54	5.8	43	4.3	97	5.0	$X^2(1)=2.089, p=.148$ Cramer's V=.033
Injury or accident	46	4.9	92	9.2	138	7.2	$X^2(1)=13.358, p<.001.$ Cramer's V=.083
Damaged or lost property	72	7.7	137	13.8	209	10.8	$X^2(1)=18.449, p<.001.$ Cramer's V=.098
Been in a serious argument	50	5.4	78	7.9	128	6.7	$X^2(1)=4.825, p=.028$ Cramer's V=.050
Victim of robbery or theft	11	1.2	16	1.6	27	1.4	$X^2(1)=.624, p=.430$ Cramer's V=.018
Been in trouble with the police	42	4.5	35	3.5	77	4.0	$X^2(1)=1.226, p=.268$ Cramer's V=.025
Hospitalized due to severe intoxication	11	1.2	8	0.8	19	1.0	$X^2(1)=.694, p=.405$ Cramer's V=.019
Hospitalized due to accident or injury	7	0.8	7	0.7	14	0.7	$X^2(1)=.017, p=.896$ Cramer's V=.003
Sexual intercourse without condom	34	3.6	32	3.2	66	3.4	$X^2(2)=.562, p=.755$ Cramer's V=.017
Victim of unwanted sexual advance	15	1.6	33	3.3	48	2.5	$X^2(2)=6.647, p=.036$ Cramer's V=.058
Deliberate self-injury	17	1.8	18	1.8	35	1.8	$X^2(2)=.021, p=.990$ Cramer's V=.003
Drunk-driving	9	1.0	8	0.8	17	0.9	$X^2(2)=.916, p=.633$ Cramer's V=.022
Drunk-driving accident	6	0.6	2	0.2	8	0.4	$X^2(2)=4.710, p=.095$ Cramer's V=.049
Swimming in deep water	20	2.1	16	1.6	36	1.8	$X^2(2)=4.496, p=.106$ Cramer's V=.048

**Table 3.14: Consequences of alcohol consumption**

# Heavy alcohol consumption in late adolescence: consequences

- Persists into adulthood
- Associated with alcohol problems
  - including dependence
  - premature death
  - diminished work capacity
- Drug dependence
- Increased risky behaviour
- Accidents/incidents/suicide
- Increased risk of being victim of violence

# Harmful drinking patterns in 18-24y



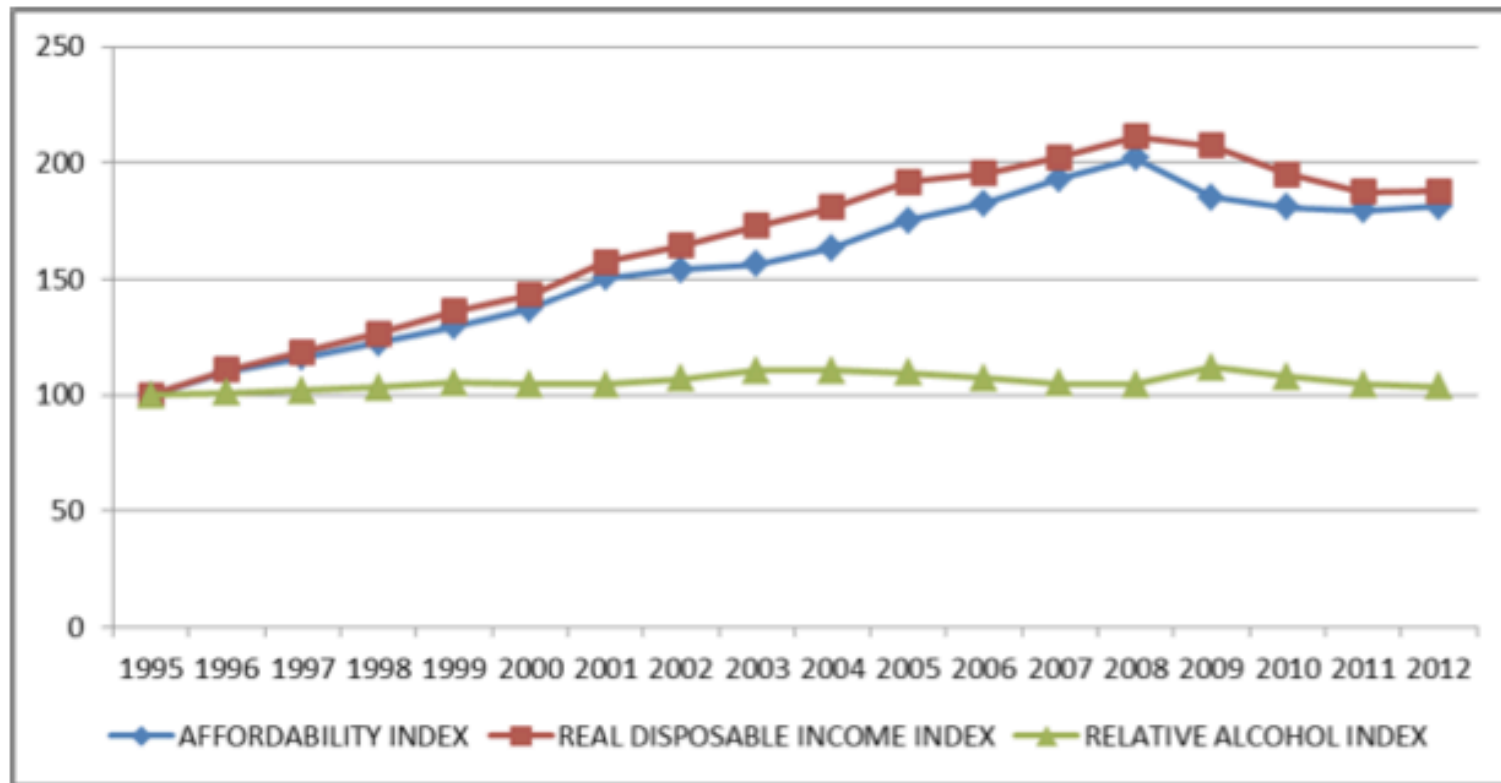
# Alcohol more widely available

- Huge increase in outlets selling alcohol
- Including most petrol stations!
- Most alcohol now supplied through supermarkets and general retailers of all sizes
- Pubs in relative decline
- MORE OUTLETS. LONGER HOURS.



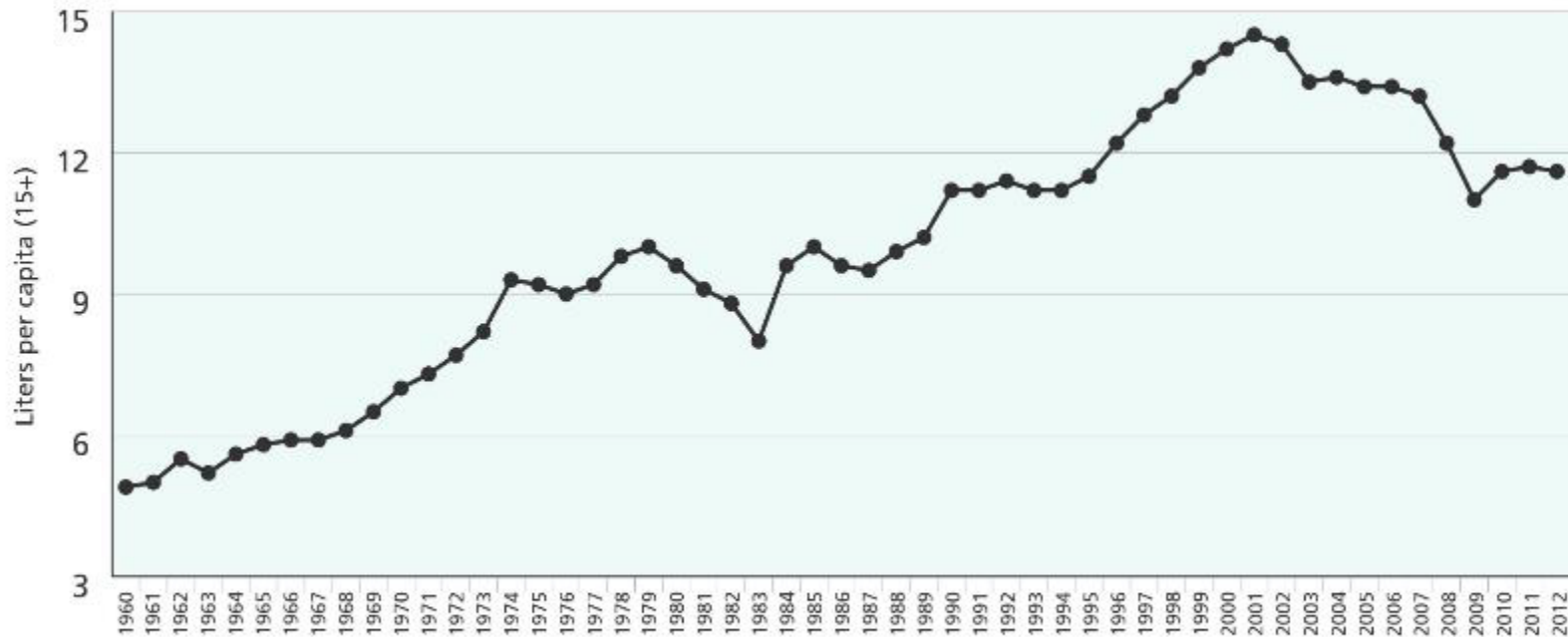
# Alcohol more affordable

Figure 6: Alcohol Affordability Index for Ireland

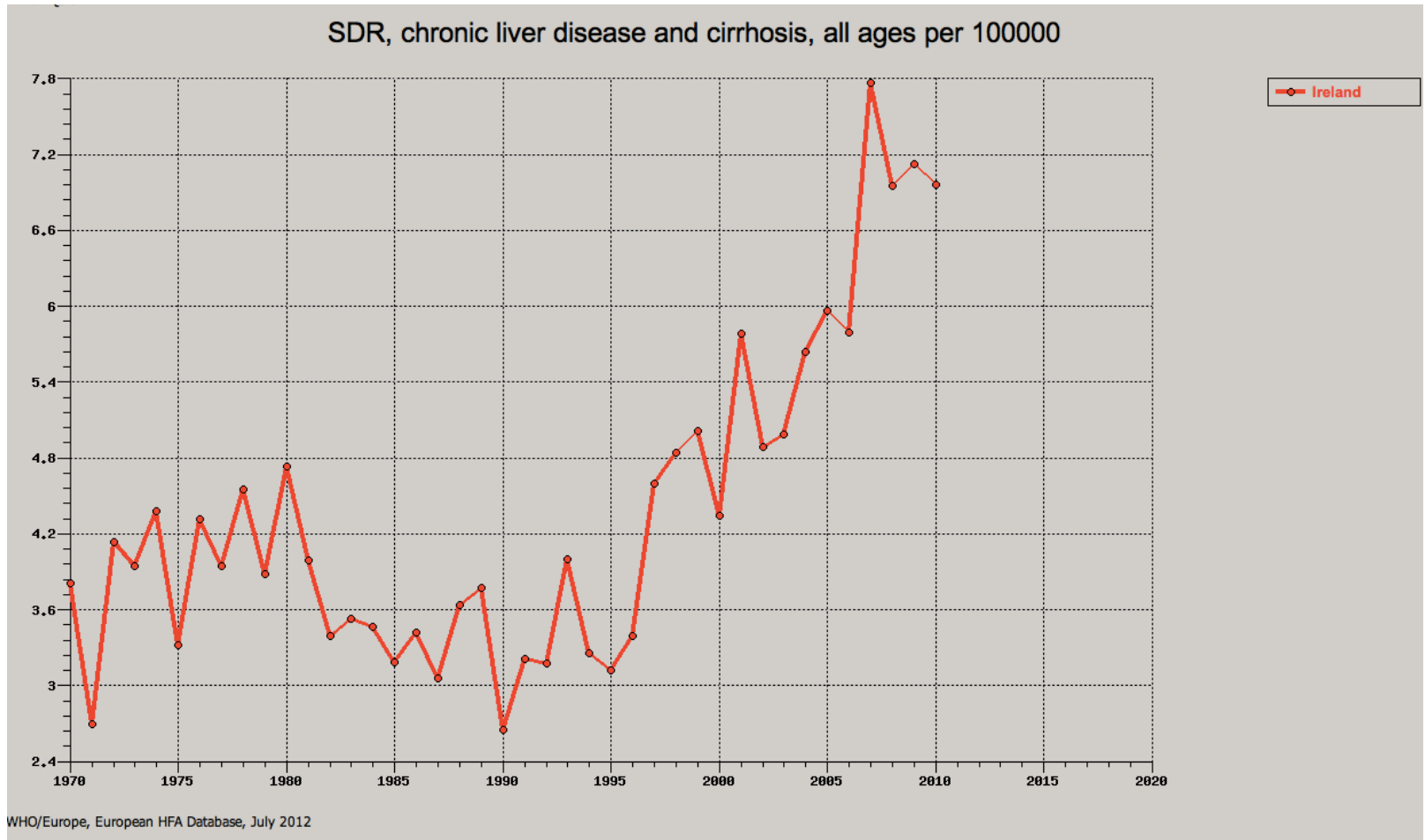


Source: CJP Consultants based on model developed by Rabinovich et al.

# Alcohol consumption per capita: Ireland 1960-2012



# Death rate due to cirrhosis in Ireland triples





Most patients have no  
warning until its  
**TOO LATE**

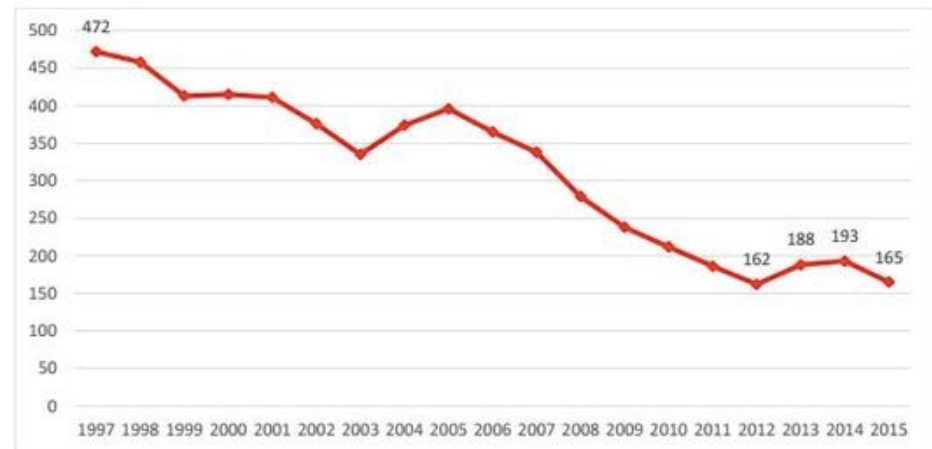
# >1500 deaths per year

- 4 per day:
  - **1+ The event of drinking**  
suicide, accidents, incidents, violence, injuries
  - **2+ Prolonged drinking**  
chronic disease:  
Cirrhosis/liver failure, cancer, many others

# >1500 deaths per year in Ireland: very little outcry

- 187 road deaths in 2016
- Dramatic fall in road deaths
- RSA responsible
- No equivalent for alcohol harms

Fatalities by year, 1997-2015



# >1500 deaths per year in Ireland: it's a huge and widespread personal tragedy

- 10 aircraft!!!
- Frequently not even recognized or attributed as being alcohol-related

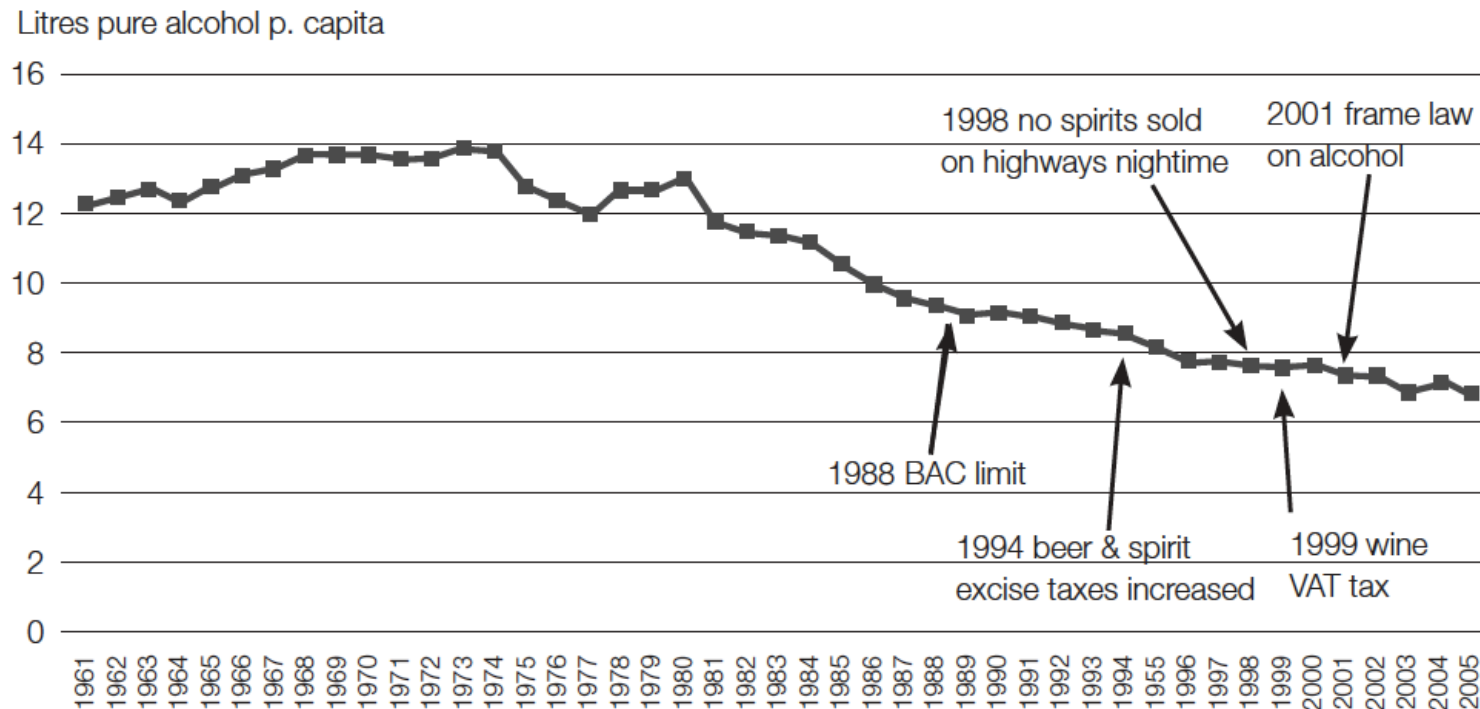


# Burden on the Health services in Ireland

- **>1500 hospital beds per day**
- €1.3 billion per year Health care costs
- €3.6 billion per year total cost
- Huge drain on resources
- **UNSUSTAINABLE**

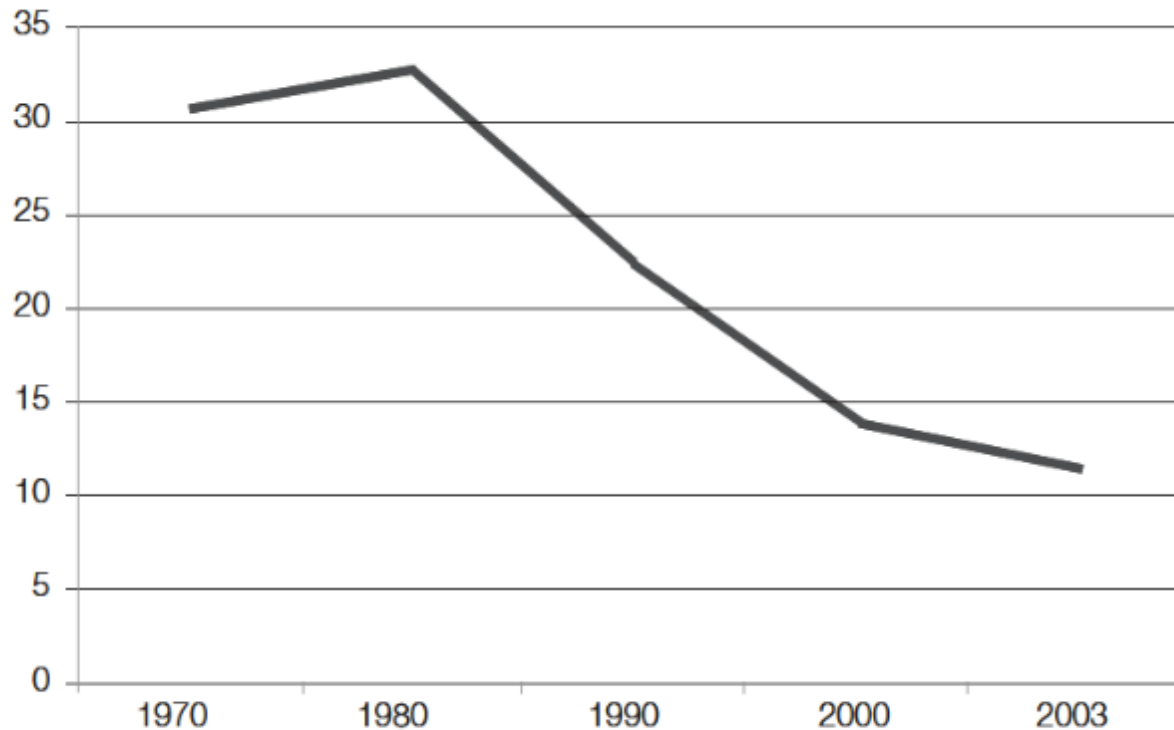


# Reduction in alcohol consumption in Italy



**Figure 2.** – Recorded alcohol consumption trends in Italy and main policy measure changes (1961–2005) source: 1960–2003: World Drink Trends 2005; 2004–2005: Osservatorio Giovani e Alcool 2007.

# Deaths from chronic liver disease and cirrhosis in Italy



**Figure 1.** – Deaths for chronic liver disease and cirrhosis in Italy, all ages per 100,000 (1970–2003) – source: WHO, HFA DB 2009.

# Alcohol is no ordinary commodity



# RCPI supporting the Public Health Alcohol Bill

## THE IRISH TIMES

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### Alcohol bill to be published during summer, Varadkar says

Legislation will put in place minimum pricing and will regulate advertising



Minister for Health Leo Varadkar has announced that the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill will be published this summer. File photograph: Dara Mac Dónaill/The Irish Times

PHOTOGRAPH BY: O'Donnell O'Donnell (The Irish Times)



RCPI says alcohol Bill 'a huge step forward'

Government is urged to come down on the side of public health interests

ROYAL COLLEGE OF  
PHYSICIANS OF IRELAND

The Royal College of Physicians of  
Ireland Policy Group on Alcohol

Submission on Public Health (Alcohol) Bill 2015





# Public Health (Alcohol) Act 2018

- For the first time categorizes alcohol consumption as a **HEALTH** issue

# Public Health (Alcohol) Act 2018.

- Minimum unit *pricing* (MUP)
- Regulation of *marketing and advertising*
- Regulations of *sale, supply and consumption*
- *Separation* of alcohol from ordinary commodities
- Regulation of *sports sponsorship*
- Health *labeling* of alcohol products

# Public Health (Alcohol) Act 2018

- Huge support from population, politicians, patients, families, doctors
- Huge opposition from industry
- Industry lobbying ++++++. CONFLICT of INTEREST. Should have no role in determining public health policy (WHO)



# Sale of Alcohol Bill 2022

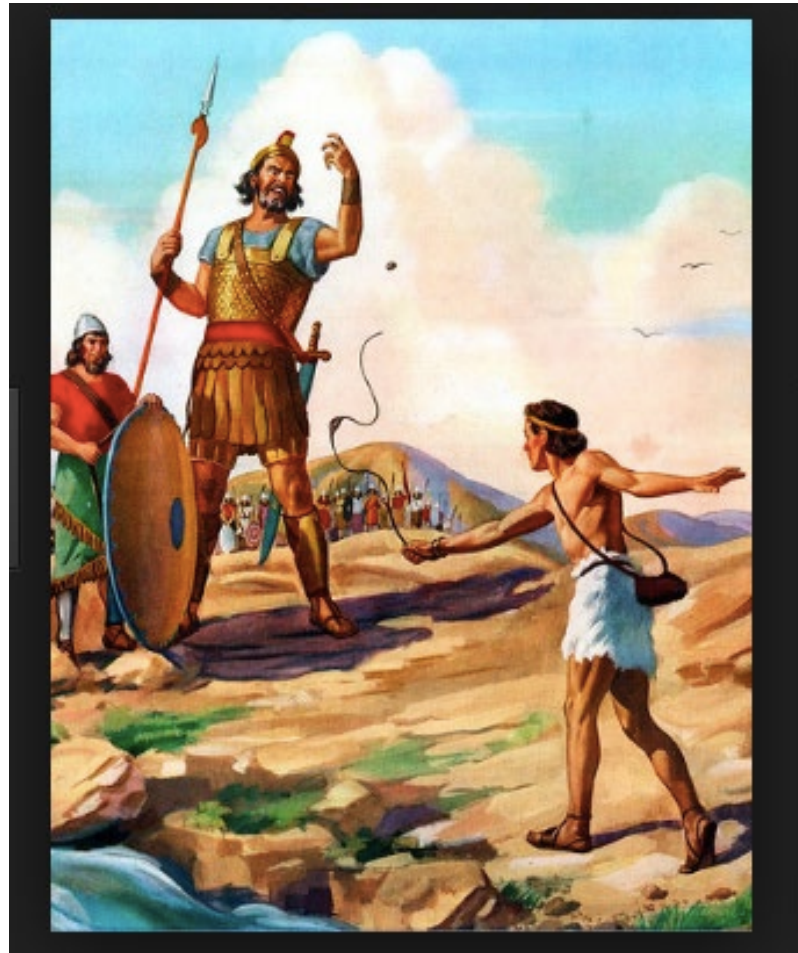
- **Extension** of licensing hours of all bars/restaurants from 11.30pm to 12.30am
- Facilitating of late-night opening of bars to **2.30am**
- Extension of **nightclub** hours to 6am
- **Cultural amenity licenses** to venues not usually having a license – eg museums, galleries, theatres etc.
- Revoking requirement to **extinguish** a license before opening a new premise.



# Sale of Alcohol Bill 2022

- This will increase the number and density of alcohol outlets.
- Against all the evidence
- Wrong direction of travel
- Lobby your politicians to oppose it!

# **Intense alcohol industry lobbying**



## Iceland best in Europe for the cleanest-living teens

- **Drunk** in the previous month

1998	42%
2016	5%
- Ever used **cannabis**

1998	17%
2016	7%
- Smoking **cigarettes** every day

1998	23%
2016	3%

- Alcohol consumption in Ireland has more than **doubled**
- Ireland ranks high for alcohol consumption and binge drinking internationally
- Widespread **under-age** drinking
- **>1500 deaths** per year in Ireland, 4 PER DAY
- Rapid increase in liver failure deaths in men and women
- Huge cost to the health service
- MORE URGENT ACTIONS NEEDED TO SOLVE THESE PROBLEMS



- Every alcohol death is an avoidable tragedy
- The personal, family, societal, health-services and financial costs are unsustainable
- The drinking epidemic must stop



ROYAL COLLEGE OF  
PHYSICIANS OF IRELAND

# Minimum Unit Price MUP

- Floor price for alcohol





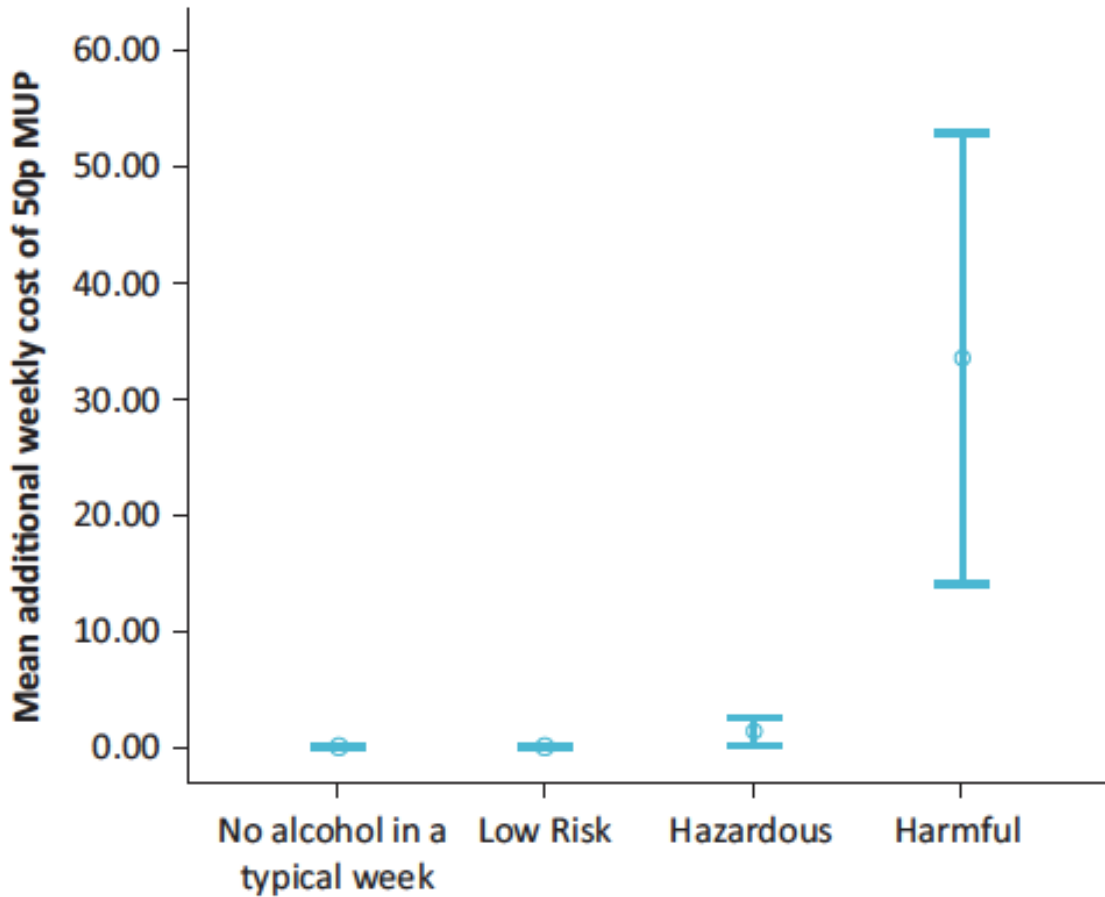
# What type of alcohol do most heavy drinkers use?

- Cheap alcohol

# What cost alcohol do patients with alcohol-related cirrhosis drink?

- Huge amounts of cheap alcohol
- Mean weekly consumption of **146** units in men and **142** in women
- Median price of 33p/unit
- compared with £1.10 for low-risk drinkers

# Mean additional weekly cost of 50p MUP



# Alcohol sales are price-sensitive

- Proven everywhere!

# Minimum Unit Pricing (MUP)

- A “floor price” beneath which alcohol cannot be sold and is based on the amount of alcohol in a product

# 10% increase in average minimum prices in British Columbia

- 3.4% decrease in total alcohol consumption.
- 32% reduction in wholly alcohol-caused deaths
- 9% drop in alcohol-related hospital admissions
- Significant delayed effects on deaths from alcohol-related diseases, such as liver cirrhosis and various cancers, after two years".

# Alcohol price strategies are effective: Summary

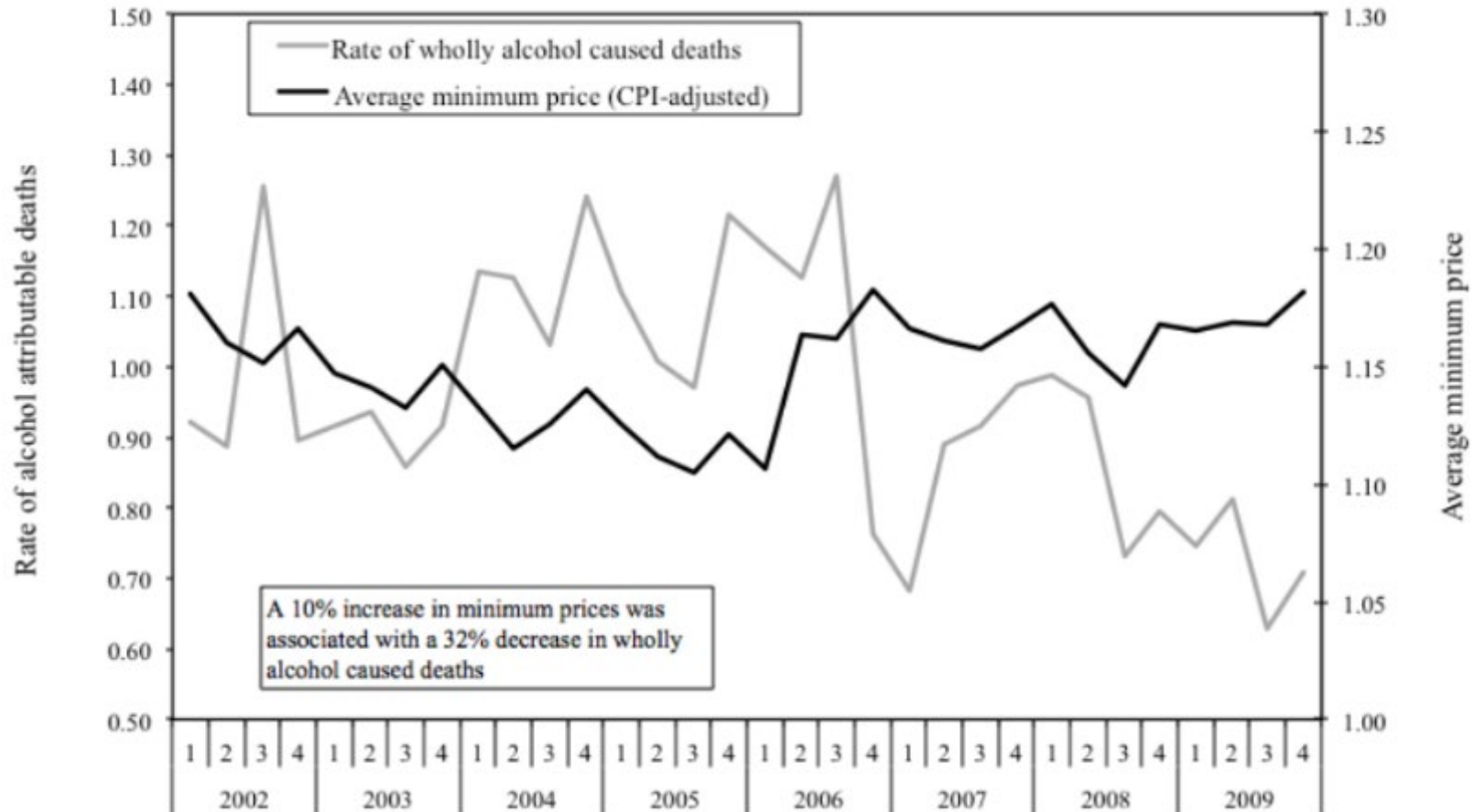
- 10% increase in cost leads to average 5% fall in consumption
- Price increases lead to
  - reductions in consumption by heavy and problem drinkers
  - Reductions in alcohol-related injuries and death
  - Reductions in alcohol-related crime

# Effect of Minimum Unit Price in Saskatchewan

- **10%** increase in price led to **8.4%** reduction in consumption
- Shift to *lower* strength drinks
- Increased government **revenue**
- Increased **profit** for alcohol wholesalers
  
- Police report less alcohol related **offences**



# Effect of MUP on wholly alcohol caused deaths





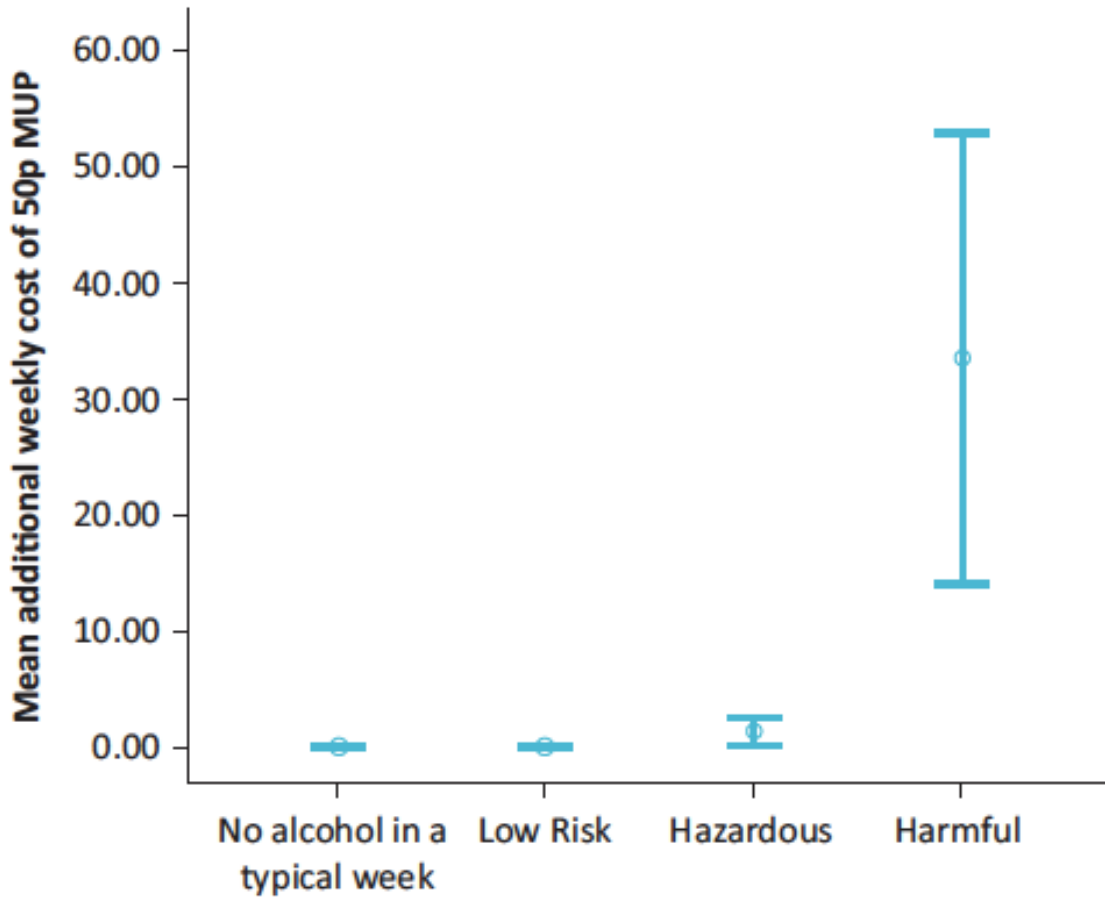
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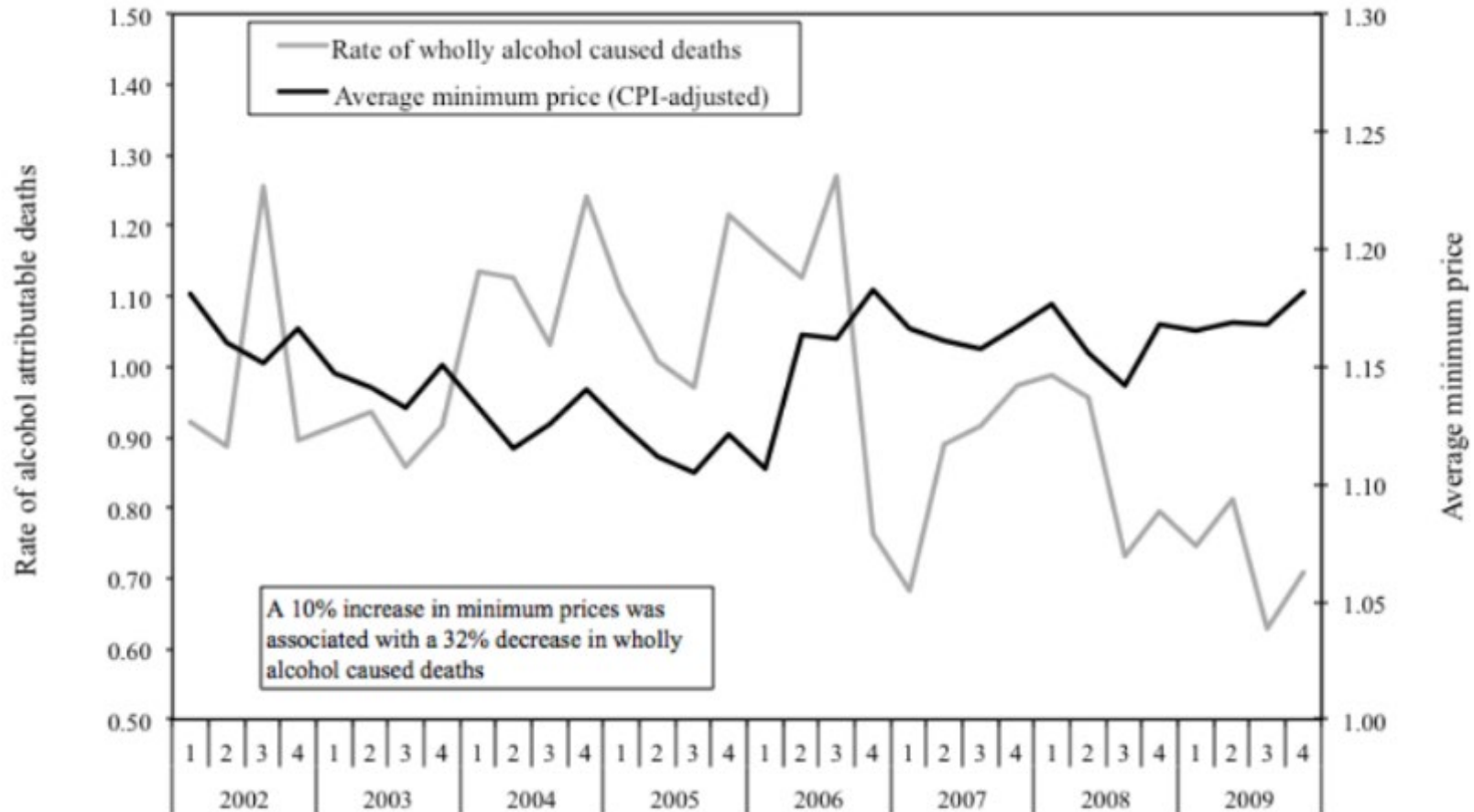
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