

Eating and drinking habits in UK, France and Germany

General trends

The UK citizens total calorific content is, rather surprisingly, declining year on year. British consumption of tea, coffee and hot chocolate has halved since 1974, in spite of the improvement of range, outlets and products available. Also, although the consumption of soft drinks has grown by 30% in a decade, the consumption of sweets and confectionary has remained largely unchanged.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, those under 30 eat out most, yet their intake of nutrients is lowest and the percentage of energy derived from carbohydrates is highest. The households of 40-50 year olds are the largest consumers of pizza, chips, crisps, ice cream and confectionary, the report states that this age groups eating out habits are 'driven by the preferences of children'. In terms of healthy eating habits, an encouraging trend is in mineral water sales which are exponential.

Alcohol habits

In spite of headlines saying alcohol consumption is continuing to grow in Britain, the statistics offer a far more complex picture than reported.

The trend for drinking at home has indeed continued to grow (9% growth in value, 2.9% in volume), driven by continental lagers (16% growth) at the expense of beer, but the purchase of alcohol, as with all eating out has decreased.

According to the report, the average consumption of alcohol per individual over 13 is 0.97 of a litre a week, or 7.8g, just under one unit a day. Allowing for non drinkers and heavy drinkers at either end of the scale, the figures reflect a nation of moderate drinkers. However, over a ten year period consumption has risen from 0.5 litre a head to 0.8 litre

averaged over the whole population and sales of all alcohol types has increased in real terms with the exception of traditional beers. But looking at expenditure when inflation is taken into account, the expenditure on alcohol per week by the average British household has remained unchanged at £2.65 a week, in fact the overall household spend on food and drink has stayed remarkably steady at between £22.50 and £23.30 between 1993 and 2004, but eating out has risen by £3 a week (but this has been in decline since 2001).

Regional variances and job type

Wales spends the most on alcohol for drinking at home, and nationally it is those in the 'lower supervisory' jobs who spend most, but 'large employers and managers spend the most on eating and drinking out. 50 -60 year olds spend the most on alcohol generally (and on vegetables and fish) reflecting their high disposable income, 60 -70 year olds spend the most on food and drink per capita overall. Finally the self employed spend more on cheese and alcohol than any other type of employee. For more

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information visit <http://statistics.defra.gov.uk/esg/publications/efs/2004/default.asp>

Latest research from Mintel shows that in two of Europe's largest economies, France and Germany, social, economic and political changes have led to many consumers reducing their alcohol consumption. In France consumption fell by 6% between 1999 and 2004 to stand at just under 6 billion litres and in Germany it fell by some 8% over the same five year period to below 12 billion litres.

(Continued on page 3)

Defra - Family Food in 2003/4

Table 4.2 Trends in UK expenditure on food and drink in real terms at 2003-04 prices

	1975 (a) (c)	1985 (a) (c)	1995 (a) (b)	2000 (b)	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
							£ per person per week
Retail price index (1975 = 100)	100	277	438	498	508	519	550
Household food and drink			23.28	23.02	23.29	23.22	22.87
Food and drink eaten out			7.36 (d)	8.13 (d)	11.56	11.59	10.93
All food and drink			30.62	31.15	34.85	34.81	33.60
Household food & drink exc. alcohol	20.94	18.59	21.00	20.38	20.65	20.58	20.02
Food and drink eaten out exc. alcohol			5.44 (d)	6.30 (d)	7.55	7.84	7.33
All food and drink exc. alcohol			26.44	26.67	28.20	28.23	27.35
% eaten out			21%	24%	27%	27%	27%
Household alcoholic drink			2.27	2.64	2.64	2.84	2.85
Eaten out alcoholic drink			1.92 (d)	1.83 (d)	4.01	3.95	3.60
All alcoholic drink			4.18	4.47	6.65	6.59	6.25
% eaten out			46%	41%	60%	60%	58%

(a) Great Britain only

(b) Estimates on eating out in 1995 and 2000 are based on National Food Survey which was considered less reliable

(c) Excludes confectionery, soft and alcoholic drinks

(d) Whilst National Food Survey food purchases were adjusted, eating out figures were not

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Kenya

The Kenyan Government has performed a u-turn on banning alcohol and tobacco advertising. The Gender, Culture and Sports Minister, Ochillo Avacko, has said that the ban has no legal basis, and that banning television and billboard advertising would be unfair. **“There is no law that prevents them from informing and persuading the public about their brands through advertisement,”** Ayacko said.

These remarks were made in August after the government gave notice that it was looking to outlaw alcohol and tobacco advertising. In June a government spokesman stated that an advertising ban was necessary to protect children and the population from the influence of products that could harm their health, security and social harmony.

Avacko added, however, that drinks companies should look to encourage responsible drinking in their adverts.

Pakistan

Pakistan cricket authorities said that its nation’s cricketers will not wear or display logos of the matches’ sponsor, Johnnie Walker, in the games scheduled for October.

Five Pakistani players have been selected for the provisional ICC World XI test and one-day squads that will play against Australia.

Alcohol consumption is banned for Muslims in the Islamic state of Pakistan. A PCB official stated that, since the ban was considered a sensitive matter, the board had pre-empted problems and acted accordingly. **“We have informed the ICC that our players will in no manner promote the logos or other promotional material if they are picked in the final World XI squads,”** he said.

Germany

The level of RTD consumption in Germany has almost halved since the introduction of a special tax on the beverages. A recent report issued by a German government drug commission showed that the percentage of youths between the ages of 12 and 17 who drink RTDs once a month has fallen to 16% from 28% since the tax was introduced last August.

Teenagers questioned in the survey cited the tax, which added between 80 and 90 cents to the price of a bottle, as the main reason behind their decision to cut back or cease consumption of RTDs. One third of the surveyed teenagers who consumed alcopops last year had since stopped.

Government drug commissioner Marion Caspers-Merk believes that consumption of non-alcoholic drinks has replace RTD consumption. **“We have reached our goal of better protecting children and teenagers from the dangers of alcoholism.”** she stated.

Sweden

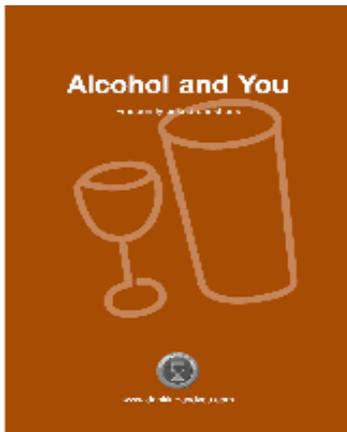
The Swedish government has proposed a tax reduction on spirits by 40%.

Sweden has seen the alcohol black market damage sales domestically, following the accession of the neighbouring Baltic states, where alcohol is taxed at a far lower rate, to the EU last year.

A tax reduction is seen as the only way to ensure the Monopoly’s role. The proposal is likely to be opposed by the communists and the environmental party. It is argued that tax reduction will lead to an increase in alcohol related harm.

Brewers have reacted strongly to the fact that only the tax has only been proposed on spirits. The Swedish Brewers’ Association have declared they want tax cuts on all alcoholic beverages.

AIM publishes two new guides on alcohol and health



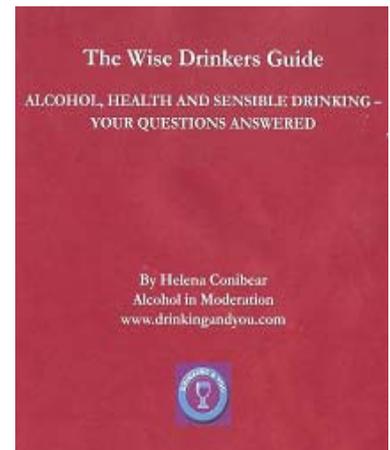
AIM has recently produced two new guides to sensible drinking guidelines and health.

In response to the Cabinet Office Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy's observation that the retailers of alcohol are doing little to inform consumers about units, sensible drinking guidelines or the law, AIM, supported by Waitrose has produced a short, no nonsense eight page guide for consumers answering the most frequently asked questions about alcohol. The questions

are derived from a five year survey of questions monitored by the www.drinkingandyou.com website, which receives over 30,000 visits a month from around the world.

The guide, edited by AIM's Medical, Scientific and Social Council, and carefully built around government guidelines are now available in all Waitrose wine, beer and spirits departments. The guide is supported by 'shelf barkers' carrying unit information on popular drinks and an area of the www.waitrose.com website which is dedicated to information on 'drinking and you'.

Whilst 'Alcohol and You' informs consumers, information was lacking on moderate drinking required for those studying to enter the beverage alcohol industry as a career. Hence, AIM have formed a partnership with the Wine and Spirit Education Trust, the foremost educator in the field, to distribute a 24 page booklet on 'Alcohol, Health and Sensible drinking' to the 12,000 students it



enrolls each year. This comprehensive guide, written in an internationally valid format as possible considering the variance in each government's sensible drinking guidelines and unit definitions, has now been sent out with every new course application this August.

These new initiatives created by AIM, will improve the basic flow of information to both consumers and those working in the industry.

Eating and drinking habits in UK, France and Germany (contd)

Mintel's five year forecasts suggest that alcohol consumption in these two countries is set to decline further, leaving the alcohol industries in France and Germany faced with challenging times ahead as the culture for young people moves towards healthier lifestyles. Stringent advertising legislation relating to alcoholic drinks has also had an impact on these markets, while in Germany continuing high unemployment and consequent economic worries have contributed to this trend.

In contrast to this British alcohol consumption has increased by 5% between 1999 and 2004 to break the 8 billion litre barrier. Indeed, it is the British (88%), who are the most likely to have had an alcoholic drink in the last 12 months, marginally ahead of the French (86%). The Germans lag some way behind, with only seven in ten (70%) having drunk alcohol in the past year.

In France volume sales of wine fell by 4% between 1999 and 2004. In contrast, wine consumption in Germany

increased by 4% over the same review period, while in the UK wine saw an increase of some 23% during the 5 year period.

Although beer still accounts for 80% of German alcohol consumption, the beer market experienced a significant 10% decline in volume sales between 1999 and 2004, to fall well below 10 billion litres. In fact, this decline is the biggest fall in consumption seen by any of the German alcoholic drinks markets. Beer is also becoming less popular in France, down by 10% over the same five year period.

According to Mintel, the UK alcohol market has experienced the greatest rise in value, with sales estimated at almost 56 billion Euros in 2004, up 15% since 1999. The French are drinking less but are spending more on better quality alcoholic drinks, with the market value increasing by 7% over the same five year period to 42 billion Euros. In the UK and France rising disposable incomes and higher aspirations have driven one of the major trends in the alcoholic drinks market -

premiumisation, where people are drinking less, but spending more on better quality beverages. Germany on the other hand is struggling. The combined value of the German alcohol market reached some 47 billion Euros in 2004, a decline of almost 4% on 1999 levels and 1.5% on the previous year.

In France, Germany and the UK men are more likely than women to drink alcohol, with Germany experiencing the biggest gender gap. 61% of German women drink alcohol, compared to 80% of German men.

When it comes to age, those who are the most likely to drink alcohol varies quite considerably. In Germany it is the younger 20 - 24 year olds who are the biggest drinkers, by contrast in France these younger adults (the under-25s) are the least likely to drink alcohol. In France, it is the over 55 year olds, who are most likely to indulge, while in the UK drinking alcohol is evenly spread across adults of all ages (24 - 64 years old).

For more information please visit www.reports.mintel.com/

Diageo publish a global information campaign

Diageo is producing a global consumer information policy, which will provide consumers with nutrition information and a responsible drinking reminder across its range of spirits, wines and beers. **“Diageo recognises that consumers want to make informed choices about what they drink. The purpose of the global consumer information policy, which will be rolled out across 180 markets, is to provide consumers with meaningful information in the best, least confusing ways possible. This information will be delivered through multiple communication channels, including labels and secondary packaging, a global website and consumer care-lines,”** a statement said.

The policy will include responsible drinking reminders and facts on nutrition, allergens and alcohol content/serve size. The words “Drink Responsibly” (or a translation of) will appear on labels and secondary packaging. A responsible drinking reminder will appear on advertising tailored to the brand or local market.

Diageo will include an energy value on labels and secondary packaging unless local regulatory requirements

demand otherwise. Within the EU, values will be provided for energy, protein, carbohydrates and fat. This information - also delivered through the global website and consumer care-lines - will not be provided in a way that implies health or dietary benefits, Diageo said.

Rob Malcolm, president, marketing, sales and innovation, Diageo, said: **“The consumer is at the heart of everything that we do. We want our consumers to continue to enjoy the quality of our brands as part of a balanced and healthy lifestyle. Our consumer information policy is another voluntary step for Diageo and is also part of our wider commitment to responsible drinking. We recognise the importance of enabling them to make informed choices about what they drink. As a responsible and responsive company we have developed a policy which helps them to do this.”**

Around 10,000 packaging variations worldwide will be changed during the course of the campaign, over a five-year period. New product launches, packaging renovations and promotional packaging changes will include the consumer information.

Bordeaux ad campaign in court again

Just over a year after it was first taken to court for its ongoing advertising campaign, the Bordeaux Wine Council has once again become the target of anti-alcohol association ANPAA, for the same campaign. The association, a publicly funded nationwide organisation which is one of the country’s leading alcohol opponents, has served a writ on the Council for portraying young wine growers and shippers in its adverts. It claims that although the people portrayed are actually members of the wine industry – which is permitted by law – they encourage people to drink by holding out a glass of wine and using first names, hence creating a

certain intimacy with passers by. The Bordeaux Wine Council rejects the accusations and points out that not only has the campaign been running for the past three years, it was also passed by the advertising standards authorities. Council chief Roland Feredj claims the legal action is an attempt by ANPAA to override changes wrought to advertising regulations for drinks in January of this year following nearly twelve months of parliamentary debate in both Houses. For the Council, the action flouts democracy by attempting to get a court ruling on the recent regulatory changes.

Source: *Journee Vinicole*

Heineken launch community initiative

The US arm of Heineken has announced the launch of a new responsible consumption initiative called the Heineken USA Distributor Co-op Program which will provide matching grants of up to US\$5,000 to its distributors which undertake community-oriented projects aimed at encouraging responsible consumption of alcohol. The company has more than 450 local distributors across the US.

Among the projects eligible for grants would be those that address drunk driving, improper or over-consumption, identification checking, server education and consumer education.

US underage drinking prevention legislation

A new bill which addresses both possession and consumption of alcohol by minors has recently passed into Missouri state law. The passing of the new law follows more than a year’s work by Missouri government officials, law enforcement, the beer industry, wholesalers, community leaders, educators and parents. Under the new law, a minor can now be found guilty of a “minor in possession” if he or she is visibly intoxicated or has a blood alcohol content of more than .02. The bill also prohibits adults from allowing minors to drink on their property unless they are the minor’s legal guardians.

The bill has been backed by Coors Brewing Co. Frits van Paasschen, president and chief executive officer said **“It is a privilege to be in the beer business and with that privilege comes responsibility. Coors will continue to support initiatives aimed at preventing underage drinking and encouraging responsible use of alcohol. The passage of this new law reinforces that when public and private groups work together, we can make real progress against underage drinking.”**

UK responsible drinking tips for holiday makers launched



The Portman Group, launched a new advertising campaign targeting pubs and bars in towns and cities and particularly seaside resorts during the popular holiday month of August.

The summer campaign was the latest initiative aimed at highlighting the downsides of drinking too much. It provided drinkers with helpful tips, in the form of a set of six collectable beer mats with hints on how to enjoy

a drink but not go overboard. Posters in pub washrooms reinforced the messages.

Some examples of the tips are:

- Woke up with the wrong person? Too much alcohol can affect your judgement – so take it easy
- Getting off your trolley will make it hard to get home safely. Take it easy. Plan your ride home

- Avoid getting drunk as a skunk. Take a soft drink between drinks

Jean Coussins, Chief Executive of The Portman Group, commented: “There is plenty of evidence to show that binge drinking is still a major problem in the UK, particularly among young people. Better public education aimed at challenging attitudes needs to form part of the solution to this problem. Most people like to enjoy a drink as they relax on holiday but when you are having a good time it can be very easy to drink too much. This campaign is about helping people to have a great summer by giving them useful information and highlighting the downsides of drinking too much.”

Half a million beer mats were distributed and 500 pubs and bars displayed posters as part of the national campaign.

DISCUS Code Review Board process demonstrates major impact

by Elisabeth Holmgren

A new report reveals that the distilled spirits industry’s Code Review Board process demonstrates effective industry self regulation and strong commitment to social responsibility.

The Distilled Spirits Council’s (DISCUS) *Code of Responsible Practices for Beverage Alcohol Advertising and Marketing* has been strengthened throughout the last several decades as social standards; the marketplace and technology have changed. Most recently, the code was expanded in the fall of 2003 and includes 39 specific provisions regarding responsible placement and content of beverage alcohol advertising and marketing materials. The most recent code also provides for a Code Review Board which is made up of senior member company representatives and a three-member advisory board. The latter includes three outside experts from government, academia and broadcasting.

The Board members are charged with reviewing complaints about advertising and marketing materials in the marketplace and to make recommendations that are in line with

the code’s provisions. If a provision of the code has been violated, the Board urges that the advertisement be revised or withdrawn. The most recent *Semi-Annual Code Report* revealed important progress in that there was an overall compliance rate of 91 % with the Code Review Board Process.

This last report makes public the Code Review Board’s actions for the period of January 1, 2005 through June 30, 2005. Specifically, the report states, “For this reporting period, the Code Review Board received complaints about 17 advertisements. Of the advertisements in question, five were DISCUS member company advertisements and 12 were non-DISCUS member advertisements. There was an overall compliance rate of 91 % with the Code Review Board Process—100% compliance by DISCUS members and 83% compliance by non members (an 8% increase over the previous reporting period).” Furthermore, it is explained that a growing number of non-member advertisers are taking responsive action even more quickly.

Peter H. Cressy, President and CEO of the Distilled Spirits Council

explained, “We believe this Semi-Annual Report is an important element of our longstanding corporate responsibility efforts and we are particularly gratified with the positive response from public officials and others that has resulted from the transparency created by this report.” He further added, “ We believe it also allows the public at large to better evaluate and appreciate the DISCUS Code review process, which the Federal Trade Commission has pointed to as a model of self regulation and a step above and beyond what others are doing.”

Unique among the beverage alcohol industry in the US, the DISCUS Code provides for a Code Review Board which has made its decisions publicly available since March of 2005 when the first report was issued. The US beer and wine industry trade organizations also have well recognized voluntary advertising restrictions or Advertising Codes. However, at this time only the distilled spirits industry has an official Code Review Board Process.

For more information, visit www.distilledspirits.org or www.discus.org/industry/code/code.htm

More than 99% alcohol related disorders go undiagnosed among US healthplan members

Survey results from a US national performance measurement project 'Alcohol Dependence: From Science to Solutions' was released in August. Less than 1 % of health plan members are actually diagnosed with alcoholism or related disorders. According to the study, based on general population rates, health plans should be diagnosing at least four or five times as many members with alcohol problems.

"This project offers concrete evidence of the scale of the challenge to improve the identification and treatment of alcohol dependence among America's workers," said Eric Goplerud, Ph.D., director of Ensuring Solutions to Alcohol Problems at the George Washington University Medical Center in Washington, D.C. Researchers at Ensuring Solutions analyzed data from the alcohol use disorders section of the 2005 eValue8 RFI Initiative, which captures voluntarily reported data from more than 250 health plans nationwide.

The findings indicate a failure to adequately identify people with alcohol problems. It is estimated approximately 8% of working adults suffer from alcohol dependence or a related condition, only about .06 percent of all health plan members (or just 8% of those estimated to be affected) receive such a diagnosis. In comparison, health plans identify about 40% of patients with depression, 65 % of diabetics and 70% of those with hypertension.

The data also showed that less than half—44%—of members identified as alcohol dependent attend any alcohol or drug treatment session within 14 days. Only about 16 % receive the recommended three chemical dependency health care services in the month following diagnosis. Dr. Goplerud found few plans are sending educational materials to plan members, and only 17% are making follow-up calls to members who miss appointments.

The study believes physicians, employers and others have not treated alcohol dependence on a par with other diseases, said Dr. Goplerud, who is also a research professor in the Department of Health Policy at the GWU School of Public Health and Health Services.

"Our approach to alcohol treatment is unlike what we expect and demand for treatment of diabetes, high blood pressure, asthma or virtually any other health condition." commented Goplerud.

There were some bright spots in the data. Dr. Goplerud found 75% of plans require primary care physicians and behavioral health care providers to use screening tools that have been proven effective, a number that continues to increase. The fact that alcohol dependence treatment is now being tracked, both through eValue8 and through accreditation programs such as those of the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA), may raise awareness and lead to positive changes.

Parents influence teens perception of alcohol and substance use

Previous studies have indicated that adolescents with warm and involved parents are less likely to misuse alcohol, smoke or use marijuana. Now a study published in the July/August 2005 issue of the journal *Child Development* finds such involved parenting actually affects teenagers' thought processes when it comes to substance use, giving teens a negative view of people who drink heavily or smoke cigarettes or marijuana, and ensuring the teens won't use such substances even when they're easily available.

Researchers from the University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth, Iowa State University, and the University of Georgia followed 714 African-American adolescents and their parents for five years. The investigators began by asking the adolescents questions about their mothers' parenting behaviors and, two years later,

questions regarding their thoughts concerning typical substance users.

The teens were also asked how open they were to trying alcohol, cigarettes, or marijuana if the opportunity arose. In the fifth year, the researchers asked the adolescents to report how often they had used any of these substances.

The findings suggest that parents affect their children's behaviors by influencing two key thought processes: their images of the typical "smoker" or "drinker," which the adolescent associates with the behavior, and their willingness to smoke, drink, or use other drugs if they find themselves in circumstances in which such substances are available.

The researchers also found that the positive effects of strong parenting were greatest in families living in high-

risk neighborhoods where, for instance, gang fights and drug-selling were more likely to occur.

"Overall, we found our results encouraging because the parenting behaviors consisted of things that most parents can do—provide warmth and support for their children, monitor their behaviors and friends, and talk to them about using drugs," said lead author Michael J. Cleveland, PhD, Assistant Professor of Psychology at the University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth. **"Parents should know that they can influence how their children think about substance use and users."**

Source: Cleveland MJ et al. The Impact of Parenting on Risk Cognitions and Risk Behavior: A Study of Mediation and Moderation in a Panel of African-American Adolescents. *Child Development* 2005;76:900-16.

US and UK teenagers drinking alcohol at home

A worrying slant has been put on research from the American Medical Association, who openly state they wish 'to eliminate any alcohol consumption amongst under 21 year olds' on how young people in the US obtain alcohol and 'drink illegally'.

The study, funded by the AMA's partnership with The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, undermines the basic premise that parents can introduce their teens safely to alcohol at home under parental supervision. The polls, which do not talk about intoxication, frequency or quantity of alcohol intimate that it is 'illegal' for the 25% of parents who allow their children to drink at home, under parental supervision.

The poll of 700 teenagers, aged 13-18, found that nearly half reported having obtained alcohol at some point. In all age groups, girls nearly always ranked higher than boys in obtaining alcohol. In the adult poll, of 2,300 adults, of whom just 394 had care of children aged between 12 and 20) found that 26% of U.S. parents with children, aged 12-20, agree that teens should be able to drink at home with their parents present. **"Parents allowing underage children to drink under their supervision are under a dangerous misperception,"** said J. Edward Hill, President of the AMA. **"the main message children hear is that drinking illegally is okay."**

A more valid concern arising from the study is that two out of three teens, aged 13-18, said it is easy to get alcohol from their homes without parents knowing about it. One third responded that it is easy to obtain



alcohol from their own parents knowingly, which increases to 40 percent when it is from a friend's parent.

The AMA said the poll results underscore the need for physicians to counsel parents on the health risks of alcohol use, as well as to advocate for policies to restrict access to minors. To assist physicians in their efforts, the AMA unveiled an informational poster for use in physician offices.

The American Medical Association on underage alcohol acquisition and use. The survey results are available online at www.alcoholpolicymd.com/press_room/Press_releases/adults_give_youth_alcohol.htm

Similarly, young people in the UK report little difficulty in obtaining cigarettes, alcohol, and other drugs.

Public health specialists from Scotland reviewing several recent surveys of young people, note that underage smokers can acquire cigarettes easily, often from friends and relatives. Most regular smokers aged 12-15 also say they buy cigarettes from shops.

Around 80% of 15 year olds say alcoholic drinks are very or fairly easy

to obtain. Friends and relatives are the most common source, but by age 15, a substantial minority say they buy from pubs, off licences or shops, and by the age of 16-17, most drinkers usually buy alcohol themselves.

Around 10-20% of 10-12 year olds, and two thirds of 15 year olds, say they have been offered other drugs (boys slightly more than girls). About a quarter of 15 year olds say cannabis can easily be bought at school, and at least 10% claim to have been offered heroin, cocaine, or crack cocaine.

The authors go on to summarise research findings across the field about the effects of measures to control availability. Increasing the price of tobacco and alcohol is likely to reduce young people's demand for them, say the authors.

Research has also shown that rigorously enforcing the minimum purchase age can reduce underage sales of tobacco and alcohol. However, state control of commercial markets is clearly only part of the picture, say the authors.

Young teenagers, and experimental or occasional smokers and drinkers, are more likely to obtain their supplies from social sources such as friends and relatives.

There is clearly more to learn about the role of social and illicit markets, and the effects of intervening in these markets, on young people's patterns of consumption and their health consequences, they conclude.

Source: Ogilvie D et al. Young people's access to tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs. *BMJ* 2005;331:393-6

New threat of health warnings on packaging in Italy

Stricter standards for labelling have been proposed as part of a bill put forward by a group of Italian senators. The bill proposes warning labels on alcoholic drinks bottles. The measure, if adopted, will take effect as of January 1st 2006, with an extension until December 31st 2007 for those bottles already in the marketplace.

Fines from 10,000 to 100,000 euros will be imposed upon those failing to comply with the new rules. The introduction of these health warnings would come in addition to other measures aimed at reducing problems related to consumption of alcohol.

These include a proposal which would allow regional governments to ban the

sale of alcohol for home consumption in public and private places, regardless of alcohol content or packaging, even if only temporarily, between 10pm and 6am. Over the counter sales of alcohol would also be banned for those under the age of eighteen. This is not the first time that such an initiative has been taken in Italy.

Source: *Journee Vinicole*

Finding may explain link between alcohol and certain cancers

Prolonged high consumption of alcoholic beverages is linked to an increased risk of upper gastrointestinal cancer and other types of cancer. Researchers looking for the potential biochemical basis for this link have focused on acetaldehyde, a suspected carcinogen formed as the body metabolizes alcohol. Scientists from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) and the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) report that polyamines - natural compounds essential for cell growth - react with acetaldehyde to trigger a series of reactions that damage DNA, an event that can lead to the formation of cancer.

“We’ve long suspected acetaldehyde’s role in the carcinogenicity of alcohol beverage consumption, but this study gives us important new clues about its involvement,” says Ting-Kai Li, M.D., director of the NIAAA, part of the National Institutes of Health. “This work provides an important framework for understanding the underlying chemical pathway that

could explain the association between drinking and certain types of cancer.”

The research team, led by P.J. Brooks of NIAAA and Miral Dizdaroglu of NIST, examined acetaldehyde’s reaction with polyamines, small molecules found in all cells. “Polyamines are usually considered ‘good guys,’ because they have been shown to protect DNA from oxidative damage,” says Dr. Brooks. Yet the researchers found the polyamines facilitated the conversion of acetaldehyde into crotonaldehyde (CrA), an environmental pollutant that has been shown to cause cancer in animals. This chemical in turn altered DNA, generating an abnormal, mutagenic DNA base called a Cr-PdG adduct. Dr. Brooks says, “We concluded that polyamines stimulated the formation of Cr-PdG adducts from acetaldehyde, and this may provide a mechanism to explain how alcohol consumption increases the risk of some types of cancer.”

Previous studies had shown acetaldehyde could be converted to mutagenic Cr-PdG, but those studies

used very high acetaldehyde concentrations. “We were able to demonstrate that these reactions can take place with acetaldehyde concentrations that have been measured in human saliva during alcohol consumption,” says Dr. Brooks.

George Kunos, Director of NIAAA’s Division of Intramural Clinical and Biological Research, says, “These findings also have significant implications for researchers seeking to understand how genes affect the risk for cancer. Many studies have shown that certain genetic variants that affect alcohol and acetaldehyde metabolism can also affect individual susceptibility to alcohol-related gastrointestinal cancer. This work could serve as a roadmap for future studies to investigate other genetic factors, particularly those that influence DNA repair pathways, in relation to alcohol consumption and cancer.”

Source: Theruvathu JA et al. Polyamines stimulate the formation of mutagenic 1,N2-propanodeoxyguanosine adducts from acetaldehyde. *Nucleic Acids Res* 2005;33:3513-20.

Alcohol may increased delayed low blood sugar risk for diabetes type I patients

Drinking a modest amount of alcohol with an evening meal may increase the risk of low blood sugar the following day in patients with type 1 diabetes

“There is no evidence to suggest that individuals with type 1 diabetes adopt a different approach to their use of alcohol than the rest of the population,” Dr. Tristan Richardson and colleagues from Royal Bournemouth Hospital, UK, write. However, in patients treated with insulin, alcohol has been implicated in up to one fifth of hospital visits for episodes of low blood sugar, also known as hypoglycemia.

The researchers studied 16 patients with an average of 39 years old, who had diabetes for an average of 15 years and drank alcohol on a regular basis.

The participants were evaluated with a continuous glucose monitoring system (CGMS) on two occasions separated by 2 weeks. On one occasion or the other they were given either orange juice or vodka and orange juice with a standardized meal. The subjects received the same dose of insulin with the meal and before bed. On day 2, the patients abstained from alcohol and the team recorded meals, insulin doses, exercise, sleep and hypoglycemic events.

The subjects experienced an average of 1.3 hypoglycemic episodes per day during the 24 hours after the alcoholic drink compared with 0.6 after the placebo, statistically significant difference. No episodes of severe hypoglycemia were reported. The

average blood sugar levels after alcohol were lower than after orange juice alone, Richardson and colleagues report. “This translated into an increased risk of (hypoglycemia) throughout the 24-h period, with a persistent risk of hypoglycemia continuing into the next day,” the team concludes.

They suggest that this information may enable people with diabetes “to be proactive and adjust insulin appropriately, with the aim to reduce the overall risk of hypoglycemia associated with alcohol.”

Source: Richardson T et al. Day After the Night Before: Influence of evening alcohol on risk of hypoglycemia in patients with type 1 diabetes. *Diabetes Care* 2005;28:1801-2.

A new risk by Harvey E. Finkel, M.D.



Because virtually all adverse effects of alcohol are associated with excessive consumption, and are so widely known, our commentaries have been preponderantly concerned with beneficial influences of moderate drinking. In contrast, we now consider just-reported research which surprisingly observes that small amounts of alcohol may escalate the virulence of bacterial infection.

Michaels Smith and Snyder of Yale University reported on their studies of interactions between bacteria and yeasts to the American Society of Microbiology in early June. They had noted that colonies of a bacterium, *Acinetobacter baumannii*, grew more vigorously when near yeasts than when not (the reverse of Fleming's famous observation of penicillin). The effect was traced to the ethanol the yeasts had produced by fermenting

sugar. *A. baumannii* leads to pneumonia, meningitis and urinary infections and to bloodstream infections in American soldiers in Iraq.

Carrying the research to infected living organisms, Smith and Snyder fed two strains of the bacterium, one a mutant insensitive to alcohol, to roundworms, and then plied the worms with modest doses of ethanol. The worms infected with alcohol-sensitive bacteria were less fertile and died sooner than the mutant strain, indicating enhanced virulence. Although conventional wisdom suggests that alcohol would kill off a budding infection, drinking may invigorate some bacteria.

Harvey Finkel writes and lectures internationally on wine's influences upon health. He is a member of AIM's Social, Scientific, and Medical Council, an award-winning wine writer, and retired as clinical professor of medicine (hematology/oncology) at the Boston University Medical Center

Source: *Microbial Synergy via an ethanol-Triggered Pathway* Michael G. Shelley G. Des Etages and Michael Snyder* Department of Molecular, Cellular and Developmental Biology, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut

Alcohol's benefit to essential tremor patients

Several studies have indicated that alcohol can suppress essential tremor (ET). This study examined whether it may also improve gait by assessing the walking patterns of 16 patients with ET and 11 age-matched controls without ET 30-minutes before and after each subject consumed a small dose of alcohol.

- After consuming alcohol, patients with ET had significantly improved tremor scores and ataxia scores. Their number of missteps also significantly decreased (from 8.8 to 5.6).
- Controls had a slight worsening of ataxia scores and an increased number of missteps (from 0.4 to 0.7), though both of these results were non-significant.

This study confirms previous findings indicating that alcohol use can improve tremor in patients with ET. Further, it showed that drinking may also improve gait in these patients. This study raises the possibility that alcohol might benefit patients with other movement disorders.

Source: Klebe S, Stolze H, Gensing K, et al. Influence of alcohol on gait in patients with essential tremor. *Neurology*. 2005;65:96-101

Link between heavy drinking and atrial fibrillation

A study led by researchers at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center (BIDMC) has found that heavy alcohol consumption- that is 35 or more drinks per week, significantly increase men's risk of developing atrial fibrillation, a dangerous type of arrhythmia and one of the leading risk factors for stroke.

The findings show that risk of this rapid, irregular heartbeat is as much as 45% higher among heavy drinkers than abstainers, and supports the existence of what has come to be known as holiday heart syndrome. "Holiday heart syndrome refers to heart rhythm disturbances which develop while a person is on vacation or away from work, and appears to be linked to heavier-than-normal alcohol consumption," explains the

study's lead author Kenneth J. Mukamal, MD, MPH, an internist in BIDMC's Division of General Medicine and Primary Care.

Atrial fibrillation develops when muscles in the heart's upper chambers contract too quickly, resulting in an ineffective, irregular heartbeat. As a result, blood is not adequately pumped from the heart, and may pool and form clots. Blood clots that travel to the brain result in a stroke, and, indeed, statistics show that having atrial fibrillation results in a nearly five-fold increase in a person's stroke risk.

Using information obtained from the Copenhagen City Heart Study in Denmark, the researchers studied 16,415 individuals with an average age

of 50. After adjusting for numerous factors including smoking, education, income, physical activity, body mass index, and diabetes, the researchers analyzed data concerning the participants' consumption of alcohol (beer, wine or spirits). The researchers documented 1,071 cases of atrial fibrillation during the study period. "This was certainly the largest study of its type to examine this topic and while it is reassuring that moderate drinkers did not seem to have an increased risk of this hazardous heart rhythm, our findings provide yet more evidence of the risks of heavy drinking to the heart."

Source: Mukamal KJ et al. Alcohol Consumption and Risk of Atrial Fibrillation in Men and Women. The Copenhagen City Heart Study. *Circulation* 2005

The importance of folate intake for moderate drinkers

Recently published research has given important new information on the effects of genes and alcohol on homocysteine, high levels of which are known to be associated with increased risk of heart disease. Overall, it appears that alcohol intake tends to increase homocysteine, but high levels of folate intake appear to block this increase.

The research showed that people with a particular genotype (MTHFR677, CC) tend to have slightly lower levels of homocysteine to begin with, but show less of a decline with increasing amounts of folate intake, than do people with the CT or TT versions. And, moderate drinkers (defined here as women consuming 15 g alcohol, or a little over one typical drink, per day) had the highest levels of homocysteine if they consumed low amounts of folate, but the strongest decrease if they consumed average or high levels of folate.

People with the CT and TT variants of the MTHFR677 gene have higher risk for coronary disease only if they have low folate intake. The authors state from their previous work that **“Women with both high folate intake and moderate alcohol intake had a significantly lower risk of coronary disease than did nondrinkers with low folate intake.”** They attribute this protection to be partially mediated through homocysteine. They also state that their previous work has shown that Alcohol intake significantly increases the risk of breast and colon cancer, although the

association appears limited to persons with low folate intake. They suggest that these interactions in relation to cancer are not likely to be due to a biological effect of homocysteine but rather to the importance of folate on gene methylation, with aberrations in DNA methylation a potential risk factor for cancer.

A similar relation was recently reported by Baglietto et al for the relation between alcohol and breast cancer. The Australian study, followed 17,447 Melbourne women from 1990 to the end of 2003, by which time 537 had developed breast cancer.

The researchers found no link between breast cancer and folate consumption, But a diet rich in folate appears to mitigate the breast cancer risk associated with alcohol, Professor Graham Giles of Cancer Council Victoria and team reported **“Women who had high alcohol consumption and low intake of folate had an increased risk of breast cancer, but those women who had high alcohol consumption and moderate to high levels of folate intake had no increased risk,”**

The study didn't look at the specific level of folate consumption that mitigated this risk, he says. But it found drinkers who consumed less than 200 micrograms of folate a day, or the equivalent of around 220 grams of leafy green vegetables, faced extra risks. English says folate plays a role in DNA regulation and is believed to help prevent genetic abnormalities

that can cause cancer. For instance it can prevent genes from mutating or becoming silenced, he says. Alcohol, meanwhile, is converted by the body into the cancer causing toxin acetaldehyde, which destroys folate, thus stimulating cancer cell growth.

Director of the New South Wales Breast Cancer Institute, Professor John Boyages, who was not involved in the original research, says the study implies that alcohol increases the risk of breast cancer because of its impact on folate levels. But he says the risk of breast cancer from alcohol is around the same as early menstruation, late menopause or taking the contraceptive pill for a few years- i.e. low.

Neither study gave beverage-specific results. However, it is known that beer contains high levels of folate and other B vitamins, as do leafy veg, tomatoes and cereals. No one has yet suggested adding folate to wine or spirits.

Some studies have also suggested folate has a protective effect against colon cancer.

Source: Chiuvè SE, Giovannucci EL, Hankinson SE, Hunter DJ, Stampfer MJ, Willett WC, Rimm EB. Alcohol intake and methylenetetrahydrofolate reductase polymorphism modify the relation of folate intake to plasma homocysteine. *Am J Clin Nutr* 2005;82:155-162. and Baglietto et al. Does dietary folate intake modify effect of alcohol consumption on breast cancer risk? Prospective cohort study. *BMJ*, doi:10.1136/bmj.38551.446470.06

Alcohol consumption and type 2 diabetes - a u-shaped relationship

A recent study sought to clarify the relationship between alcohol consumption and type 2 diabetes by conducting a meta-analysis of published epidemiological studies. Data from 13 cohorts were included in the analysis.

The results of these studies are consistent with regard to moderate alcohol consumption, indicating a protective effect in the order of 30% (relative risk [RR]meta=0.72, 95% CI=0.67-0.77). The reduced risk is

seen in men as well as in women, although few studies investigated women. No protective effect of high alcohol consumption was seen and one cannot rule out that large intakes of alcohol may increase the risk of type 2 diabetes. Results from published studies suggest a U-shaped relationship between alcohol and type 2 diabetes, but this is based on rather few studies with heterogeneous design and definitions. It seems important to further investigate if, and to what

extent, high alcohol consumption increases the risk of type 2 diabetes. Aspects of moderate alcohol consumption also need further investigation; these include type of drink, frequency of drinking, sex and ethnic differences.

Source: Carlsson S, Hammar N, Grill V. Alcohol consumption and type 2 diabetes. Meta-analysis of epidemiological studies indicates a U-shaped relationship. *Diabetologia* 2005;48:1051-1054. *Alcoholism: Clinical & Experimental Research*. 29(5):902-908, May 2005.

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AIM – Alcohol in Moderation was founded in 1991 as an independent organisation whose role is to communicate ‘The Sensible Drinking Message’ and to act as a conduit for information from the industry, its associations and relevant medical and scientific researchers, legislation, policy and campaigns.

AIM Mission Statement

- **To promote the sensible and responsible consumption of alcohol**
- **To encourage informed debate on alcohol issues**
- **To communicate and publicise relevant medical and scientific research in a clear and concise format via AIM Digest and the AIM Research Highlights**
- **To publish information via the ‘AIM Gateway to Sensible Drinking and Health’ website containing a unique archive of research on moderate drinking and health – comprehensively indexed and fully searchable**
- **To publish information to the consumer on sensible drinking and health via the ‘Drinking and You’ website based on national government guidelines with sections for the UK, USA, Canada, Spain, France Sweden and Germany**
- **To distribute AIM Digest without charge to the media, legislators and researchers involved in alcohol affairs**
- **To direct enquiries from the media and others towards full and accurate sources of information.**

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Alcohol abuse in Russia

A recent study carried out by Nilssen and colleagues explored levels of alcohol consumption of a Russian population in relation to risk factors for cardiovascular disease. Researchers found that mortality rates in Russia, especially in the Northern regions, are much higher than in other developed countries, and have been increasing (rather than decreasing, as is occurring elsewhere).

A total of 1963 men and 1734 women, aged 18–75 years took part in the study, participating in a physical examination, a six-page questionnaire on health and lifestyle, and blood tests. Results showed that Gamma-glutamyltransferase (GGT) levels in both sexes were more than twice as high as found in comparable studies. Elevated GGT-levels were 4–5 times more frequent than found in Norwegian studies. Alcohol Use Disorder Identification Test (AUDIT) identified up to 75% of male workers and 47% of female workers as hazardous or harmful alcohol drinkers. These findings indicate an extremely high level of alcohol consumption in this population. Elevation in GGT was significantly associated with increased risk for cardiovascular disease.

The study points out strikingly high rates of alcohol abuse reported among its subjects, with the usual pattern of drinking being very large amounts on only one day per week. Despite the fact that these drinkers did not have very abnormal levels of cardiovascular risk factors, the very high death rates from heart disease in this area are undoubtedly related to the very unhealthy pattern of drinking (especially bingeing) of a large proportion of the population.

Source : Nilssen O et al, Alcohol consumption and its relation to risk factors for cardiovascular disease in the north-west of Russia: the Arkhangelsk study. *Int J Epidemiology* 2005; 34:781-788

Julian Brind to join the AIM Council



AIM is honoured to welcome Julian Brind to its Social, Scientific and Medical Council.

Julian Brind became a Master of Wine in 1970 after winning both the 'Bourse de Voyage' and the 'Vintners' scholarships immediately being recruited by Waitrose, the major supermarket group (with currently 186 stores in the UK). After 6 months he took over buying responsibility for Wine, Spirits, Beer and Soft Drinks. Now, having retired early, he remains Senior Consultant to Waitrose Supermarkets.

During his distinguished career, Brind was Chairman of The Institute of Masters of Wine in 1993, and Chairman

of their Examination Board. He was honoured as President of the Wine and Spirit Association in 2002 and is also a trustee of the Wine and Spirit Education Trust.

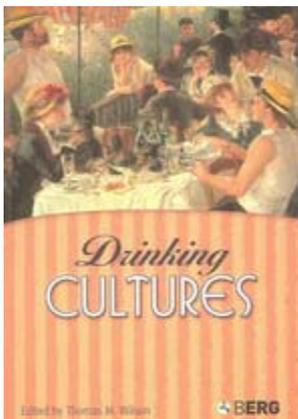
As a lifelong leader in the search for quality Brind serves as a senior judge and member of the International Wine and Spirit Competition Technical Committee.

Brind encouraged Waitrose to be the first supermarket group to recognise social responsibility and give advice to consumers and has supported AIM since its inception. Waitrose sponsor AIM's 'Drinking and You' consumer website for the UK and with Brind's guidance have just printed AIM's 'Alcohol and You' to be made free to their customers.

As a serious sportsman Brind plays 'real tennis' and squash having won the UK Wine Trade Squash Championship no less than 9 times and runner up 10 times!

Brind will bring his wealth of experience to support AIM's increasing educational publishing role to the consumer on responsible alcohol drinking and health.

Book review - Drinking Cultures



This collection of essays is edited by Tom Wilson, Professor of Anthropology at Binghamton University, state University of New York. 'Drinking Cultures' draws on eleven original field studies taking the reader is on a world tour, visiting a wide variety of cultures from gangland

Los Angeles to a country valley in rural Japan, from home drinking parties in Norway to wine drinking in France.

Each contributors to the book looks at the various aspects of drinking within the culture and gives anecdotal evidence as to the the drinking place, memories, economics and politics, and wider expressions of culture and identity.

Many other thematic threads run through the studies including gendered drinking, consumption and identity, religion and identity, and the interplay of national and regional identity. The book looks at what drinking means to the people who consume or, or choose not to consume. To obtain a copy visit www.bergpublishers.com/uk/

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