



# Alcohol Consumption and Harm in the UK and EU

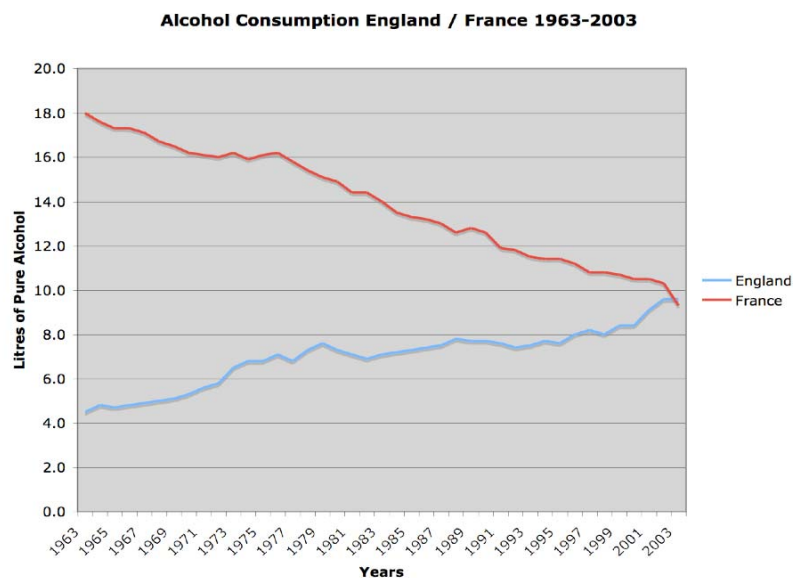
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**In terms of the total amount of alcohol drunk, the UK has been a relatively moderate consumer compared with other Western European countries. Historically, the heaviest drinking countries were the wine producers: for many years, France had one of the highest known levels of alcohol consumption in the world, and one of the highest levels of alcoholism.**

**However:** Whereas, in recent years, alcohol consumption has fallen in most of the wine producing countries, and tended to stabilise elsewhere in Western Europe, it is still rising in the UK, which is now one of the heaviest alcohol consuming countries in the world. If the figures below are accurate, between 2002 and 2003 the UK overtook France in the national consumption league table.

**Projected Total Alcohol Consumption, litres per capita, for France and UK <sup>1</sup>**



- While there have been some changes, the UK drinking culture still reflects the binge drinking pattern characteristic of Northern Europe with, in consequence, relatively high levels of violence and other social problems associated with acute intoxication.

These patterns and problems are particularly evident in teenagers and young adults. British teenagers, along with those in Ireland and Denmark,

are among the heaviest drinkers in Europe: they are more likely to drink, to get drunk and to report problems associated with drinking than most of their counterparts in other European nations.

**Recorded per Capita Alcohol Consumption in Selected Countries (Total Population)<sup>1</sup>**

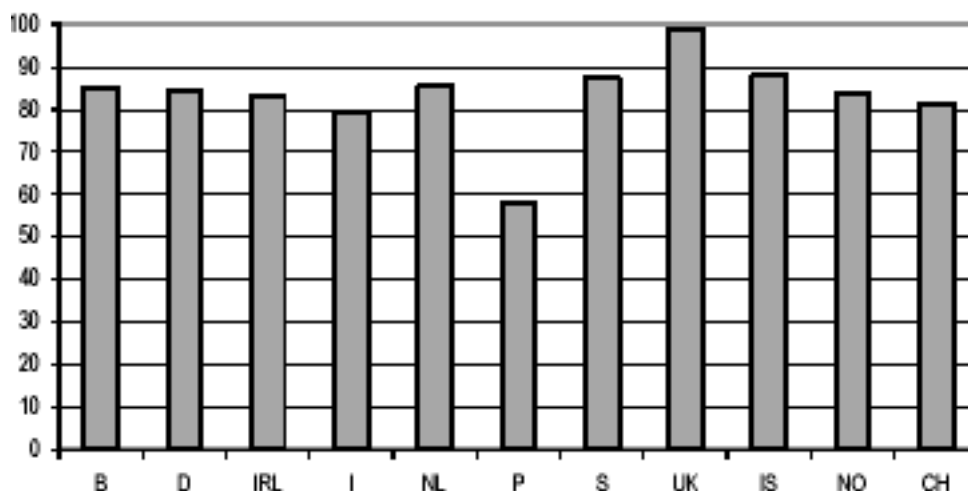
(ranked in order of per capita consumption in 2003)

		Litres of pure alcohol						
Rank	Country	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
1	Luxembourg	11.4	13.3	12.9	13.2	12.4	11.9	12.6
2	Hungary	10.1	10.2	10.6	10.9	11.1	11.1	11.4
3	Czech Republic	10.5	10.5	11.0	10.9	10.9	10.8	11.0
4	Rep.of Ireland	9.7	9.7	9.6	10.7	10.8	10.8	10.8
5	Germany	10.8	10.6	10.6	10.5	10.4	10.4	10.2
6	Spain	10.2	10.1	9.9	9.8	9.8	9.6	10.0
7	<b>United Kingdom</b>	<b>8.2</b>	<b>8.0</b>	<b>8.4</b>	<b>8.4</b>	<b>9.1</b>	<b>9.6</b>	<b>9.6</b>
8	Portugal	11.3	11.3	10.6	10.3	10.3	9.7	9.6
9	Denmark	9.9	9.5	9.5	9.5	9.5	9.5	9.5
10	Austria	9.5	9.3	9.3	9.2	9.0	9.2	9.3
11	France	10.9	10.8	10.7	10.4	10.5	10.3	9.3
12	Cyprus	6.6	7.0	7.1	7.4	7.9	9.1	9.0
13	Switzerland	9.2	9.1	9.2	9.2	9.2	9.0	9.0
14	Belgium	9.1	8.2	8.4	8.4	8.1	7.9	8.8
15	Russia	7.5	8.1	8.6	8.6	8.6	8.6	8.7
16	Slovak Repub.	8.3	8.0	8.1	8.9	8.7	8.8	8.5
17	Romania	9.8	10.5	7.3	7.4	9.9	8.5	8.1
18	Latvia	6.9	7.1	7.7	7.7	7.5	7.7	8.1
19	Netherlands	8.2	8.1	8.2	8.2	8.1	8.0	7.9
20	Finland	6.8	7.2	7.1	7.1	7.4	7.7	7.9
21	Greece	8.3	7.9	8.4	8.0	7.9	7.8	7.7
22	Australia	7.5	7.6	7.3	7.4	7.4	7.3	7.2
23	Canada	6.1	6.3	6.4	6.6	6.7	6.9	7.0
24	Italy	7.8	7.7	7.6	7.7	7.4	7.4	6.9
25	New Zealand	7.3	7.5	7.3	6.8	6.6	6.9	6.8
26	USA	6.6	6.6	6.8	6.8	6.8	6.7	6.8
27	Poland	6.7	6.7	6.7	6.7	6.3	6.6	6.7
28	Estonia			5.1	5.6	5.7	6.2	6.5
29	Japan	6.4	6.5	6.4	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5
30	Argentina	6.9	6.8	6.7	6.4	6.3	6.3	6.2
31	Uruguay			6.0	6.0	5.8	5.9	5.9
32	Iceland			4.5	4.7	4.9	5.0	5.4
33	Chile			5.4	5.3	4.9	4.9	5.2
34	Bulgaria	7.0	6.8	6.6	6.3	6.0	5.4	5.0
35	Malta			5.2	5.2	5.0	4.9	4.9
36	Sweden			4.9	4.9	4.9	4.9	4.9
37	South Africa			4.9	4.8	4.8	4.7	4.6
38	Venezuela			4.9	5.0	5.0	4.8	4.6
39	Norway			4.8	5.0	4.4	4.4	4.4
40	Thailand			3.9	4.4	4.5	4.3	4.3
41	Brazil			4.2	4.2	4.1	4.2	4.2
42	China			3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	4.0
43	Colombia			4.2	4.1	4.0	3.9	3.9
44	Taiwan			3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.3
45	Mexico			3.2	3.2	3.2	3.1	3.1

*Countries of the EU in red*

Compared with other countries, the UK has a lower than average proportion of non-drinkers.

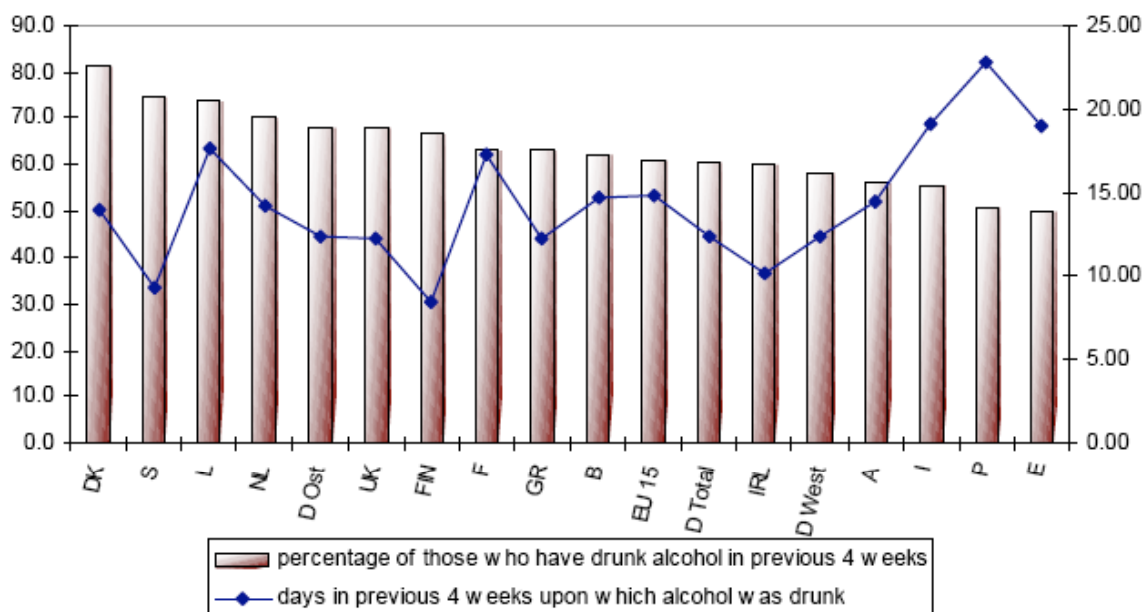
### Percentage of population having drunk alcohol in the past 12 months<sup>2</sup>



#### Country abbreviations

B – Belgium;	DK – Denmark;	D – Germany;	EL – Greece;	E – Spain;	F – France;
IRL – Ireland;	I – Italy;	NL – Netherlands;	A – Austria;	P – Portugal;	S – Sweden
UK – United Kingdom;	IS – Iceland;	NO – Norway;	CH – Switzerland;		

### Drinking Patterns of Europeans, 2002<sup>3</sup>

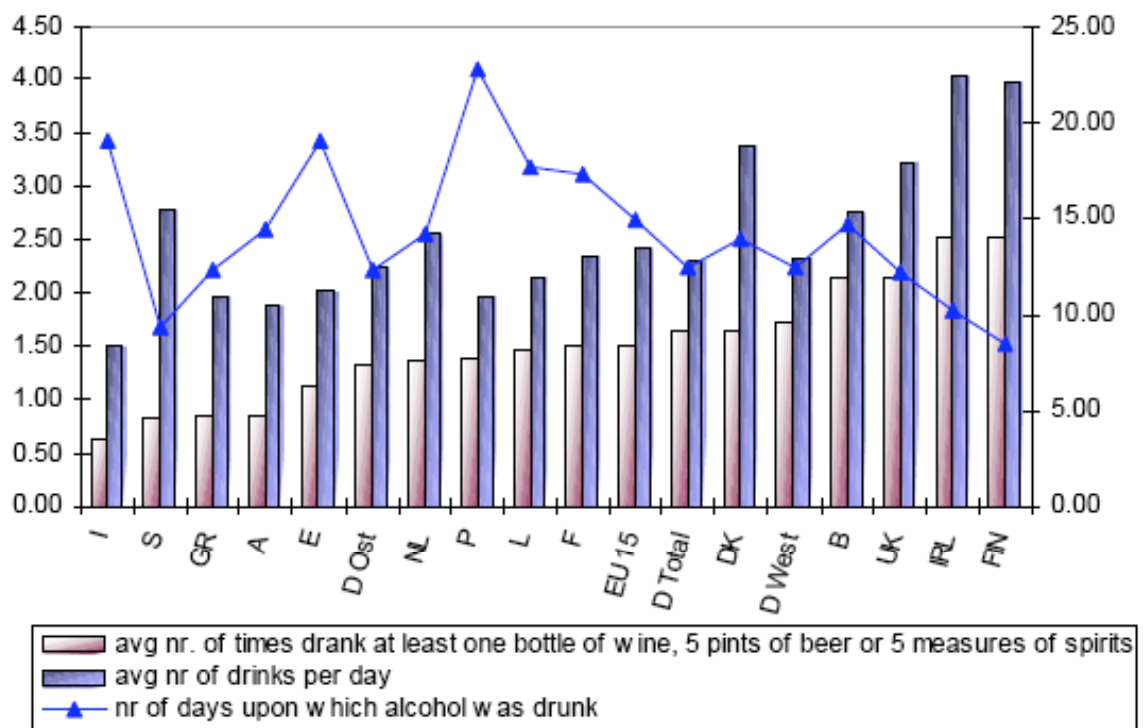


A- Austria	D Ost - East Germany	DTotal - Germany	E - Spain	F - France	Gr - Greece	IRL - Ireland	NL - Netherlands	S - Sweden
B - Belgium	DWest - West Germany	DK - Denmark	EU15	FIN - Finland	I - Italy	L- Luxembourg	P- Portugal	UK - United Kingdom

## Drinking Patterns

- Whereas regular, daily, drinking is most common in Southern Europe, the quantity consumed per drinking occasion is highest in the UK and Northern Europe.
- Binge drinking (consumption of 5 or more standard drinks in a single drinking occasion) accounts for a relatively high proportion of drinking occasions in the UK and Ireland compared with other countries.

Drinking Patterns of Europeans, 2002<sup>3</sup>

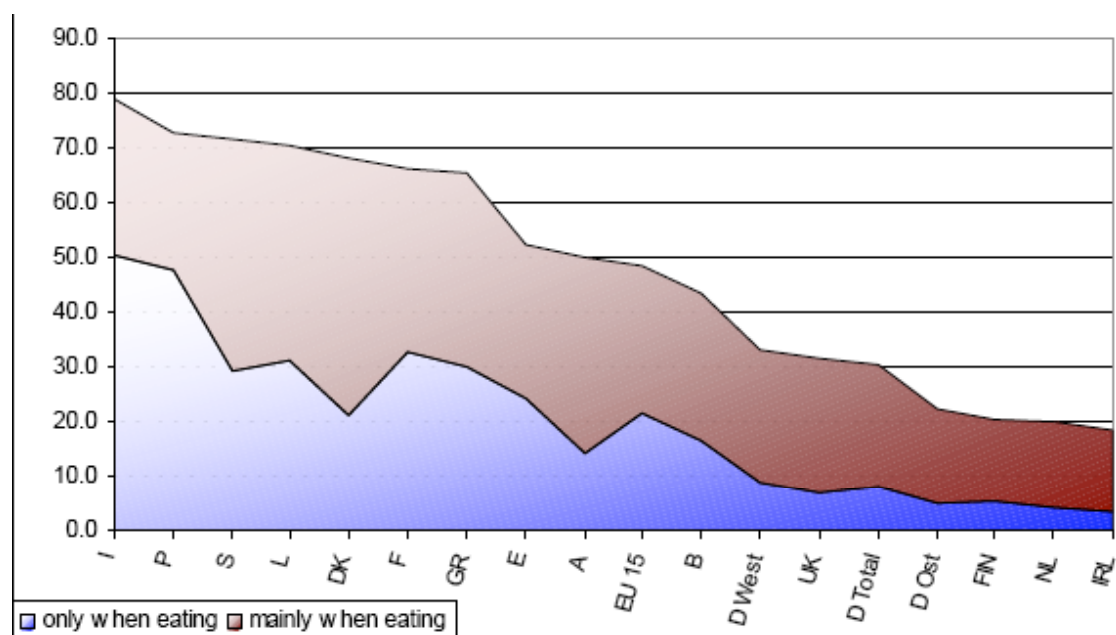


**Drinking patterns among men and women in selected European countries (All respondents aged 18-64 years)<sup>4</sup>**

	Drinking every day %	Drinking at least once a week %	Binge drinking at least once a week %	Mean drinking occasions past 12 months	Mean binge drinking occasions past 12 months	Binge per 100 drinking occasions
<b>MEN</b>						
Finland	4	60	16	70	20	29
France	21	68	8	121	47	40
Germany	12	60	9	97	13	13
Ireland	1.6	69	48	78	45	58
Italy	42	76	11	179	23	13
Sweden	3	47	8	37	12	32
UK	9	74	38	118	47	40
<b>WOMEN</b>						
Finland	2	33	3	35	6	17
France	9	38	2	62	3	5
Germany	5	40	2	54	4	7
Ireland	0.2	51	16	46	14	30
Italy	26	52	7	121	14	12
Sweden	1	24	1	24	4	17
UK	5	51	12	73	16	22

- In the South, meal times account for 80 per cent of drinking occasions compared with 50 per cent in the UK, where relatively high proportions of drinking occasions occur at home (rather than eg restaurants) and not in connection with meals.
- As can be seen from the graph below, in the UK and other northern countries the bulk of alcohol consumption takes place unaccompanied by food

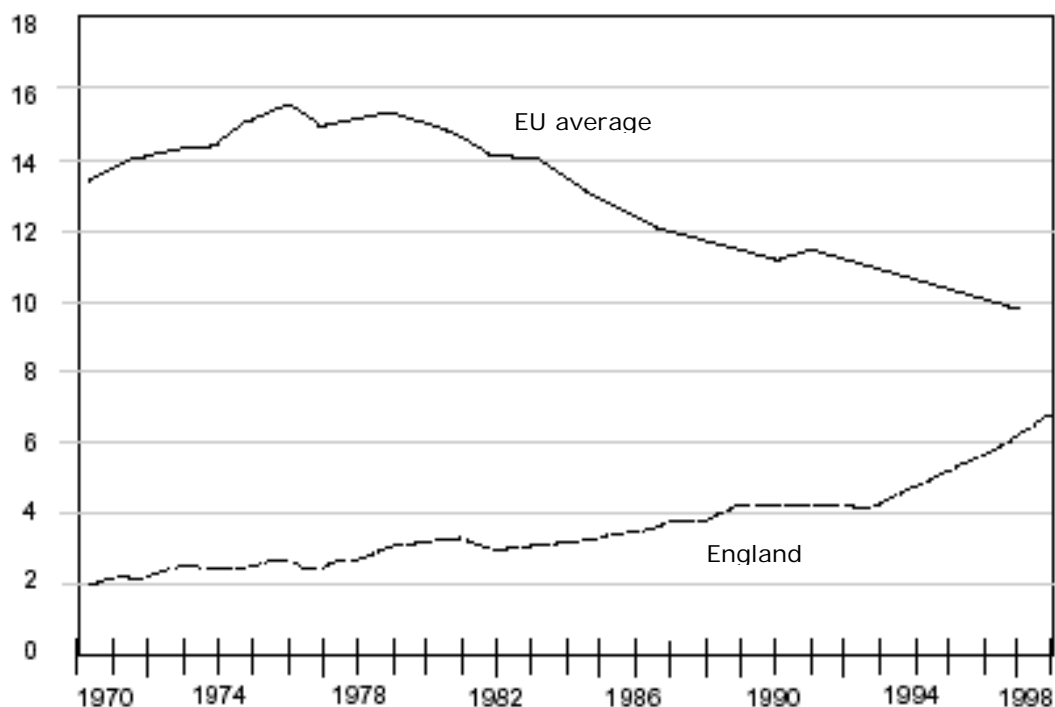
**European Alcohol Consumption with Meals<sup>3</sup>**



## Alcohol-Related Problems

Liver cirrhosis is often regarded as a proxy for health damage caused by long-term excessive drinking. As can be seen from the graph below, the gap between Great Britain and other European countries has narrowed and, indeed, Scotland now has one of the highest levels of liver cirrhosis in Western Europe.

### Changing death rates from cirrhosis in England and the EU: 1970-1998 (Rates per 100,000 population)<sup>5</sup>



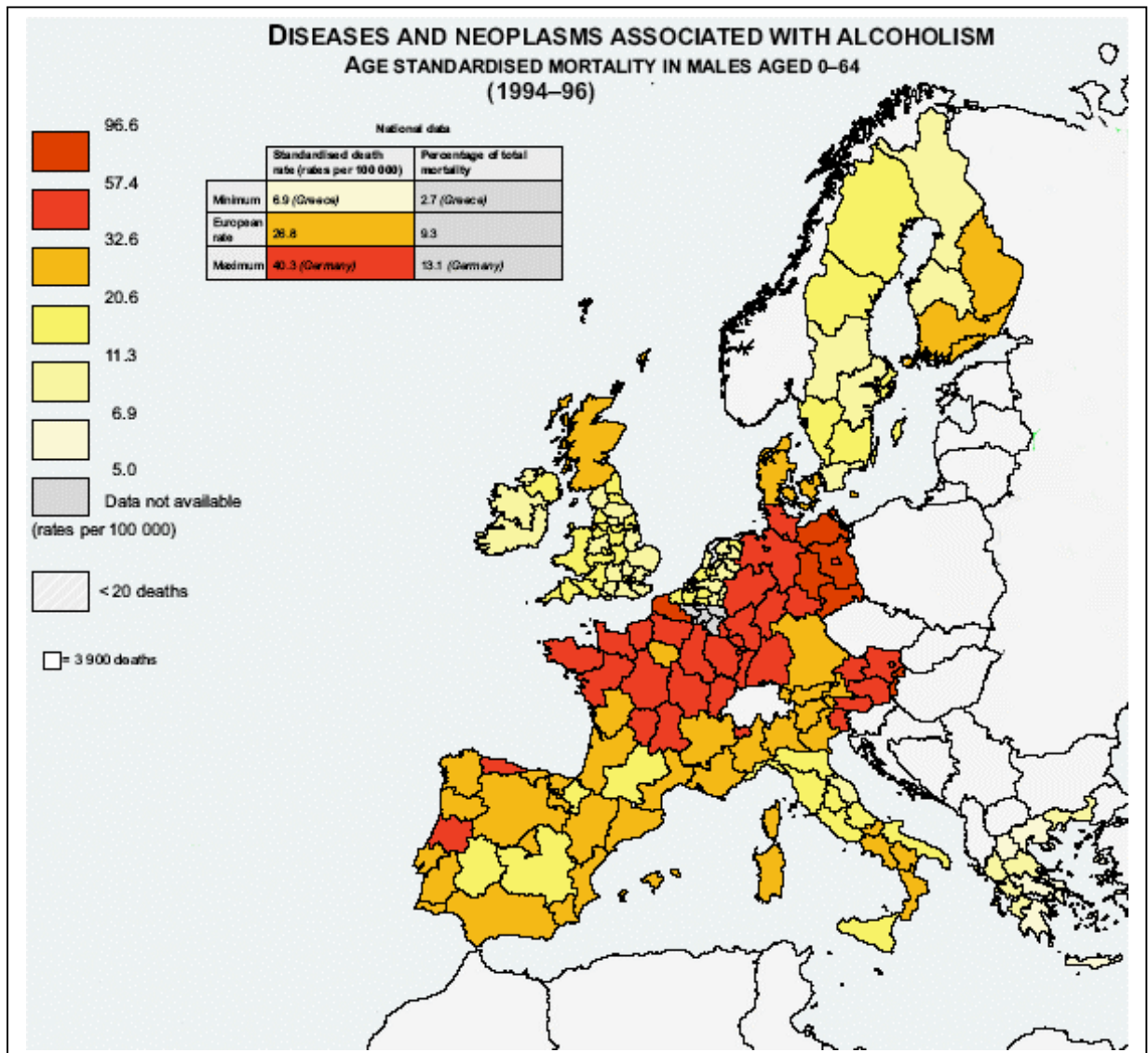
### Standardised mortality rates for liver cirrhosis at all ages per 100,000 per year<sup>6</sup>

	1957 - 1961		1987 - 1991		1997 - 2001	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Austria	43.4	13.5	56.6	18.1	43.5	16.7
Denmark	11.7	15.6	28.00	12.9	34.2*	15.6*
England & Wales	3.4	2.2	8.3	5.4	14.1	7.7
Finland	9.9	5.5	23.8	8.1	28.7	9.9
France	48.4	19.9	31.9	14.1	28.1	10.8
Germany	25.2	11.1	35.8	14.5	33.6	13.9
Ireland	5.4	3.9	7.8	5.3	11.1	6.5
Italy	29.6	10.2	37.4	16.2	26.5	12.2
Netherlands	7.8	4.7	9.4	5.3	9.7	5.9
Norway	7.7	6.6	13.1	6.1	12.1	6.7
Portugal	43.3	19.0	52.4	16.9	34.7	11.1
Scotland	8.2	6.1	16.9	11.1	34.4	16.1
Spain	28.9	14.2	34.8	11.0	25.1	8.2
Sweden	9.2	4.7	13.7	6.2	13.5	5.6

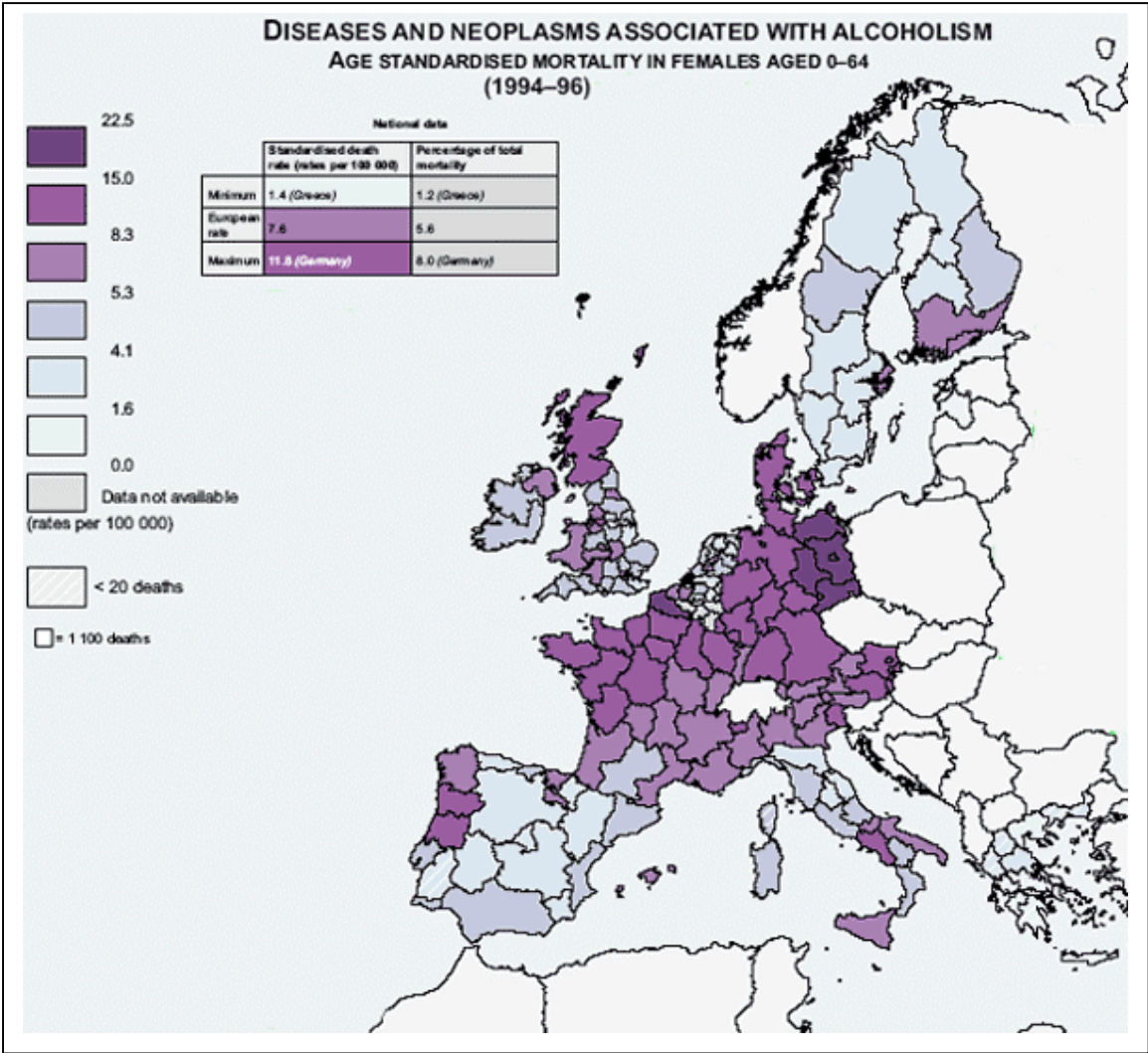
Rates directly age-standardised to the European standard population

\* Rates are 1997-2000 only

Maps showing diseases and neoplasms associated with alcoholism (*males below, females over page*) in the EU<sup>7</sup>



The maps show mortality for cirrhosis of the liver, alcoholic psychosis and cancers of the head and neck. In the EU deaths from these causes comprise 4.2% of male deaths and 2.1% of female deaths. Six out of ten of the male deaths, five out of ten of the female, occur before the age of 65. Men aged 45-65 are the most affected

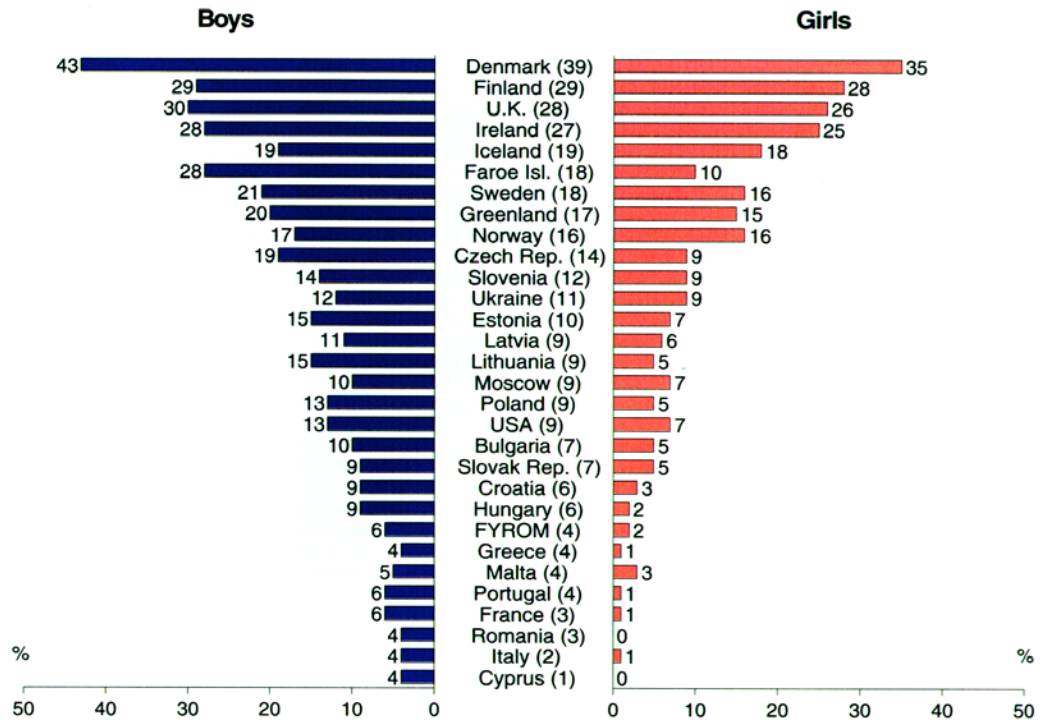


In regard to alcohol-related social harm the UK and Finland have higher levels than some other European countries.

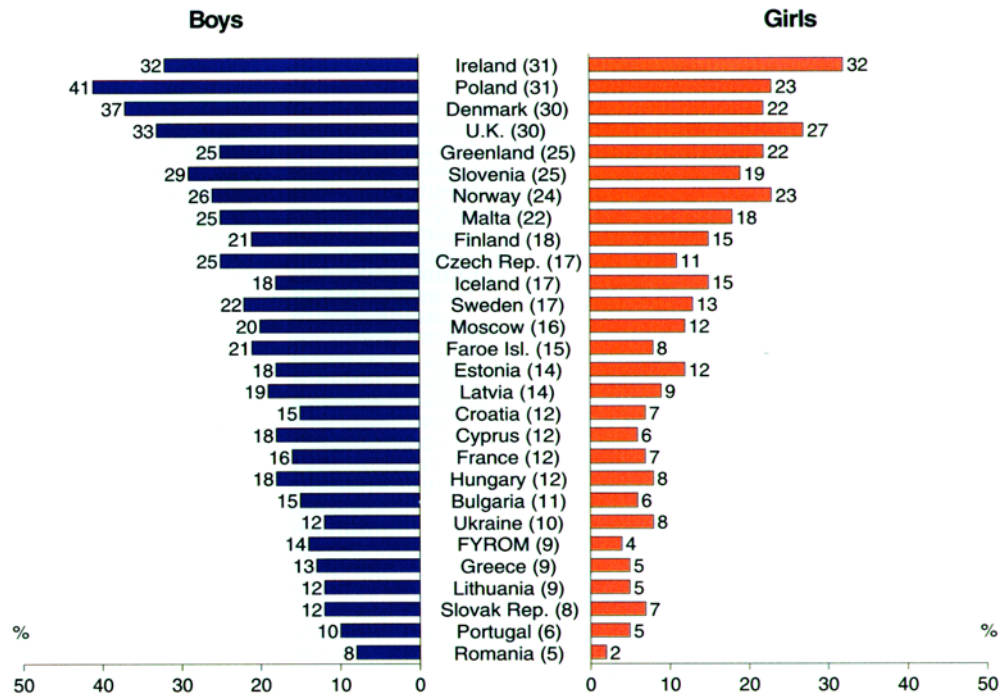
**Proportion (%) reporting adverse consequences of own alcohol use during the past 12 months (abstainers excluded)<sup>8</sup>**

	<b>Overall rates</b>			<b>Behavioural concomitants</b>			<b>Social reactions</b>		
	<i>At least one harm</i>	<i>Ever Considered cutting down</i>	<i>Alcohol harmed health</i>	<i>Regretted things said</i>	<i>Got into a fight</i>	<i>Got into an accident</i>	<i>Alcohol harmed work/studies</i>	<i>Alcohol harmed homelife marriage</i>	<i>Alcohol harmed friendships</i>
<b>MEN</b>									
Finland	46.3	33.0	17.3	25.1	4.2	2.6	4.5	6.8	5.2
Sweden	35.5	11.0	8.0	25.8	1.3	3.5	3.0	1.9	0.6
Germany	33.5	17.8	17.3	7.2	5.5	0.5	3.3	3.0	1.6
UK	45.0	24.5	18.6	27.9	7.5	3.6	9.1	6.5	5.1
France	27.1	15.2	18.0	12.7	2.0	3.5	2.6	3.3	3.6
Italy	18.3	10.7	9.8	4.9	1.2	1.6	5.7	4.3	6.0
<b>Av</b>	<b>34.5</b>	<b>18.7</b>	<b>14.8</b>	<b>17.3</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>3.7</b>
<b>Women</b>									
Finland	28.6	18.5	6.6	17.0	1.4	0.8	2.1	2.5	2.6
Sweden	18.6	6.0	5.7	13.0	0.6	1.3	0.8	0.5	0.7
Germany	20.2	12.1	9.8	5.9	1.8	0.7	1.6	2.0	1.2
UK	32.7	19.6	8.8	21.5	3.6	3.4	4.1	4.5	5.1
France	12.1	4.7	8.0	4.4	0.0	0.4	0.4	0.2	1.3
Italy	8.5	3.5	4.3	3.6	0.2	0.2	1.7	1.3	2.3
<b>Av</b>	<b>20.5</b>	<b>10.7</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>10.9</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>2.2</b>

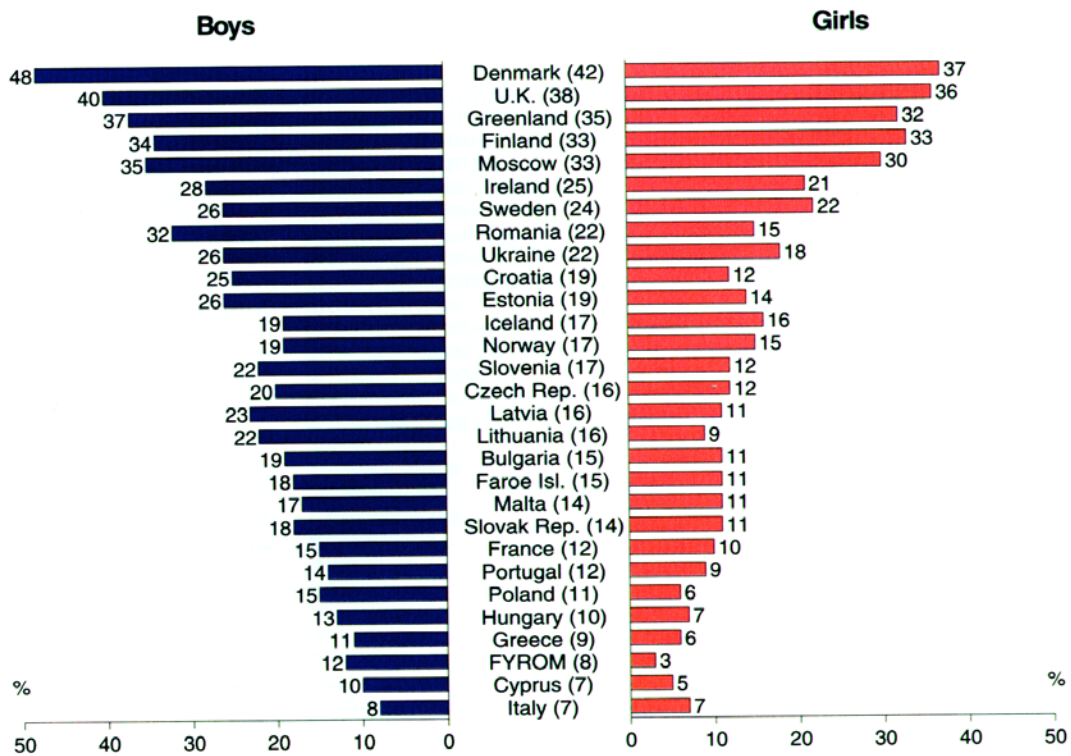
## Young people (Graphs)<sup>9</sup>



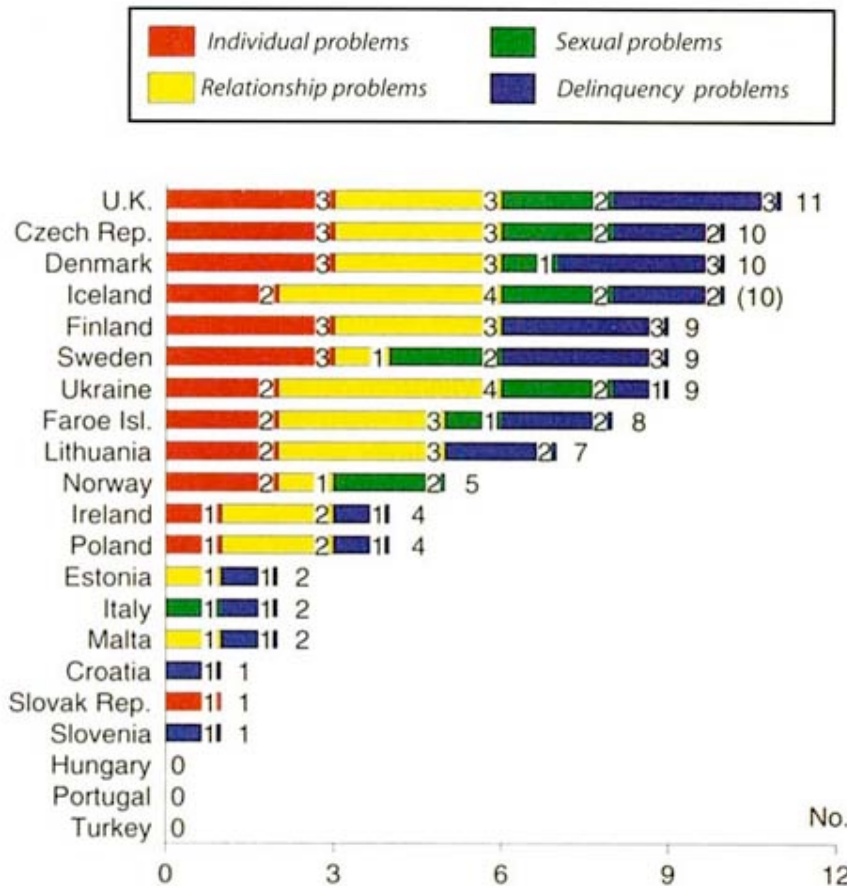
**Figure 42b.** Proportion of boys and girls who have been drunk 10 times or more during last 12 months. 1999.



**Figure 44b.** Proportion of boys and girls who reported "binge drinking" 3 times or more during the last 30 days. 1999.



**Figure 45b.** Proportion of boys and girls who have been drunk at the age of 13 or younger. 1999.



## Alcohol Related Mortality

Deaths from alcoholic liver disease are normally regarded as providing an indication of the general extent of chronic health problems related to alcohol consumption. In western countries alcohol is implicated in the majority of deaths from chronic liver disease.

Age adjusted liver cirrhosis mortality rates (per 100,000, 15+) for men and women in 15 European countries in the postwar period. Error! Bookmark not defined.

	1950 - 65		1966 - 80		1981 - 95		1995	
		Women		Women		Women		Women
<b>Northern Europe</b>								
Finland	8.4	4.5	11.1	3.9	16.9	5.8	19.7	5.8
Norway	5.9	4.1	7.6	3.9	9.5	4.2	7.6	3.6
Sweden	7.7	4.1	17.1	6.8	11.7	4.9	9.3	4.9
<i>Average</i>	<i>7.3</i>	<i>4.2</i>	<i>11.9</i>	<i>4.9</i>	<i>12.7</i>	<i>5.0</i>	<i>12.2</i>	<i>4.8</i>
<b>Central Europe</b>								
Austria	44.1	12.2	65.8	17.0	54.3	16.2	47.1	15.1
Belgium	15.9	7.4	21.7	10.4	19.6	9.9	18.6	9.5
Denmark	9.8	11.0	15.3	9.3	22.2	9.7	27.7	13.3
Ireland	4.7	2.5	6.8	4.1	5.8	3.7	4.3	4.0
Netherlands	7.3	4.8	9.0	4.7	8.9	4.4	7.7	4.4
UK	4.4	2.8	5.6	3.8	8.2	5.4	11.1	6.4
West Germany	31.6	12.8	49.8	38.5	14.8	3.2	36.8	14.5
<i>Average</i>	<i>16.8</i>	<i>7.6</i>	<i>24.9</i>	<i>12.5</i>	<i>19.1</i>	<i>7.5</i>	<i>21.9</i>	<i>9.6</i>
<b>Southern Europe</b>								
France	57.4	23.5	69.7	24.7	38.8	14.3	28.0	11.0
Italy	40.8	13.5	67.2	21.1	49.4	18.6	35.0	15.8
Spain	34.9	17.1	53.3	19.4	40.2	12.8	29.3	9.4
Portugal	67.1	27.6	82.2	29.2	58.5	18.2	42.5	12.1
Greece	36.7	13.3	31.0	11.0	16.6	5.5	9.5	3.3
<i>Average</i>	<i>47.4</i>	<i>20.4</i>	<i>68.1</i>	<i>23.6</i>	<i>46.7</i>	<i>16.0</i>	<i>33.7</i>	<i>12.1</i>
<b>Total average</b>	<b>25.1</b>	<b>10.7</b>	<b>34.2</b>	<b>13.9</b>	<b>25.0</b>	<b>9.1</b>	<b>22.3</b>	<b>8.9</b>

**Age adjusted mortality rates from explicitly alcohol-related causes\* (AAA) for men and women (per100,000, 15+) in 15 European countries in the postwar period**

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Country	1950 - 65		1966 - 80		1981 - 95		1995	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
<b>Northern Europe</b>								
Finland	9.5	0.4	18.3	1.4	23.6	3.2	28.6	4.0
Norway	1.7	0.2	7.6	1.0	14.3	2.7	14.0	3.3
Sweden	2.6	0.2	11.7	1.8	15.1	2.8	10.6	2.1
<i>Average</i>	<i>4.6</i>	<i>0.3</i>	<i>12.5</i>	<i>1.4</i>	<i>17.7</i>	<i>2.9</i>	<i>17.7</i>	<i>3.1</i>
<b>Central Europe</b>								
Austria	6.8	1.1	5.9	1.3	5.7	1.2	7.6	1.5
Belgium	3.4	0.8	5.2	1.5	4.8	1.5	5.6	2.1
Denmark	0.8	0.1	2.6	0.6	8.5	2.5	9.6	3.0
Ireland	0.4	0.1	0.9	0.3	2.0	0.8	2.8	2.0
Netherlands	1.4	0.1	1.9	0.3	2.8	0.6	3.1	0.8
UK	0.3	0.1	1.2	0.5	2.2	0.8	2.8	1.1
West Germany	1.5	0.3	7.5	1.8	13.3	3.2	16.8	4.0
<i>Average</i>	<i>2.1</i>	<i>0.4</i>	<i>4.0</i>	<i>1.0</i>	<i>5.6</i>	<i>1.5</i>	<i>6.9</i>	<i>2.1</i>
<b>Southern Europe</b>								
France	20.8	4.9	18.8	4.1	12.7	2.6	9.2	2.0
Italy	3.4	0.4	2.0	0.2	1.4	0.2	1.3	0.2
Spain	3.1	0.7	3.2	0.4	2.3	0.4	1.9	0.3
Portugal	9.6	1.8	5.5	0.7	2.9	0.2	1.4	0.2
Greece	NA	NA	2.1	0.1	0.9	0.0	1.1	0.0
<i>Average</i>	<i>9.2</i>	<i>2.0</i>	<i>6.3</i>	<i>1.1</i>	<i>4.0</i>	<i>0.7</i>	<i>3.0</i>	<i>0.5</i>
<b>Total average</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>7.8</b>	<b>1.8</b>

\*The causes of death are: alcohol dependence, alcohol psychosis, alcohol poisoning and other explicitly alcohol related causes of death (alcohol abuse, alcoholic cardiomyopathy, alcoholic gastritis and alcoholic polyneuropath

**Institute of Alcohol Studies  
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## References

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- <sup>6</sup> Leon, D A; McCambridge, J: Liver cirrhosis mortality rates in Britain from 1950 to 2002: an analysis of routine data. Lancet 2006; 367: 52-56
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