

# Trends in Young People's use of Alcohol

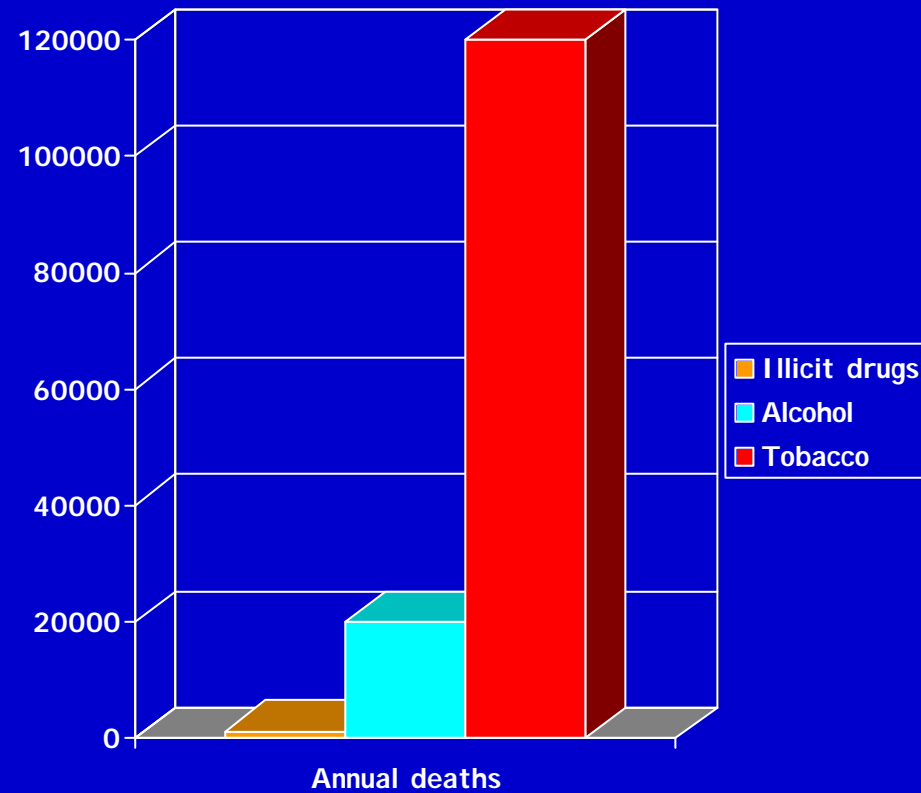
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Presented at the Alcohol Concern and DrugScope  
Regional Seminars

*Alcohol, Education and Young people, May-June 2002*

# Psychoactive Drug-Related Deaths

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# Trends in young people's alcohol consumption: stability and change

- Stable:
  - Initiation
  - Abstinence
- Increasing:
  - Amount
  - Binge drinking
- Fluctuating:
  - Frequency

# Transitions

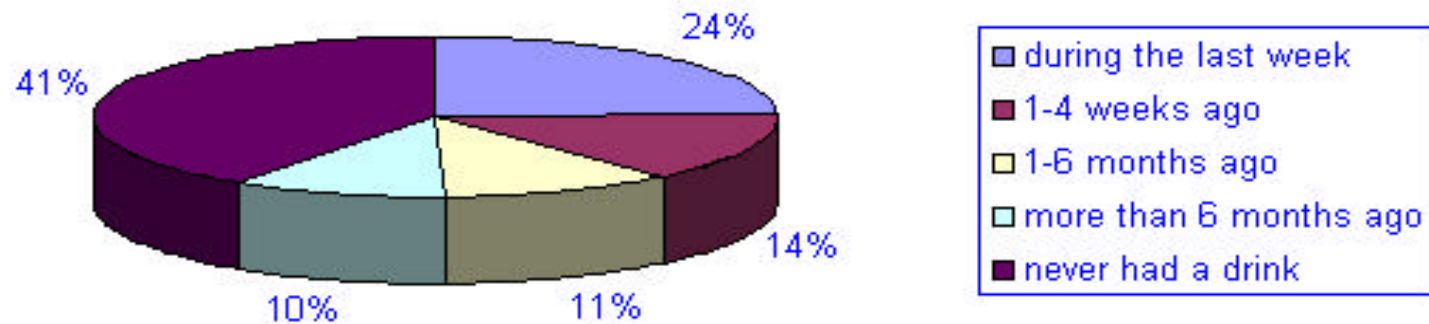
- 9-11 year-olds
  - first experiences of alcohol in family settings
- 11-16 year-olds
  - transition to unsupervised drinking
- 16-18 year-olds
  - transition to adult drinking levels
  - women's drinking peaks
- 18-24 year olds
  - men's drinking peaks

# Initiation

- By the time they leave primary school, most young people will have some limited experience of drinking.
- Among 8-9 year-olds, 85% of boys and 80% of girls have tasted alcohol (Balding and Shelley, 1993)

# 11-15 year-olds drinking in 2000

11-15-year-olds' drinking patterns in 2000



# Abstinence

- Since 1980, around 40% of 11-15 year-olds do not drink at all
- Most under 16s either do not drink at all or drink small amounts infrequently

# Amount of Alcohol

- Average amount drunk by 11-15 year-olds:
  - in 1990                      0.8 units/week
  - in 1998                      1.6 units/week
- Average amount drunk by 11-15 year-olds who drink:
  - 1990                      5.3 units/week
  - 2000                      10.4 units/week

Source: DoH (2001) Smoking, Drinking and Drug use among young teenagers in 2000

# Drinking among Y11 pupils (15-16) in last week

- 67% had drunk alcohol
- 65% had their first unsupervised drink at age 13-14
- average amount drunk was 11.7 units;
- 70% of drinkers had exceeded DoH recommended daily limits

Source:Boys et al (2001)

# Y11 'Binge' Drinking

(drinking 5 or more drinks on a single occasion)

ESPAD study data indicates:

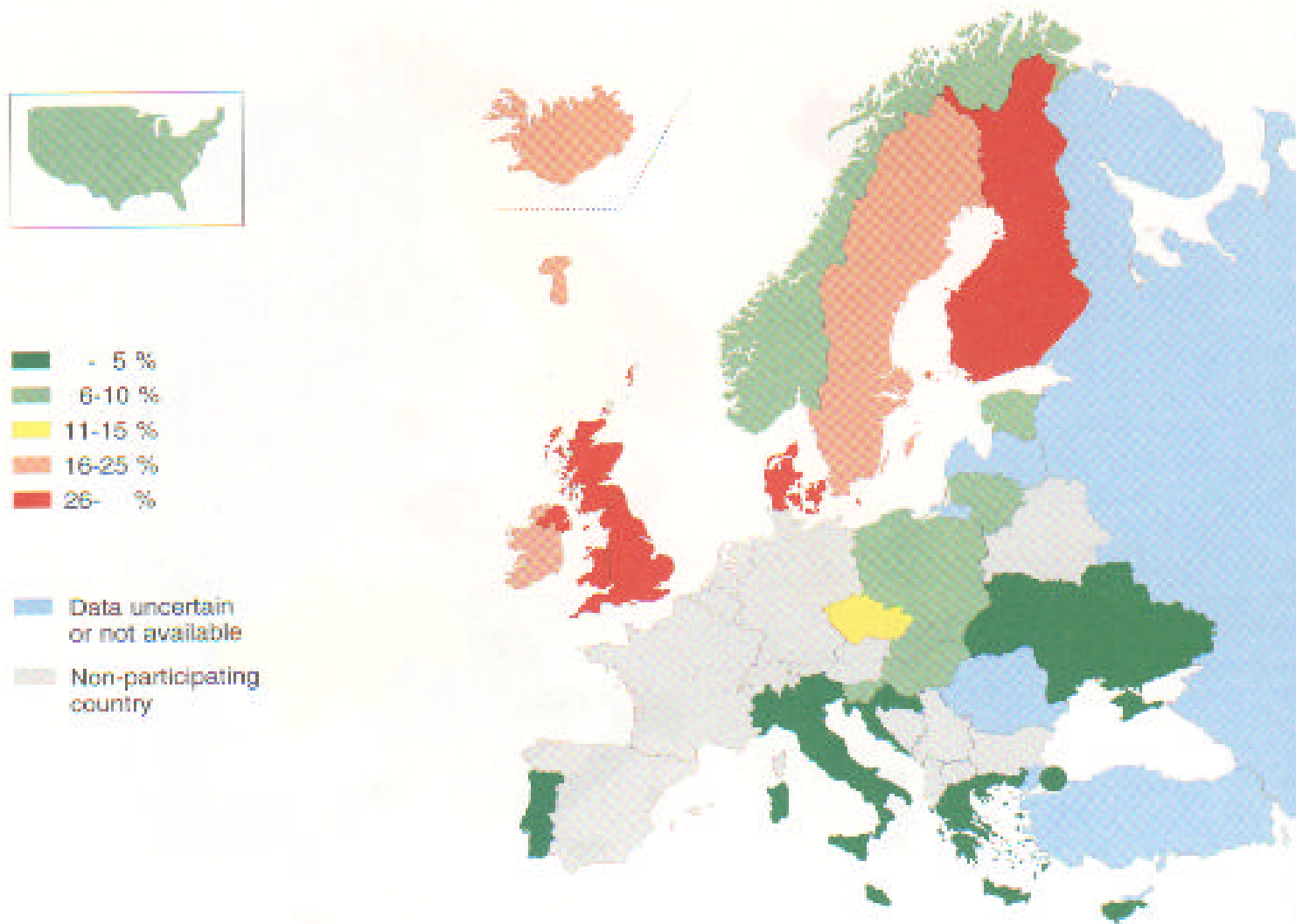
- 56% of 15-16 year-olds in UK have binged in last 30 days

Proportion of 15-16 year-olds who have binged 3 times or more in last 30 days:

– 1995 22%

– 1999 30%

- Source: Hibbel et al (2000) The 1999 ESPAD study



*Map 13. Proportion of all student who have been drunk 20 times or more in lifetime.*

# What do young people drink ?

Type of drink	1990	1992	1994	1996	1998	2000
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Beer, lager, cider	67	76	76	74	71	75
Shandy	31	25	24	20	18	20
Wine	50	52	48	40	51	44
Fortified wine	18	17	15	15	20	19
Spirits	35	37	39	45	54	59
Alcopops	a	a	a	55	37	62

Figure 3 ( a -alcopops were first introduced in 1996 survey)  
(2 DoH 2001)

# 'Designer' Drinks and Alcopops

- not clear whether encourage young people to start to drink, drink more or simply influence drinkers' beverage choice
- Designed to appeal to young people
- rise in young people's drinking parallels diversification of drinks market
- Designer drinks and vodka are related to drunkenness among young people
- alcopops appeal most to under-age drinkers - peak age for drinking is 13-16
- industry voluntary code

# Transitions in drinking: 12-13

- curiosity, anticipation of adulthood, start socialising
- mainly within family settings
- Experiment with any available drinks

# 14-15

- test limits, get drunk, sharing experience
- differentiates from younger activities
- unsupervised and concealed from parents
- prefer cheap, strong, pleasant tasting drinks

# 16-17

- to appear adult, sophisticated, to impress
- regular
- consider themselves more responsible
- believe know own limits
- growing acceptance by parents
- defined by transition to work
- Choose 'adult' drinks, price, strength and image are important

# 18-24

- to socialise and get drunk with peer group; image still important.
- accepted by parents
- transition to work, parenthood
- Heaviest consumers of lagers, beers, vodka (males); white ciders, 'designer drinks', vodka (females).

# Where do young people drink?

- Introduced to alcohol by parents in home
- Unsupervised drinking begins at 13-14 with friends at home
- By 15, 50% have drunk alcohol in a pub
- 24% of 15 year-olds in England say they usually drink in a pub or club
- 16-19 year-olds prefer to drink in a pub/club- nearly half do so regularly
- Young people can buy alcohol easily
- Setting and supervision play an important role in risk

# The meaning of drinking

- Young people's drinking is not deviant
- Transitions are important
- Place and meaning of drinking varies with age, gender, ethnicity, social context, drinking environment

## Understanding young people's drinking: key themes and challenges

- Drinking is functional
- poly drug use
- the 'buzz'
- hedonism
- time out
- consumerism
- leisure
- boundaries

# Alternative routes to prevent alcohol misuse

- 2 groups of prevention strategies:
  - individually based
  - population based
- Whose interests does alcohol education serve?