

## Alcohol causes harm to people other than the drinker

Each year in Europe, alcohol causes<sup>1</sup>:

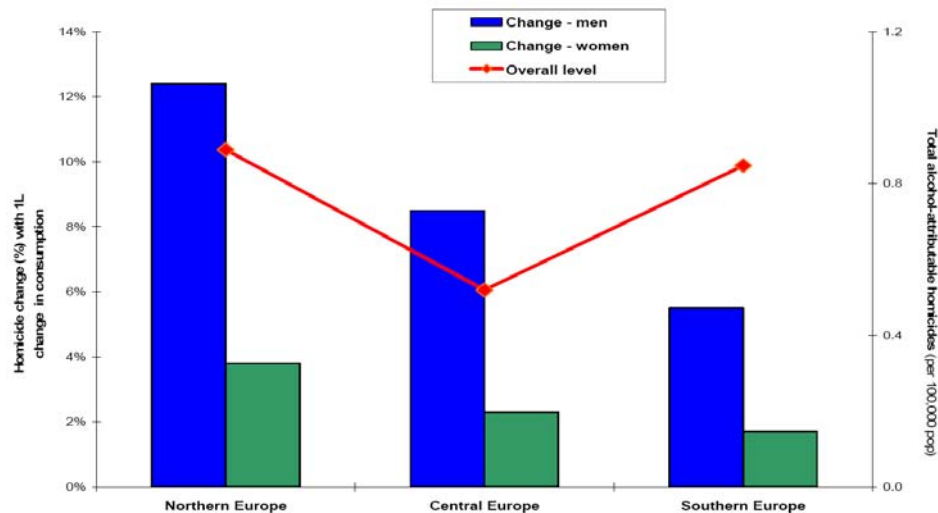
- Some 50% of all violent crime to the person
- Some 40% of all domestic violence
- 2,000 homicides (4 in 10 of all murders)
- 10,000 deaths in drink-driving accidents for people other than the drink-driver
- 60,000 underweight births
- 16% of all child abuse / neglect
- 5-9 million children living in families adversely affected by alcohol

Alcohol use is associated with **crime and domestic violence** in all European countries, and is particularly involved with violent crimes. Episodic heavy drinking, frequency of drinking and drinking volume are all independently associated with the risk of violence, with frequency of drinking appearing to be the most important. Generally, the higher the level of alcohol consumption, the more serious the violence. It should be borne in mind that the links to alcohol show how far alcohol is *associated* with violence, which may be greater than its *causal* role.

	Country	% linked to alcohol	Type of link
<b>All crimes</b>	Belgium	20	Intoxication
	England & Wales	25	Under-the-influence
	Finland	47	Intoxication, prisoners
	Germany	7	Under-the-influence
	Hungary	35	Intoxication
	Latvia	34	Under-the-influence
	Lithuania	21	Under-the-influence
<b>Violent crime</b>	Belgium	40	Intoxication
	England & Wales	48	Under-the-influence
	Estonia	60-70	Alcohol-related
	Finland	66	Intoxication, prisoners (assault)
	France	25	1973 data; Alcohol-related (assault)
	Germany	24	Under-the-influence
	Norway	80	Intoxication
	Spain	42	Under-the-influence, victims in A&E
	Sweden	86	Intoxication
<b>Robbery</b>	England & Wales	19	Under-the-influence
	Finland	53	Intoxication, prisoners
	Norway	40	Intoxication
	Poland	40	Intoxication
<b>Sex offences / Rape</b>	England & Wales	58	Alcohol-related
	Finland	49	Intoxication, prisoners
	Germany	29	Under-the-influence
	Norway	60	Intoxication

	Country	% linked to alcohol	Type of link	
<b>Domestic violence</b>	France	30	Alcohol-related	
	England & Wales	53	Under-the-influence	
	Iceland	71	Attribution	
	Ireland	34	Attribution (trigger)	
	Netherlands	30	Intoxication	
	Portugal	16	Alcohol (or other drug) related	
	Spain	25	Alcohol-related	
	Switzerland	26	Attribution	
			40	Alcohol-related

Over 2,000 **homicide** deaths per year are attributable to alcohol use, 4 of every 10 homicides that occur in the European Union. Homicide rates in a country change with changes in alcohol consumption. Although the effect per litre change in alcohol consumption has been greater in northern Europe, the higher consumption levels in southern Europe mean that the overall estimated number of homicides caused by alcohol is estimated to be similar in northern and southern Europe. Thus, the estimated share of all homicides that are due to alcohol is slightly higher in southern Europe (61% of all homicides) than in northern Europe (50% of all homicides).



Homicides and alcohol in northern, central and southern Europe. Left axis, homicide change (%) with 1% change in per capita alcohol consumption; right axis, total alcohol caused homicides per 100,000 population<sup>2</sup>

**Drink driving accidents** affect not only the drinker, but also those surrounding the drinker, including other passengers in the car of the drink driver, passengers in other cars, and pedestrians. Out of the total 17,000 drink driving deaths each year, it is estimated that 10,000 (two fifths) are due to someone other than the drink driver.

Alcohol is a **teratogen**, affecting the developing baby. The most serious consequence of drinking during pregnancy is foetal alcohol syndrome (FAS), a devastating developmental disorder characterized by craniofacial abnormalities, growth retardation, and nervous system impairments that may include mental disability. But, even at low average volumes of consumption, and particularly during the first trimester of pregnancy alcohol can increase the risk of spontaneous abortion, low birth weight, prematurity and intra-uterine growth retardation. Some 60,000 low birth weight babies are estimated to be due to alcohol each year in Europe.

**Child abuse** Parental drinking can affect the environment in which a child grows up through financial strain, poor parenting, marital conflicts and negative role models. A variety of childhood mental and behavioural disorders are more prevalent among children of heavy drinkers than others, and there is a higher risk of child abuse in families with heavy drinking parents, with the estimate that alcohol is a cause of child abuse in 16% of cases. Five to nine million European children (6%-12% of all children) are living in families adversely affected by alcohol.

<sup>1</sup> Anderson, P. & Baumberg, B. (2006). Alcohol in Europe: a public health perspective. [http://ec.europa.eu/health-eu/news\\_alcoholineurope\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/health-eu/news_alcoholineurope_en.htm).

<sup>2</sup> Rossow, I. (2001). "Drinking and Violence: a Cross-Cultural Comparison of the Relationship Between Alcohol Consumption and Homicide in 14 European Countries." *Addiction*, 96(S1): S77-S92.