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Attitudes towards Alcohol in Europe Report - Eurobarometer



A 76 page report on attitudes towards alcohol in Europe, based on field work carried out amongst over 28,000 respondents in the 27 EU members during Autumn 2006 was published in March. Commissioned by DG Sanco, but not representing the views

of the European Commission, the report will feed into the evidence base of The Alcohol and Health Forum. Five or more drinks on one occasion are more likely to be consumed by students and 15 – 24 year olds – at approximately 20% against an EU average of 10% across the whole population. This means that 80% of young people across the EU are drinking responsibly and in some countries not at all. For example 40% of Italians and 37% of Portuguese claim to be abstainers (against 7% in Denmark). Only 2% of respondents in Italy and Greece and 4% in Portugal ever drink more than five drinks on one occasion compared with 34% of Irish respondents, Finland (27%), the UK (24%) and Denmark (23%).

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Some interesting statistics emerge, in that 25% of the EU adult population had not drunk alcohol at all in the last 12 months. 84% of men and 64% of women had drunk alcohol in the last year, but just 48% in the last month. In Portugal most adults drink daily, but moderately, whereas in Ireland the majority drink only once a week (41%) but three drinks or more in each sitting.

‘Most EU citizens usually drink 1-2 drinks at once’

59% of EU citizens aged 15 and above drink moderately, with just 10% across the EU ever drinking more than five drinks in one session. Ireland showed the worst patterns with 36% of the population drinking 3-4 drinks and a further 34% five or more drinks per occasion.

Moderate trends on the increase

In comparison with the Eurobarometer survey of 2003 ‘the proportion of people who drink 3–4 drinks in one sitting has slightly decreased in favour of those having 1–2 drinks or even less at a time’ the proportion of those who drink 3-4 drinks (18%) in one sitting has slightly decreased (four percentage points) during the past three years. The share of those having drunk more than 4 drinks remained the same over the same period (10%) however.

| QB10a During the past 12 months, did you drink any alcoholic beverage (beer, wine, sprits, cider or other local beverages)? | | | | | |
|---|-----|-----|------------------------------------|-----|-----|
| | Yes | No | | Yes | No |
| EU25 | 75% | 25% | EU25 | 75% | 25% |
| Sex | | | Education (End of) | | |
| Male | 84% | 16% | 15 | 63% | 37% |
| Female | 68% | 32% | 16-19 | 80% | 20% |
| Age | | | 20+ | 84% | 16% |
| 15-24 | 75% | 25% | Still Studying | 72% | 28% |
| 25-39 | 81% | 19% | Respondent occupation scale | | |
| 40-54 | 81% | 19% | Self- employed | 81% | 19% |
| 55 + | 67% | 33% | Managers | 88% | 12% |
| Put warnings on alcohol bottles and adverts | | | Other white collars | 82% | 18% |
| Agree | 74% | 26% | Manual workers | 84% | 16% |
| Disagree | 84% | 16% | House persons | 57% | 43% |
| Protection from alcohol related harm | | | Unemployed | 74% | 26% |
| Individuals are responsible | 80% | 20% | Retired | 67% | 33% |
| Public authorities must intervene | 71% | 29% | Students | 72% | 28% |

Public Opinion on public interventions to reduce misuse

According to the report, European public opinion is quite divided on who bears responsibility in protecting individuals from alcohol-related harm: 52% stated this was the responsibility of individuals themselves, 44% said public authorities. Opinion on this question has a significant impact on attitudes towards measures aiming to prevent negative consequences of alcohol consumption.

A majority (68%) of respondents believe that a 25% price increase would not effect their alcohol drinking habits or the amount they drank – interestingly 81% would not buy more alcohol if prices reduced by 25%. Two thirds of the European Union population also believe that higher prices for alcohol would not discourage young people and heavy drinkers from consumption.

Drink drive knowledge confused

36% of respondents did not understand or know the permitted blood alcohol limit (BAC) in their country. This could be explained by possible difficulties in understanding the exact measurement, a lack of availability of such information. Knowledge does not imply lack of compliance with drink drive law however as 70% of UK respondents replied ‘don’t know’ to BAC levels yet drink drive incidences are some of the lowest in the world.

73% favoured a lower BAC for young and novice drivers and 80% to random police alcohol breath testing on EU roads.

Sensible drinking label messaging

Across the EU, 77% of those surveyed would agree with putting warnings on alcohol bottles and adverts in order to warn pregnant women and drivers of dangers of drinking alcohol.

Finland recorded sizeable opposition to warning labels (45%), Denmark (41%) and the Netherlands (38%) however.

The survey discovered a consensus on a universal purchase age of alcohol of 18. 84% agree with not selling alcohol to people under the age of 18.

On the release of the report, EU Health Commissioner Markos Kyprianou said: “It is evident from this survey that EU citizens support measures crafted to protect specific groups in society, such as pregnant women, drivers and young people from the harmful effects of alcohol abuse and misuse. I am deeply concerned about the data showing that one in five young Europeans regularly binge drink.”

The Eurobarometer on Alcohol is available at: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_272b_en.pdf

| QB10b How often in the past 12 months have you had 5 or more drinks on one occasion? | | | | | |
|--|----------------------|--------------------------------|--------------|------------------------|-------|
| | Several times a week | Once a week | Once a month | Less than once a month | Never |
| EU25 | 13% | 15% | 16% | 24% | 31% |
| BE | 9% | 15% | 17% | 22% | 37% |
| CZ | 7% | 18% | 17% | 26% | 31% |
| DK | 8% | 14% | 23% | 37% | 18% |
| DE | 15% | 19% | 20% | 23% | 23% |
| EE | 4% | 17% | 21% | 30% | 28% |
| EL | 6% | 9% | 15% | 23% | 46% |
| ES | 28% | 21% | 11% | 16% | 22% |
| FR | 6% | 9% | 16% | 30% | 39% |
| IE | 17% | 37% | 14% | 20% | 11% |
| IT | 21% | 13% | 7% | 12% | 46% |
| CY | 6% | 7% | 12% | 21% | 54% |
| LV | 2% | 8% | 15% | 22% | 52% |
| LT | 4% | 8% | 16% | 31% | 40% |
| LU | 10% | 9% | 14% | 21% | 46% |
| HU | 14% | 11% | 14% | 25% | 36% |
| MT | 4% | 22% | 11% | 33% | 30% |
| NL | 8% | 12% | 17% | 27% | 36% |
| AT | 24% | 20% | 17% | 18% | 20% |
| PL | 4% | 13% | 22% | 37% | 21% |
| PT | 14% | 6% | 6% | 18% | 55% |
| SI | 7% | 14% | 17% | 23% | 39% |
| SK | 10% | 16% | 19% | 26% | 28% |
| FI | 5% | 16% | 25% | 31% | 23% |
| SE | 1% | 11% | 20% | 33% | 34% |
| UK | 12% | 19% | 16% | 24% | 29% |
| CY(tcc) | 19% | 14% | 17% | 20% | 29% |
| BG | 14% | 13% | 9% | 18% | 45% |
| RO | 14% | 18% | 15% | 23% | 29% |
| HR | 10% | 11% | 14% | 24% | 40% |
| Highest percentage within a country | | Highest percentage in the EU25 | | | |

Table refers to those claimed to have drunk alcohol during the past 12 months (BASE: 18895 respondents)