

For more information please email Helena.Conibear@aim-digest.com or Alison.Rees@aim-digest.com

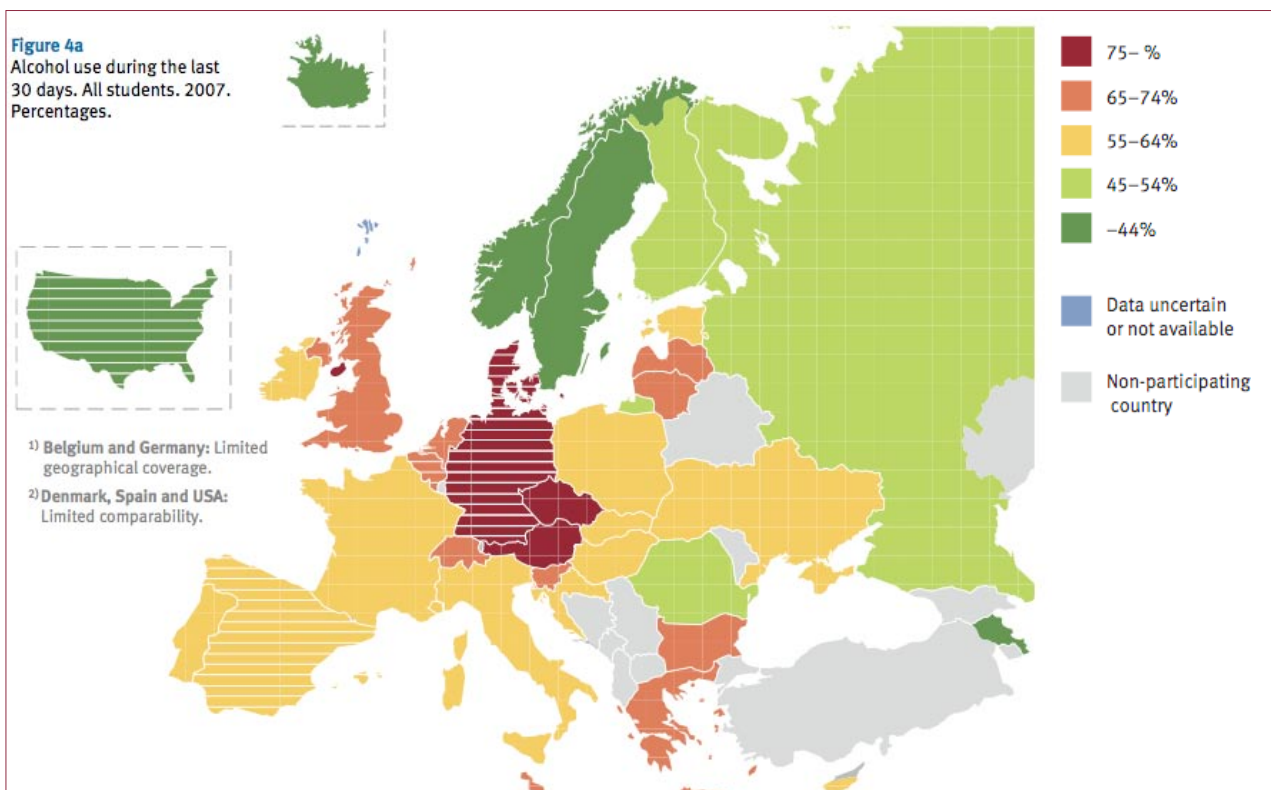
Key extracts from the report on trends in alcohol use among 15-16 year olds in 35 European countries

In all ESPAD countries at least two thirds of the students have drunk alcohol at least once during their lifetime, with an ESPAD average close to 90% in the 2007 survey. The corresponding average figures for the past 12 months and the past 30 days are 82 and 61% respectively. These figures were relatively unchanged from 1995 to 2007 for lifetime and past 12 months prevalence's, while past 30 days figures increased until 2003 before they dropped a little in 2007, especially among boys. Between the last two surveys there was also a clear decrease in the average proportion of students that been drinking beer and/or wine during the past 30 days. The average figures above are of course based on very divergent country figures. For example, alcohol use during the past

30 days was reported by 80% of the students in Austria and Denmark but only by 31% in Iceland and 35% in Armenia.

The total amount of alcohol consumed during the last drinking day is usually low in countries where the students drink often, for example in Greece, and the other way around for countries with low consumption frequencies. Countries with such a pattern include the Nordic countries Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. However, there are exceptions to this pattern and they include Denmark and Austria in which the students report high frequencies as well as large quantities consumed. In the countries with the largest average quantities, Denmark (limited comparability) and the Isle of Man, the quantities for an

average student is about 3–4 times higher than in the countries with the lowest average consumption (Armenia and Cyprus). All in all, beer is the dominant beverage, accounting for some 40% of the amount consumed (in 100% alcohol) on the last drinking day, and followed by 30% for spirits and 13% for wine. Beer is more dominant among boys - girls have a more evenly distributed pattern, with spirits as the most important type, constituting about one third of the total consumption. On average, half of the ESPAD students have been intoxicated at least once during their lifetime, to the point of staggering when walking, having slurred speech or throwing up. For 39% of the students this happened during the past 12 months and for 18% during the past 30 days.



Those who have tried alcohol at least once are not all particularly experienced consumers or regular drinkers: an average of 21% have tried alcohol only on 1–5 occasions while, on the other hand, 27% have done so on 40 occasions or more. In the latter group, gender differences are more pronounced – 32% of the boys report use on 40 or more occasions but only 22% of the girls. There is no country where more girls than boys report this level of consumption frequency. On average 43% of the ESPAD students reported heavy episodic drinking during the past 30 days, and this was more common among boys (47%) than among girls (39%). In all, 61% of the students in the ESPAD countries had been drinking alcohol during the 30 days immediately prior to the survey.

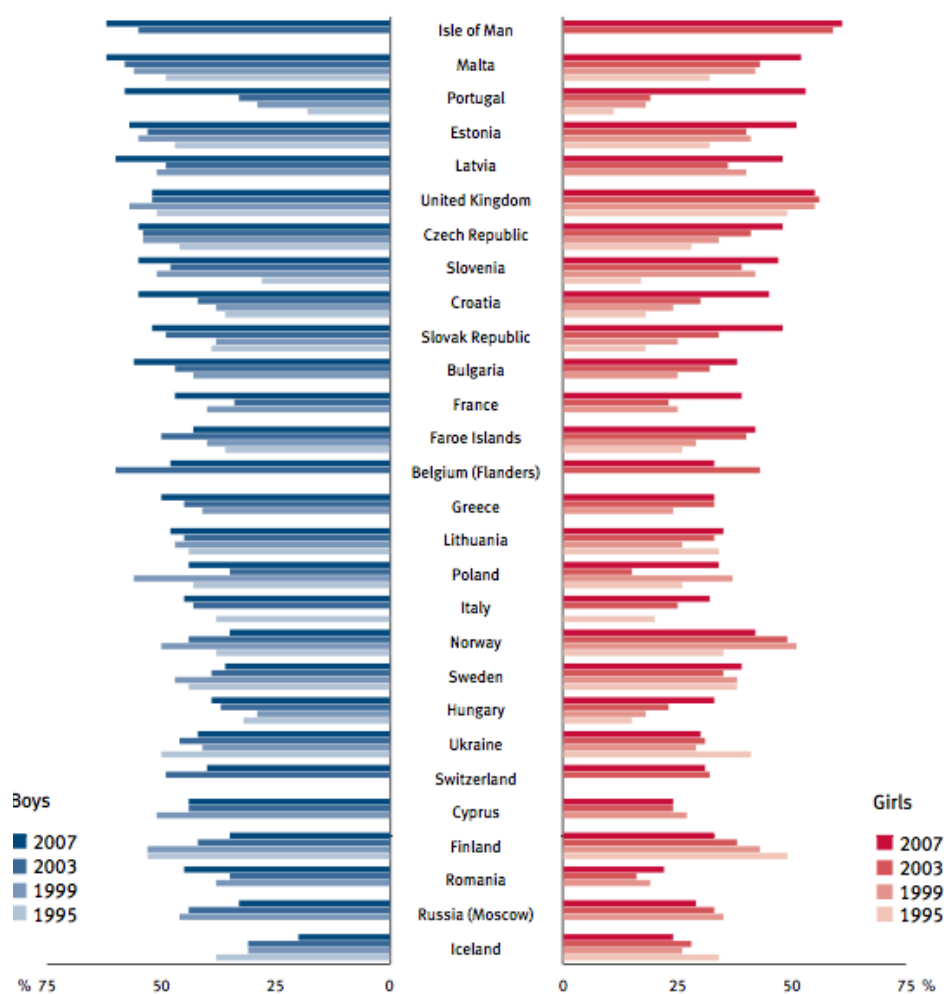
In Austria, the Czech Republic, Denmark (limited comparability), The Isle of Man and Germany (7 Bundesl.), a vast majority (75–80%) had done so.

Boys versus girls

Boys also dominated in a large majority of the countries. In some few the figures were about the same, but there are also countries in which more girls than boys stated this. The most striking example is Norway in which 42% of the girls and 35% of the boys reported heavy episodic drinking during the past 30 days. On average, heavy episodic drinking during the past 30 days increased between 1995 and 1999, but also between 2003 and 2007. In the latter period this is especially true among girls, with an increase from 35 to 42%.

In 1995 heavy episodic drinking was on average much more common among boys than girls, but this gap diminished substantially in 2007. Countries with a continuing upward trend between all four data collections include Croatia, the Czech Republic, Malta, Portugal and the Slovak Republic. Increases in the recent period are found in more than half of the countries.

The most pronounced increase between 2003 and 2007 is found in Portugal, where the proportion of students reporting heavy episodic drinking during the past 30 days increased from 25 to 56%, i.e. by 31 percentage points. Other countries with large increases include Poland (which returned close to the 1999 level after a drop in 2003) (16 percentage points), France (15), Croatia (14) and Bulgaria (12). The UK shows a decline in annual and monthly use.



Beverage choice

The students were asked if they had drunk beer, wine and spirits during the last 30 days; most countries also included the optional question on alcopops while some included that on cider. The most commonly reported type of beverage was beer (49%), followed by spirits (40%). Wine and alcopops contribute 13% and 11%, respectively, while cider makes up only 6% of aggregate average consumption. For girls, spirits are typically the dominant beverages as regards alcohol consumption on their latest drinking day; this is the most common beverage type in 17 of the 31 countries. In Monaco and Malta, about 55% of the girls' total alcohol consumption comes from spirits (again, measured in pure alcohol).

Spirits are the least important in Romania, Belgium (Flanders) and Russia, where roughly 13% of total consumption comes from that type of beverage.

Wine is the dominant beverage in only one country: Armenia, where 43% of total consumption comes from wine on average, 10% of the boys' and 15% of the girls' alcohol consumption originates from wine. In Armenia, 75% of the girls' consumption came from wine.

The contribution of alcopops to total consumption in Poland, the Slovak Republic, Romania, Bulgaria, Lithuania and Croatia is more or less negligible (around 3%). This type of beverage is far more common in Switzerland and Denmark (limited comparability), with a quarter of the consumption originating from alcopop use. The

most dominating position for this drink category is however noticeable in the Netherlands, with 31% of the total consumption coming from alcopop use and the highest proportion per gender is found among Dutch girls (40%).

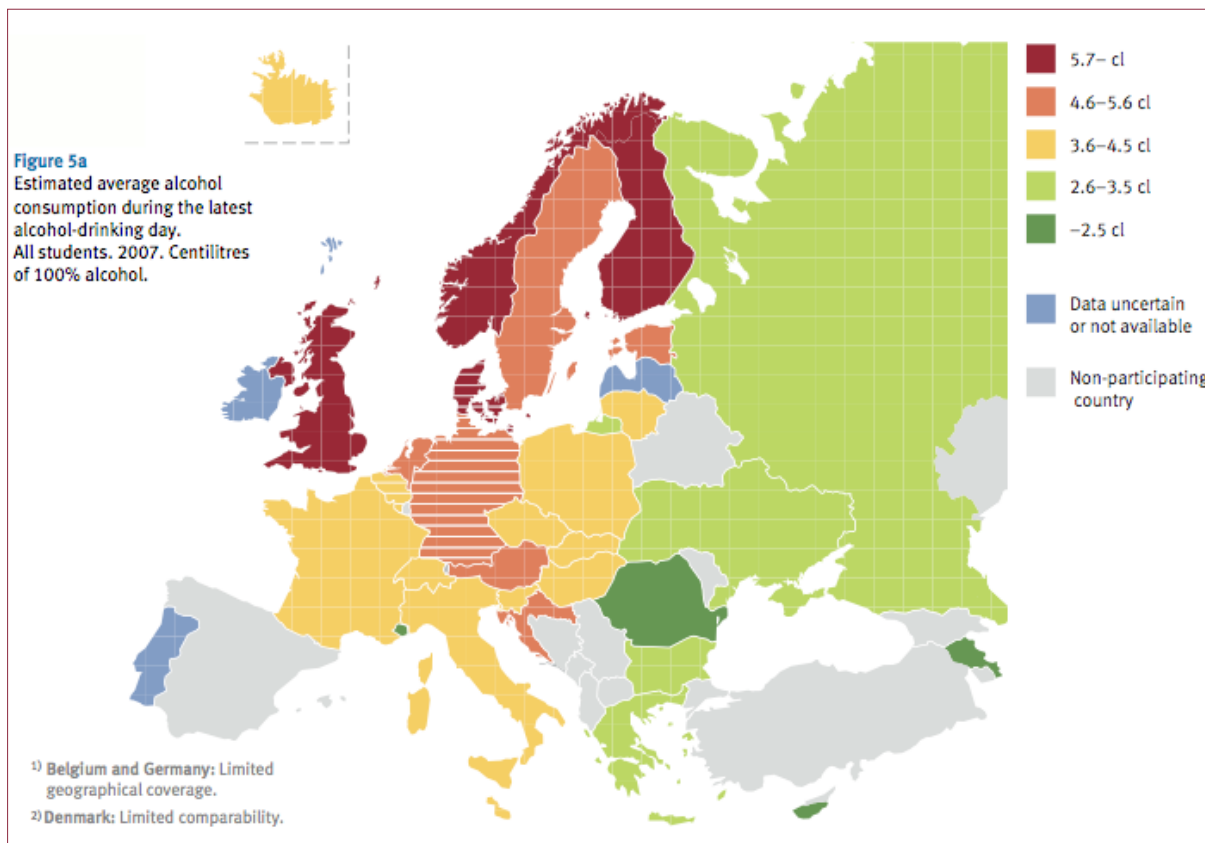
How much are they drinking?

Nordic countries - more bingeing on less occasions, versus Mediterranean 'little and more often'

On average, the students reported having consumed alcoholic beverages corresponding to 4.2 centilitres (cl) of pure alcohol on their latest drinking day. Reconverted into a specific beverage, this corresponds, for example, to about 11cl of spirits (2–3 drinks) or close to one litre of beer. In terms of weight, 4.2cl of pure alcohol corresponds to 33 grams of pure alcohol.

Denmark (limited comparability) and the Isle of Man (about 7.5cl of pure alcohol) have the heaviest drinking patterns. The United Kingdom, Norway, Austria and Finland also display relatively high levels for the latest drinking day (5.5–5.9 cl). Sweden, too, scores relatively high (5.2 cl), meaning that the Nordic countries come across as high-consumption countries in terms of volumes consumed on the latest drinking day.

Low levels on the latest drinking day (below 2.5cl) are found for Monaco, Romania, Cyprus and Armenia, with a particularly low volume in the latter country (1.6 cl). In other words, students in the top countries, on average, had consumed three times as much as students in the countries with the lowest consumption level. Students in Bulgaria, Greece, Russia and



Ukraine report relatively low levels (around 3 cl). This means that countries where students had a relatively low alcohol consumption on their latest drinking day are mainly located in Eastern Europe or in the Mediterranean region.

Drunkness

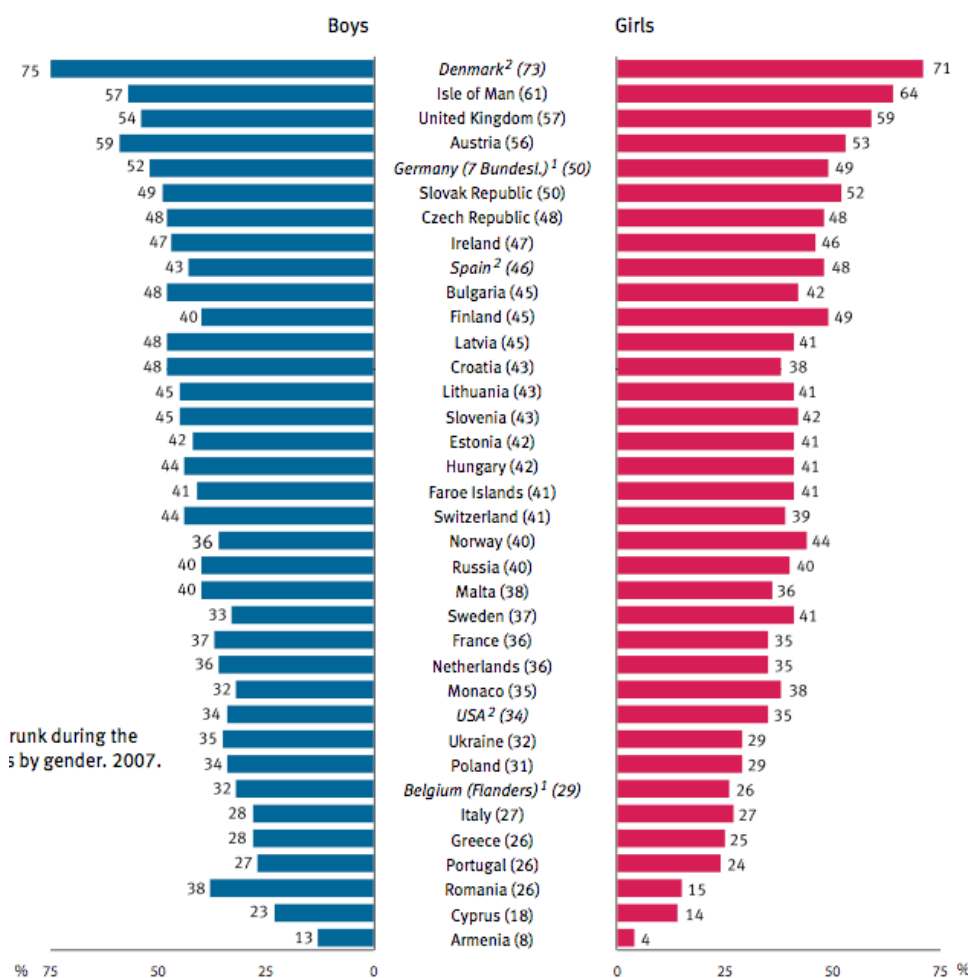
On average, 39% reported that they had been intoxicated during the last 12 months. Among Danish students, 73% reported intoxication during that period; and levels were also high (50% or above) in the Isle of Man, the United Kingdom, Austria, Germany (7 Bundesl.) and the Slovak Republic. Apart from Spain (not an ESPAD country), no Mediterranean countries are among the countries with high prevalence figures.

Age of drinking

It is clear that many students in most ESPAD countries have tried alcohol at a fairly young age. Such consumption, however, did not lead to intoxication in all that many cases. The proportion of students reporting that they were drunk at the age of 13 or younger varies quite substantially across countries; the average is 14%. About one fourth of the students in Denmark (limited comparability), Estonia, the Isle of Man and the United Kingdom report that they experienced their first intoxication at the age of 13 or younger. In other countries, this percentage is considerably lower. The lowest rate, roughly 5%, was reported from Armenia, Greece, Italy and Portugal.

There is only one country where girls report larger alcohol volumes on their latest drinking day than boys do, and that is Iceland. In three more countries – Finland, Norway and Sweden – gender differences are more or less negligible. All four of these countries are Nordic.

One interpretation of this is that countries where alcohol drinking is more likely to have occurred recently are those where students normally drink smaller amounts per drinking day. A typical example of such a country would be Greece, where 71% of the students had used alcohol in the past 30 days (ESPAD average 61%) and the volume consumed on the latest drinking day is 3.1cl (ESPAD average 4.2 cl). Another example is Malta (73% and 3.9cl). Typical countries representing an opposite pattern are Finland and Norway, where around 45% had used alcohol in the past 30 days and the volume drunk on the latest drinking day was around 5.8cl. The highest average intoxication scores were reported by students from the Faroe Islands (5.4). Sweden, Ireland, the United Kingdom, the Isle of Man and Norway also display relatively high values (4.0–4.4). The average was 3.3, and the lowest level of intoxication – 1.6 points – was reported by Armenian students, indicating that most of them hardly felt any effects of alcohol at all on their latest drinking occasion. Greece and Portugal also display relatively low scores (slightly above 2).



The UK

The UK should be pleased that it's 15-16 year olds are showing significant downward trends over the last three years in use (of any alcohol during the last 12 months,

use of alcohol in the last 30 days and drinking less beer and wine. However, the amount drunk on the last occasion recorded, remains at 6cl about 3 pints for boys or three double spirit measures for girls) - well above sensible drinking guidelines (equivalent of 2-3cl for women and 3-4cl for adult men)

The results show that the British scores are higher than the ESPAD average on four of the nine variables, but that trends are all in the right direction, since the height of hedonistic youth behaviour and damaging drinking trends in 1999.

A large majority (88%) of the students had consumed alcohol during the past 12 months and half (57%) had been drunk once.

Full summary from the report

Alcoholic beverages, especially beer, are considered easily available; 78% found beer easy to obtain. In all ESPAD countries, at least two thirds of the students have tried alcohol at least once during their lifetime. On average, 89% have used alcohol during their lifetime, 82% have done so in the last 12 months and 61% in the past 30 days. Gender differences become apparent when frequency of use is considered: boys have used alcohol more often than girls. In all, 14% of the students state that, at present, they never drink alcohol at all. In countries where students report a relatively high level of alcohol use in the past 30 days, they also, by contrast, report lower volumes of consumption on their latest drinking day. A typical country

where students drink more often, but in smaller quantities, is Greece. An opposite pattern is often notable for the Nordic countries, where alcohol is consumed less often but in larger quantities. In countries with relatively high levels of consumption on the latest drinking day, girls tend to drink about the same amounts as boys do. Quite naturally, reported self-assessed intoxication levels on the latest drinking day were considerably higher in countries with high consumption levels. Beer and spirits are the two most important types of beverage for the students. On average, 40% of the amount consumed (in 100% alcohol) on the latest drinking day stemmed from beer drinking. The second-most important beverage type is spirits, contributing 30% of total alcohol consumption. Wine and alcopops contribute 13% and 11%, respectively, while cider makes up only 6% of aggregate average consumption. Half of the boys' consumption on the latest drinking day (in 100% alcohol) is accounted for by beer. Girls have a more evenly distributed pattern as regards different beverages, the most important type being spirits, which contribute one-third of the volume consumed on the latest drinking day. On average, half of the students have been intoxicated, at least once during their lifetime, to the point of staggering when walking, having slurred speech or throwing up. Thirty-nine percent reported intoxication in the last 12 months and 18% in the past 30 days. There were gender differences within countries, but

on the ESPAD average level no differences were noted for any of these three measures. Another way to measure drunkenness is to ask about a specific amount of alcohol consumed within a certain period of time. The students were asked if they had had five drinks or more on one occasion during the past month; this is referred to here as "heavy episodic drinking". Forty-three percent reported this; more boys than girls did so (47% versus 39%). In half of the participating countries, at least half of the students had consumed at least one glass of alcohol at the age of 13 or younger, and 14% had been drunk at that age'.

There is no (significant) correlation between having used alcohol at all in the past 30 days and the amount of alcohol used on the latest drinking day. In other words, in countries where students tend to drink more often, they are more likely to have consumed smaller amounts on their latest drinking day. As already mentioned above, one impression is that drinking patterns vary across countries and that some countries seem to have a drinking culture which is more geared towards intoxication while the drinking culture of other countries involves students drinking more frequently but also more moderately.

The full report is available from http://www.espad.org/documents/Espad/ESPAD_reports/2007/The_2007_ESPAD_Report-FULL.pdf