

Alcohol and Crime

- “ From earliest times a link between alcohol and crime has been noted
- “ Alcohol affects reasoning, problem solving and impulse control
- “ Significant positive association between alcohol consumption and rates of criminal violence has been observed in many countries
- “ The link between alcohol consumption and crime is particularly serious in the case of young men aged 18 to 25

Alcohol and crime – causal links

- “ The links between alcohol and crime involve the drinking environment, the personality attitudes and expectations of the drinker and society’s attitudes and values
- “ In most countries increases in per capital alcohol consumption are associated with increases in violent crime
- “ But drinking patterns and social factors lead to different outcomes in different countries
- “ In the Nordic countries where acute intoxication is a major feature of drinking patterns the link between alcohol and homicide is greatest
- “ In Mediterranean countries where alcohol is integrated in everyday life and usually consumed with meals, alcohol related homicide is lowest

Alcohol related crime data

- “ In most countries there are specific crimes that relate to alcohol consumption such as being intoxicated in a public place or disorderly conduct
- “ Reliable data are available on these crimes
- “ In Ireland the Garda PULSE system shows that alcohol is a contributory factor in 97% of public order offences
- “ But alcohol is often a factor in serious crimes such as domestic violence, rape and sexual assault and child abuse and many of these crimes are not reported or if reported do not result in convictions

Alcohol and public order offences in Ireland

- “ There has been a dramatic increase in public order offences in Ireland over the past 20 years in line with a large increase in alcohol consumption
- “ In 2010 there were 70,000 crimes in which alcohol was recorded as a factor.
- “ There are about 130 alcohol related incidents of disorderly conduct and 40 cases of assaults every day in Ireland
- “ Alcohol is involved in at least half of assaults with some studies putting the figure as high as 85%
- “ Disorderly conduct offences rose by 25% between 2004 and 2010 while assaults rose by 20% in the same period

Alcohol and Injury

- “ A study of the role of alcohol in injury cases attending Irish hospital emergency departments showed that 35% of alcohol related injuries (i.e. those occurring in person who had consumed alcohol) were intentional and perpetrated by somebody else
- “ In the case of injuries caused by someone else, strangers were the main perpetrators but a spouse or partner was twice as likely to be the perpetrator of alcohol-related injuries (8% vs.4%) in comparison to non-alcohol-related injuries
- “ While alcohol consumption increases the likelihood of the drinker being a perpetrator of violence, drinking also increases the drinker's risk of being a victim of violence

Alcohol and other crimes

- “ Alcohol is estimated to be involved in half of homicides, half of sexual assaults and one third of domestic violence
- “ The only good news is that alcohol related driving offences have fallen over the past five years
- “ Liquor licensing offences relating to the sale, supply, purchase and consumption of alcohol have also fallen

Cost of alcohol related crime

- “ Alcohol related crime imposes both direct and indirect costs on society
- “ The direct costs include the costs of policing alcohol related crime, the costs to the court system and the costs to the prison and probation systems
- “ The indirect costs are the pain and suffering inflicted on victims of alcohol related crime and costs incurred in prevention of crime

Categories of Cost

- “ *Costs in anticipation of crime* –defensive expenditure and insurance
- “ *Costs as a consequence of crime*- emotional impact on victims, costs of property stolen or damaged, healthcare cost for victims of crime
- “ *Criminal justice system costs* – policing, courts, probation services, legal aid etc

Data on alcohol related crime

- “ Reliable data on alcohol offences is available but most of these are minor offences
- “ Less information is available on the role of alcohol in serious crimes such as homicide and sexual assault, to which alcohol is a contributory factor
- “ But these more serious crimes lead to greater costs

Costing alcohol related crime

- “ Detailed figures on the various components of alcohol crime costs are not available for Ireland
- “ It would be misleading to attribute costs according to alcohol offences as a proportion of total crime
- “ The largest proportion of alcohol related crimes are public order offences which, while they take up a significant proportion of police time, do not use a large proportion of court or prison resources or cause serious long term consequences

Costs of alcohol related in Scotland

- “ Scotland has a pattern of harmful drinking similar to that in Ireland
- “ A study for the Scottish Parliament of the costs of alcohol misuse in Scotland in 2007 found that 20% of the total costs of alcohol misuse could be attributed to alcohol related crime

Categories of crime costs in Scotland

Category of Cost	Percentage of total costs
Costs of specific alcohol offences (custody, court and penalty costs)	0.9
Costs in anticipation of crime	2.1
Costs of consequences of alcohol related crimes and offences	77
Costs in response to crime (costs to criminal justice system)	20

Costs to the criminal justice system in Ireland

- “ Using the percentages of total costs in Scotland attributable to policing, prisons and courts it is possible to estimate the cost to the criminal justice system in Ireland
- “ As the overall level of alcohol crime in Scotland is somewhat higher than in Ireland, the percentages have been adjusted downwards by 2 percentage points

Costs to the criminal justice system of alcohol crimes in Scotland and Ireland

	Scotland %	Ireland % (assumed)
Cost of policing alcohol related crime	26	24
Cost to prison service of alcohol related crime	17	15
Cost to courts of alcohol related crime	12	10

Irish cost data for 2010

” Applying the above percentages to public expenditure figures for Ireland for 2010 gives the following estimates: €mn

Cost of policing alcohol crime	336
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Cost to prison system	58
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Cost to courts	6
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TOTAL	410
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Costs of consequences of crime

- “ The costs to the criminal justice system given above are the costs of the *response to crime*
- “ In Scotland the costs of the *consequences of crime* have been calculated directly as being almost four times the costs of the response to crime
- “ Applying a more conservative ratio of three to one for Ireland, gives a figure of €1.2 bn as an estimate of the cost of the *consequences* of crime
- “ The total cost of the consequences of crime and the response to crime is therefore about €1.6bn

Costs in anticipation of alcohol related crime in Ireland

- “ Irish Small and Medium Enterprises Association estimated the cost of crime to small and medium sized enterprises in 2009 as about €1.35 bn of which €874 was costs in anticipation of crime
- “ Conservatively assuming that 20% of this crime is alcohol related, gives a figure of €175 million as the cost to small and medium sized enterprises of costs in anticipation of crime
- “ Adding this figure to the figure for cost of consequences of crime and response to crime gives an overall total cost of €1.8bn

Limitations of cost estimates

- “ While lack of data do not permit direct estimates for Ireland, the overall figure seems plausible relative to Scotland which has a similar pattern of alcohol misuse and similar population
- “ As many alcohol related crimes such as domestic violence and vandalising of public property, minor theft etc are either unreported or undetected the figures for reported crime are likely to be an underestimate