What about the human costs?
In addition to the economic costs, it is crucial that we don’t forget the human costs in terms of trauma and loss. The human impact can take its toll in the form of fear and anxiety, stress and intimidation, as well as the personal financial cost of repairing damage, painting over graffiti, etc.

Some facts on alcohol and crime in Ireland:
- Almost half of the perpetrators of homicide were intoxicated when the crime was committed.
- Alcohol has been identified as a contributory factor in 97% of public order offences as recorded under the Garda PULSE system.
- One in 11, or approximately 318,000 of the full adult population, said that they or a family member were assaulted by someone under the influence of alcohol in the past year.
- It is estimated that over half of all assailants had been drinking prior to the assault.

What about alcohol-related violence in the home?
Alcohol-related crimes that take place in the home, particularly those associated with domestic abuse, can often go unreported and unaccounted for in calculations of the economic and even human costs of crime. The growing trend in home drinking – over 50% of all alcohol bought in Ireland is now bought for domestic consumption – may in the future also be accompanied by a rise in alcohol-related intimidation, assault and violence in and near the home.

What is the role of alcohol in rape and sexual assaults?
The Rape Crisis Network Ireland has said that alcohol is the most common drug used in sexual assaults. A recent Irish study found that 76% of all rape defendants had been drinking at the time of the alleged offence. Alcohol is never an excuse or an explanation for rape or sexual assault. However, alcohol consumption is sometimes used to blame victims or to diminish the responsibility of perpetrators.
What is the relationship between alcohol and youth crime?

Alcohol is a factor in approximately half of all youth crimes. Alcohol offences (e.g. underage drinking) are the main offences for which children are referred to the Garda Youth Diversion Programme, accounting for almost a fifth of youth crimes. However, many other criminal offences are also committed by young people when drinking. When considered together, the proportion of crimes where alcohol is a factor is approximately half of all youth crimes.

85% of Garda Youth Diversion Programmes who took part in a 2009 study named alcohol-related crime as first on the list of offences committed in their area. The offences committed when drinking were mainly public order and criminal damage, and to a lesser degree minor assault and trespass. Alcohol-related youth crime spikes at weekends, in the summer months and at calendar events, such as Hallowe’en.

Is the role of alcohol in crime over-estimated?

No. In fact, the number of alcohol-related crimes is underestimated and under-recorded for a number of reasons. Many people state that they do not report crimes to the Gardaí, particularly offences that can be considered to be of a minor nature, such as damage to property or noise and intimidating behavior.

A key finding of Alcohol Action Ireland’s Alcohol - Where’s the Harm? survey was that much alcohol-related crime and anti-social behaviour was not reported to the Gardaí - 80% said they did not report that they had been threatened; 75% said they did not report being kept awake at night and seven out of eight people said they did not report verbal abuse. According to respondents, about half of all alcohol-related assaults were reported to the Gardaí. A CSO study in 2010 found that 45% assaults were not reported to the Gardaí.

Are people who drink alcohol more likely to commit crimes?

Alcohol is a significant risk factor when it comes to crime. However, while the role of alcohol in a wide range of crimes has been extensively documented and evidenced, it is not a simple cause and effect relationship. Most people who drink do not commit offences or become involved in anti-social or violent behaviour. However, what is clear is that alcohol consumption, particularly in large volumes, is a significant risk factor for violence and anti-social behavior.

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5 Alcohol-Where’s the Harm? is a nationally representative survey commissioned by Alcohol Action Ireland and conducted by Behaviour and Attitudes in 2011. The full survey is available is www.alcoholireland.ie
8 Irish Youth Justice Service (2009) Designing Effective Local Responses to Youth Crime
9 IYJS (2009)
10 See 5