

# Adolescent binge drinking in Chile: Does it matter which school they go to?

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## SHAAP/SARN 'Alcohol Occasional' Seminar

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**Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems (SHAAP) and the Scottish Alcohol Research Network (SARN) are pleased to support the lunchtime 'Alcohol Occasional' seminars which showcase new and innovative research on alcohol use. All of the seminars are run in conjunction with the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh. These events provide the chance for researchers, practitioners, policy makers and members of the public to hear about new alcohol-related topics and discuss and debate implications for policy and practice. The current theme for the seminars is "Alcohol, Europe and the World". Briefing papers, including this one, aim to capture the main themes and to communicate these to a wider audience. SHAAP is fully responsible for the contents, which are our interpretation.**

Alcohol consumption in Chile has a significant health impact. One in ten or 9,500 deaths annually in Chile are directly attributable to alcohol. In terms of morbidity, alcohol is the second greatest specific cause of loss of disability adjusted life years (DALYs) in the male population and is the greatest cause in males aged 20-24. This mortality and morbidity impact is not equally distributed. It is socioeconomically patterned. Frequency of alcohol consumption increases with income yet it is lower socioeconomic status (SES) males who are at the highest risk of harmful drinking and alcohol dependence (measured using AUDIT). Chile has

the greatest disparity in the probability of hazardous and heavy episodic drinking in males of lower education.

Binge drinking is associated with a number of health risks and secondary consequences and with an increased risk of alcoholism in adulthood. Roman outlined the findings of her PhD research which looks at the effect of the school attended on alcohol consumption patterns of adolescents. The Chilean school system has three types of school – state-funded, private subsidised and private. Every school is quite homogeneous, with all students from a similar background, and is highly socially stratifying. The majority of students attending state-funded schools are from lower SES groups and the majority attending private schools are from the highest SES. The school system sits within a social context influenced by parental knowledge and peer influence which are both further influenced by the broader (macro) economic and education environment. The school socioeconomic environment is thus determined by a network of reciprocal interactions shaped by available resources and structural characteristics.

Using data from the tenth National School Population Substance Use Survey (2013), the aim of Roman's research has been to understand to what extent school socioeconomic environment impacts upon adolescent drinking and whether this effect would be related to parental and peer influences and gender difference

in Chilean adolescents aged 13 to 18. More specifically, Roman's presentation focused on assessing if the school socioeconomic environment is associated with adolescent drinking, after taking into account individual factors and unmeasured characteristics at local level. To measure outcomes, in the survey, adolescents are categorised into three groups – non-drinkers, non-binge drinkers and binge drinkers (consuming more than five drinks on a single occasion in the last month).

The findings of the research show that boys aged 13-18 are both more likely to be non-drinkers (19.7%) than girls (16.4%) and are also more likely to be binge drinkers (31.9% compared to 29% of girls). In both genders, non-drinking decreases with age as young people approach the legal drinking age of 18. Binge drinking increases with age as adolescents approach 18 years of age, although this increase is steeper in boys. Patterns of both non-binge drinking and binge drinking are associated with the socioeconomic status of the school. The findings show that a higher proportion of adolescents attending lower SES schools consumed alcohol and this pattern holds for both genders. Roman demonstrated that gender differences were more apparent in relation to binge drinking. For girls, the more socioeconomically deprived schools reported greater incidence of binge drinkers; for boys, binge drinking was more common in the most affluent schools. Overall, the findings suggest that school socioeconomic status

is associated with both non-binge drinking and binge drinking among adolescents in Chile. The effect of socioeconomic status on non-binge drinking appears to be stronger for boys, while the effect on binge drinking seems to be stronger in girls. For all of the findings, Roman stressed the importance of taking into account individual and parental factors as key explanatory variables.

Roman then moved on to outline alcohol policy in Chile. Chile has a written national alcohol policy with a legal minimum purchase age of 18 and restrictions governing the physical availability of alcohol. Price is controlled through excise duty. However, the country has no regulation on sales promotions, sponsorship or advertising; health warning labelling is not compulsory as there is no regulation; and Chile lacks a national monitoring strategy for its alcohol policy.

There is a widespread belief among parents that is okay for young people to drink alcohol at home and with their families and is far better for them to do so. Recent national statistics show that 45% of minors were able to purchase alcohol in the off-trade and 16% were able to consume alcohol in on-trade premises. Alcohol prices are very low. A 750ml bottle of vodka can be purchased for as little as £3.30, and a 12-pack of 330ml cans of beer for £4.40. The economic burden of alcohol in Chile is greater than its economic contribution.

In an effort to raise the price of alcohol and reduce the burden of alcohol on Chilean society, Roman explained that the government in 2014 proposed raising rates of excise duty but this was strongly opposed by the industry. Under current law, there is tax of 21.5% on wine and 31.5% on spirits. The reform introduced an 18% baseline tax plus an increase of 0.5% per each degree of alcoholic content. Prices increased by around 5% which Roman argued had an insufficient impact on public health. The overall impact on consumption was minimal. Taxes on spirits remain low and the concentration of pure alcohol in a standard drink in Chile has increased

as a result, leading to a higher concentration of pure alcohol among drinkers.

The discussion began with a participant making reference to the fact that the data presented was from the tenth school survey in Chile and asked if it would be possible to compare this with the findings of the first survey in 1995 to develop a time series. Roman informed the group that the question of binge drinking was only introduced into the survey in 2011. The discussant then asked, based on the survey data, if the prevalence of binge drinking differed in mixed gender or single-sex schools. Roman reported that mixed schools increase the effect of engaging with binge drinking in girls but not

boys. Possible explanations for this are girls being influenced by male friends or older boyfriends with jobs who purchase alcohol for them, and more boys choosing to abstain.

A discussant asked whether there is a social recognition of alcohol as a problem in Chile, as is the case in Scotland. Roman stated that Chilean society is very consumer driven. Alcohol consumption is not seen as a problem, at least not in any great magnitude, yet the data shows that it is a major problem. In recent years, disposable incomes have risen and Roman suggested that alcohol is increasingly used by individuals and families as a way of demonstrating wealth.

## Forthcoming Occasionals

Our next events in the current series of Alcohol Occasionals will be:

### **Tackling Health Inequalities in Scotland & Implications for Alcohol Policy**

Dr Katherine Smith, Global Public Health Unit, The University of Edinburgh  
Thursday 13th October 2016

### **Does harm from drinking differ by socioeconomic status? Exploring the alcohol harms paradox**

Dr S Vittal Katikireddi, MRC/CSO Social and Public Health Sciences Unit, University of Glasgow  
Monday 5th December 2016

### **How inclusive are we? A trans perspective on alcohol and drug services in Scotland**

Oceana Maund and Vic Valentine, Scottish Transgender Alliance  
Tuesday 24th January 2017

### **Alcohol admissions and health inequalities: is the tide finally turning?**

Neil Martin, Research and Information Manager, Balance, the North East Alcohol Office  
Monday 27th February 2017

### **Alcohol problems in criminal justice settings: an opportunity not to be missed**

Dr Lesley Graham, Clinical Lead for Alcohol, Drugs and Health in Justice Settings, ISD Scotland  
Monday 13th March 2017

### **Drinking in pregnancy: a comparison between areas of high and low deprivation in Scotland**

Dr Andrew Symon, Senior Lecturer, Mother and Infant Research Unit, University of Dundee  
Thursday 11th May 2017

### **Alcohol Deaths in Glasgow 2010. Has Service Redesign had an Impact?**

Dr Catherine Chiang, NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde  
Wednesday 14th June 2017

These events are popular and places are limited. We need you to confirm if you would like to attend. You can do this by registering via EventBrite through our website at [www.shaap.org.uk/events.html](http://www.shaap.org.uk/events.html)