



Our Love Affair with Alcohol  
Is it Causing More Pain than Pleasure?

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Dr. Declan Bedford

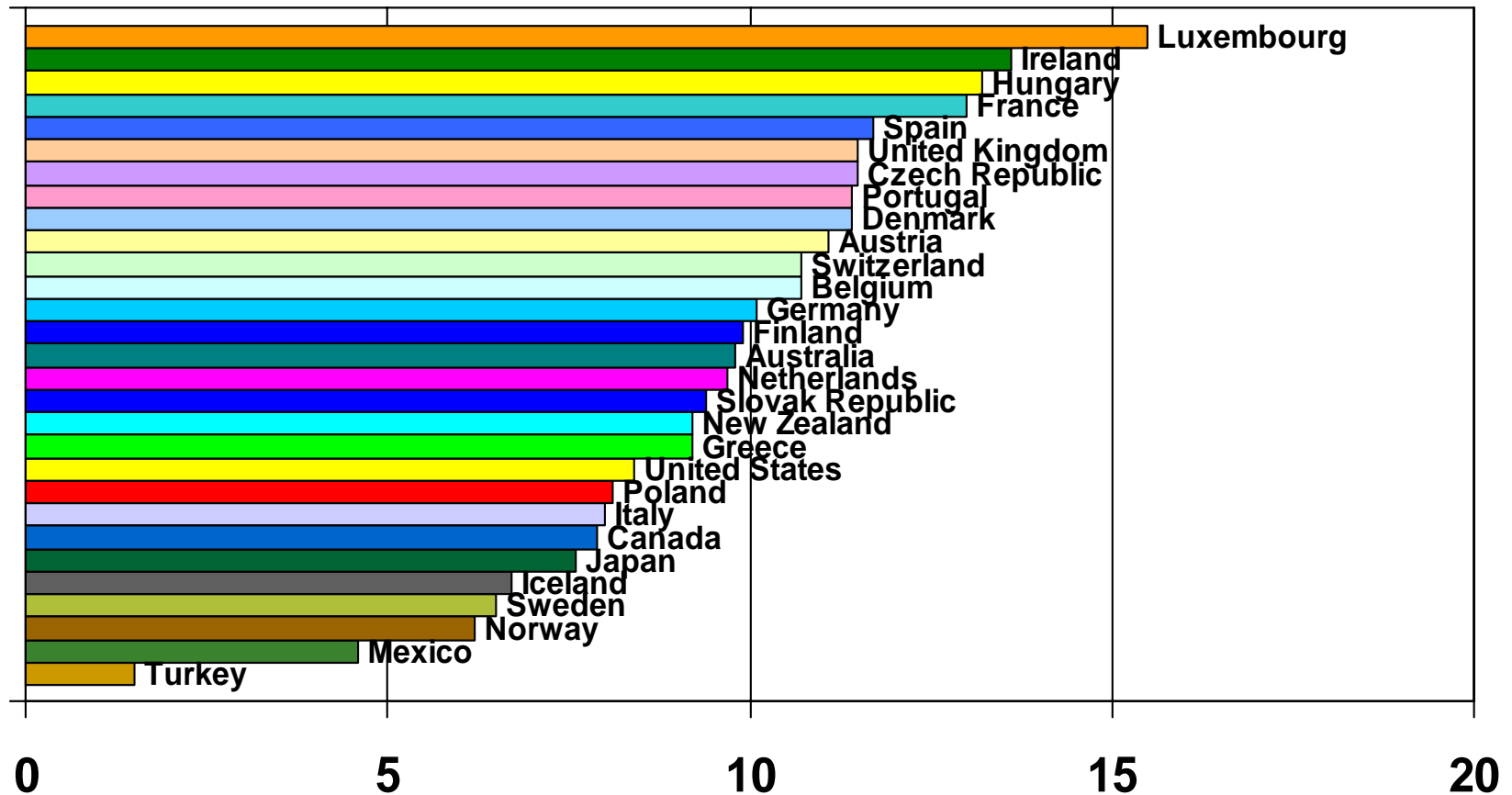
April 2007

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# This presentation

- Our drinking – The pleasure?
- The consequences -The pain
- What is needed and the challenges

# Annual Alcohol Consumption, Litres per population 15+

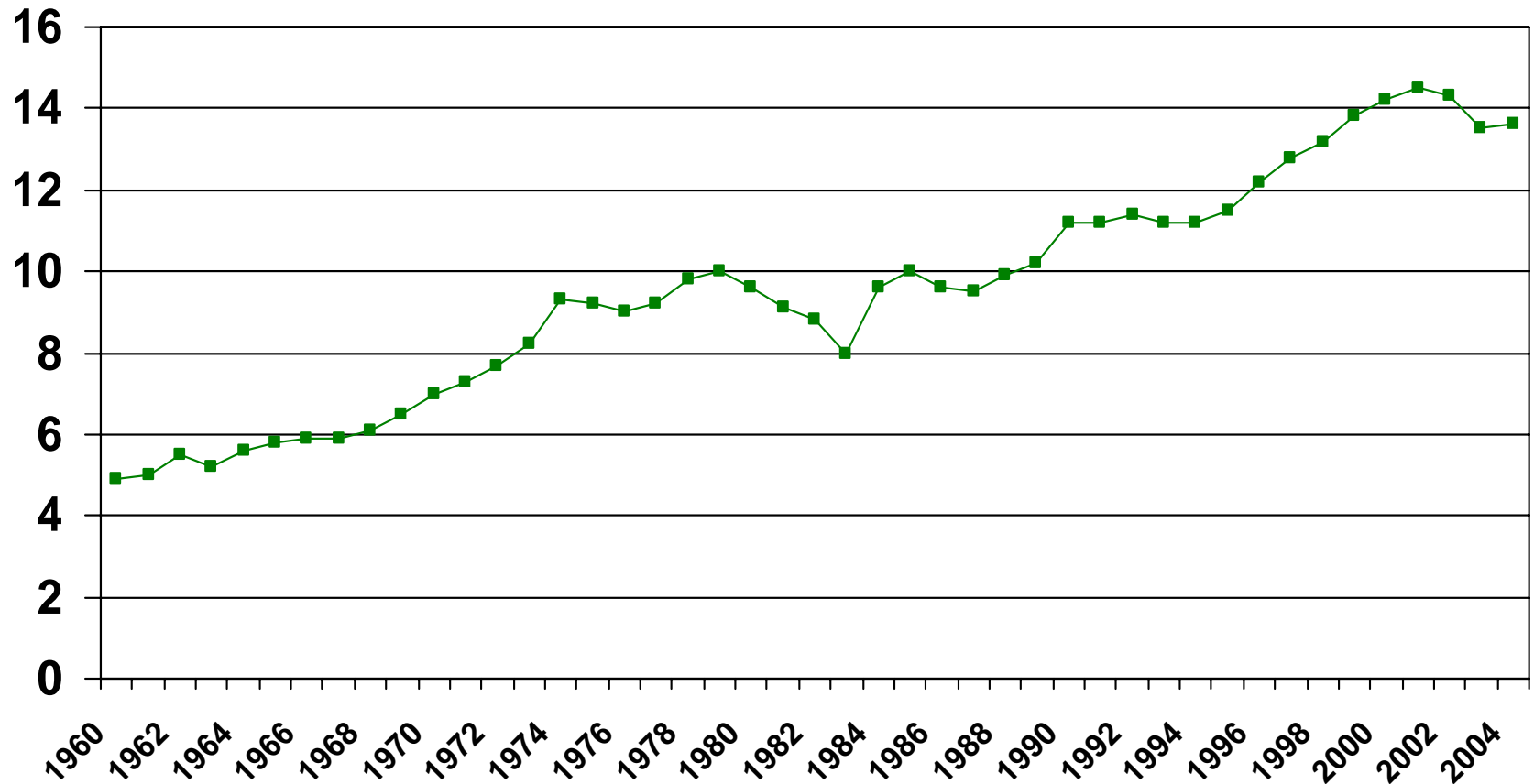


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# Annual per capita alcohol consumption Ireland (age 15+) 1960-2004

■ 1960	4.9
■ 1970	7.0
■ 1980	9.6
■ 1990	11.2
■ 2000	14.2
■ 2004	13.6

# Per capita Alcohol consumption Ireland (age 15+) 1960-2004



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# Special Eurobarometer

## March 2007

### 5 drinks or more in typical session

■ Ireland	34%
■ Finland	27%
■ UK	24%
■ EU	10%
■ Italy	2%

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# Special Eurobarometer

## March 2007

### Proportion who drink daily

- Italy 26%
- Spain 24%
- France 18%
- Ireland 2%

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# Availability of Alcohol

- 1 pub license for every 250 adults (18+)
- The total number of alcohol outlets is:
  - 4 times the number of general retail stores
  - 8 times the number of clothes shops
  - 24 times the number of electrical shops

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# Special Exemptions

■ 1994 55,290

■ 2002 81,933

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- The Pain

Table 9: Cost of alcohol related problems in Ireland

	2001 EURO million	2003 EURO million
Healthcare costs	279	433
Cost of road accidents	315	322
Cost of alcohol related crime	100	147.5
Loss of output due to alcohol related absences from work	1,034	1,050
Alcohol related transfer payments	404	523.3
Taxes not received on lost output	234	210
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,366</b>	<b>2,652.8</b>

Source: S. Byrne, Update on estimates of the cost of alcohol related problems in Ireland, 2004

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# Public order

- 88% of public order offences are alcohol related

1996 to 2004

- public order offences increased from 16,384 to 51,099

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# Marital breakdown

- 34% of those seeking legal advice due to marital breakdown cite alcohol as the main cause

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# Road crash deaths

- 38% alcohol related
- Where blood tests available on dead drivers
  - 54% alcohol related;
- 38% pedestrian deaths alcohol related
- In 2003, 5 pedestrians were lying on road when run over

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# Attendance at A/E

- Every 8th new patient attending A/E is there because of alcohol related injury

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# Admissions to Acute hospitals

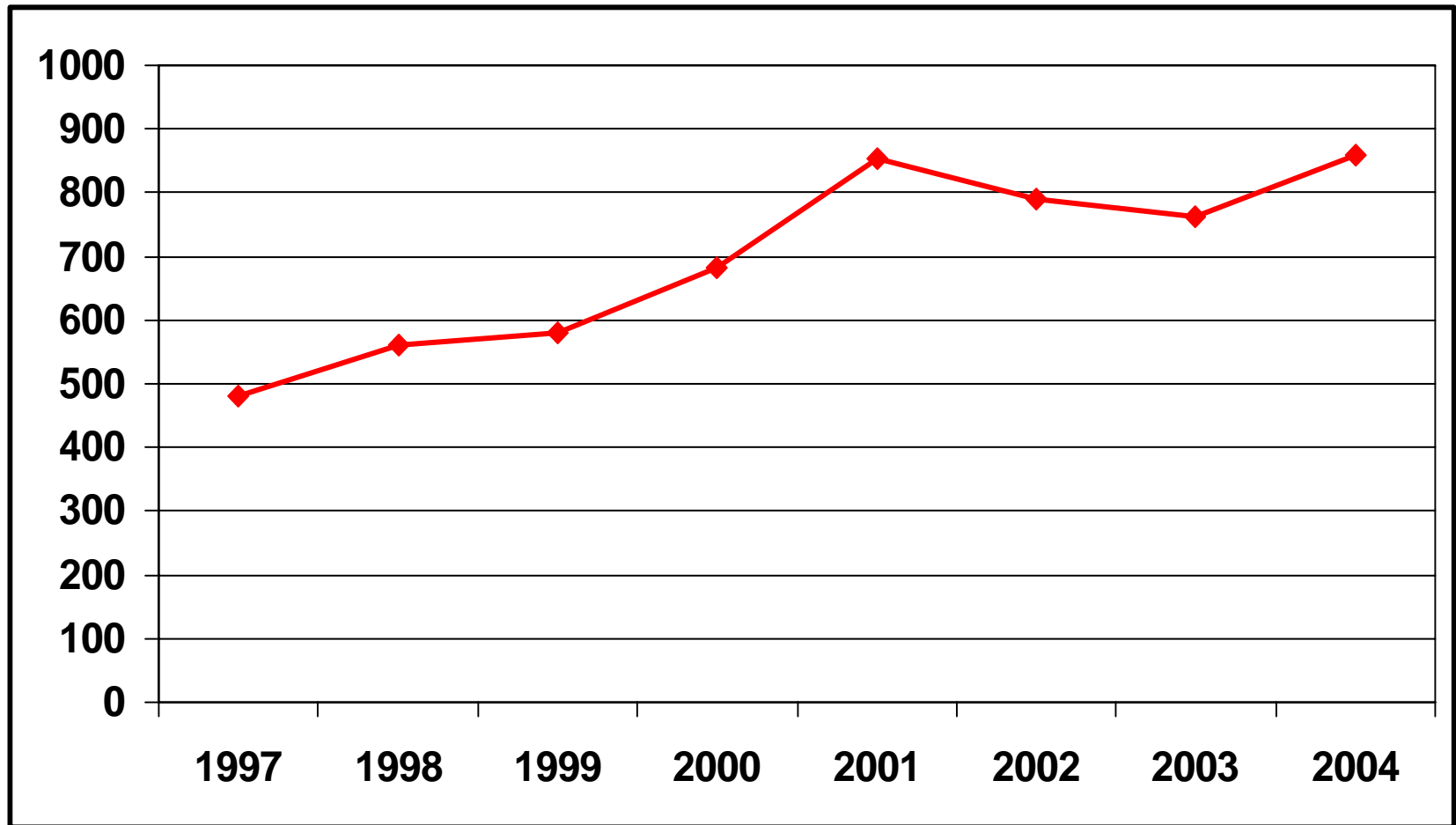
- 30% of males and 8% of females underlying abuse or dependency problem
- Equates to up to **127,000** admissions a year

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# Patients from the NEHB region admitted drunk to hospital

- Up 80% from 1997-2002

## Number of individual patients admitted to Irish hospitals with Alcoholic Liver Disease, 1997-2007

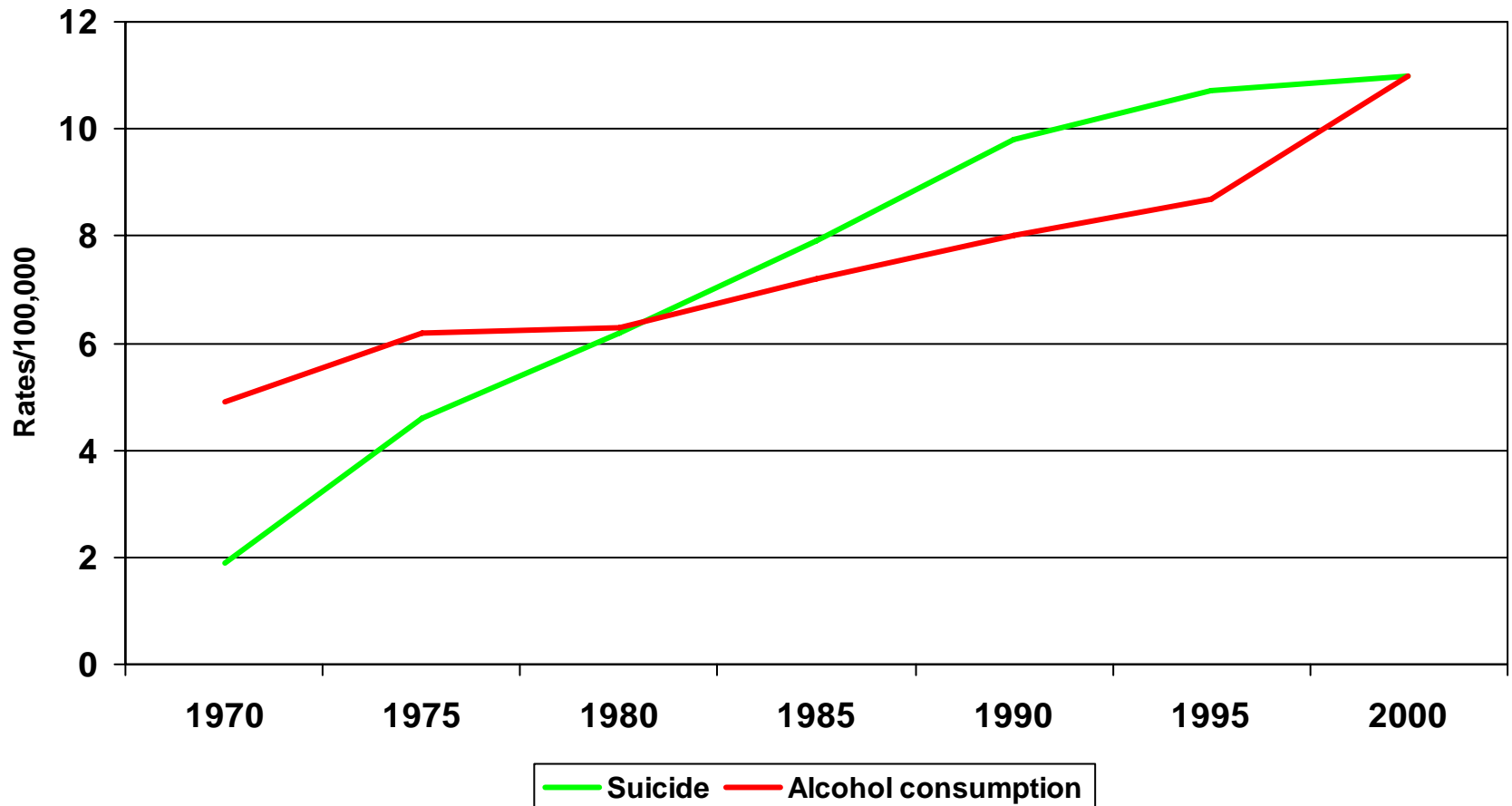


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# Alcohol related mortality Ireland 1992-2002

- Alcohol acute conditions + 90%
- Alcoholic specific chronic + 61%
- Overall mortality - 14%

# Suicide and alcohol consumption Ireland



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# Alcohol and young suicides

- 90% of those under 30 years of age had alcohol in blood
- 58% drunk  
(Blood level > 150mg/100ml)

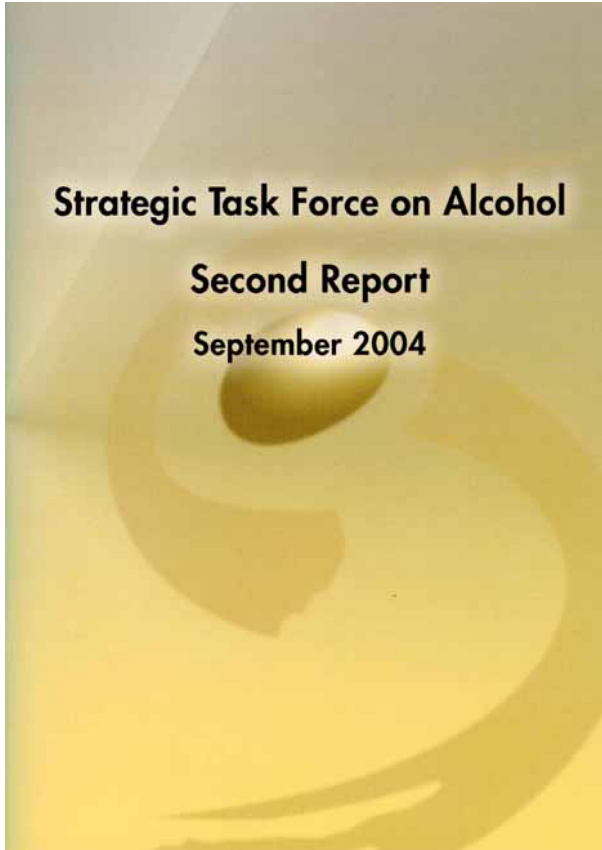
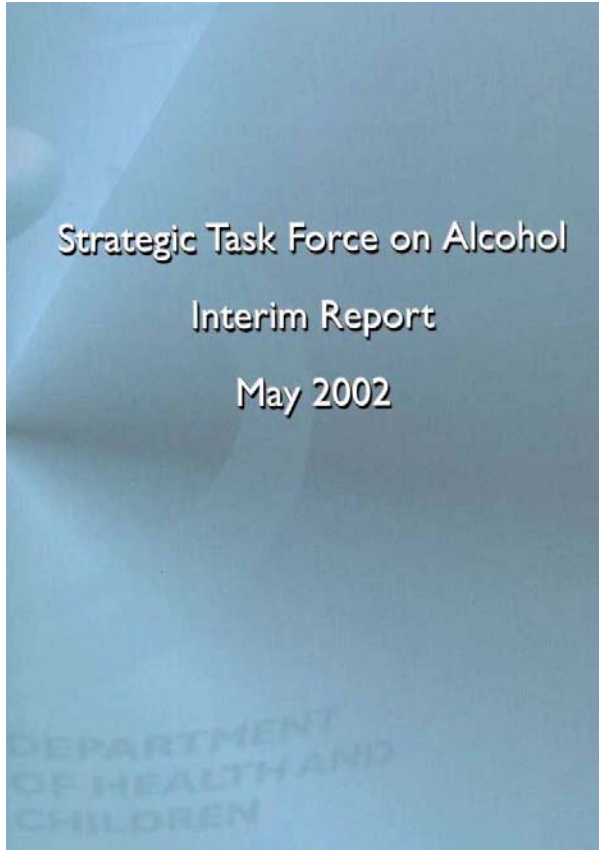
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# Forces at work

- Increased availability
- Money to spend
- Relatively cheap drink
- The age of the population
- The industry
- “The need to get hammered”
- A relaxed attitude to drinking too much
- Our culture

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# Where to now?



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# What is needed

- Implement task force recommendations
- Decrease availability
- Increase price through taxation
- Decrease tax on low strength beers
- Minimum price on all off sales

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# What is needed

- Highly visible implementation of Random Breath Testing
- Reduce the legal limit to 20 mg/100ml

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# What is needed

- Legislate to reduce the exposure of children to advertising, sponsorship and promotions

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*Alcohol consumption is set to increase in the Irish population over the next number of years, given:-*

- the current and projected economic growth*
- strong alcohol advertising campaigns in all media in terms of volume, exposure and extensive sponsorship promotions with highly visible sports.*

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**Summary - National Alcohol Policy 1996**



**TITHE AN OIREACHTAIS**

**AN COMBCHOISTE UM GHNÓTHAÍ EALAÍON, SPÓIRT,  
TURASÓIREACHTA, POBAIL, TUAITHE AGUS GAELTACHTA**

**An Naóú Tuarascáil**

**Alcól a Áireamh i Straitéis Náisiúnta um MI-Úsáid Substaintí**

**HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS**

**JOINT COMMITTEE ON ARTS, SPORT, TOURISM, COMMUNITY,  
RURAL AND GAELTACHT AFFAIRS**

**Ninth Report**

**The Inclusion of Alcohol in a National Substance Misuse Strategy**

**Iúil 2006  
July 2006**

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## Joint Committee on Arts, Sport, Tourism, Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (2007)

- *“the correlation between the onset of drinks sponsorship and the rapid rise in alcohol consumption in this country is too strong to be ignored”*

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# Anheuser-Busch Co.Inc. Annual Report 1997

- “Every action taken by management is guided by one overriding objective-enhancing shareholder value”.

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# What is needed

- Recognition that alcohol is no ordinary commodity and needs regulation
- Recognition that alcohol is a legitimate health concern not just an industry

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# What is needed

- Public agree that action is needed
  - But might not like the medicine
- Huge vested interests
  - “We will show you who runs the country”
- The nanny state
- Local leadership required
- Political leadership required