

Drinking behaviours and blood alcohol concentration in four European drinking environments: a cross-sectional study

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Abstract

Reducing harm in drinking environments is a growing priority for European alcohol policy yet few studies have explored nightlife drinking behaviours. This study examines alcohol consumption and blood alcohol concentration (BAC) in drinking environments in four European cities.

Methods

A short questionnaire was implemented among 838 drinkers aged 16-35 in drinking environments in four European cities, in the Netherlands, Slovenia, Spain and the UK. Questions included self-reported alcohol use before interview and expected consumption over the remainder of the night. Breathalyser tests were used to measured breath alcohol concentration (converted to BAC) at interview.

Results

Most participants in the Dutch (56.2%), Spanish (59.6%) and British (61.4%) samples had preloaded (cf Slovenia 34.8%). In those drinking < 3 h at interview, there were no differences in BAC by gender or nationality. In UK participants, BAC increased significantly in those who had been drinking longer, reaching 0.13% (median) in females and 0.17% in males drinking > 5 h. In other nationalities, BAC increases were less pronounced or absent. High BAC (> 0.08%) was associated with being male, aged > 19, British and having consumed spirits. In all cities most participants intended to drink enough alcohol to constitute binge drinking.

Conclusions

Different models of drinking behaviour are seen in different nightlife settings. Here, the UK sample was typified by continued increases in inebriation compared with steady, more moderate

intoxication elsewhere. With the former being associated with higher health risks, European alcohol policy must work to deter this form of nightlife.

Web link

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