

# Introduction

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*How successful are the UK's economic alcohol control policies in influencing young drinkers?*

There are very few young people in the UK who wait until they are 18 to drink. In fact, by the time they reach 15, more than eight out of 10 have already tried alcohol.<sup>1</sup> While there are many policies imposed to help discourage excessive drinking, these guidelines and policies have often been aimed young drinkers and not underage drinker's as well. While there have been official Government drinking guidelines for adults for many years, until recent times there were none for under-18s. In January 2010, Government advice for underage people and their parents about alcohol was published by the Chief Medical Officer, Sir Liam Donaldson stating that children should not drink before they are 15 and that they should only drink between 15 and 17 if they are supervised by a parent or adult. However, many teenagers are not heavily influenced by such age restriction guidelines or policies; there are other policies, some which are more influential in controlling young drinking. It is also important to note that young drinkers are not just those who are under 18; students up to the age of 24 are classed as young drinkers by the NHS and it is this specific category of drinkers who are most known for taking part in binge drinking.

Among 35 European countries, the UK has the third-highest proportion of 15 year olds who report having been drunk 10 times or more in the past year.<sup>2</sup> Although underage drinking is a significant problem, excessive drinking by youngsters in general is a major problem; statistics show that around 5,000 teenagers are admitted to hospital every year for alcohol-related reasons.<sup>3</sup> With a substantial number of problems arising from excessive long term and short term drinking, it is important that the UK maintains very strong and detailed control policies to help combat such issues. This project aims to analyse six of the main types of alcohol control policies within the UK. Perhaps the most obvious one mentioned above, age restrictions on alcohol will prove to be the most influential policy in influencing young drinkers; however, there are also alcohol taxes, licensing hours, advertisement policies, public drinking laws and educational policies which are aimed at young drinkers.

This project will go through each of the six main policies which I have chosen analysing their effects and successfulness. My overall evaluation will consist of comparisons with the alcohol policies in other countries, the successfulness of the UK's policies and a survey towards young people which aims to question which of the six main policies most affects their drinking habits. The conclusion for this project will sum up how influential certain alcohol control policies within the UK are in controlling young drinking and will suggest ways in which policies could be tightened or eased to help improve the problem of excessive drinking amongst youngsters. This conclusion will be drawn upon mainly from comparisons with other countries.

*Alcohol kills 6.5 times more youth than all other illicit drugs combined<sup>4</sup>*

This is why focussing on alcohol control policies is more important than ever.

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<sup>1</sup> Fuller, E (2008). Drug Use, Smoking and Drinking Among Young People in England in 2007. UK: National Centre for Social Research. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Björn Hibell, Ulf Guttormsson, Salme Ahlström, Olga Balakireva, Thoroddur Bjarnason, Anna Kokkevi, Ludwig Kraus (2007). The 2007 ESPAD Report - Substance Use Among Students in 35 European Countries. Sweden: ESPAD. 121.

<sup>3</sup> The NHS Information Centre, Lifestyles Statistics. (2009). NHS Information Centre – Statistics for Alcohol: England . London: NHS. 16.

<sup>4</sup> NCADA. (2003). Drinking and Driving - Facts for Teens. Available:

<http://happenings4youth.org/News%20and%20Fact%20Sheets/Drinking%20and%20Driving.pdf>. Last accessed 18<sup>th</sup> June 2011

# Section One:

## Age Restrictions on Alcohol

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The laws surrounding the legal drinking age limit within the UK are much more detailed than most people tend to think. Children under 5 must not be given alcohol unless under medical supervision or in an emergency under the Children and Young Persons Act 1933.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the minimum age that one can purchase alcohol is 18 although people aged 16 or 17 may consume wine, beer or cider on licensed premises with a table meal. In England and Wales, it must be an adult who orders, however this is not the case in Scotland. The overall legal age for the purchase of alcohol from an off-licence is 18 years.<sup>6</sup> Further laws enforcing age restrictions on alcohol include the fact that purchasing alcohol on behalf of a minor is illegal in the United Kingdom and is deemed as acting as the young person's agent.

However, in recent times, these laws are often not abided to or enforced as strictly as they should be; to help combat this, the BBPA (British Beer and Pub Association) introduced their 'Challenge 21' Scheme. Under this system, customers attempting to buy alcoholic beverages are asked to prove their age if in the retailer's opinion they look under 21 even though the law states they must be a minimum age of 18 years. This has enforced the checking of ID against minors who may have otherwise been served alcohol; many supermarket and off-licence chains display 'Challenge 21' notices stating that they will not serve those who look under 21 unless they have valid identification to prove they are of a legal age to purchase alcohol.

However, many places that sold alcohol simply did not check customer's identification in an effort to boost profits whilst neglecting alcoholic laws and indirect health issues linked with underage drinking. These chains which are found to have violated the law and have repeatedly sold alcohol to underage persons are then required to adopt the Challenge 25 scheme; failing to adhere to this will result in revocation of the license to sell alcohol. Research has shown that around 90% of 18-24 year olds are aware of the Challenge 21 scheme, outlining the success of the scheme amongst its key target group. Pubs turn away over one million customers each month who, when challenged, are unable to provide an acceptable form of identification which clearly indicates the trade is making a huge effort to enforce the law and prevent underage sales<sup>7</sup> (*an example of a BBPA 'Challenge 21' Poster can be seen on the opposite page – the BBPA and its members have circulated around half a million of these posters to places selling alcohol*).

The reason that the UK (and most countries around the World) sets the age limit on alcohol at 18 is because alcohol is more harmful for youngsters who are physically and emotionally less able to cope with the effects of drinking alcohol. They are also considered less mature and are therefore more likely to behave in a risky or unacceptable manner, which can often mean crime, due to the effects of drinking alcohol. Moreover, drinking at an early age can cause serious health problems and evidence shows that drinking too much alcohol can harm brain development in young people. Perhaps most importantly, however, drinking too much alcohol is strongly linked to many other problems such as unprotected sex consequences, failing at school, taking illegal drugs, health problems and even death.

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5 UK Government Act. (1933). *Children and Young Persons Act - Section 5*. Available: [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo5/23-24/12](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo5/23-24/12). Last accessed 18th June 2011.

6 UK Government Act. (2003). *Licensing Act 2003, Part 7: Offences, Section 149*. Available: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/17/contents>. Last accessed

7 BBPA. (2009). *Alcohol Strategy - 'Challenge 21'*. Available: <http://www.beerandpub.com/industryArticle.aspx?articleId=85>. Last accessed 18th June 2011.

# Challenge

21

If you are  
lucky enough  
to look under 21

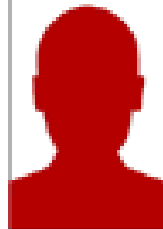
you will be asked to prove  
that you are

**over**

**18**

**when you buy alcohol**

If you are under 18  
you are committing  
an offence if you  
attempt to buy  
alcohol



The only acceptable forms  
of proof are:

- Photocard Driving Licence
- Passport
- Proof of age cards bearing the PASS hologram



[DRINKAWARE.CO.UK](http://DRINKAWARE.CO.UK)

[BEERANDPUB.COM](http://BEERANDPUB.COM)



## How effective are age restrictions on Alcohol?

Studies show that around 85% of 12-17 year olds have drunk at some point in their lives and for most of those aged just 12-15, drinking is occasional; about one in ten reported drinking at least once a week on average and half of teenagers between 16 and 17 drink at least once a week.<sup>8</sup> These were figures from 2003 and have shown to be worsening ever since; in fact, although underage individuals cannot legally buy alcohol themselves, 63% of those aged 16-17 who have drunk in the last year say that they usually buy their alcohol themselves from pubs, bars and nightclubs. This is a very important problem because around 15% of all 12-17 year olds have been involved in some form of anti-social behaviour whilst under the influence of alcohol.<sup>9</sup>

Although the 'Challenge 21' scheme does appear to be successful, it is still incredibly easy for youngsters to gain access to alcohol through older friends or relatives even though this is illegal. One way in which this could be more easily controlled is through a 'tagging' scheme – an example of such a scheme went live in Scotland in early 2011. Shops in parts of Dundee have started tagging bottles of alcohol with an invisible code as part of a police plan to cut underage drinking levels. If young drinkers are found in possession of a tagged item, police are then able to work out where and when the substance was purchased. Constable Andy Davie from Tayside Police said: "The biggest problem we have in the UK isn't shops selling alcohol directly to young customers, it's people buying it on their behalf."<sup>10</sup>

If a pattern emerges of a significant number of items coming from a specific shop, police say they can send in undercover officers or watch CCTV footage to identify the adults buying alcohol for youngsters; they also say that anyone caught will be prosecuted. The maximum sentence for buying alcohol on a youngster's behalf is a £5,000 fine and three months in prison. The police say that underage drinking is often linked to crime and other anti-social behaviour which is why they are trying to stop the root cause of the problem. There are also extreme health issues; Dundee alone treated 388 Under-18s in 2010 due to drink related problems.<sup>11</sup>

Bottle marking is the latest scheme in a long line of ideas aiming to help restrict and even prevent underage drinking. In England and Wales, for example, police have been handed more powers to confiscate bottles and cans from teenagers and the fine for shops that are caught repeatedly selling alcohol to minors has been raised to £20,000.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, powers placed last year in the UK mean that Under-18s can now be prosecuted and fined if they are caught with drink in a public place three times in a year.

However, in general, it is incredibly easy for youngsters to obtain alcohol even if they are underage and even age restrictions in the UK do not entirely solve the problem of youngsters drinking excessively as those aged between 18 and 24 are still able to purchase alcohol legally even though they may exploit use of the substance. Overall, it seems that youngsters will always find a way around age restriction policies on alcohol and it is this particular age group which, statistics show, abuse alcohol the most.

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8 Hebbell B, Andersson B, Bjarnasson T, Ahlstrom S, Balakireva O, Kokkevi A, Morgan M (2004). *Alcohol and Other Drug Use Among Students in 35 European Countries*. Sweden: ESPAD Report. 133.

9 Harrington V, (2010) *Underage Drinking: Findings from the 2008-2009 Youth Lifestyles Survey*, Home Office Research Findings No. 125

10 Reed, J. (2011). *Scottish Alcohol Tagging Scheme Goes Live*. Available: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsbeat/12242360>. Last accessed 19th June

11 Reed, J. (2011). *Scottish Alcohol Tagging Scheme Goes Live*. Available: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsbeat/12242360>. Last accessed 19th June

<sup>12</sup> UK Government Act. (2003). *Licensing Act 2003, Part 7: Offences, Section 151*. Available: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/17/contents>. Last accessed 19<sup>th</sup> June 2011

## Section Two: Alcohol Taxes

In the UK there are two different kinds of alcohol tax; excise duties, which vary with the different categories of alcoholic drink, and VAT, a uniform rate currently set at 20% (recently raised from 17.5% in January) Excise duties are normally reviewed annually by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Budget. In comparison with most other European countries, alcohol is taxed significantly higher in the UK as shown in the table below:

Country	Spirits £ per 70cl bottle 40% ABV	Still wine £ per 75 cl bottle 11.5% ABV	Sparkling wine £ per 75 cl bottle	Beer £ per pint 5% ABV or 12° Plato	VAT rate %
Austria	1.9	0.00	0.00	0.10	20
Belgium	3.4	0.25	0.84	0.08	21
Cyprus	1.2	0.00	0.00	0.02	15
Czech Rep.	1.8	0.00	0.43	0.04	22
Denmark	3.9	0.43		0.13	25
Estonia	1.9	0.35	0.35	0.07	18
Finland	5.5	1.10	1.10	0.38	22
France	2.8	0.02	0.04	0.05	19.6
Germany	2.5	0.00	0.27	0.04	16
Greece	2.1	0.00	0.00	0.06	18
Hungary	1.6	0.00	0.24	0.09	25
Ireland	7.6	1.42	2.84	0.39	21
Italy	1.6	0.00	0.00	0.12	20
Latvia	1.8	0.22	0.22	0.03	18
Lithuania	1.8	0.23	0.23	0.04	18
Luxembourg	2.0	0.00	0.00	0.04	15
Malta	4.5	0.00	0.00	0.04	18
Netherlands	2.9	0.31	1.05	0.10	19
Poland	2.3	0.18	0.18	0.09	22
Portugal	1.8	0.00	0.00	0.06	21
Slovakia	1.5	0.00	0.33	0.07	19
Slovenia	1.4	0.00	0.00	0.14	20
Spain	1.6	0.00	0.00	0.04	16
Sweden	10.4	1.23	1.23	0.31	25
UK	5.5	1.25	1.65	0.38	17.5

This table shows Excise Duty Rates in the European Union.<sup>13</sup> Clearly the UK is one of the highest alcohol taxing countries within the EU. Although it has a similar VAT rate to other countries, it has the third-highest tax on spirits (£5.50 per 70cl bottle 40% ABV) and the second-highest tax on still wine (£1.25 per 75cl bottle 11.5% ABV) and sparkling wine (£1.65 per 75cl bottle) behind Ireland. It also has the second-highest excise duty on Beer at 38p per pint 5% ABV. The fact that Ireland is commonly the only country to have higher taxes than the UK shows that Great Britain as a whole has considerably high alcohol tax.

However, the UK is right to set relatively high taxes; a range of studies have found that high alcohol prices can reduce road accidents and fatalities, workplace injuries, liver-related deaths and various types of violent crime.<sup>14</sup> This was clearly demonstrated in 2004 in Finland where the Government reduced alcohol excise duty by an average of 33% in order to reduce the number of cheap imports from abroad. This resulted in an instantaneous 17% increase in alcohol-related death.<sup>15</sup>

G. Edwards stated that *“Taxation of alcohol is an effective mechanism for reducing alcohol problems...The notion that heavy or dependent drinkers are immune to the influence of price is demonstrably incorrect. Put simply, but with entire scientific accuracy, alcohol taxation is a readily available instrument which can be applied to save lives and avert alcohol-related suffering.”*<sup>16</sup>

It does seem indeed that high alcohol taxes are a good way of restricting alcohol abuse within a country. However, with such high income levels in the UK and with disposable income rising it seems that many are able to ignore such inconveniences. Furthermore, high alcohol prices are what youngsters are used to and they know no different so such high prices do not affect their consumption significantly.

13 European Commission (2006). *European Commission's Excise Duty Tables (Alcohol Beverages)*. Belgium: Europa Website.

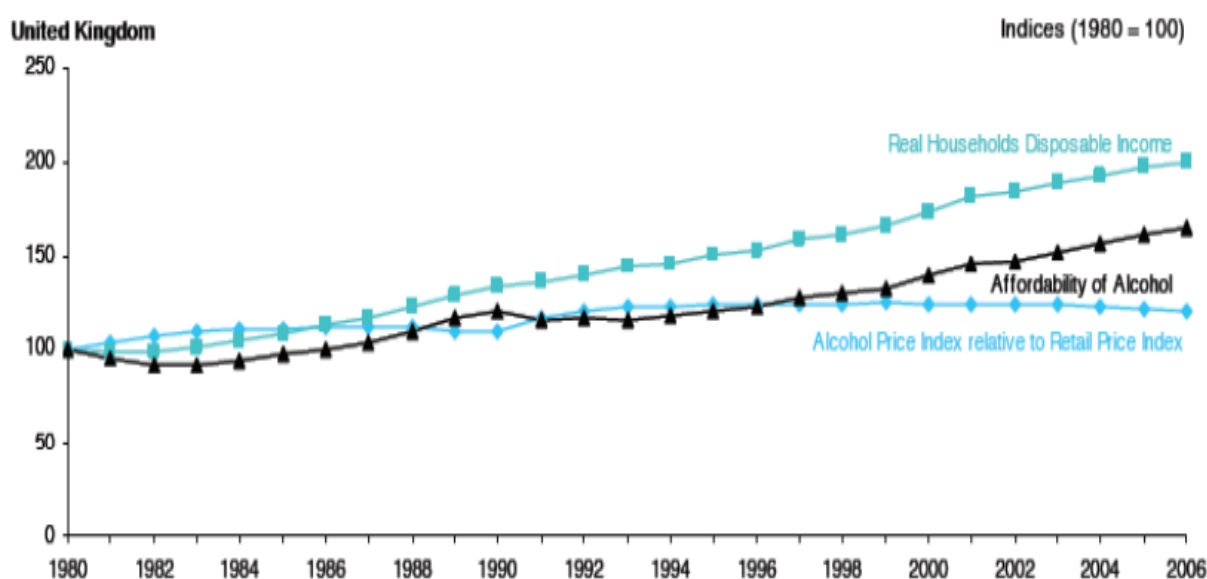
14 Babor T et al,(2003) *Alcohol: no ordinary commodity*. Oxford Medical Publications. Oxford. Chp.3

15 Koski, A; Sirén, R; Vuoir, E; Poikolainen (2007), *Alcohol tax cuts and increase in alcohol-positive sudden deaths – a time-series intervention analysis*.

16 G Edwards (2004), *Alcohol Policy and the Public Good* Oxford Medical Publications Chp.4

## Why are high taxes on alcohol in the UK so ineffective in reducing levels of drinking?

The price of alcohol in relation to disposable income is the most important influence on alcohol consumption, especially amongst youngsters. In general, the less expensive alcohol is relative to disposable income, the more that is consumed. UK prices of alcoholic drink, as measured by the Alcohol Price Index, have increased considerably more than general price increases. Between 1980 and 2003, the price of alcohol increased by 24% more than general prices. This does pose the question of why alcoholic-related issues are still a problem; however, over the same period, the disposable income of households increased by 91% which meant that alcohol was 54% more affordable in 2003 than in 1980.<sup>17</sup>



This line graph shows the indices of alcohol price relative to retail price index against real household disposable income and therefore showing the affordability of alcohol between 1980 and 2006.<sup>18</sup> Because alcohol tax was relatively high during the 80's and 90's, alcohol prices have not risen to drastically between 1980 and 2006, although, they are still fairly high. Compared to the base index of 100 however, real household disposable income has soared; doubling itself over the last couple of decades. Because of this significant increase, the affordability of alcohol has increased. Although this may not necessarily drive mature adults into purchasing more alcohol, for less mature youngsters it means that alcohol is extremely affordable. This is why there are such high levels of health-related issues surrounding alcohol, because it has become more affordable. Although, high taxes have raised the price of alcohol, youngsters can still afford to buy excessive amounts of the substance.

Overall, for youngsters, high alcohol prices seem normal to them because that is what they are used to. This means that high taxes will not necessarily discourage them from buying alcohol because they already understand its high expenses in the UK. Furthermore, with real household income rising extensively, the affordability of alcohol is much greater meaning youngsters are able to buy it in excessive amounts. It would take an extremely significant tax raise by the government to have any effect on alcohol consumption in youngsters, and such a raise would affect their budget revenue.

<sup>17</sup> Office for National Statistics (2005) *Statistics on alcohol: England, 2004*. Department of Health. Office for National Statistics

<sup>18</sup> Focus on Consumer Price Indices, Office for National Statistics & Economic Trends, ONS, 2007



## Section 3: Education

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Education on alcohol is a very important and simple policy in influencing young drinkers as it takes place in all schools in England as part of the National Curriculum. The aim of such a project is to give all children and young people the skills they need to make safe and responsible choices about alcohol as they get older. Because it has only recently been added to the school syllabus, it is difficult to analyse whether the effects have filtered through effectively into youngsters until the children who have studied the whole syllabus from age 5 are much older.

Children start alcohol education in primary school, the idea being that they should know the facts about alcohol before they have any experience of it themselves, this education then continues into secondary school. Children begin learning at 5 years old but they do not learn anything about alcohol misuse until they are 7 years of age. During this two year period they learn the basic skills for making healthy choices and following safety rules; this aims to prepare that for any later experience of the harmful effects of alcohol.<sup>19</sup>

Between the ages of 7 and 11 years before they enter secondary school, children learn of the damaging effects of alcohol on their health and the other extreme risks that are involved with misuse. They are also taught basic skills for making good choices about their health, and recognising and managing risky situation. The main objective of these five years is to help them to resist peer pressure when necessary and to take more responsibility for their actions. When children enter secondary school they learn more issues surrounding the effects and risks of alcohol and continue to develop their risk-management skills to help resist peer pressure and to make healthy choices. Also introduced to them are the laws relating to alcohol and where youngsters can go for alcohol-related help and advice.<sup>20</sup>



Between the ages of 14 and 16, youngsters learn about the minor and severe effects of alcohol misuse on themselves, family, friends, the local community and wider society. They are also encouraged to form their own opinions through discussion and debate.<sup>21</sup>

Many secondary schools have NHS Health Education teams come in to do talks and presentations similar to that shown in this picture.<sup>22</sup> Here, NECA's Health Education team Jan Milner (left), David Messenger and Fiona Hetherington, are offering advice to

youngsters during alcohol awareness week from October 2010. They were also encouraging parents to talk to their children about alcohol and its effect because often alcohol education from parents can have the biggest impact upon youngsters. An important issue often raised is the message parents send to their children through their own actions surrounding alcohol. Youngsters exposed to alcoholic parents are closely associated with troubled upbringings which can lead to further alcohol abuse; educating parents as well as youngsters is extremely important.

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<sup>19</sup> Website of the Government – [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk) Alcohol Education in Schools (August 2011)

<sup>20</sup> Website of the Government – [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk) Alcohol Education in Schools (August 2011)

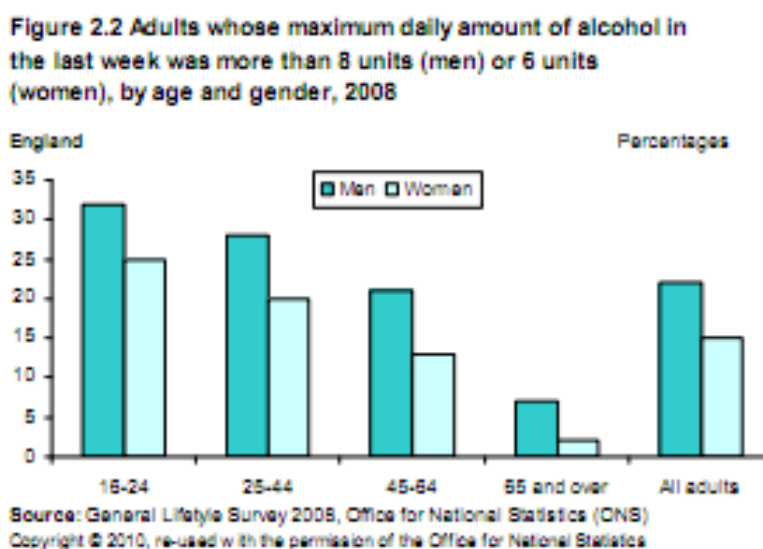
<sup>21</sup> Website of the Government – [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk) Alcohol Education in Schools (August 2011)

<sup>22</sup> Picture from NHS website - <http://www.sotw.nhs.uk/aboutus/pressrelease.aspx?id=1305>

## How effective is alcohol education in determining the decisions young people make and how much influence do parents have?

Because the changes to the National Curriculum regarding alcohol education are relatively new, it is difficult to determine the effect they are having until the children who begin the programme in primary school are older and have left secondary school with the full effects of the programme. However, it is possible to analyse alcohol education levels amongst adults and studying the influence that adult parents have upon their children surround drinking issues.

Education surrounding alcohol amongst adults is limited; government recommendations advise that adult men should not regularly drink more than 3 to 4 units of alcohol a day and adult women no more than 2 to 3.<sup>23</sup> Results found that adults who frequently drink a particular type of alcohol once a week were mostly aware of its alcohol content, however, 31% of frequent beer drinkers and 17% of frequent wine drinkers were not aware of the number of units they were drinking.<sup>24</sup> This expresses the lack of alcohol education towards adults considering the simplicity of the system of alcoholic units. The table further demonstrates this fundamental flaw – showing not just the high percentage of young drinkers who drink excessively, but also of adults aged between 25 and 64. This suggests that there is a strong influence from parents regarding the issue of drinking among youngsters.



In a 2009 report by the NHS information Centre (*Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use Among Young People in England 2008*) pupils were asked how their parents felt about them drinking alcohol. There was a clear relationship between perceived parental acceptance of drinking and age. Younger pupils seemed more likely to say that their parents did not like them drinking at all (71% of 11 year olds compared with 24% of 15 year olds). Similarly, older pupils tended to answer that parents would not mind them drinking as long as it was not too much (28% of 11 year olds, increasing to 73% of 15 year olds).<sup>25</sup>

The key findings from the report above were that whether or not pupils drink alcohol is related to the number of drinkers that pupils live with. The proportion of pupils who had drunk alcohol in the last week increased from 5% of those who lived in non-drinking households to 31% of those who lived with three or more people who drank alcohol.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, about half (53%) of pupils stated that their parent's did not mind them drinking as long as they did not drink too much; a slightly smaller proportion (46%) said their parents would not like them to drink.

<sup>23</sup> NHS Health and Social Care Information Centre - *Statistics on Alcohol: England (2010)*

<sup>24</sup> ONS Omnibus Survey Report Drinking: *Adult Behaviour and Knowledge (2009)*

<sup>25</sup> NHS Information Centre – *Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use Among Young People in England (2008)*

<sup>26</sup> NHS Information Centre – *Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use Among Young People in England (2008)*



In general, pupils' drinking tended to reflect what they believed their parents thought. For example, 80% of pupils who said their parents would not like them to drink had never drunk alcohol, compared with 24% of pupils who thought their parents did not mind them drinking within limits.<sup>27</sup>

In addition to these results, it was found that around half of pupils who had drunk alcohol in the past four weeks reported feeling drunk; girls who drank alcohol were more likely to become drunk than boys. What's more, there's evidence showing that the likelihood of becoming drunk increased with age – drunkenness which can often result in violence and crime. However, the most likely adverse consequence of drinking alcohol was feeling ill or sick, reported by 29% of pupils who had been drunk in the last four weeks before the survey. Smaller proportions had lost money (12%), damaged clothes (13%), been sick (13%) or had arguments (16%). These were the pupils (of which there was a third) who had drunk alcohol in the last four weeks and had tried to get drunk at least once – a more common issue among older drinkers further suggesting parental influence.<sup>28</sup>

Perhaps the most interesting statistic was that pupils were most likely to cite their parents as sources of helpful information with 74% going to their parents for alcohol education or advice.<sup>29</sup> This clearly shows the high level of influence that parents have upon decisions youngsters make concerning alcohol. With only a small proportion going to teachers or the internet for information on alcohol, it seems that most parents have a direct gateway into educating their child about alcohol and its dangers. However, with such limited alcohol education aimed at parents it is very difficult for the parents to filter through useful information. The report also shows that 42% of pupils had obtained alcohol in the last four weeks and, of these, 22% had been given it by their parents (24% by friends and 18% by asking someone else to buy it)<sup>30</sup> which clearly shows how parents are not so reluctant to let their children drink or that they are just oblivious to the laws regarding age restrictions and the purchasing of alcohol.

Overall, even though the recent changes to the National Curriculum to include alcohol education for ages 5 to 16 seem, on the surface to be quite effective, it is difficult to tell how successful such a programme will prove to be considering the time lags involved. However, from the NHS Information Centre's report – *Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use Among Young People in England* – it is clear to see that parents have a direct and significant influence on their children's attitudes towards alcohol. There is also evidence to suggest that adults and parents themselves are not satisfactorily educated on the dangers of alcohol and therefore cannot always provide their children with correct or useful information and advice concerning alcohol. Once the effects of the Alcohol Education Schools Programme can be fully analysed in a few years, the Government should then decide whether to look at educating adults on the dangers of alcohol. Nonetheless, the detailed alcohol programme in the current National Curriculum should most certainly remain as an important foundation for educating youngsters about the dangers of alcohol.

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<sup>27</sup> NHS Information Centre – *Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use Among Young People in England* (2008)

<sup>28</sup> NHS Information Centre – *Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use Among Young People in England* (2008)

<sup>29</sup> NHS Information Centre – *Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use Among Young People in England* (2008)

<sup>30</sup> NHS Information Centre – *Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use Among Young People in England* (2008)

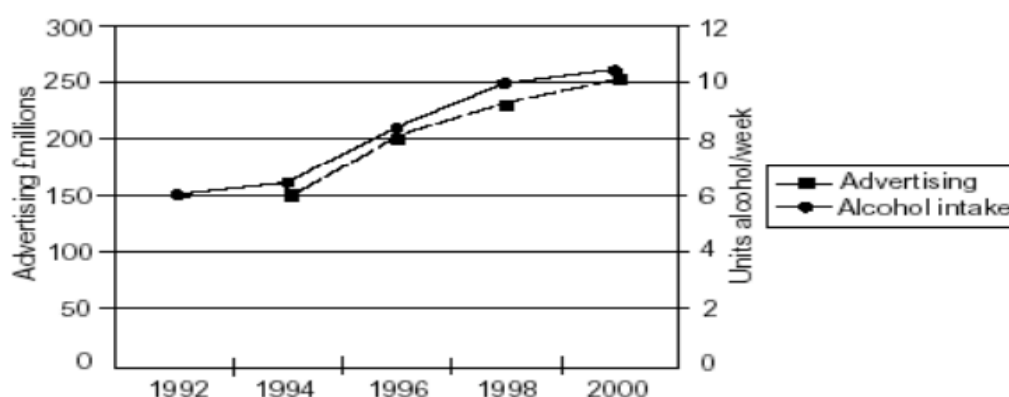
# ADVERTISING



## Section Four – Advertising

There is a strong debate surrounding the issue of advertising alcohol; the alcohol and advertising industries argue that as alcoholic drink is a legal product it should be legally possible for it to be advertised and that bans on alcohol advertisements would have negative effects on the alcohol market. They also claim that bans are not justified as advertising is concerned with promoting sales of alcoholic brands and there is no strong evidence of a distinct link between advertising and the overall level of alcohol consumption or the amount of alcohol-related harm. However, this graph clearly shows that there is a close relationship between UK advertising expenditure at current prices and alcohol consumption in 11-15 year old children: 1992-2000.<sup>31</sup>

Close relationship between annual expenditure on alcohol advertising and weekly alcohol of 11-15 year old children (R=0.995)



This graph clearly shows that increasing alcohol advertising campaigns leads to increased consumption of alcohol amongst young drinkers. This can be because in alcohol advertisements the young are a key target, and the imagery used is often designed to attract them. A study in the UK carried out in November 2001 on the impact of alcohol advertising on teenagers showed that most young people believed that the majority of alcohol advertisements were targeted at young people because they often showed scenes of activities identified with young people such as dancing and clubbing. Moreover, the survey suggested that alcohol advertisements tended to be the favourite type of advertisement among youngsters.<sup>32</sup>

In general, the main arguments in the debate against alcohol advertising are that as well as promoting specific brands, advertising also aimed to recruit new drinkers and increase sales among existing consumers typical of any product advertisement. Intensive advertising and promotion of alcohol seems to send a message to youngsters that it is acceptable to use a product which causes high levels of damage to themselves and to society if used inappropriately. Moreover, alcohol advertising is heavily biased; it avoids any reference to the negative effects of alcohol so as to maximise company sales. As the graph above shows, increasing advertising on alcohol increased the consumption of alcohol among youngsters and this increased consumption raises the levels of the negative effects of alcohol within the UK.

<sup>31</sup> Calling Time: The Nations's drinking as a major health issue. A report from the Academy of Medical Sciences, March 200

<sup>32</sup> The Impact of Alcohol Advertising on Teenagers in Ireland. C Dring & A Hope. Health Promotion Unit, Department of Health & Children. November 2001



## Alcohol section taken directly from BCAP Code – effective from 1 September 2010

### The BCAP Code: The UK Broadcast Advertising Standards Code on Alcohol

*(This section has been copied directly from the BCAP Code to show the specific rules regarding Alcohol Advertising within the UK as of September 2010)*

#### Principle

Advertisements for alcoholic drinks should not be targeted at people under 18 years of age and should not imply, condone or encourage immoderate, irresponsible or anti-social drinking. The spirit as well as the letter of the rules in this section applies.

#### Definitions

The rules in this section apply to advertisements for alcoholic drinks and advertisements that feature or refer to alcoholic drinks. Alcoholic drinks are defined as those containing at least 0.5% alcohol; for the purposes of this Code low-alcohol drinks are defined as drinks containing between 0.5% and 1.2% alcohol. Where stated, exceptions are made for low-alcohol drinks. But, if an advertisement for a low alcohol drink could be considered to promote a stronger alcoholic drink or if the low-alcohol content of a drink is not stated clearly in the advertisement, all the rules in this section apply. If a soft drink is promoted as a mixer, the rules in this section apply in full. The rules are not intended to inhibit responsible advertisements that are intended to counter problem drinking or tell consumers about alcohol-related health or safety themes. Those advertisements should not be likely to promote an alcohol product or brand.

#### Rules

19.1 – Radio central copy clearance

*Radio broadcasters must ensure advertisements for alcoholic drinks are centrally cleared.*

*Rules that apply to all advertisements*

19.2 Advertisements must not feature, imply, condone or encourage irresponsible or immoderate drinking. That applies to both the amount of drink and the way drinking is portrayed. References to, or suggestions of, buying repeat rounds of alcoholic drinks are not acceptable. That does not prevent, for example, someone buying a drink for each member of a group. It does, however, prevent any suggestion that other members of the group will buy a round.

19.3 Advertisements must neither imply that alcohol can contribute to an individual's popularity or confidence nor imply that alcohol can enhance personal qualities.

19.4 Advertisements must not imply that drinking alcohol is a key component of social success or acceptance or that refusal is a sign of weakness.

Advertisements must not imply that the success of a social occasion depends on the presence or consumption of alcohol.

19.5 Advertisements must not link alcohol with daring, toughness, aggression or unruly, irresponsible or antisocial behaviour.

19.6 Advertisements must not link alcohol with sexual activity, sexual success or seduction or imply that alcohol can enhance attractiveness. That does not preclude linking alcohol with romance or flirtation. IAS FACT SHEET – ALCOHOL AND ADVERTISING PAGE 8 OF 19

19.7 Advertisements must not portray alcohol as indispensable or as taking priority in life. Advertisements must not imply that drinking can overcome problems or that regular solitary drinking is acceptable.

19.8 Advertisements must not imply that alcohol has therapeutic qualities. Alcohol must not be portrayed as capable of changing mood, physical condition or behaviour or as a source or nourishment. Although they may refer to refreshment, advertisements must not imply that alcohol can improve any type of performance.

19.9 Advertisements must not link alcohol to illicit drugs.

19.10 Advertisements may give factual information about the alcoholic strength of a drink they may also make a factual strength comparison with another product, but only when the comparison is with a higher strength product of a similar beverage. Low-alcohol drinks, which may be presented as preferable because of their low alcoholic strength, must not otherwise imply that a drink may be preferred because of its alcohol content or intoxicating effect. In the case of a drink with relatively high alcoholic strength in relation to its category, the factual information should not be given undue emphasis.

19.11 Advertisements may include alcohol sales promotions but must not imply, condone or encourage immoderate drinking.

19.12 Advertisements must not feature alcohol being handled or served irresponsibly.

19.13 Advertisements must not link alcohol with the use of potentially dangerous machinery or driving. Advertisements may feature sporting and other physical activities (subject to other rules in this section) but must not imply that those activities have been undertaken after the consumption of alcohol.

*Rules that apply to alcohol advertisements*

19.15 – Television only

*Alcohol advertisements must not:*

19.15.1 be likely to appeal strongly to people under 18, especially by reflecting or being associated with youth culture or showing a adolescent or juvenile behaviour

19.15.2 include a person or character whose example is likely to be followed by those aged under 18 years or who has a strong appeal to those aged under 18.

19.16 Radio only

*Alcohol advertisements must not:*

19.16.1 be targeted at those under 18 years or use a treatment likely to be of particular appeal to them.

19.16.2 include a person or character whose example is likely to be followed by those aged under 18 years or who has a particular appeal to those aged under 18 years.

19.17 Alcohol advertisements must not feature in a significant role anyone who is, or seems to be, under 25 and must not feature children. IAS FACT SHEET – ALCOHOL AND ADVERTISING PAGE 9 OF 19 An exception is made for advertisements that feature families socialising responsibly. Here, children may be included but they should have an incidental role only and anyone who seems to be under the age of 25 must be obviously not drinking alcohol.

19.18 Advertisements for alcoholic drinks may give factual statements about product contents, including comparisons, but must not make any health claims, which include fitness or weight-control claims. The only permitted nutrition claims are "low alcohol", "reduced alcohol" and "reduced energy."

## The BCAP Code: The UK Non-Broadcast Advertising Standards Code on Alcohol

*(This section has been copied directly from the BCAP Code to show the specific rules regarding Non-Broadcast Alcohol Advertising within the UK as of September 2010)*

### Alcohol

#### Principle

Marketing communications for alcoholic drinks should not be targeted at people under 18 and should not imply, condone or encourage immoderate, irresponsible or anti-social drinking. The spirit as well as the letter of the rules in this section applies.

#### Definition

The rules in this section apply to advertisements for alcoholic drinks and advertisements that feature or refer to alcoholic drinks. Alcoholic drinks are defined as drinks containing at least 0.5% alcohol; for the purposes of this Code low-alcohol drinks are defined as drinks containing between 0.5% and 1.2% alcohol. Where stated, exceptions are made for low-alcohol drinks. But, if a marketing communication for a low-alcohol drink could be considered to promote a stronger alcoholic drink or if the drink's low-alcohol content is not stated clearly in the advertisement, all the rules in this section apply. If a soft drink is promoted as a mixer, the rules in this section apply in full. These rules are not intended to inhibit responsible marketing communications that are intended to counter problem drinking or tell consumers about alcohol-related health or safety themes. Those marketing communications should not be likely to promote an alcohol product or brand.

#### Rules

- 18.1 Marketing communications must be socially responsible and must contain nothing that is likely to lead people to adopt styles of drinking that are unwise. For example, they should not encourage excessive drinking. Care should be taken not to exploit the young, the immature or those who are mentally or socially vulnerable.
- 18.2 Marketing communications must not claim or imply that alcohol can enhance confidence or popularity.
- 18.3 Marketing communications must not imply that drinking alcohol is a key component of the success of a personal relationship or social event. The consumption of alcohol may be portrayed as sociable or thirst-quenching.
- 18.4 Drinking alcohol must not be portrayed as a challenge. Marketing communications must neither show, imply, encourage or refer to aggression or unruly, irresponsible or anti-social behaviour nor link alcohol with brave, tough or daring people or behaviour.
- 18.5 Marketing communications must neither link alcohol with seduction, sexual activity or sexual success nor imply that alcohol can enhance attractiveness.
- 18.6 Marketing communications must not imply that alcohol might be indispensable or take priority in life or that drinking alcohol can overcome boredom, loneliness or other problems.
- 18.7 marketing communications must not imply that alcohol has therapeutic qualities. Alcohol must not be portrayed as capable of hanging mood, physical condition or behaviour or as a source of nourishment. Marketing communications must not imply that alcohol can enhance mental or physical capabilities; for example, by contributing to professional or sporting achievements. IAS FACT SHEET – ALCOHOL AND ADVERTISING PAGE 11 OF 19
- 18.8 Marketing communications must not link alcohol to illicit drugs.
- 18.9 Marketing communications may give factual information about the alcoholic strength of a drink. They may also make a factual alcohol strength comparison with another product, but only when the comparison is with a higher strength product of a similar beverage. Marketing communications must not imply that a drink may be preferred because of its alcohol content or intoxicating effect. There is an exception for low-alcohol drinks, which may be presented as preferable because of their low alcoholic strength. In the case of a drink with relatively high alcoholic strength in relation to its category, the factual information should not be given undue emphasis.
- 18.10 Marketing communications that include a sales promotion must not imply, condone or encourage excessive consumption of alcohol.
- 18.11 Marketing communications must not feature alcohol being handled or served irresponsibly.
- 18.12 marketing communications must not link alcohol with activities or locations in which drinking would be unsafe or unwise. Marketing communications must not link alcohol with the use of potentially dangerous machinery or driving. Marketing communications may feature sporting and other physical activities (subject to other rules in this section; for example, appeal to under-18s or link with daring or aggression) but must not imply that those activities have been undertaken after the consumption of alcohol.
- 18.13 Only in exceptional circumstances may marketing communications feature alcohol being drunk by anyone in their working environment.
- 18.14 Marketing communications must not be likely to appeal particularly to people under 18, especially by reflecting or being associated with youth culture. They should not feature or portray real or fictitious characters who are likely to appeal particularly to people under 18 in a way that might encourage the young to drink. People shown drinking or playing a significant role (see rule 18.16) should not be shown behaving in an adolescent or juvenile manner.
- 18.15 Marketing communications must not be directed at people under 18 through the selection of media or the context in which they appear. No medium should be used to advertise alcoholic drinks if more than 25% of its audience is under 18 years of age.
- 18.16 People shown drinking or playing a significant role must neither be nor seem to be under 25. People under 25 may be shown in marketing communications, for example, in the context of family celebrations, but must be obviously not drinking.
- 18.17 Marketing communications may give factual information about product contents, including comparisons, but must not make any health fitness or weight-control claims. The only permitted nutrition claims are "low-alcohol", "reduced alcohol" and "reduced energy".<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup> The BCAP Code: The UK Advertising Standards Code on Alcohol as of September 2010

## “How influential are TV adverts?” – Experiment

The aim of this experiment is to study the advertisements aimed at young people and to see how alcohol advertisements feature in television advert sections. I began by watching a film on ITV1 called *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. The age rating of this film is 12 and is therefore aimed at youngsters above the age of 12. However, this film was shown between the hours of 7pm and 9pm so although the ages this film is aimed at is the same as the ages of young drinkers, it cannot be said that the audience of this film will be mostly young drinkers and more likely family members so we can predict that the adverts will be aimed at mainly youngsters but also family members. The other television show I watched was on 4music; this programme entitled *UK Hot 20 Big Beats Chart* was shown between 9pm and 10pm and a television chart show for youngsters playing the newest and most popular music videos. This type of programme shown between these hours attracts those aged around 14 upwards to around 19 or 20 and many of the youngsters watching this are very likely to be those who have experienced alcohol in their teenage years. For both programmes, I counted the different types of adverts that were shown to study the differences and to analyse the power of advertising in the market (the data I recorded can be seen on the following three pages).

The data I collected clearly shows how powerful television advertising is; if companies are aiming to attract youngsters, then their adverts are showing during programmes that youngsters will watch. Because not many alcoholic drinkers will be watching *Harry Potter* there is a stronger emphasis on other things that youngsters are interested in such as technology (5 total adverts during *Harry Potter*), Theme Parks (3 adverts) and Movies at the Cinemas (4 adverts). However, because this is a family film there are also general family adverts on such as advertising for school uniform, toiletries, home insurance and television boxes – typical things that would be bought by a family. Obviously the later programme attracted youngsters of a higher age than the *Harry Potter* film; this meant there were advertisements for alcohol as well as typical adverts of products that would interest youngsters. However, the adverts during this programme were much more focussed on attracting solely youngsters; an advert for an opticians was the only advert which did not seem to attract youngsters, whilst there were 5 adverts for entertainment and 9 adverts for technology. It was interesting to see the food adverts that were shown in that they were unhealthy ‘junk food’ type foods aimed at youngsters – clearly not helping obesity and other health issues in the UK. Overall, there were five adverts for alcohol during this later programme and all five were clearly aimed at youngsters.

The first advert was from the Co-Op expressing how cheap that their shop sold lager; considering the fact that firms cannot purposely lie in their advertisements, this is an example of a loss leader product. This means that a company (Co-Op in this case) advertise one product very cheaply to attract consumers who will then spend on other products from the same company whilst that company can raise the prices of other products. Essentially, the Co-Op knows that alcohol is such a popular product that they can afford to sell it cheaply because there is such high demand for it; so although they make a loss on this product they make more on their other products. All the other adverts were examples of ways to attract youngsters by setting there adverts on beaches or in clubs and mentioning entities such as *Facebook* and *Live Music*. In general, advertising proves to be a very powerful tool in influencing drinking patterns – especially among youngsters. The main reason that so many youngsters drink lager these days is because companies want them drinking that because lager is easier to store than bitter and so easier to enlarge revenue. Companies want to maximise their profits so aim lager products at youngsters who are easily manipulated into drinking lager – however, they do not need to influence all youngsters; if the adverts impact a majority of youngsters, then peer pressure results in increased levels of drinking lager. Overall, advertising is an extremely powerful tool for alcoholic companies.



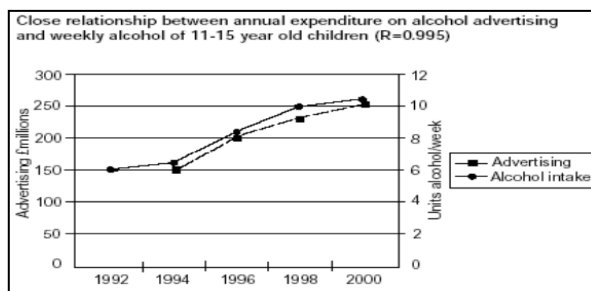
**HANDWRITTEN EXPERIMENTS**

## Evaluation of Alcohol Advertising

Obviously, some advertising surrounding alcohol can be viewed as a positive method in helping to discourage excessive drinking and limit child exposure to alcohol. In 2006 the Government began a £4 million campaign in which very strong and dramatic adverts (see right) showing the dangers people face from drinking to excess. This campaign entitled “Alcohol: Know Your Limits”<sup>34</sup> warned people that alcohol makes you feel invincible when you are most vulnerable. In an interview, public health minister Caroline Flint stated: ‘*We are not trying to demonise alcohol or to stop people enjoying themselves... This is about encouraging young people to still have a good time but to know their limits and to take responsibility for how much they drink.*’<sup>35</sup> It is advertising campaigns such as these which should be witnessed more during television programmes; but also during television programmes which are aimed at youngsters. During my experiment there were five adverts promoting the sale of alcohol without outlining its risks but there were no adverts from this 2006 campaign discouraging excessive drinking at all.



The fact that alcohol advertising campaigns are so directly influencing on alcohol consumption



(especially among youngsters as shown in the graph left<sup>36</sup>) means that reducing the level of advertising, or even banning alcohol advertisements completely, could reduce the consumption levels of alcohol and therefore reduce the negative health-related issues that are associated with excessive drinking. The UK government can employ many different policies regarding age restrictions and licensing hours

(etc.) but reducing alcohol advertising is clearly an important factor that needs to be considered; they were able to ban advertising on tobacco so they certainly have the powers to ban alcohol advertisements.

Sweden is a country with very low alcohol related issues; this is mainly because they employ such a strict policy with high excise duty taxes on alcohol and one of the highest VAT rates in Europe they seem to be able to limit problems associated with alcohol whilst maintaining a healthy economy and being one of the ‘happiest’ countries in the World.<sup>37</sup> Considered the best example of a welfare state, because of high taxes Sweden provides the most health and education provisions of any country and mostly free public service. In Sweden, as of 2003, under Swedish Alcohol law, advertising of spirits, wine and beer above 2.25%abv is prohibited except at the point of sale and in trade journals; foreign magazines are also allowed to carry alcohol advertisements.<sup>38</sup> This means that there are virtually no advertisements for alcohol anywhere in Sweden from television to newspapers and the level of harmful problems arising from alcohol is one of the lowest in Europe. Overall, Sweden is a great example of how a general ban on almost all alcohol advertisements is extremely effective and beneficial, which is why such a strategy should be employed in the UK.

<sup>34</sup> BBC News Article – TV Ad aims to stop young drinkers (October 2006)

<sup>35</sup> 2006 Interview by BBC with Caroline Flint (Public Health Minister)

<sup>36</sup> Calling Time: The Nations’s drinking as a major health issue. A report from the Academy of Medical Sciences, March 200

<sup>37</sup> Ruut Vennhoven - *World Database of Happiness* (2010)

<sup>38</sup> Principal Source: Drinks Advertising in the European Union, Just-Drinks.com February 2004

## Section Five – Licensing Hours

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The Licensing Act (2003) was introduced after receiving royal assent in July 2003. The act was designed to help combat alcohol related crime and disorder; to replace what was often referred to as an extremely bureaucratic licensing system; and encourage more freedom for licensees. Despite the concern surrounding binge drinking in the UK, the Act eventually came into force on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2005; predictions of 24-hour drinking and rising alcohol abuse dominated the media throughout the transitional period. The Licensing Act covered an assortment of activities including the sale of alcohol, provision of entertainment and the provision of refreshment between 11pm and 5am. The four official objectives of said act were:

- To prevent crime and disorder.
- To ensure public safety.
- To protect children from harm.
- To prevent public nuisance.

In July 2003, just after the Act had received Royal Assent, the Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) released a statement highlighting the key features of the new regime; these included:

- Flexible opening hours
- Tough measures to tackle alcohol-related crime and disorder.
- A greater say for the public.
- Strengthened protection for children
- Less red tape<sup>39</sup>

### Dispersal

According to advocates, the Act would have two major consequences. Firstly, the traditional ‘drinking up’ time would be replaced with a much more leisurely approach to alcohol consumption. This would, in theory, lead to a more mature approach to drinking. Secondly, without the rush to consume before closing time, patrons would be free to vacate a premise at their will, leading to much less pressure on existing transport infrastructure, and police resources. Research studies had demonstrated that the majority of late-night violence occurs at taxi queues and late-night food venues. Staggered hours would subsequently result in less late-night violence, due to more of a trickle than mass exodus for food and transport.

#### *Case Study of Dispersal within Chelmsford*

The majority of licensed premises in Chelmsford’s town centre are located away from residential properties, with the exception of a small grouping in the Moulsham Road. Prior to November 2005 pubs had a terminal hour of 11pm and the clubs 2pm. After the Act, although many premises applied for late hours up until 2am or 3am seven days a week, it was established at licensing subcommittee hearings that it was not the intention of local managers to open for those hours and the applications were submitted at the behest of their head offices. In practice, most premises close at either 11pm or 3am at the weekend – this is when most youngsters appear to spend time drinking in Chelmsford. If trade is particularly quiet, clubs will close earlier than 3am; there is a drinking circuit and

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<sup>39</sup> DCMS, (2003) ‘Major Reform Of The Licensing Laws Completed’

customers migrate from pubs and bars to clubs, especially as some clubs will not admit customers after a certain time. Taxis seem to provide the major mode of transport late at night as there are insufficient customers to make late night bus services a viable commercial proposition. There are some problems still with concentrations of people gathering in taxi ranks and these require extra policing.

*We still get it in the kebab shop and occasionally at the taxi ranks. Mind you our kebab shops and taxi ranks are on top of each other. They're areas we still cover. We get a fight there if we're away doing something else [or] if we have to go to another area to deal with a job. On the whole we've got marked units outside the taxi ranks.<sup>40</sup>*

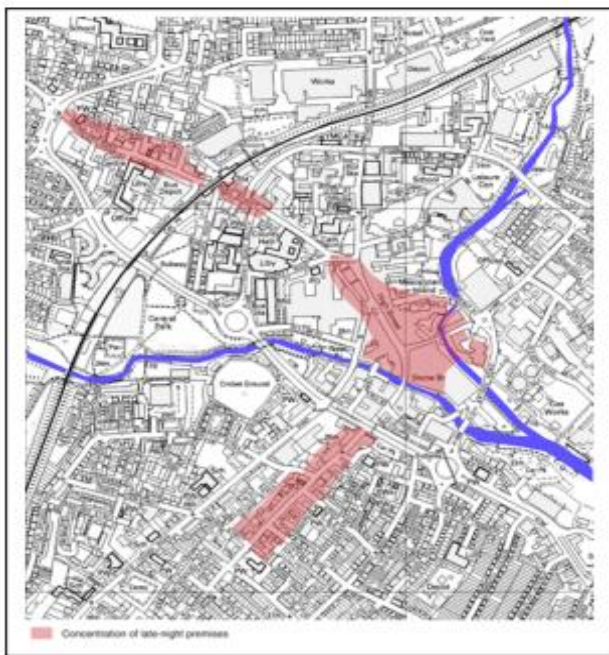
- Police Officer

The Licensing Act has had little impact on dispersal from Chelmsford town centre, apart from making weekend final dispersal times later. Clubs and similar venues can close earlier than their advertised times during quiet periods which does not help the police who have to organise their shifts around the latest terminal hour.

*As far as policing is done [all it's achieved] is shift it from 2 o'clock to 3 o'clock or half past where they finish now. The other thing that's a headache for regional commanders, in the old Act, Special Hours*

*Certificate granted, had to open till 2 o'clock and didn't have a choice. New legalisation – close when you like. At some stage overheads is higher than profits, so they close. We pay for policing until half past three; one o'clock town is dead, they're all shut up.<sup>41</sup>*

- Police Licensing Officer



Map of Chelmsford

© Crown Copyright/database right 2007. An Ordnance Survey/EDINA supplied service

<sup>40</sup> University of Westminster Report - Expecting 'Great Things'? The Impact of the Licensing Act 2003 on Democratic Involvement, Dispersal and Drinking Cultures.

<sup>41</sup> University of Westminster Report - Expecting 'Great Things'? The Impact of the Licensing Act 2003 on Democratic Involvement, Dispersal and Drinking Cultures.

## Evaluation of Licensing Hours

The aims of the licensing Act were to tackle crime, disorder and excessive alcohol consumption – three attributes closely associated to drinking amongst youngsters. Whilst, to an extremely small extent the problems associated with young drinkers have been limited because of the Licensing Act, dispersal is still causing problems in many ways. The main issue is the ‘drinking circuit’ which many youngsters seem to take where after moving from pubs and bars to nightclubs, they then move onto food houses and car parks or transport home where pedestrian accidents are extremely prone to occurring. All of the problems associated with this become critical where residents are adjacent to or nearby licensed premises who, even by staggering closing hours, are unable to limit the trouble caused when youngsters take to the streets; these issues are neither likely to dissipate because there is pressure on local authorities to introduce more residential uses into urban areas.

One aim of the Licensing Act was to achieve a European style ‘Café Culture’ of drinking within Britain, however, there is little evidence to show that this has been achieved and greater evidence from this project to suggest that drinking among youngsters – especially binge drinking – has increased. Although the smoking ban has helped to create ‘family friendly’ venues, there is nothing particularly ‘family friendly’ about the experiences of towns across the country on popular drinking nights such as Friday and Saturday. Moreover, there is no reason to think that town centres will not continue to be dominated by late night youthful drinkers. Making pleasant town centres that are family friendly and attractive to all ages and classes for a period that extends beyond 5pm in the evening requires a far more radical approach than simply changing one regulatory system. A realistic approach to planning and licensing needs to be adopted that recognises the divisions between youth oriented late night venues and those that are more truly representative of a more relaxed style of consumption.

Given the lack of cultural change, patterns of drinking and dispersal have to be addressed and it has demonstrated that changes solely to the licensing system have not achieved this. The revised Guidance issued in June 2007 stresses the need for integration between the different strands of management of the night-time economy. This report has provided evidence to suggest that such good practices can ease problems associated with dispersal, but not remove them entirely. Where there has been significant tension between organised residents’ groups and the licensed trade, the Act has only helped to provide a forum for negotiations.

The case study of Chelmsford on the previous page is fairly limited in scope; the variations between different authorities and areas imply the need for further detailed investigation of local circumstances and practices. It is to be hoped that the Home Office review of the impacts of the Act will be able to produce findings that can assess and evaluate local differences.

In conclusion, this study has demonstrated that the Licensing Act has made some differences to dispersal, however, these were not the differences intended when licensing reform was first introduced, nor have the changes been experienced in a uniform fashion. Admittedly, dispersal of youngsters throughout the UK has improved with staggered closing hours, however, this has affected policing massively and still does not control the problem of excessive drinking amongst youngsters. Overall, it would seem that licensing hour laws are not entirely affective in influencing young drinkers at all.

## Section Six – Public Drinking

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There is a distinct contrast between the laws surrounding drinking in public and the laws concerning public intoxication. Drinking in public is legal and widely practised in England – one may carry a drink from a public house down the street and you are also allowed to purchase alcohol at an off-licence and immediately begin drinking it outside. Similarly, you are allowed to drink on aeroplanes and on National Rail trains, either purchasing alcohol or consuming your own.

In certain public areas however, you may be required to stop drinking; although it is not illegal to drink in these areas contrary to popular misconception. However, if you are in these areas and are requested to stop, you must discontinue drinking and surrender your alcohol to the police.<sup>42</sup> These areas are formally known as Designated Public Places Orders (DPPO's) and were allowed by *The Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001*; they are more commonly known, however, as 'Controlled Drinking Zones' (CDZ's).<sup>43</sup>

However, there are a number of offences dealing with intoxication in public places within the UK; in a public place it is an offence to be:

- Drunk<sup>44</sup>
- Drunk and disorderly<sup>45</sup>

It is also considered an offence to be drunk:

- While boarding or while on board an aircraft<sup>46</sup>
- While in charge of a child under 7 years old<sup>47</sup>
- While travelling to a 'designated sporting event' on public transport or a vehicle with eight seats or more<sup>48</sup>
- While in, or attempting to enter, a 'designated sporting ground' during a designated sporting event<sup>49</sup>

Usually the police will help the intoxicated person on their way or place them in a police station until they sober up; once fit to be dealt with they will normally be either cautioned, fined or bailed to appear in a local court and be further fined depending on the circumstances. There are also more specific offences concerning intoxication such as driving a motor vehicle while drunk or over the official limit and riding a bicycle while under the influence of alcohol. As far as youngsters are concerned, the police have the power to confiscate any alcohol which is being consumed in public by those under 18 although not the obligation to; local authorities also have the power to prohibit alcohol consumption in certain areas.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> "Councils may use bye-laws for 'no alcohol zones' – Alcohol Policy UK October 2009

<sup>43</sup> "Councils may use bye-laws for 'no alcohol zones' – Alcohol Policy UK October 2009

<sup>44</sup> Section 12 – Licensing Act 1872 ([www.statutelaw.gov.uk](http://www.statutelaw.gov.uk))

<sup>45</sup> Section 91 – Criminal Justice Act 1967 ([www.statutelaw.gov.uk](http://www.statutelaw.gov.uk))

<sup>46</sup> Section 139 – Air Navigation Order 2009 ([www.statutelaw.gov.uk](http://www.statutelaw.gov.uk))

<sup>47</sup> Section 2 – Licensing Act 1902 ([www.statutelaw.gov.uk](http://www.statutelaw.gov.uk))

<sup>48</sup> Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol etc.) Act 1985

<sup>49</sup> Sporting Events (control of Alcohol etc.) Act 1985

<sup>50</sup> Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001 ss.12-16 ([www.statutelaw.gov.uk](http://www.statutelaw.gov.uk))



# SURVEY

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# Survey Plan

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The aim of my survey is to draw further conclusions from my question below, whilst taking into account the research and analysis composed throughout my project:

*‘How successful are the UK’s Alcohol Control Policies in Influencing Young Drinkers?’*

It is important to draw further conclusions of the effectiveness of the six types of policies researched in my project:

- Age Restrictions on Alcohol
- Alcohol Taxes
- Education
- Advertising
- Licensing Hours
- Public Drinking

As my project looks at young drinkers I plan to survey 30 people aged between 15 and 24 aiming to get a mix of age groups; the mode of data collection will be in person. I will carry out my questionnaire with a random sample of people but obviously only those aged between 15 and 24. Typically, there will be one main question for each of my six questions taking this form:



3) To what extent do age restrictions on alcohol influence your drinking habits?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
No Influence	V. Weak Influence	Weak Influence	Medium Influence	Strong Influence	V.Strong Influence	Completely Influences
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I will also include some similar questions relating to other topics which I have found to influence young drinkers – most notably the influence of parents – the page opposite shows the notes I made as I went through my project concerning some possible survey questions and I will also incorporate these into my actual survey.

I am choosing to include mostly closed-type questions in my questionnaire and on a ‘scale-type’ so as to make analysing the data easier and to avoid obscure answers. For most questions with scales, the scale will range from 1-7(as shown above); I have chosen a scale greater than 1-5 to increase the precision of the data I will be collection. I will also carry out a trial run of my questionnaire to help outline any flaws in the questions.

Before getting people to fill out a questionnaire I will ask them if they have ever drunk alcohol before and obviously only continue the survey if they have tried alcohol at least once before.

# Analysis and Evaluations of Completed Survey

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# Survey Data Collection and Analysis

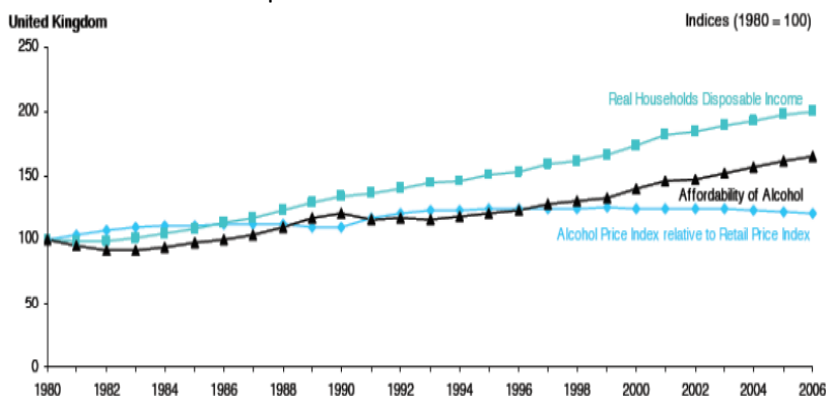
<b>To what extent do age restrictions on alcohol influence your drinking habits?</b>		
	<b>Ages 18 and over</b>	<b>Under 18s</b>
No Influence	19	1
V. Weak Influence	0	4
Weak Influence	0	2
Medium Influence	0	4
Strong Influence	0	0
V. Strong Influence	0	0
Completely Influences	0	0
<b>How easy is it to obtain alcohol if you are underage?</b>		
No Problem	6	3
Very Easy	10	3
Fairly Easy	3	2
Medium	0	3
Fairly Difficult	0	0
Very Difficult	0	0
Impossible	0	0

These two tables show the attitudes towards age restrictions on alcohol within the UK; clearly the top table shows that there is little influence on age restrictions towards young drinkers. Obviously, those who were of the legal age to drink were not influenced by such laws but those who were under-18 did not seem to be heavily influenced with no one in the survey feeling anything more than a 'medium influence' towards the restrictions. Similarly, the views on the obtain ability of alcohol for those underage clearly showed that the age restrictions placed upon alcohol are nowhere near strict enough, with only 10% of the youngsters in my survey showing any signs of believing there is difficulty for acquiring alcohol underage. There is also a general trend that those who are over the legal age to drink in the UK seem to believe it is easy for youngsters to get hold of alcohol – with over half of people surveyed aged 18 and over feeling that it is 'very easy' for youngsters to obtain alcohol if they are underage.

Overall, there is a general consensus that it is incredibly easy for youngsters to obtain alcohol even if they are underage – although schemes like the 'Challenge 21' scheme do show signs of success, it is very difficult for authorities to stop older friends or relatives buying alcohol for Under-18s. Moreover, age restrictions do not entirely solve the problem of youngsters drinking excessively and further results from my survey seem to show that it is those aged between 18 and 24 who seem to exploit the use of the substance anyway. Nevertheless, overall, it seems that youngsters will always find a way around age restriction policies on alcohol and it is this particular age group (16-24) which, statistics show, seem to abuse alcohol the most.

<b>To what extent does the pricing of alcohol influence your drinking habits?</b>		
	Ages 18 and over	Under 18s
No Influence	1	1
V. Weak Influence	5	2
Weak Influence	4	1
Medium Influence	8	5
Strong Influence	1	2
V. Strong Influence	0	0
Completely Influences	0	0
<b>To what extent do you consider the price of alcohol to be expensive within the UK?</b>		
Very Cheap	0	0
Quite Inexpensive	3	0
The price it should be	4	3
Quite expensive	10	6
Very Expensive	2	1
Heavily Over-Priced	0	1
Unaffordable	0	0

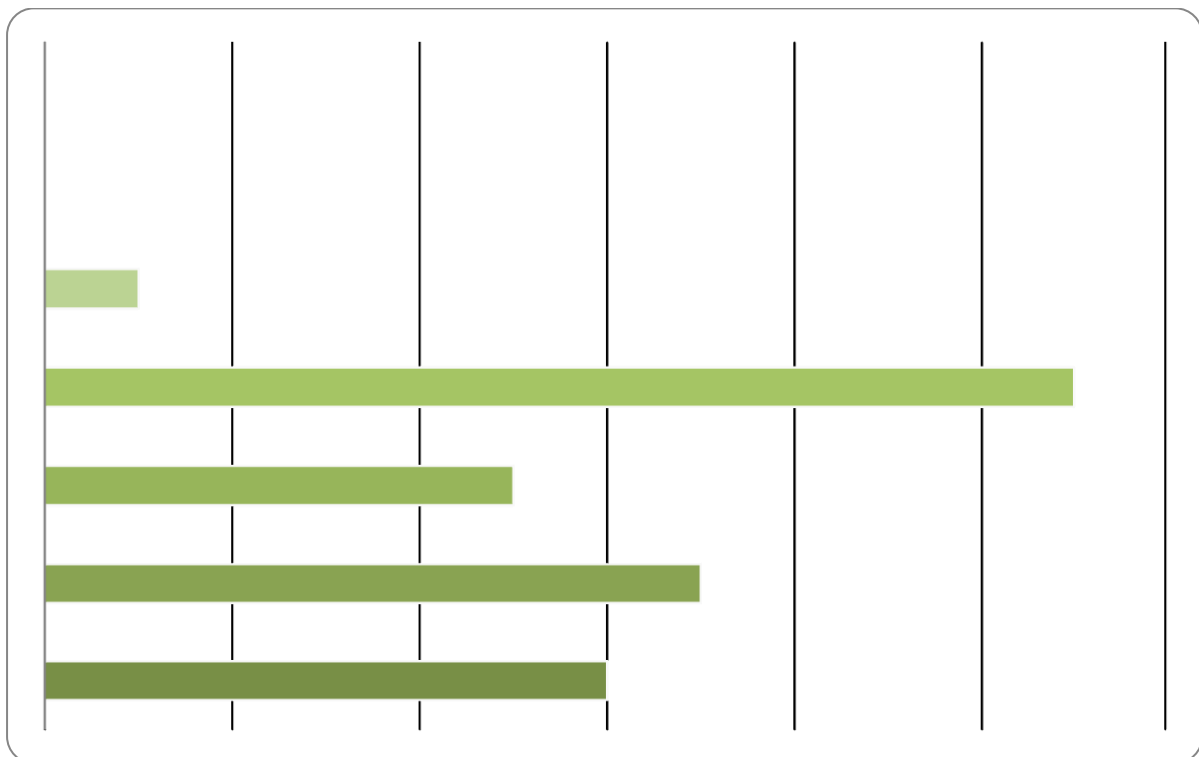
The tables above clearly back up the information in the graph<sup>51</sup> seen below (which was explained in the second section of this project). The main things to notice from this graph are that as the price of alcohol only steadily increases due to high taxes, real household disposable income also rises meaning that alcohol has become more affordable. The first table questioning the influence the pricing of alcohol has on drinking habits shows that only 10% of the people surveyed felt a strong influence from alcohol pricing on their drinking patterns – even though over half of the people surveyed found alcohol to be ‘quite expensive’. This shows many people considered alcohol to be affordable, but only because of high disposable income levels; compared with other countries in Europe, the UK has some of the highest alcohol taxes which explains why many consider the price of alcohol to be rather expensive within the UK.



By separating results between Under-18s and Over-18s we can see that those who are not of the legal age to drink are more influenced by the cost of alcohol with the data being positively skewed towards a stronger influence of alcohol pricing. Generally, in comparison with Over-18s, younger drinkers seem to feel that alcohol is overpriced and this is probably because they have much lower levels of disposable income to spend on alcohol so for them it is less affordable than it is for those who are of the legal age to drink as they probably have a higher level of income. In this sense, alcohol taxing is quite successful in restricting young drinkers; however, no one found alcohol to be unaffordable.

<sup>51</sup> Source: Focus on Consumer Price Indices, Office for National Statistics & Economic Trends, ONS, 2007

The bar chart below shows the attitude towards alcohol education and represents the answers to question five on the survey: 'To what extent does education on alcohol (if any at all) influence your drinking habits?'



This graph seems to determine that education on alcohol is not entirely effective – although around 30% felt a 'medium influence' from it towards their drinking habits the rest did not seem too heavily affected by alcohol education with only one person out of the thirty people surveyed feeling a strong influence by alcohol education.

However, in evaluating this we must consider the fact that there are significant time lags involved with the new UK school's curriculum which now includes alcohol education; it would only be fair to assess how effective education on alcohol is if we wait for another five years when the effects of this new scheme have filtered through to youngsters. Moreover, we must assess the influence that parents have on their children drinking as studies outlined in section three of this project show that many children seek education on alcohol from their parents.

An interesting finding from my survey was discovered from the results of question 14; only 11 people were not aware of the 'Units System' concerning the amount of alcohol in certain drinks, whilst the other 19 said that they were aware of such a system. This contradicts the idea from the table above in that the UK is not well educated on alcohol; almost two thirds of the people surveyed were in some way aware of Alcoholic Units.

However, we must consider the fact that this is a very closed question with only two choices; many people being surveyed may have heard of the 'Units System' but not actually know what it means or fully understand it and thus education on alcohol is not entirely effective. On the other hand, these findings may show that people are well educated and fully aware of the dangers of excessive drinking but do so anyway. Full evaluation of this section must be completed, however, when the effects of the new national curriculum have seeped through into youngsters.



## Parental Influences

How much influence do your parents have on when and where you are allowed to drink?		
	Ages 18 and over	Under 18s
No Influence	14	1
V. Weak Influence	5	4
Weak Influence	0	2
Medium Influence	0	1
Strong Influence	0	3
V. Strong Influence	0	0
Completely Influences	0	0
How much influence do your parents have on how much alcohol you drink?		
No Influence	15	1
V. Weak Influence	4	5
Weak Influence	0	1
Medium Influence	0	2
Strong Influence	0	2
V. Strong Influence	0	0
Completely Influences	0	0

The above tables show the results from questions 10 and 11 of the survey. This contradicts with the ideas suggested on pages 8 and 9 of this investigation (Section 3 – Education: ‘How effective is alcohol in determining the decisions young people make and how much influence do parents have?’) in that it is thought, as outlined by the NHS Information Centre, that parents have quite a significant influence on youngsters drinking habits. There was barely any influence by parents from those aged 18 and over and minimal influence from youngsters who were under 18.

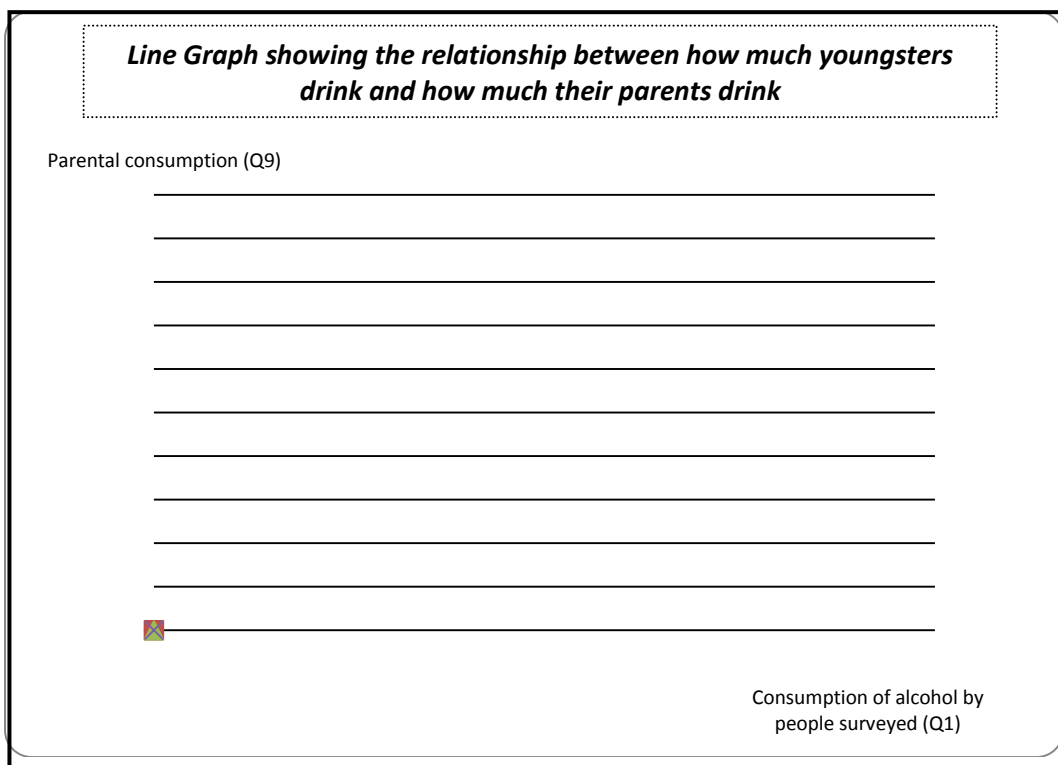
However, one of the reasons for this could be that although youngsters go to their parents for education on alcohol, they may not always be influenced by the decisions that their parents make. Furthermore, parents may feel that those aged over 16 are perfectly mature enough to drink alcohol and probably, therefore, do not see the need to persuade and influence their children on the dangers of drinking. Moreover, these results do seem to show signs that parental influence has a slight dominance over alcohol education in influencing young drinkers; this follows the view that youngsters are more likely to go to their parents on advice about alcohol, rather than seek professional educational services.

> Once a week	2	3	4	4	6	-	-	-	-	-
1-2 days a week	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	6
3-4 days a week	5	5	5	5	6	6	6	6	6	7
5-6 days a week	2	6	6	7	7	-	-	-	-	-
Everyday	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

The table above shows the relationship between how much youngsters drink and how much they consider their parents to drink. By separating the data into the categories of question 1 (categories in the left column) I then placed the numbers that the people in this category gave for question 9: ‘In

your opinion, how much alcohol do your parents drink?' 1 represented the lowest value being 'They don't drink' and 7 was the highest value with 'They are almost always drinking.' The diagram above seems to show those who drink more alcohol per week, seem to have parents who are also quite heavy drinkers.

The line graph below shows this pattern much more clearly; the x-axis represents question one i.e. the categories people were placed into as determined by their answer to question one. The point between 0 and 1 represents those who drank alcohol less than once a week, whilst the points between 1 and 2, 3 and 4 etc represent the number of days that the people surveyed consume alcohol. The y-axis, shows the averages, of the answers given to question 9; for example, those who drank alcohol 1-2 days a week were asked how much they thought their parents drink and this was measured on a scale of 1 to 7. The data from this scale was then averaged to give 4.6, I excluded an anomalous variable from the category '5-6 days a week' as this variable led the average to be smaller than the previous average which distorted the line graph.

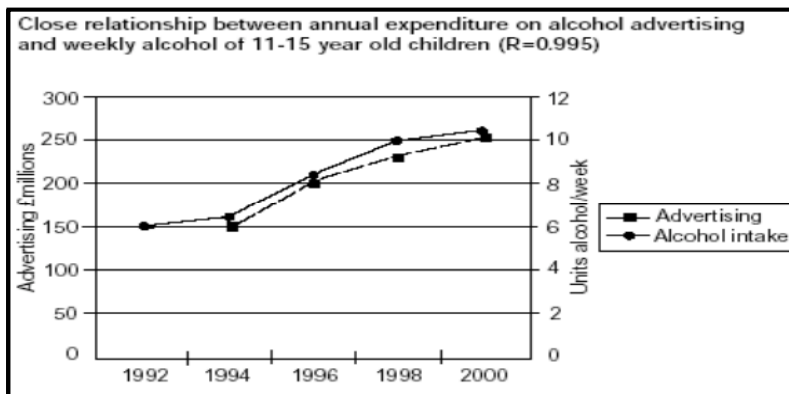


The graph shows that those who drink quite frequently per week, tended to also have parents who they believed drank frequently as well; most of the people surveyed who were found to drink around 5-6 times a week, felt that their parents were excessive drinkers and almost always drinking. Those who drank less than twice a week seemed to feel that their parents tend to 'drink normally' or only 'drink occasionally.' This was perhaps one of the most interesting findings from the survey as it was not an entirely noticeable pattern on the surface. This clearly demonstrates the influence parents have on their children's drinking patterns even if it is not a direct educational influence. In this sense, social services who remove children from high alcohol driven households are actually providing a very successful service in withdrawing negative alcoholic parental influence. Overall, from this project investigation, it seems that parents have a greater influence on youngsters' drinking habits than any UK Government policy.

## Advertising Influences

Question 6: To what extent do you feel alcohol advertising influences your drinking habits?

The pie chart above shows the feelings, by the people surveyed, towards alcohol advertising within the UK. There is clearly a mixed opinion, but generally, there are a limited number of people who seem to think that alcohol advertising has a significant influence on their drinking habits – with only one person stating they felt a ‘V. Strong Influence’ from alcohol advertising. This clearly shows that advertising is successful in making people believe that adverts have no influence on them whatsoever when there is in fact a significant amount of evidence (shown in the graph below and explained in Section Four of this project) showing that alcohol advertising is perhaps the most influential aspect of the six that have been assessed in this project.

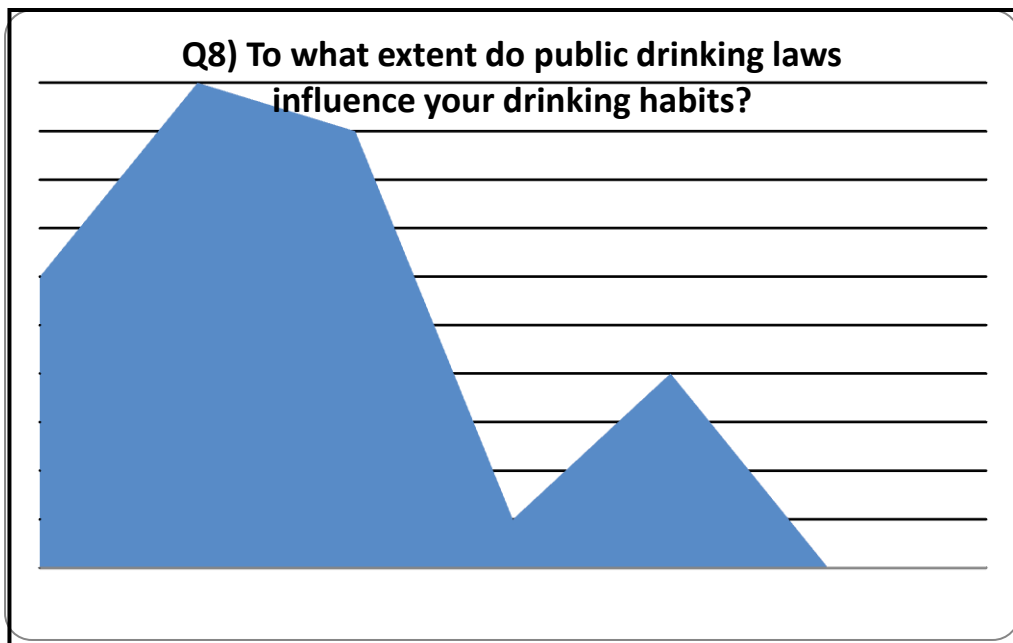
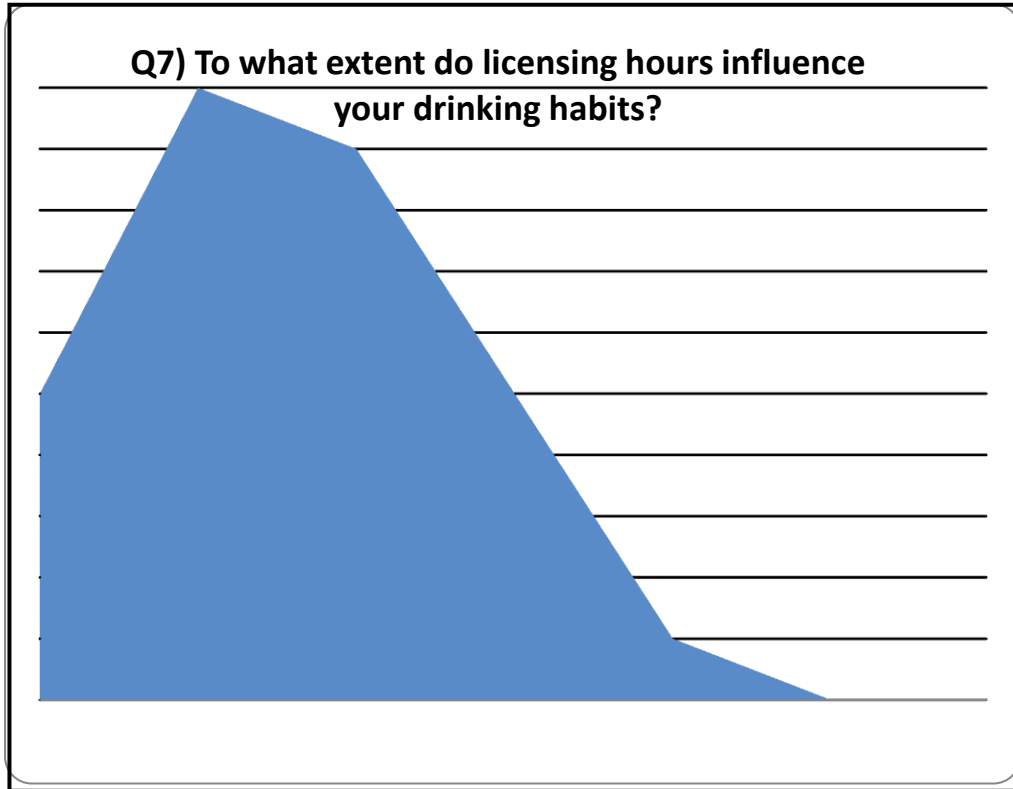


Overall, advertising is an extremely powerful tool for alcohol companies. The graph opposite which was explained in section two shows very clearly how increases in alcohol advertising can lead to significant increases of alcohol consumption amongst youngsters even though (as shown in the pie chart of my survey) these youngsters do not

realise the effect that advertising has. In general, advertising is one of the most key aspects of influencing young drinkers and measures must be taken to restrict alcohol advertising even further.

## Influences of Licensing Hour and Public Drinking Laws

By collecting the data and placing it into a table it was possible to create the following two graphs showing the influences of licensing hours and public drinking laws on the youngsters surveyed.



Although the second graph seems to be quite volatile, in both cases the highest proportion of people surveyed have chosen an option between ‘no influence’ and ‘weak influence’. These two graphs clearly show that the general consensus is that both alcohol control policies are rather ineffective in influencing young drinkers and this idea is backed up strongly by the evidence shown in sections five and six of this project investigation.

**OVERALL CONCLUSIONS AND  
EVALUATIONS CONCERNING:  
‘HOW SUCCESSFUL THE UK’S  
ECONOMIC ALCOHOL CONTROL  
POLICIES ARE IN INFLUENCING YOUNG  
DRINKERS’**

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# Overall Conclusions

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On the surface, the UK's alcohol control policies seem wholly ineffective in influencing young drinkers. However, there are signs that some policies show of being quite successful and there are many schemes in place that, given time, can be very effective. Schemes coming into place to help further limit underage drinking could show signs of success if they were used more vigilantly and on a broader scale; the 'tagging' scheme in Scotland mentioned on page 4 could help to solve the most problematic cause of underage drinking of people buying youngsters drink on their behalf. However, this does have serious time lag issues involved and is not very effective in the short run.

Furthermore, the 'Challenge 21' scheme does seem to show some signs of success in that around 90% of 18-24 year olds are aware of the scheme;<sup>52</sup> however, many places that adopt this scheme simply choose to not verify customer identification in an effort to boost profits whilst neglecting the law. In general, it is very easy for young people to acquire alcohol under the age of 18 in the UK and it is this specific age group of young drinkers which abuse this loophole the most.

Secondly, although many people feel that alcohol tends to be over-priced within the UK (and indeed it is as shown in the table on page 5), high alcohol taxes often prove ineffective in influencing people significantly. This is because, as has often been pointed out, the level of real household disposable income is constantly rising in the UK whilst the taxing of alcohol has maintained at a constant, albeit high, level. This means the affordability of alcohol has actually increased (see page 6) and for many youngsters, high alcohol pricing is what they are used to so are therefore less likely to be influenced by high alcohol taxes. On the other hand, as found in the project survey, alcohol taxes could be deemed reasonably successful in influencing young drinkers specifically. The results of the survey on page 33 showed that those aged under-18 considered alcohol to be, on average, more expensive than what was thought by those aged over 18. This is most likely due to the fact that people aged between 18 and 24 have higher levels of disposable income so do not consider high alcohol taxes to be such a significant issue; whereas those aged under-18 who were more likely to have low levels of disposable income were probably influenced by alcohol taxing to a greater extent. Although this shows that alcohol taxing could be deemed reasonably successful, evidence shows that youngsters are still not influenced by high alcohol prices to a large enough extent. This could be because of an issue of British culture; the UK has some of the largest alcohol related problems in Europe even though it has some of the highest alcohol taxes – maybe the problem of youngsters drinking excessively is unsolvable through alcohol taxes?

As far as educational policies are concerned, even though the recent changes to the National Curriculum to include alcohol education for ages 5 to 16 seem, on the surface, to be quite effective, it is difficult to tell how successful such a programme will prove to be considering the time lags involved. However, from the NHS Information Centre's report – *Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use Among Young People in England* – it is clear to see that parents have a direct and significant influence on their children's attitudes towards alcohol (see pages 8 and 9). Additionally, the survey results do seem to show signs that parental influence has a slight dominance over alcohol education in influencing young drinkers; thus following the view that youngsters are more likely to go to their parents on advice about alcohol, rather than seek professional educational services.

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<sup>52</sup> BBPA Website – [www.beerandpub.com](http://www.beerandpub.com)



Moreover, there is also significant evidence to suggest that adults and parents themselves are not satisfactorily educated on the dangers of alcohol and therefore cannot always provide their children with correct or useful information and advice concerning alcohol. Once the effects of the Alcohol Education Schools Programme can be fully analysed in a few years, the Government should then decide whether to look at educating adults on the dangers of alcohol. Nonetheless, the detailed alcohol programme in the current National Curriculum should most certainly remain as an important foundation for educating youngsters about the dangers of alcohol and hopefully this will prove to be a successful policy employed by the Government.

Generally, this project established the idea that alcohol advertising is one of the most powerful tools employed by companies to boost their sales. Evidence shows that increasing advertising campaigns on alcohol is directly linked to alcohol consumption – especially among youngsters (see page 18). The main reason that so many youngsters drink lager these days is because companies want them drinking this specific type of beer because lager is easier to store than bitter and so easier to increase revenue figures. Companies want to maximise their profits so aim lager products at youngsters who are easily manipulated into drinking lager and are the highest age group of alcohol consumers – however, they do not need to influence all youngsters; if the adverts impact only a minority of youngsters, then peer pressure helps in increasing levels of drinking lager. The UK government can employ many different policies regarding age restrictions and licensing hours (etc.) but reducing alcohol advertising is clearly one of the more important factors that needs to be considered; they were able to ban advertising on tobacco so they certainly have the powers to ban alcohol advertisements.

As far as licensing hours are concerned, a case study on Chelmsford regarding ‘late-night’ drinking demonstrated that the Licensing Act has made some differences to the dispersal of youths, however, these were not the differences intended when licensing reform was first introduced, nor have the changes been experienced in a uniform fashion. Admittedly, dispersal of youngsters throughout the UK has improved with staggered closing hours; however, this has affected policing massively and still does not control the problem of excessive drinking amongst youngsters – proving that UK licensing hour policies are rather ineffective in influencing young drinkers. In general, there was little to be said for public drinking laws, which only really holds a very small proportion of the problem of excessive drinking within the UK.

Overall, it would seem that of the six main policies I have assessed, none are entirely effective in influencing young drinkers; although some policies such as education and taxing do show some signs of success, evaluation of the main problems the UK faces will show that there are measures which can, and *should*, be taken to help influence youngsters regarding the dangers of alcohol abuse.

# Evaluation

<b>MAIN PROBLEMS</b>	<b>POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS?</b>
<p>Schemes such as the 'Challenge 21' scheme, which aim to restrict the ability for youngsters to obtain alcohol underage are highly ineffective. Usually, it is adults who buy alcohol for children on their behalf even though this is illegal.</p>	<p>This is a problem which is almost unsolvable and nearly all solutions have minor technicalities. The 'tagging' scheme mentioned on page 4 could help to limit this kind of occurrence, however there are very obvious loopholes that have been outlined with this scheme already. One rather extreme solution to this problem, which would be quite effective in the short and long run, would be to increase the punishments involved in buying alcohol and giving it to minors. Adults would be less likely to take the risk of buying alcohol for their children if it could involve them going to prison. However, the obvious problems with this are that it could lead to higher levels of crime with youngsters shoplifting alcohol if the consequences of this are not as great as getting an adult to purchase alcohol. Similarly, there are many excuses adults could create for why their child came into possession of alcohol. This problem is quite a difficult one to solve; nevertheless, the policies that are currently in place are proving to be rather ineffective.</p>
<p>Although there are some restrictions on alcohol advertising, the fact that increasing advertisement campaigns are directly related to the increasing consumption of alcohol (especially amongst youngsters) shows that alcohol advertisements are the most powerful tool in influencing youngsters to drink alcohol and, thus, the current restrictions on alcohol advertising are quite ineffective.</p>	<p>The UK government can employ many different policies regarding age restrictions and licensing hours (etc.) but reducing alcohol advertising is clearly an important factor that needs to be considered; they were able to ban advertising on tobacco so they certainly have the powers to ban alcohol advertisements. Effectively, a full ban on alcohol advertising would have a significant influence on the way in which youngsters drink. In Sweden, as of 2003, under Swedish Alcohol Law, advertising of any drinks above 2.25%abv is prohibited except at the point of sale (see page 18). Overall, Sweden is a great example of how a general ban on almost all alcohol advertisements is extremely effective and beneficial as Sweden has a very limited number of alcohol related problems (especially among youngsters), which is why such a</p>

	strategy should be used within the UK.
The alcoholic education additions to the UK Schools National Curriculum can only be seen to be effective when assessed in the long term and in the short term, the education on alcohol is limited and it is adults, not just youngsters who are not educated on alcohol well enough.	Seeing as parental influence is one of the key aspects of the drinking habits of youngsters, it is important to better educate adults into the dangers of alcohol. Sending information leaflets round to UK households would be a cost-effective method to help educate families on alcohol in the short term while we wait for the effects of the changes to the National Schools Curriculum.
Recent changes to licensing hours have made dispersal in towns improve but this has had a huge affect on policing costs and does not solve the problem of excessive drinking.	The main problem is that with staggered closing hours, the police have to stay out longer and often have periods where there is nothing to be done, even though they continue to be paid which has its effect on the economy. Obviously, staggered hours limit the trouble that occurs when all venues in a town close at the same time but it means the cost of policing is higher and it does not limit excessive drinking. One solution to this could be to continue with staggered hours, but instead of staggering closing time by hours at a time, have different venues close every 15 minutes or half an hour while the police disperse everyone off the streets. The problem of excessive drinking can only really be influenced by policies concerning education, advertising and taxation.
Although the UK has some of the highest taxes on alcohol in Europe, there are still major alcohol related problems as the affordability of alcohol has not increased at all due to rising disposable income.	Although youngsters (with low disposable income) find alcohol to be rather expensive, it does not influence their drinking habits to any significant extent. This could be due to the British Drinking Culture which differs from that of other European countries. The Government could increase alcohol tax even though it is already at such a high level, but this could be damaging to the economy because increasing taxation too drastically could result in a loss of government tax revenue – a theory developed in the Laffer Curve. Overall, it is very difficult to solve the problem of alcohol pricing within the UK.