

# Measuring alcohol-related harm to others

Julian Strizek  
Austrian Public Health Insitut  
Stubenring 6, 1010 Vienna  
Julian.strizek@goeg.at



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# Outline

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- » background
- » how is alcohol-related harm to others measured?
- » some results
- » critical reflection on the results

## Background: What is alcohol-related harm to others?

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- » Drinking often results in harm not only to the drinker, but also **to others around the drinker** (Room 2010)
  - » A **traffic crash** caused by a drinking driver may kill passengers, the other driver or pedestrians.
  - » An elderly couple walking home at night may be **threatened by drunken teenagers**.
  - » A sober **bystander** involved in a fight between drunken people
  - » **Family members** affected a drunken father.
  - » A small firm may be driven into **bankruptcy** by mistakes or misdeeds of drinking employees.
  - » A **pregnant woman** harming her baby by drinking alcohol during pregnancy

## Background: What is alcohol-related harm to others?

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- » Harm to others increases the **legitimacy to intervene** in someone's behaviour
- » “The maxims are, first, that the individual is **not accountable** to society for his actions, in so far as these concern the interests of **no person but himself**. (...) Secondly, that for such actions as are prejudicial to the **interests of others**, the individual is **accountable**, and may be subjected either to social or to legal punishments, if society is of opinion that the one or the other is requisite for its protection.” (Mill 1859)
- » Terminology: **passive drinking** (passive smoking) vs. harm **to** others vs. harm **from** others: taking the perspective of people other than the drinker as victims into account

## Background: What is alcohol-related harm to others?

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- » New and under-researched area, which is a **growing threat to the social fabric of society** and with high potential for alcohol policy
  - » alcohol harms **every level of society** directly or indirectly & is a ‚**blight**‘ on society (Wood et al. 2013)
  - » in many communities, homes and families, the drinking environment has become a **combat zone** (Babor, 2011)
  - » Terminology helps to **mobilize** popular support for **control policies** (e.g. binge drinking, passive smoking, passive drinking) (Barbor 2011)
  - » There’s a **need for quantification** of impacts, total impact of alcohol is underestimated (Casswell et al. 2010, Giesbrecht et al., 2010)
- » However, there’s no common metric and less standardized measures than for medical harm (e.g. DALYs, YLL)
- » Causation for social harm **more complex** than medical harm and more prone to social contexts (e.g. stronger in countries with „explosive“ drinking patterns) (Babor et al. 2003)
- » Limited data for alcohol attribution in non-medical **records** (e.g. police or ambulance records), **surveys** used instead

# RARHA: Measuring harm from others drinking

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- » **R**educing **A**lcohol **R**elated **H**arm **A**lliance (2014 – 2016)
- » Aim to **harmonize** survey instruments across Europe (Standardized European Alcohol Survey)
- » Three section on harm from others
  1. Harm from other's drinking during **childhood**
  2. Harm from heavy drinkers from your **close social network**
  3. **“environmental/community”** harm



# RARHA: Measuring harm from others drinking

## CH – Childhood

CH\_1. While you were a child or teenager had someone you lived with, problems due to alcohol?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No  → go to NEXT SECTION (HD)
- 9) No answer

If yes, was it:

	Yes	No	No answer
a) father (biological, adoptive father, foster father)	1	2	9
b) mother (biological, adoptive mother, foster mother)	1	2	9
c) father's new wife, girlfriend, partner	1	2	9
d) mother's new husband, boyfriend, partner	1	2	9
e) siblings	1	2	9
f) others in your household	1	2	9

CH\_2. How much were you negatively affected by these person/persons' drinking? Were you affected a lot or a little? *(Show card 8)*

- 1) Affected a lot
- 2) Neither a lot nor a little, but somehow in between
- 3) Affected a little
- 4) Not affected at all
- 9) No answer

# RARHA: Measuring harm from others drinking

## HD – Heavy drinkers in your life

HD\_1. Thinking about the past 12 months, do you know some people who you consider to be fairly heavy drinkers or someone who drinks a lot sometimes?

- 1) Yes → go to HD\_2a\_1.
- 2) No → go to the next section COM.
- 9) No answer

### HD\_2. Who were these people?

*(Show card 10)*  
If Yes  
How much these person's drinking affected you negatively in the past 12 months? Were you affected a lot or just a little or not affected at all?

HD_2a_1. Household member	1) Yes → go to HD_2a_2. 2) No → go to HD_2b_1. 9) No answer	HD_2a_2. 1) Affected a lot 2) Affected a little 3) Not affected at all	9) No answer
HD_2b_1. Family member not in household	1) Yes → go to HD_2b_2. 2) No → go to HD_2c_1. 9) No answer	HD_2b_2. 1) Affected a lot 2) Affected a little 3) Not affected at all	9) No answer
HD_2c_1. Co-worker	1) Yes → go to HD_2c_2. 2) No → go to HD_2d_1. 9) No answer	HD_2c_2. 1) Affected a lot 2) Affected a little 3) Not affected at all	9) No answer
HD_2d_1. Friend	1) Yes → go to HD_2d_2. 2) No → go to HD_2e_1. 9) No answer	HD_2d_2. 1) Affected a lot 2) Affected a little 3) Not affected at all	9) No answer
HD_2e_1. Neighbour	1) Yes → go to HD_2e_2. 2) No → go to HD_2f_1. 9) No answer	HD_2e_2. 1) Affected a lot 2) Affected a little 3) Not affected at all	9) No answer
HD_2f_1. Others known to you, please specify .....	1) Yes → go to HD_2f_2. 2) No → go to COM. 9) No answer	HD_2f_2. 1) Affected a lot 2) Affected a little 3) Not affected at all	9) No answer

## COM – Impact of others drinking

Now let me ask you some questions about various problems that can occur because of someone else drinking. I will ask you about several problems that could affect you. In the past 12 months . . . .

(Show card 11)

(Show card 12)

	A. Select	B. Who was this person? You can tick one or more	C. Were you affected a lot or just a little?
COM_1. Because of someone else's drinking, have you been kept awake at night?	1) No → go to COM_2 2) 1-2 times 3) 3 or more times 9) No answer	1) Your household member 2) Others, known to you 3) Stranger 9) No answer	1) a lot 2) somehow in between 3) a little 9) No answer
COM_2. Because of someone else's drinking, have you been verbally abused i.e. called names or otherwise insulted?	1) No → go to COM_3 2) 1-2 times 3) 3 or more times 9) No answer	1) Your household member 2) Others, known to you 3) Stranger 9) No answer	1) a lot 2) somehow in between 3) a little 9) No answer
COM_3. Because of someone else's drinking, have you been harmed physically?	1) No → go to COM_4 2) 1-2 times 3) 3 or more times 9) No answer	1) Your household member 2) Others, known to you 3) Stranger 9) No answer	1) a lot 2) somehow in between 3) a little 9) No answer
COM_4. Because of someone else's drinking, have you been involved in a serious argument?	1) No → go to COM_5 2) 1-2 times 3) 3 or more times 9) No answer	1) Your household member 2) Others, known to you 3) Stranger 9) No answer	1) a lot 2) somehow in between 3) a little 9) No answer
COM_5. Have you been a passenger with a driver who had had too much to drink?	1) No → go to COM_6 2) 1-2 times 3) 3 or more times 9) No answer	1) Your household member 2) Others, known to you 3) Stranger 9) No answer	1) a lot 2) somehow in between 3) a little 9) No answer
COM_6. Have you been involved in a traffic accident because of someone's drinking?	1) No → go to COM_7 2) 1-2 times 3) 3 or more times 9) No answer	1) Your household member 2) Others, known to you 3) Stranger 9) No answer	1) a lot 2) somehow in between 3) a little 9) No answer
COM_7. Because of someone else's drinking, have you felt unsafe in public places, including public transportation?	1) No → go to COM_8 2) 1-2 times 3) 3 or more times 9) No answer	1) Your household member 2) Others, known to you 3) Stranger 9) No answer	1) a lot 2) somehow in between 3) a little 9) No answer
COM_8. Have you been annoyed by people vomiting, urinating or littering when they have been drinking?	1) No → go to Problem drinking 2) 1-2 times 3) 3 or more times 9) No answer	1) Your household member 2) Others, known to you 3) Stranger 9) No answer	1) a lot 2) somehow in between 3) a little 9) No answer
COM_9. Has been a child or a teenager you are responsible for negatively affected by someone else's drinking?	1) No → go to Problem drinking 2) 1-2 times 3) 3 or more times 9) No answer	1) Yourself 2) Your household member 3) Others, known to you 4) Stranger 9) No answer	1) a lot 2) somehow in between 3) a little 9) No answer

## RARHA: results

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- » Huge **cross country disparities** with highest numbers in eastern and central–eastern European countries
- » **Women** are more often affected by harm from family members than men
- » Severe harm more often takes place within the **household**
- » **Young adults** and people **drinking alcohol** themselves are most likely to experience harm from others
- » **63 %** are effected by harm from others drinking and **10 %** are affected a lot.

point of criticism 1

**MIXING DIFFERENT DIMENSION OF SOCIAL  
HARM IN ONE INDICATOR INFLATES THE  
PROBLEM**

# 1: Mixing different dimension of social harm in one indicator inflates the problem

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## Summary: Alcohol-related harm from others' drinking: An overview

In summary, the majority (63%) of Europeans have been negatively affected in some way because of the drinking of others in the last 12 months. Generally speaking, the highest preval-

(RARHA-Project, Moskalewicz et al., 2016)

**Findings** A total of 70% of respondents were affected by strangers' drinking and experienced nuisance, fear or abuse, and 30% reported that the drinking of someone close to them had negative effects, although only 11% were affected by such a person 'a lot'. Women were more affected by someone they knew in the household or family, while men were more affected by strangers, friends and co-workers. Young adults were consistently the most negatively affected across the majority of types of harm.

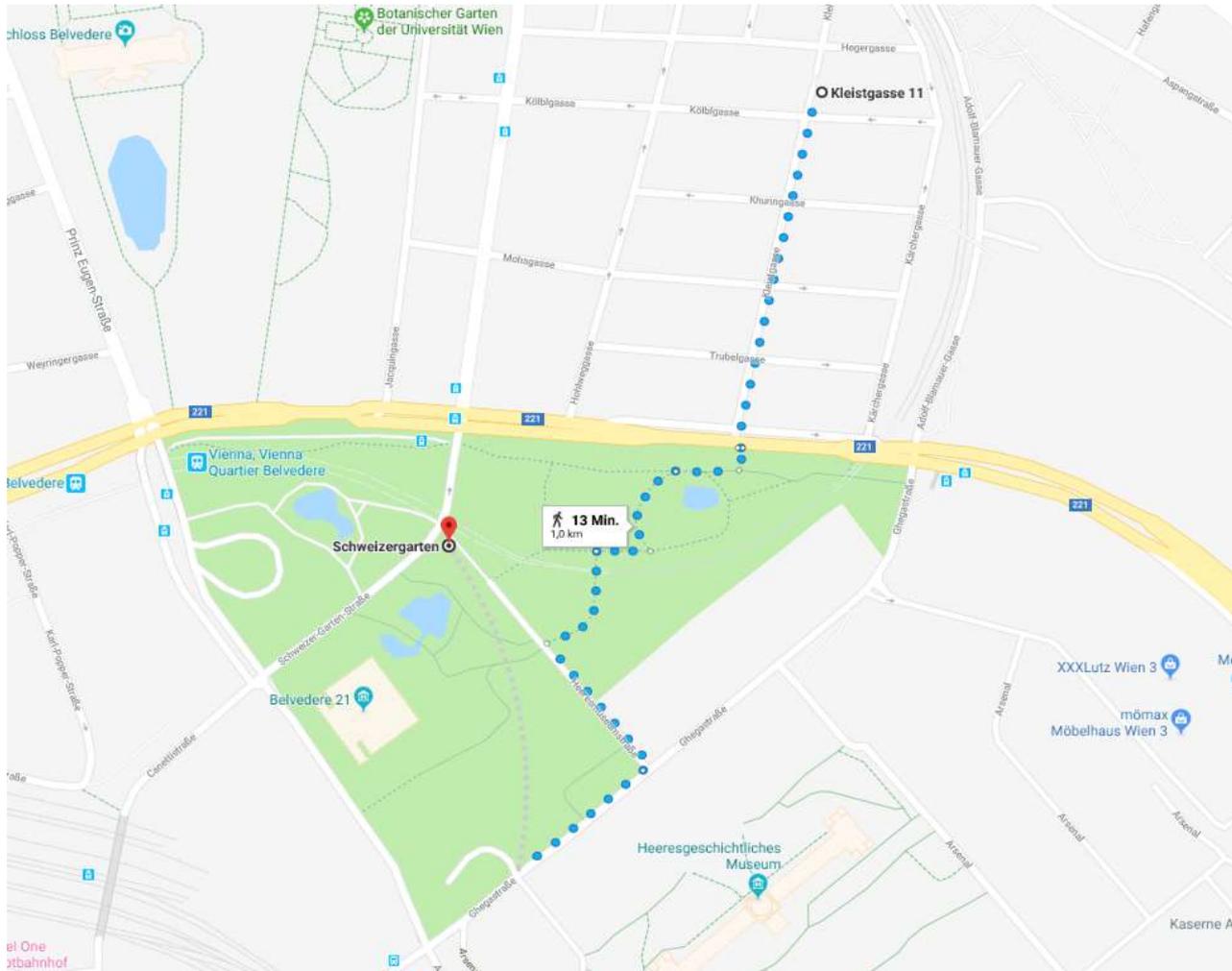
**Conclusions** Substantial proportions of Australians are affected by other people's drinking, including that of their families, friends, co-workers and strangers. These harms range in magnitude from noise and fear to physical abuse, sexual coercion and social isolation.

(Laslett et al., 2011)

point of criticism 2

**WHETHER ACTIONS ARE DETRIMENTAL TO  
THE INTERESTS OF OTHERS IS A VERY  
SUBJECTIVE DECISION**

## 2: Whether actions are detrimental to the interests of others is a very subjective decision



## 2: Whether actions are detrimental to the interests of others is a very subjective decision

COM_1. <u>because of someone else's drinking</u> , have you been kept awake at night?		COM_1. <u>because of someone else's <del>drinking</del> dog</u> , have you been kept awake at night?	X
COM_2. <u>because of someone else's drinking</u> , have you been verbally abused i.e. called names or otherwise insulted?		COM_2. <u>because of someone else's <del>drinking</del> dog</u> , have you been verbally abused i.e. called names or otherwise insulted?	X
COM_3. <u>because of someone else's drinking</u> , have you been harmed physically?		COM_3. <u>because of someone else's <del>drinking</del> dog</u> , have you been harmed physically?	
COM_4. <u>because of someone else's drinking</u> , have you been involved in a serious argument?		COM_4. <u>because of someone else's <del>drinking</del> dog</u> , have you been involved in a serious argument?	X
COM_5. have you been a passenger with a driver who had had too much to drink?		<del>COM_5. have you been a passenger with a driver who had had too much to drink?</del>	
COM_6. have you been involved in a traffic accident because of someone's drinking?		<del>COM_6. have you been involved in a traffic accident because of someone's drinking?</del>	
COM_7. <u>because of someone else's drinking</u> , have you felt unsafe in public places, including public transportation?		COM_7. <u>because of someone else's <del>drinking</del> dog</u> , have you felt unsafe in public places, including public transportation?	X
COM_8. have you been annoyed by people vomiting, urinating or littering when they have been drinking?	X	COM_8. have you been annoyed by <del>drinking</del> dogs <del>people vomiting, urinating or littering when they have been drinking?</del>	X
COM_9 has been a child or a teenager you are responsible for negatively affected by someone else's drinking?		COM_9 has been a child or a teenager you are responsible for negatively affected by someone else's <del>drinking?</del> dog drinking?	X

## 2: Whether actions are detrimental to the interests of others is a very subjective decision

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~~Have you been annoyed by people urinating in public when they have been drinking / by dogs urinating?~~

Considering the positive effects of a **dog on the dog owner / beer on a beer drinker** as well as the possible negative effects on others, do you believe that restrictions for **dog owners / beer drinkers** are justified or not?

point of criticism 3

**“BEING NEGATIVELY EFFECTED” IS NOT A  
VERY SOLID MEASURE**

## Critic 3: “being negatively effected” is not a very solid measure

- » Undersampling and underreporting
- » Harm during childhood needs long **time recall** (accuracy of retrospective)
- » **Gender-specific** perception: women are more likely to report growing up with a drinker than men (Anda et al. 2002)

Table A3.7.8. Prevalence of individuals being negatively affected a lot by living with fairly heavy drinkers or someone who drank a lot during childhood or teenage years by sex and age.

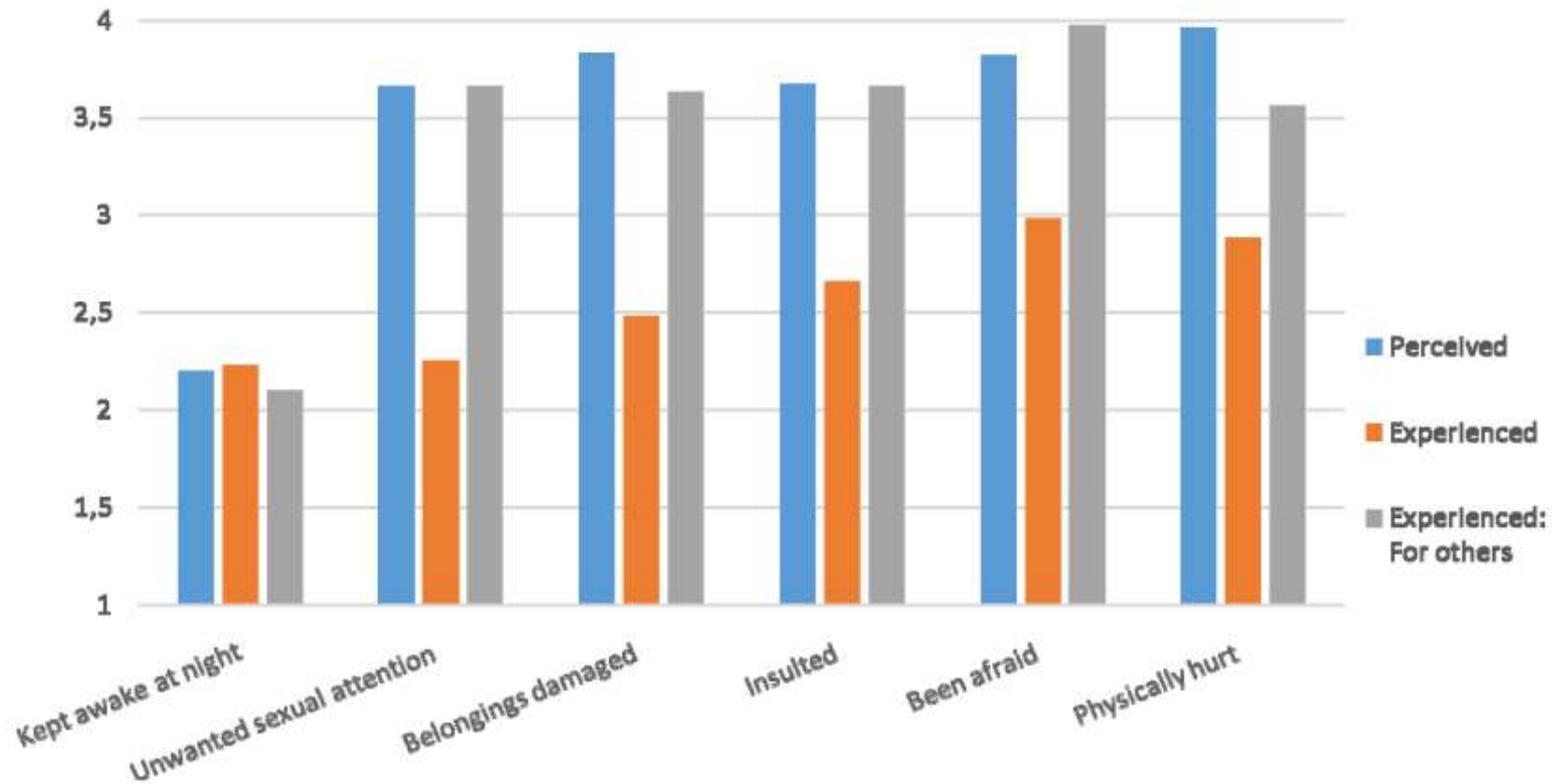
	Men				Women			
	18–34 years	35–49 years	50+ years	All men	18–34 years	35–49 years	50+ years	All women
Austria	1.9	4.3	4.7	3.6	5.7	9.6	10.3	8.5
Bulgaria	11.7	12.3	12.2	12.1	15.9	10.9	8.7	12.0
Croatia	4.7	11.1	10.2	8.5	9.3	8.7	19.9	12.9
Denmark	3.6	8.7	6.4	6.3	11.6	16.4	4.6	10.6
Estonia	13.1	15.4	11.7	13.4	22.1	29.4	24.3	25.1
France	8.5	13.8	9.9	10.7	15.2	23.8	17.8	19.1
Greece	4.6	8.4	11.6	8.1	8.1	14.0	9.4	10.9
Hungary	9.2	12.0	9.6	10.3	8.9	14.9	11.7	11.9
Iceland	12.5	19.5	15.1	15.5	23.5	20.9	16.8	20.6
Lithuania	18.0	23.1	23.9	21.5	21.0	27.1	23.4	23.8
Norway	2.8	6.4	6.3	5.1	5.6	8.8	11.1	8.3
Poland	8.2	7.1	6.3	7.3	11.4	10.2	9.7	10.5
Portugal	8.5	4.3	9.5	7.3	3.3	8.2	10.7	7.4
Romania	9.0	9.3	10.2	9.5	14.4	24.1	20.4	19.5
Spain*	5.2	4.2	6.8	5.2	10.1	8.0	7.5	8.5
Spain-Catalonia	9.9	5.8	5.3	6.9	6.1	3.6	11.2	6.4
Sweden	9.6	6.6	8.1	8.2	11.0	12.0	14.8	12.4
United Kingdom	2.2	13.1	4.2	6.1	8.0	17.2	15.2	13.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>8.0</b>	<b>9.9</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>9.1</b>	<b>11.9</b>	<b>14.7</b>	<b>13.7</b>	<b>13.4</b>

Note: Data not available for Finland and Italy.

*Italicized* = among the bottom five countries for prevalence of being negatively affected a lot by living with fairly heavy drinkers during childhood or teenage years; *underlined* = among the top five countries for prevalence of being negatively affected a lot by living with fairly heavy drinkers

## Critic 3: “Being negatively effected” is not a very solid measure

- » Harm from others is perceived more problematic by people who are not effected (**potential harm**) than by those who experience harm from others (**actual harm**) (Lund 2015)



## Critic 3: results indicate that the level of “being negatively effected” is not a very solid measure

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Being a passenger of a drunk-driver appears less likely to result in harm than being involved in a traffic accident with someone who had been drinking – less than one third of respondents who reported being a passenger of a drunk driver were negatively affected a lot by that experience, whereas more than half of respondents who were involved in a traffic accident were affected negatively a lot by that experience. Being physically harmed appears to be among the most serious of the eight harm items, with approximately two thirds of respondents who reported being harmed physically by someone who had been drinking reporting being negatively affected a lot by that experience.

Similar to the prevalence of experiencing any of the eight harm types, a larger percentage of respondents reported being negatively affected a lot by any of the ‘less serious’ harm items compared to the ‘more serious’ harm items. However, the difference in the prevalence of ‘less serious’ and ‘more serious’ harm items was less pronounced when considering only those who were negatively affected a lot (as opposed to counting all those who experienced the items, regardless of whether they were negatively affect a lot). Those who experience the ‘more serious’ types of harm are thus more likely to be negatively affected a lot because of others’ drinking than those who experience the ‘less serious’ types of harm.

point of criticism 4

**THE IDEA OF HARM TO OTHERS REDUCES  
COMPLEX INTERACTIONS TO SIMPLE  
CAUSAL EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL**

## Critic 4: harm to others reduces complex interactions to simple causal effects of alcohol

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- » Term passive drinking suggest biological pathways in **analogy to passive smoking** though only association in complex social models exists
- » Possible **positive social effects** (“social lubric”) of alcohol consumption are neglected.
- » In many cases it **will be impossible** for the respondent to causally attribute negative events to someone’s drinking
- » Many negative outcomes also exist in the **absence of alcohol** (e.g. verbal fights, poor productivity)

# Critic 4: harm to others reduces complex interactions to simple causal effects of alcohol

Measuring social harm in **ESPAD 2015**: any negative event will be attributed to alcohol

**C17 PROPOSED TO BE DROPPED**

Both questions C17.1, C17 to be dropped

I AGREE   
I DO NOT AGREE

**C17** WHILE UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF ALCOHOL, how often during the LAST 12 MONTHS have you experienced the following? Mark one box for each line.

I have not drunk any alcohol during the last 12 months → Please continue with question C18

	Number of occasions						
	0	1-2	3-5	6-9	10-19	20-39	40 or more
a) Physical fight	<input type="checkbox"/>						
b) Accident or injury	<input type="checkbox"/>						
c) Damaged or lost objects or clothing	<input type="checkbox"/>						
d) Serious arguments	<input type="checkbox"/>						
e) Victimized by robbery or theft	<input type="checkbox"/>						
f) Trouble with police	<input type="checkbox"/>						
g) Hospitalised or admitted to an emergency room because of severe intoxication	<input type="checkbox"/>						
h) Hospitalised or admitted to an emergency room because of accident or injury	<input type="checkbox"/>						
i) Engaged in sexual intercourse without a condom	<input type="checkbox"/>						
j) Being a victim of unwanted sexual advance	<input type="checkbox"/>						
k) Deliberately hurt yourself	<input type="checkbox"/>						
l) Driven a moped, car or other motor vehicle	<input type="checkbox"/>						
m) Being involved in an accident while driving yourself	<input type="checkbox"/>						
n) Been swimming in deep water (swimming pool, river, lake or sea)	<input type="checkbox"/>						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

# Critic 4: harm to others reduces complex interactions to simple causal effects of alcohol

## Measuring social harm in **ESPAD 2019**

### **OC08** During the LAST 12 MONTHS have you experienced the following?

Mark all that apply.

	Never	Yes, while using alcohol	Yes, while using drugs	Yes, but NOT while using alcohol/drugs
(a) Physical fight .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) Accident or injury .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) Damaged or lost objects or clothing .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) Serious arguments .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(e) Victimized by robbery or theft.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(f) Trouble with police .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(g) Hospitalised or admitted to an emergency room because of severe intoxication .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(h) Hospitalised or admitted to an emergency room because of accident or injury.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(i) Engaged in sexual intercourse without a condom .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(j) Been a victim of unwanted sexual advance .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(k) Deliberately hurt yourself.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(l) Driven a moped, car or other motor vehicle .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(m) Been involved in an accident while driving yourself .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(n) Been swimming in deep water (swimming pool, river, lake or sea).....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1

1

1

1

point of criticism 5

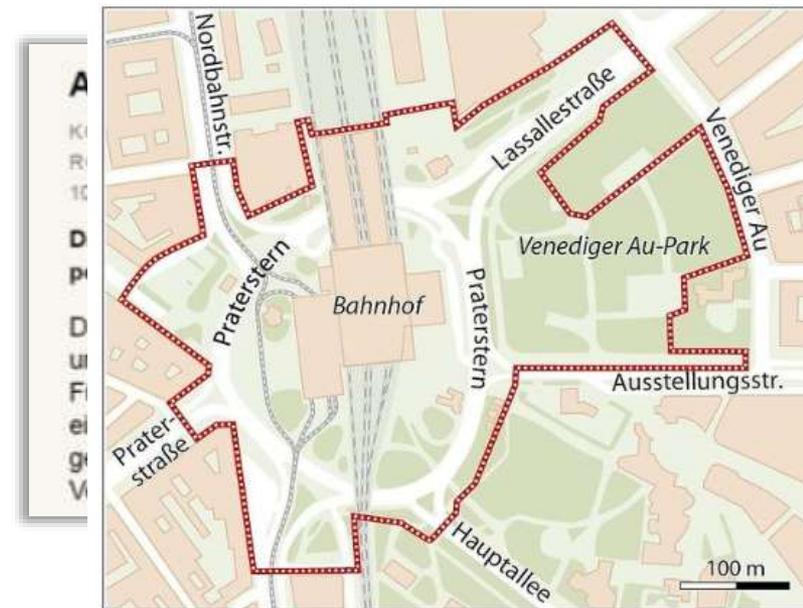
**HARM FROM OTHERS USES FLAW EMPIRICAL  
DATA TO JUSTIFY PATERNALISTIC ALCOHOL  
POLICY**

## Critic 5: Harm from others uses flawed empirical data to foster paternalistic alcohol policy

- » Discourse of “harm from others” represents rather a **change of perspective** and a **culture of complaint** than a real change
- » People are conceded only one human right: the right **not to be bothered** by other people which may undermine solidarity
- » The state’s primary function is to guarantee **security** in public settings (bans, prohibition, elimination) and **paternalistic** authority is legitimated to save the weak
- » Negative conditions (e.g. social problems) are explained by **individual misbehaviour** (individual drinking)
- » Restrictive measures may help to get problems out of sight without providing any solution

### Alkoholverbot am Praterstern

Ab 27. April, ausgenommen Gastronomie und Imbissstände



Grafik: © APA, Quelle: APA/Stadt Wien

# Conclusion

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- » Negative effects on the social environment is **not** a new topic, though harm to others is used with the notion of new results
- » Harm from others drinking is inspired by the overwhelming success of **passive smoking**.
- » Harm to others is framed to effect **anyone** (but in particular vulnerable populations) and to reveal the **real harm from alcohol** and is often used in favor of prohibitive alcohol measures
- » There are several reasons why **quantitative survey data** is not a useful tool to assess the severe effects of alcohol consumption on others
- » Mixing up severe and minor negative effects is not justified and **inflates problem assessment**
- » Harm-to-others reduces complex social interactions to a **very simple negative** causal pathway
- » Any assessment of negative effects from others drinking depends on **general attitudes** on alcohol and personal characteristics
- » Critique is justified from a **methodological perspective**, but also from a more balanced understanding of social effects of alcohol consumption

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**Thank you for your attention!**

[julian.strizek@goeg.at](mailto:julian.strizek@goeg.at)