



---

## News Alert

# Northeast Community Challenge Coalition

---

### Do European Adolescents Drink Less?

Do European adolescents drink less and experience fewer problems than their American counterparts? Commonly, European countries are used as examples to argue that more liberal drinking-age laws and attitudes about alcohol may foster more responsible drinking by young people. It is often believed that because alcohol is integrated into European culture at younger ages within the context of the family, European adolescents learn to drink more responsibly than do young people from the United States.

According to data from the European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs and the United States Monitoring the Future Survey, this is not the case. There is no evidence that the more liberal policies and drinking socialization practices in Europe are associated with lower levels of intoxication.

Recent data from these representative surveys provide no evidence that young Europeans drink more responsibly than their peers in the United States. Information was collected from 15- to 16-year-old students covering 30-day usage, binge drinking (described as consuming five or more drinks), and intoxication.

- A far greater percentage of young people from nearly all European countries reported drinking during the past 30 days (please see Figure 1 below);
- For a majority of these European countries, a greater percentage of young people report having five or more drinks in a row (please see Figure 2 below); and
- In more than three-quarters of the 36 countries surveyed, a greater percentage of 15-year-olds reported drinking to intoxication in the previous year than those in the United States (please see Figure 3 below).

If we assume that the early socialization to drinking fosters responsible drinking, than we would expect to see much lower rates of binge drinking and intoxication in European countries than in the United States. On the contrary, the rate of young people from European countries reporting binge drinking is considerably higher than that for the United States, and adolescents in the United States show a moderate rate of intoxication compared to their European peers.

There is no evidence to support that training teens to drink in the home will teach teens responsible drinking or minimize drinking outside the home (Sources: American Medical Association, National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, Pacific Institute, and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention).

More information regarding this research may be found at <http://www.espad.org>

---

Northeast Community Challenge Coalition

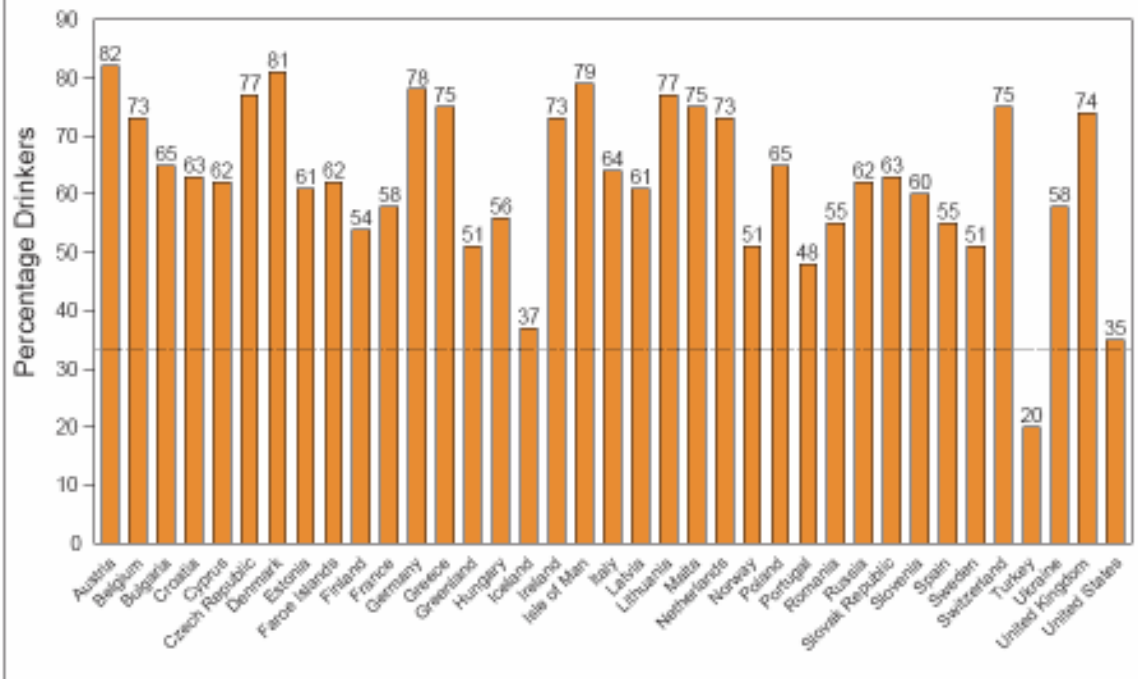
P.O. Box 42387

Cincinnati, OH 45242

[www.necchealthycommunity.org](http://www.necchealthycommunity.org)

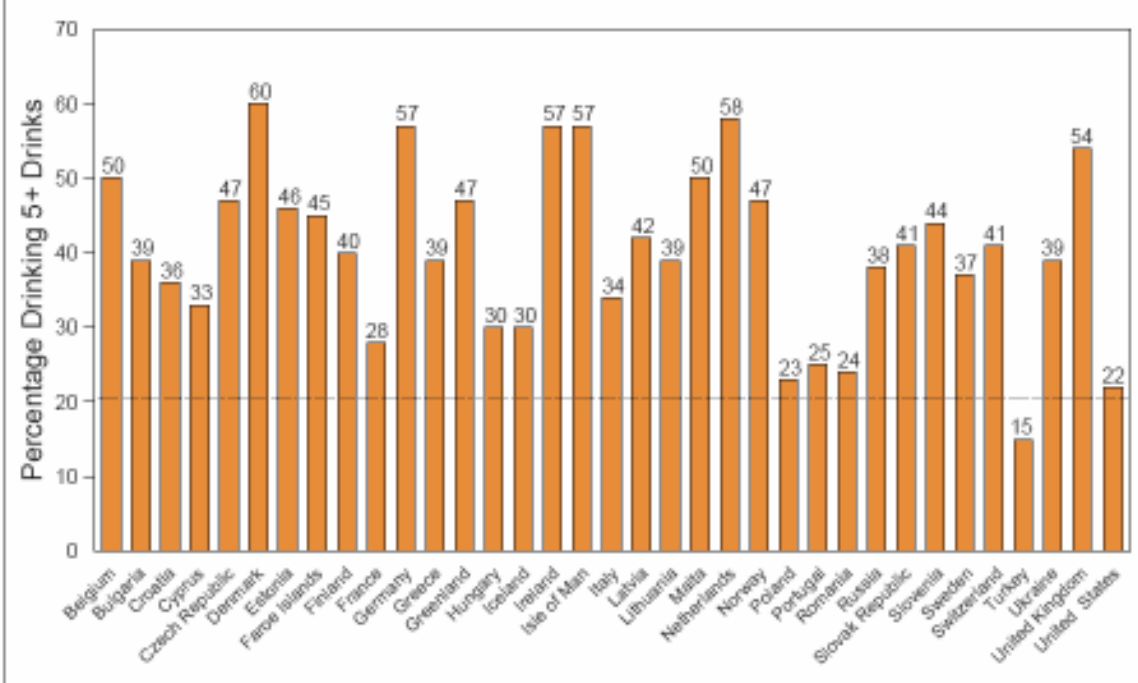
513-489-2587

**Figure 1. Prevalence of Drinking in the Past 30 Days:  
United States and Europe**



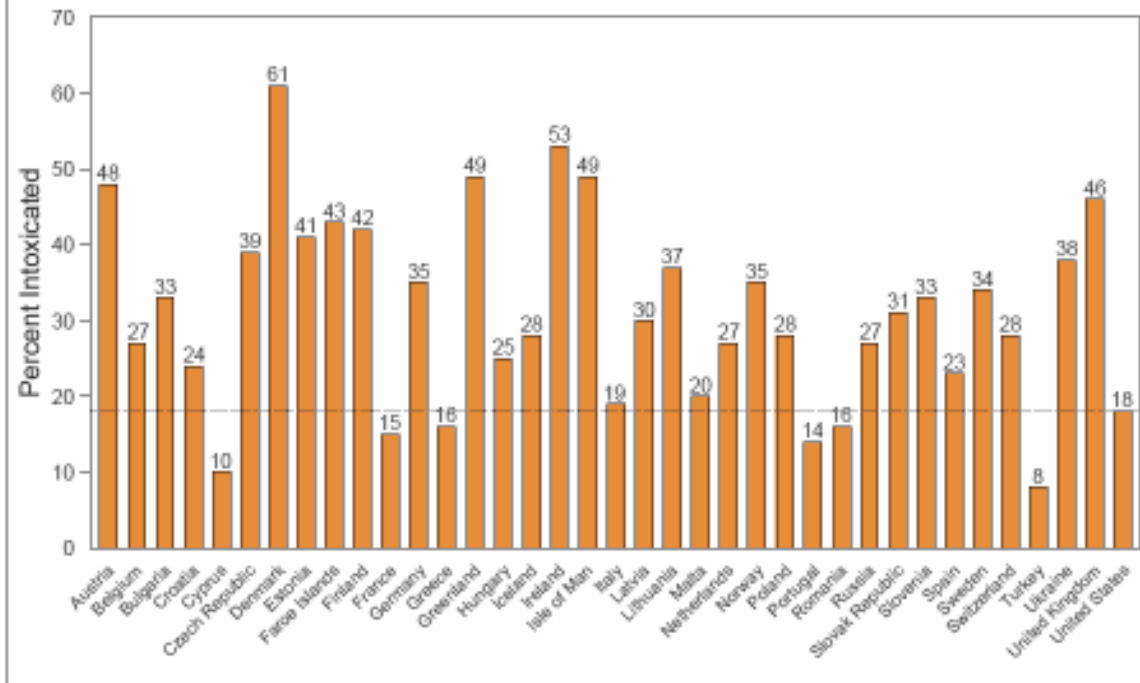
Sources: 2003 ESPAD Survey and 2003 Monitoring the Future Survey

**Figure 2. Prevalence of Heavy Drinking in the Past 30 Days:  
United States and Europe**



Sources: 2003 ESPAD Survey and 2003 Monitoring the Future Survey

**Figure 3. Prevalence of Intoxication in the Past 30 Days:  
United States and Europe**



Sources: 2003 ESPAD Survey and 2003 Monitoring the Future Survey