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Drinkers forget what they've drunk - study

Published: 24 May 2012 10:51 GMT+1
Updated: 24 May 2012 09:58 GMT+1

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Young people's impressions of the amount of alcohol they have drunk are significantly lower the morning after compared to during the evening of a drinking session, a new Swiss study shows - casting doubt on the accuracy of alcohol consumption figures.

The study quizzed 183 young people aged 19-26 from western Switzerland, newspaper Neue Zürcher Zeitung reported.

The researchers, from the Swiss National Science Foundation and Addiction Switzerland, found that there were significant discrepancies in the amounts of alcohol that were reported by mobile phone on the evening of consumption in comparison with the amounts reported in the following 30 day period.

The report found that the young men drank an average of two litres of beer on a Saturday night, while the girls drank an average of 1.4 litres, online news site Blick reported.

The participants reported an average of three full glasses of an alcoholic drink between Thursday and Saturday when surveyed at the time. These figures were halved when participants were asked some 30 days later.

This has led the researchers to conclude that alcohol consumption data, which is traditionally gathered through interviews after the event, may be inaccurate and that real amounts may be twice as high as previously thought.

One of the reports' authors, Emmanuel Kuntsche, has also provided recommendations to tackle the binge-drinking problem, including a ban on the sale of alcohol in the evening or on drinking in public places.

“Such prohibitions won't bring anything,” Federal Councillor, Felix Gutzwiller, told Blick. “They are easy to circumvent. People can just buy alcohol earlier.”

The report also raises the question of whether intoxicated people should be prevented from entering bars and restaurants.

Report co-author, Emmanuel Kuntsche, is now interested in looking more closely at the reporting issue of memory lapses to see if similar results are obtained in a survey of people of different ages.

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