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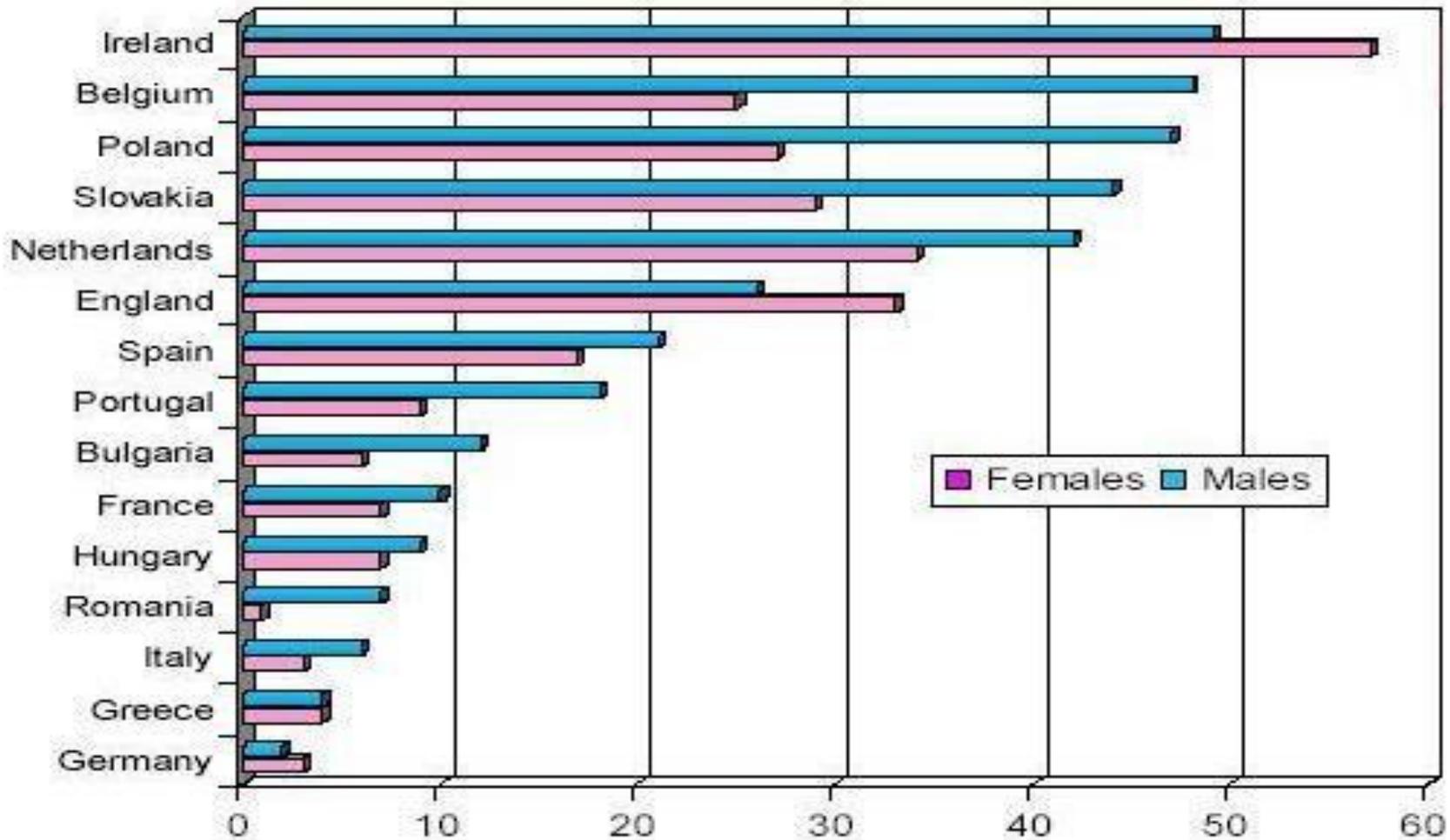
*The Impact of Social Marketing on  
Irish Female College Students' Binge  
Drinking: Are Fear Appeals Effective?*

# Alcohol Consumption in Ireland

- Ireland has one of the highest levels of alcohol consumption in the EU, consuming 10.6 litres of pure alcohol per person in 2003, increasing to 13.4 litres in 2006.
- In addition to the high volume of alcohol consumed by people in Ireland, drinking occasions appear to be strongly related to “heavy episodic or binge drinking patterns”.
- Binge drinking is defined as drinking five or more drinks in a row for men and four or more drinks in a row for women, at least once in the previous two weeks.

# Alcohol Consumption in College

- The prevalence of alcohol use and associated problems is higher in college populations than in the general public .
- In fact, binge drinking has been identified as the number one substance abuse problem in university life. In large scale studies of US universities, approximately 44% of students were classified as binge drinkers.



Heavy drinking among University Students in Europe (>5 drinks in past 30 days)

# Effects of Binge Drinking

- Binge Drinking is associated with:-
  - serious injury as a result of vehicle accidents.
  - unplanned and unsafe sex.
  - various social and psychological problems.
  - interpersonal problems.
  - physical or cognitive impairment.
  - poor academic performance.

# Health Risks for Women

- Women are at an increased risk from alcohol use as they need less alcohol per kilogram of body weight than men, to attain the same peak blood alcohol level and level of impairment.
- Alcohol increases the risk of breast cancer, liver disease, stroke, osteoporosis.
- Health Research Board in Ireland recently stated “if current trends continue, we will see significantly higher numbers of middle-aged women experiencing alcohol related morbidity or mortality”.

# Research Objectives

- What is the extent of binge drinking among the third level female student population?
- Where and how are they drinking?
- What are their coping strategies in relation to binge drinking?
- Are social threat appeals more powerful than physical threat appeals in preventing binge drinking among female third level students?

# Methodology

- Five focus groups were conducted between March and April 2009. The focus groups were held in Cork Institute of Technology (CIT), Cork, Ireland. All participants were young female college students aged between 18 and 24 years of age and full time students taking classes in the Department of Management and Marketing at CIT. All were recruited in a convenient sample.
- Interviews with professionals in the moderation drinking/ public health sectors.

# Results – Extent of Binge Drinking?

- Binge drinking among female college students in this study is very high. Of the 45 female students who participated in the focus group discussions, it was determined that at least 90% of them would now classify themselves as binge drinkers after clarifying what a binge drinker is.

*Binge drinking - it is where you have 9 drinks on a night out.*

# Results - Renaming “Binge Drinking”

*I think generally speaking, people don't know what is meant by the term binge. Everyone will have a different perception of what is meant by it and that is an issue that needs to be addressed. For instance, I would not classify myself as a binge drinker although I have drank more than 5 drinks on many an occasion.*

- While attending college, this normative behaviour of consuming substantial or excessive amounts of alcohol becomes more regular and sustained.

# Results – Where do they drink?

- The majority drink alcohol in a house with friends before they go to bars or nightclubs and the reasons given for this include “it’s cheaper” and “it’s a good laugh”. The alcohol of choice for most of the participants was vodka, wine and beer but it is the consumption levels of these types of alcohol that is most startling.

*You drink as much as you possibly can before you go out.*

# Results – Knowledge of Health Effects?

- Poor and dismissive - only interested in the short term effects such as a hangover or bad skin for a few days as opposed to the longer term health effects.

*Well we know there are health effects, but we do not think of them. There are health effects with everything - you worry about that when you are old.*

# Results – Maladaptive Coping Responses

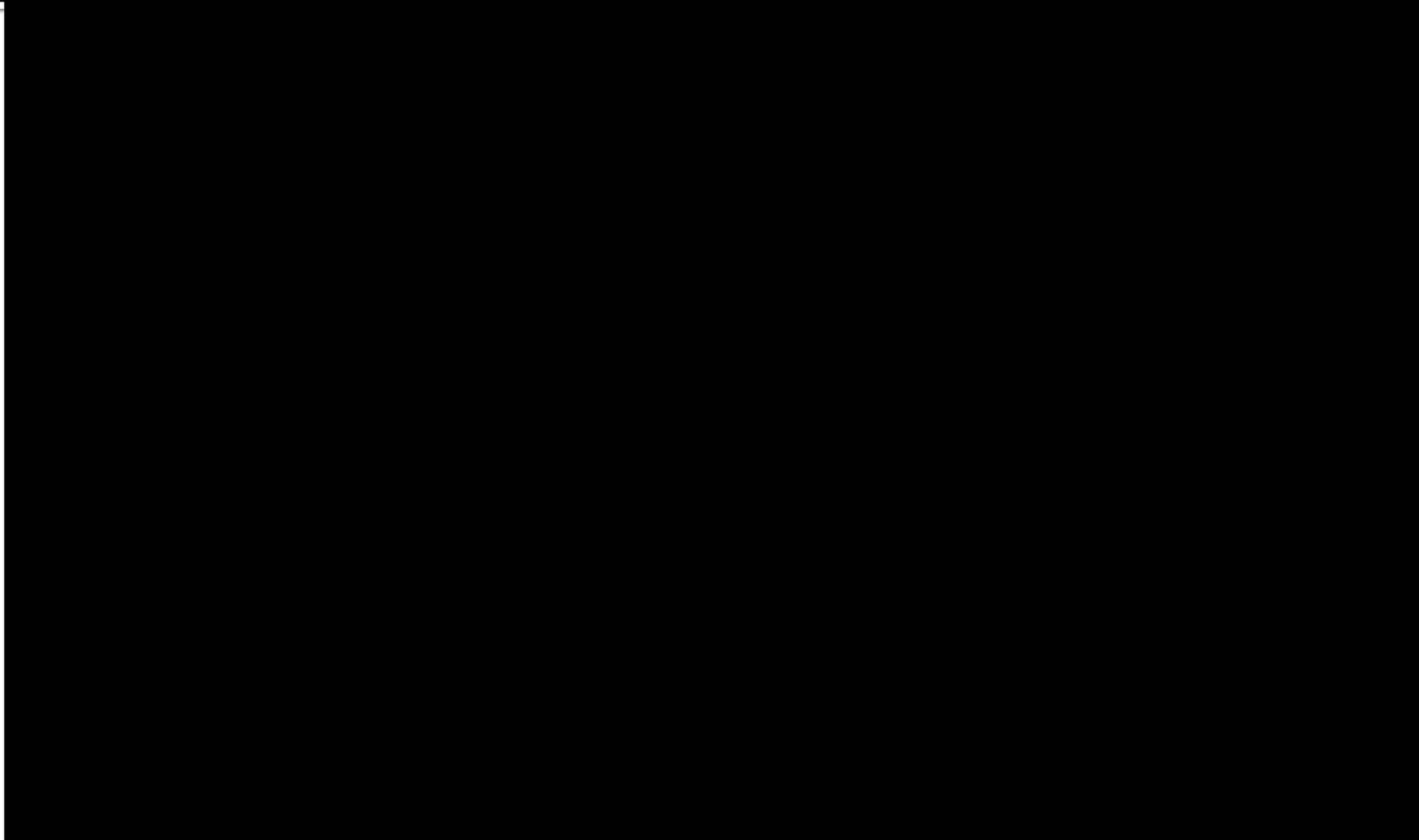
- One of the main coping strategies for this particular group is the constant reference to the role that friends play in ensuring that nothing too extreme or potentially dangerous will occur to them while in a state of intoxication or when they are binge drinking:

*No, it would not happen to me - my friends would take care of me. We all stay together. We all stay in the same place and we all mind each others' drinks when we go to the bathroom.*

# Results – Overestimation of Control

*You probably think you are in more control than you actually are. That is what the alcohol does anyway. It gives you a false sense of security.*

*Honestly, I have never really thought much about the implications of drinking before, as nothing serious has happened to me or my friends on nights out.*





# Results of Social Marketing Advertisements

- Physical threat appeals are more powerful than social threat appeals.
- Female students experienced increases in knowledge, perceived risk and responsibility, and a decrease in perceived acceptability of binge drinking after viewing the various physical threat appeals as opposed to the social threat appeals, due to fear invoked in the advertisement.
- Potential sexual assault and rape as a result of binge drinking were the most effective advertisements.

# Results of Social Marketing Advertisements

*I could see it happening to people because you do see people who are absolutely demented when they are out and they do not know what they are doing. That type of appeal would frighten people who get into that state when they are out and make them conscious that it could happen to them.*

*The majority of rapes happen when the person is intoxicated like that girl in that advertisement, and also when the girl is left on her own.*

# Results – Reactions to Social Fear Advertisements

*We laughed at the last two advertisements there now, so they need to be more shocking than that. They are just wasting their money with those types of advertisements.*

*They are not shocking at all and I really do not think they are taken seriously by people our own age. It is always this type of advertisement they show on Irish TV and they are not effective at all.*

# Conclusions

- Fear appeals work – especially fears dealing with sexual assault for this segment.
- Over-estimation of control and under-estimation of vulnerability.
- Very low knowledge of long-term health consequences.
- Concentration should be on framing messages that show the positive aspects of moderate drinking rather than the negative effects of excess drinking?
- Contradictory role of the Irish alcohol industry in regulating its own advertising.