Author's response to reviews

Title: Alcohol consumption in Estonia and Finland: Finbalt survey 1994-2006

Authors:

Kersti Pärna (kersti.parna@ut.ee)
Kaja Rahu (kaja.rahu@tai.ee)
Satu Helakorpi (satu.helakorpi@thl.fi)
Mare Tekkel (mare.tekkel@tai.ee)

Version: 4 Date: 15 March 2010

Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Associate Editor, 15. March 2010

Please find attached the revised version of our paper “Alcohol consumption in Estonia and Finland: Finbalt survey 1994–2006” Kersti Pärna, Kaja Rahu, Satu Helakorpi and Mare Tekkel. This version was approved by all the authors.

We hereby detail the changes made to our manuscript in response to the associate editor’s comments.

**Associate Editor comments:**
Despite the fact that you have had a degree of help with the manuscript there is still a number of changes I wish you to make so that it is readable. Please make your changes in a different colour font (red or blue) and use strike through to indicate deleted text as it will make it easier to pick them up and assist with swift turnaround of the manuscript. I would request that you do not use track changes as it is often difficult to remove from the template.

Changes were made in blue colour. Deleted text was indicated using strike through.

Please insert the following text (where no change is indicated please assume the original text is correct).

**Abstract**

**Results:**
Compared to the ethnic majority in Estonia weekly alcohol consumption or more was lower among men but higher of women of ethninc minority (predominantly Russian).

The following text was inserted:
Compared to ethnic majority in Estonia, alcohol consumption at least once a week was lower among men, but amount of pure alcohol drunk per week was higher among women of ethnic minority.

With the aim better to separate frequency and amount of alcohol consumption, the following terms were used. If possible in description of frequency of alcohol consumption the term ‘alcohol consumption at least once a week’ was used and in description of amount of alcohol consumed the term ‘amount of pure alcohol drunk per week’ was used.

In Finland alcohol consumption was more prevalent among women but the amount of pure alcohol drunk per week was lower for both ethnic minority gender groups.

The following text was inserted:
In Finland, alcohol consumption at least once a week was more prevalent among women, but the amount of pure alcohol drunk per week was lower for both gender groups of ethnic minority.

Compared to married/cohabiting respondents weekly alcohol consumption (or more
frequent) was etc

The following text was inserted:
Compared to married/cohabiting respondents, at least alcohol consumption at least once a week was less pronounced among single respondents in Finland, divorced or separated women in both countries, and widowed respondents in Estonia.

Greater weekly alcohol consumption was more prevalent etc

The following text was inserted:
Greater amount of alcohol consumed per week was more prevalent among single and divorced or separated respondents in Finland, but only among divorced or separated men in Estonia.

Conclusion: Please insert the following sentence. Alcohol consumption is on a consistently upward trend in Estonia, increasing in Finnish women but generally stable for Finish men.

The following text was inserted:
Alcohol consumption is on a consistently upward trend in Estonia, increasing in Finnish women, but generally stable for Finnish men.

Page 12

Results

The probability of drinking alcohol weekly or more was lower for ethnic minority men compared with similar individuals in the ethnic majority.

The following text was inserted:
The probability of drinking alcohol at least once a week was lower for ethnic minority men compared with similar individuals in the ethnic majority in Estonia.

In Comparison with married /cohabiting men drinking weekly or more was etc

The following text was inserted:
In comparison with married/cohabiting men, drinking alcohol weekly or more frequently was lower among widowed men in Estonia and among single men in Finland.

Weekly alcohol consumption or greater was lower among women in Estonia etc

The following text was inserted:
Alcohol consumption at least once a week was lower among women in Estonia in 2002 and 2006 than in the first study year.

Page 13

Alcohol consumption was more prevalent in ethnic minority women compared to those women in the ethnic majority.

The following text was inserted:
Alcohol consumption at least once a week was more prevalent in ethnic minority women compared to the women in ethnic majority in Finland, but not in Estonia.

Page 14

In Finland only the amount of pure alcohol consumed weekly was lower in ethnic minority men
The following text was inserted:
*In Finland only, the amount of pure alcohol consumed weekly was lower in ethnic minority men.*

**Significantly more pure alcohol was consumed weekly by less educated men in Estonia but not in Finland.**
The following text was inserted:
*Significantly more pure alcohol was consumed per week by less educated men in Estonia, but not in Finland.*

The amount of pure alcohol consumed per week was higher among women of ethnic minority rather than women from the ethnic majority population in Estonia. This trend was reversed in Finland.

The following text was inserted:
*The amount of pure alcohol consumed per week was higher among women of ethnic minority rather than women from ethnic majority in Estonia. This association was reversed in Finland.*

**Page 19 (now pages 20-21)**

Re Ref 18. This data is at a minimum 10 years old. Please find more up to date data- it may help you to search for data concerning 'hazardous' and 'harmful' drinking as outlined by the WHO. I have no problem with the Finish or Estonian data. Associate editor is absolutely right. The reference 18 is from the year 2001. The reference was especially chosen from the middle of the study period 1994–2006. Also this was there source were medium and high risk drinking was calculated identically with our study. But as this reference is indeed nearly 10 years old, then the paragraph containing information based on this reference was deleted and replaced with the following text:

Now page 20: One reason for increasing trend in alcohol consumption could be liberal alcohol policy in both countries. Moreover, previous studies in Finland reported that in the long-term, alcohol consumption of women has increased relatively more than of men in Finland, even if drinking is still more common among men [23;24].

Please provide some (even if tentative) explanation as to why Finish women 35-44 and 45-54 is highest- are they working? Greater disposable income? Less child care commitments- Is drinking in Finland for women more acceptable than in Estonia? In Finland do young women binge drink as in UK ?- this data would suggest not. This is an important finding and I don't think you have stressed it sufficiently- there are likely to be pronounced health consequences over time.

We agree with the reviewer that this is an important topic. As background information on changes in drinking habits among men and women in Finland is the following: In Finland, per capita consumption of alcohol has doubled between the early 1970s and 2008 (THL, 2009). Alcohol consumption probably increased due to more liberal attitudes towards alcohol and the resulting liberalization of alcohol policy. In Finland alcohol consumption increased especially among men and women born in 1946–50 (the “baby boomer” generation) and regarding women this was the first female group which adopted drinking of alcohol more widely (Sulkunen 1987). According to the reviewer’s request the text concerning differences in alcohol consumption among women in Estonia and in Finland was added:
The increase of alcohol drinking among women over 35-year-old follows a longer-term trend in Finland, reflects more liberal attitudes towards alcohol consumption and the egalitarian position of women in society [23;24]. At the same time, low alcohol consumption among 55–64-year-old women in Estonia could be explained with traditionally low alcohol drinking habits among women during the Soviet period.

Page 20 (now page 21)

Weekly alcohol consumption or greater was lower etc.
The following text was inserted:
Alcohol consumption weekly or more frequently was lower among men, but the amount of pure alcohol consumed per week was higher among women of ethnic minority in Estonia.

Page 21 (now page 22)

Conclusion

After the sentence ending socio demographic factors- please insert

Alcohol consumption is on a consistently upward trend in Estonia, increasing in Finnish women but generally stable for Finish men.
The following text was inserted:
Alcohol consumption is on a consistently upward trend in Estonia, increasing in Finnish women, but generally stable for Finnish men.

Best regards,

Kersti Pärna
corresponding author