

# Standardisation of Survey Instrument

**Salme Ahlström, Research Professor**  
**Esa Österberg, Senior Researcher**  
**Alcohol and Drug Research, STAKES,**  
**Helsinki, Finland**  
**[salme.ahlstrom@stakes.fi](mailto:salme.ahlstrom@stakes.fi)**  
**[esa.osterberg@stakes.fi](mailto:esa.osterberg@stakes.fi)**

# Why do we need drinking habit surveys?

- **Majority of the comparative studies of national differences in alcohol use are based on analyses of recorded alcohol consumption**
- **Aggregate data on alcohol consumption does not permit any detailed analysis of national differences in drinking patterns, nor is it possible to break down these consumption data in sub-populations, for example, by gender and age or educational level and social group**
- **Survey is the most commonly used method to gather data on drinking patterns. Other possibilities are diaries or observational studies.**

## First Nordic Comparative Survey

- **"Drinking habits among Northern Youth. A cross-national study of male teenage drinking in the Northern capitals" in 1960 (Bruun and Hauge 1963)**
  - Iceland excluded
- **Age groups: 14, 16 and 18**
- **Standardized to a relatively high degree**
- **Interview situation was not standardized**
- **No clear instructions for coding**
- **Boys drinking habits were followed four years later in 1964 (Bruun 1966)**

## **Nordic Comparative Alcohol Survey Among Men**

- **Drinking habits of men aged 30-45 in Nordic capitals in 1964.**
- **Reykjavik not included**
- **Johnsson, E. & Nilsson, T: Samnordisk undersökning av vuxna mäns alkoholvanor (Nordic comparative study of men's alcohol habits). CAN, Stockholm, 1972**

# Scandinavian Drinking Survey (Pohja) I

- **Data gathered in 1979 in Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden**
- **Danish application was turned down because Denmark "tends to be less enthusiastic about this kind of alcohol research"**
- **Mailed questionnaire**
- **Samples between 20 and 69 years of age**
- **Constructing the questionnaire proved difficult**
- **Countries with earlier survey traditions wanted to have questions framed in their traditional ways**

## Scandinavian Drinking Survey (Pohja) II

- **After long discussions Finnish layout was followed exactly in the other countries**
- **In Iceland 5 and in Sweden 12 additional questions concerning politically important areas**
- **Response rates: Finland 71, Iceland 63, Norway 54, Sweden 58**
- **Summary report: Hauge, R. & Irgens-Jensen, O. Alkoholen i Norden. En sammenliknede undersøkelse av bruk av alkohol, holdninger till alkohol og konsekvenser av alkoholbruk I Finland, Island , Norge og Sverige (Alcohol in the Nordic countries. A comparative study of use, attitudes and consequences). Alko and NAD, Helsingfors, 1987**

## Nordic Comparative Alcohol Survey

- **Compiled in 1995-1997 in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden**
- **Iceland excluded**
- **Telephone interviews**
- **Recommendations for the study design**
- **A prototype questionnaire**
- **In Sweden only parts of the questionnaire could be used**
- **Summary report: Mäkelä, P. & Fonager, K. & Hibell, B. & Nordlund, S. & Sabroe, S. & Simpura, J. Drinking Habits in the Nordic Countries. National Institute for Alcohol and Drug Research, 1999**

## **Alcohol Consumption and Alcohol Problems Among Women in European Countries**

- **Secondary analyses of 11 surveys from 9 different countries**
- **Finland, Sweden, Scotland, The Netherlands, Germany, Czech Republic, Switzerland, France, Italy**
- **Different countries used different questions, response categories/ limited comparability**
- **Summary report: Kim Bloomfield et al. Alcohol Consumption and Alcohol Problems among Women in European Countries. Institute for Medical Informatics, Biostatistics & Epidemiology, Free University of Berlin, 1999**

## **European Comparative Alcohol Study Survey**

- **ECAS survey was compiled in spring 2000**
- **Six EU member states representing different drinking cultures (France and Italy, wine countries; Germany and United Kingdom, beer countries; Finland and Sweden, former spirits countries)**
- **Summary report: Hemström, Ö. & Leifman, H. & Ramstedt, M. The ECAS survey on drinking patterns and alcohol-related problems. In: Norström, T. ed. Alcohol in Postwar Europe. Consumption, drinking habits, consequences and policy responses in 15 European countries. National Institute of Public Health, Stockholm, 2002**

## EuroHIS study

- **Conducted in 2001. The participating countries were Finland, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands**
- **Based on protocol analyses on four alcohol use items: frequency drinking, quantity of drinking, frequency of drunkenness, and the context of drinking in the last 12 months.**
- **Summary report: Raitasalo, K. & Knibbe, R. & Kraus, L. Retrieval strategies and cultural differences in answering survey questions on drinking: A cross-national comparison. Addiction Research and Theory 13 : 359-372, 2005**

# **The EU Project "Gender & Alcohol - A Multi-national Study" I**

- **Conducted in 15 countries:**

**Mediterranean, wine-producing, predominately Catholic**

**Italy, France, Austria, Switzerland, parts of Germany**

**Temperance-oriented, Nordic drinking tradition**

**Finland, Norway, Sweden**

**Eastern European, spirits-oriented**

**Czech Republic, Hungary**

**Central European with combined traditions**

**The Netherlands, United Kingdom, parts of Germany**

**Brazil, Mexico, Israel**

## **The EU Project "Gender & Alcohol - A Multi-national Study" II**

- **Extensive efforts to collect fresh data with standard measures for the main variables**
- **A recommended set of standard questions to be applied in new data collecting efforts**
- **Data analyzed centrally**
- **Summary report: Bloomfield, Kim et al. Gender, Culture and Alcohol Problems: A Multi-national Study, Project Final Report, Charité Campus Benjamin Franklin, January 2005**

## **GENACIS - gender, alcohol and culture: an international study**

- **15 + 17 = 32 countries**

**Argentina, Australia, Canada, Costa Rica, Denmark, Iceland, India, Ireland, Japan, Kasakhstan, Nigeria, Russia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Uganda, Uruguay, USA**

- **Funded by:**

**The European Commission**

**The U.S. National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism**

**The Swiss Federal Office of Education and Science**

**The German Ministry of Health and Social Security**

**The World Health Organization (WHO)**

# **Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC)**

- **Initiated in 1982 by researchers from three countries and shortly afterwards adapted as a WHO collaborative study**
- **Now 41 participating countries and regions in Europe and North America**
- **First data gathered in 1983/84 (5 countries), second 1985/86 (13 countries) and since then every four years. Seventh data 2005/2006.**
- **Main emphasis on health, a few questions of tobacco and alcohol, in 2005/2005 of illegal drugs**
- **International data file at Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD)**

# **European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD) I**

- **CAN - the Swedish Council for Information on Alcohol and Other Drugs initiated the project in 1993 and is serving as the coordinator**
- **Support from:**
  - The Pompidou Group at the Council of Europe**
  - The Swedish Ministry of Health and Social Affairs**
  - The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA)**
- **Basic purpose to collect comparable data on use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs among students in as many European countries as possible**

## **European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD) II**

- **Largest cross-national research project on adolescent substance use in the world**
- **In 1995 number of participating countries 23**
- **In 2007 altogether in 35 countries**
- **During 2008 there will be an extra data collection wave in seven new countries and two old countries not able to participate in the 2007 wave**
- **Data are collected every fourth year**
- **Latest data gathered in spring 2007**

# European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD) III

- **Methodology is strictly standardized**
  - target population
  - data collection instrument
  - field procedure
  - timing
  - data processing
- **Target population students that turn 16 years old during the calendar year of the data collection**
- **At least 2 400 students**

# **European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD) IV**

- **Core questions**
- **Optional questions**
- **Three optional modules, one or two included**
- **Country specific questions**
- **Data collection in March / April**
- **Data set cleanings and constructions of new variables is done centrally by the data base manager**

## **Eurobarometer 2006**

- **Commissioned by the DG Sanco.**
- **The participating countries were 25 member states of the EU, two at that time acceding countries (Bulgaria and Romania) as well as Croatia and Turkish Cypriot Community**
- **EU citizens' alcohol drinking habits in terms of the frequency and the amount of consumed**
- **Face to face interviews**
- **Summary report: Special Eurobarometer Attitudes towards Alcohol, Report March 2007**

## Hupkens & Knibbe & Drop 1993

- **Based on Eurobarometer 1988 data**
- **Covered the whole EC**
- **Frequency and the context of consumption of the new beverage type**
- **Analyses whether subpopulations defined by gender, age and educational level differ in the adaptation of new beverage type**
- **Hupkens, C. L. H. & Knibbe, R. & Drop, M. J. Alcohol consumption in the European Community: uniformity and diversity in drinking pattern. *Addiction* 88: 1391-1404, 1993**

## **Different use values of alcoholic beverages**

- **They all can serve as a beverage at meals**
- **They all can be used as a means of recreation and enjoyment**
- **They all can be used as an intoxicant**
- **Almost all of them can be used as a thirst-quencher**
- **Some of them are still used as medicine**

# Conclusions I

- **Drinking habits vary greatly between different European countries**
- **Politicians and researches are interested in different aspects of adult alcohol drinking patterns**
- **National alcohol surveys are often intended to describe changes in longer time periods**
- **Therefore, any standardized survey instrument might disturb the measurement of national trends in drinking habits**

## Conclusions II

- **However, in some countries, a national survey instrument for monitoring young people's drinking, has been complemented by an international survey instrument**
- **To study adult drinking behavior a sample is not as easily to be drawn as when studying student population**
- **Therefore it is difficult to guarantee an exactly similar study design in all European countries**
- **It is extremely important to have a similar study design in order to reliably compare the drinking patterns**

## Conclusions III

- **When a standardized survey instrument has been accepted for use in different countries, its use should be monitored**
- **For example, it should be translated into English from the national language by an independent translator in order to guarantee that the phrasing of the questions are understood in a similar way in all of the countries**