

### Parents and teen drinking

- 1 Parents who serve their teenagers a glass of wine at dinner often argue that they are encouraging a more civilised drinking culture as practised on European mainland. Now the first major study has concluded that they are wrong: teenagers given alcohol by their parents are twice as likely to become heavier drinkers. However, the study also found that it was worse for teenagers to get alcohol from peers, as they were then five times as likely to progress to heavier drinking as those who had none.
- 2 Richard Mattick, of the University of New South Wales, said: "Our study is the first to analyse parental supply of alcohol and its effects in detail in the long term, and finds that it is, in fact, associated with risks when compared to teenagers not given alcohol. This 30 the conclusion that alcohol consumption leads to harm, no matter how it is supplied."
- 3 He recruited children from the age of 12, following them through adolescence and questioning them every year. At the start, 15 per cent had been given alcohol by their parents, rising to 57 per cent at the end. Teenagers given alcohol only by their parents one year were twice as likely as those who did not drink to get alcohol from other sources the next, according to results published in *The Lancet Public Health*. They were twice as likely to have more than half a bottle of wine in one go.
- 4 Professor Mattick said that "parents go largely unnoticed" in alcohol policy. He said that the bigger risks of getting alcohol from elsewhere were not a reason for parents to step in, arguing: "Although other supply was associated with more problems than was parental supply, our study shows that there is no rationale for parents to give alcohol to adolescents younger than the legal purchase age."
- 5 Professor Mattick said that although it was possible his results were not applicable to different cultures, "there remains no evidence from other countries that parental supply reduces risk".
- 6 James Nicholls, of Alcohol Research UK, said that the study "provides yet more evidence that the continental approach to introducing children to alcohol, at least in high-consuming countries, does little to prevent heavier drinking later on. Indeed, it may do the reverse."
- 7 A survey earlier this month by the Alcohol Health Alliance found six in ten people agreed that giving children alcohol at home would make them better able to handle their drink. Sir Ian Gilmore, chairman of the alliance, said: "Many parents believe that letting their children try alcohol reduces the chances that they will seek out alcohol from other sources, or experience alcohol-related harm. Though an understandable belief, this study is a clear indication that the opposite is in fact true."

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