

# Report finds extensive use of illicit alcohol

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The consumption of illicit or noncommercial alcohol is widespread in many countries worldwide and contributes significantly to the global burden of disease, according to a new report released today by the International Center for Alcohol Policies (ICAP). The report focuses on the use of noncommercial alcohol, defined as traditional beverages produced for home consumption or limited local trade and counterfeit or unregistered products, in three regions: sub-Saharan Africa, southern Asia, and central and eastern Europe.

The report, *Noncommercial Alcohol in Three Regions*, finds a significant portion of alcohol produced, sold, and consumed around the world is not reflected in official statistics. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), noncommercial drinks account for a significant portion of alcohol consumed in the three regions.

"The extensive use of noncommercial alcohol around the world has detrimental and far-reaching effects on consumers, government and the industry," says Marcus Grant, President of ICAP. "In many countries, this largely illicit alcohol has harmful effects on society because of the lack of meaningful controls."

Highlights from the report include:

- In Ukraine, unrecorded or noncommercial alcohol consumption exceeds recorded alcohol consumption (10.5 vs. 6.09 per capita consumption in liters, respectively)
- Unrecorded alcohol consumption also exceeds recorded alcohol

consumption in many African countries, including Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, and Zimbabwe

-- In Sri Lanka, illicit alcohol has a far greater share of the market than legal alcohol

(77 percent vs. 22 percent, respectively)

-- Noncommercial alcohol accounts for nearly half (43 percent) of official alcohol sales in Belarus

-- Despite the apparent displacement of some of its historical importance by the more commoditized drinks (e.g., Western beer, wine, and spirits), noncommercial alcohol continues to have a role in the religious, symbolic, social, psychological, and economic realms of life of the average African

While the production of many noncommercial beverages meets high quality standards, the report finds that much of this category of alcohol may be contaminated and toxic. This tainted alcohol poses a serious threat to public health, particularly in developing and transition countries.

Also included in the report are nonbeverage alcohols derived from medicinal compounds, automobile products, and cosmetics.

Nonbeverage alcohols, often used to increase alcohol concentration, are a relatively widespread phenomenon in some countries, particularly among problem drinkers in the lowest socioeconomic brackets.

Source: International Center for Alcohol Policies

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