

Greying Finns drink more alcohol than before: study

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Ageing Finns have increased their alcohol consumption significantly since 2000, a worrying trend in a country where alcohol is the leading cause of death, researchers said on Friday.

The national institute for health and welfare (THL) interviewed Finns about their drinking habits in 2000 and 2008.

Researchers found that Finns who were 50 or older in 2008 drank greater quantities of alcohol and more often than people in the same age group eight years earlier.

On average, men between age 50 and 69 consumed 6.3 litres (1.6 gallons) of pure alcohol last year, while among women of the same age consumption was 1.7 litres.

Alcohol intake had increased by 44 percent for men and 35 percent for women compared to 2000.

According to official statistics, Finns consumed an average 10.4 litres of pure alcohol per person in Finland in 2008.

"In the 2000s people have not cut down on their alcohol consumption when they get older the same way as before. The price of alcohol has decreased during this decade and older people's level of income is higher than before," senior THL researcher Pia Maekelae told AFP.

Maekelae added that those in their 50s now belong to a generation that has always drunk more alcohol than previous generations.

Greater [alcohol consumption](#) is likely to cause more health problems.

"Older people should drink less alcohol than younger people. They have more illnesses and medication and that together with alcohol can have consequences," she said.

Researchers interviewed some 2,700 Finns aged 15 to 69 last autumn.

Alcohol has been Finland's leading cause of death since 2005, a year after the Nordic country slashed its alcohol tax by 30 percent in an attempt to stem a flood of imports from EU neighbours where prices were lower.

In January the tax on alcohol was increased by 10 percent and parliament is expected next week to approve a law proposal that would raise the tax by another 10 percent in early October.

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