

Communism continues to cause heavy drinking in Eastern European countries

October 18 2018



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Researchers from the School of Economics set out to establish to what extent living under communism, both in terms of the numbers of years spent under communist regimes and specifically during formative adult years of 18-25, influenced alcoholic intake in the future.

Using data from the first wave of the European Health Interview Survey

(EHIS), gathered between 2006-2009, researchers Dr. Gintare Malisauskaite and Dr. Alex Klein, analysed [alcohol intake](#) for citizens in non-communist Cyprus, Greece, Malta and former communist regimes of Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia.

The results showed a clear trend that the amount of time spent living under communism is related to greater intake of [alcohol](#), even since the collapse of the Soviet Union almost 20 years ago.

This was particularly true for women, with a large disparity in alcoholic intake between women in Eastern European countries who had lived under communism than those in the west.

Specifically, the longer women had lived under communism the more likely they were to drink alcohol between two to four times a month, and this increased 0.7% for each year spent living under communist regimes. Daily drinking was also higher, although on a smaller scale.

However, [binge drinking](#)—classed as six drinks or more on a single occasion—for women in former communist nations was low, in line with previous research that found there was little social acceptance for female binge drinking in these nations.

However, there was a clear link between the amount of binge drinking by males in these countries and the amount of time they have lived under communism. Analysis shows that each year lived under communism increased the probability of drinking heavily either monthly or weekly by 0.4%. The effect on drinking daily was smaller, at a 0.1% increase for each year under communism.

The researchers are unable to say specifically what it is about living under communist regimes that has influenced people to drink more but

that this could be the basis for future studies.

Commenting on the findings Dr. Malisauskaite said: 'Data analysis shows that living under communism has had a long-term impact on alcohol consumption of those affected, resulting in more frequent consumption for both men and women and more likely binge [drinking](#) for men. This suggests that the experience of the Soviet regime still has an impact on the people's behaviour and, if it is transmitted as a cultural norm between generations, this impact could last even beyond the lives of those affected directly.'

More information: Gintare Malisauskaite et al, Drinking under communism: Why do alcohol consumption habits in Eastern Europe differ from the west in the long-run?, *Journal of Comparative Economics* (2018). [DOI: 10.1016/j.jce.2018.07.010](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jce.2018.07.010)

Provided by University of Kent

Citation: Communism continues to cause heavy drinking in Eastern European countries (2018, October 18) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2018-10-heavy-eastern-european-countries.html>

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