

feeling the  
effects:  
Romania  
a Demos and  
IPP report on  
parenting and  
alcohol

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Finally, we would like to state clearly that all editorial decisions rested with us, the authors. Therefore, the authors alone take responsibility for any errors or omissions that may be identified in this report.

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## Executive summary

Excessive alcohol consumption continues to be a priority for governments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) across Europe. Through the research conducted at Demos, we have explored the role that parenting can have on reducing the next generation's likelihood of drinking excessively. In 2011 and 2012, Demos launched two research reports exploring the relationship between parenting style, parental drinking behaviour and children's likelihood of developing a problematic relationship with alcohol.

In *Under the Influence* we presented evidence based on analysis of longitudinal data sets showing that high levels of emotional warmth in the first five years of a child's life and consistent discipline until the age of 16 are correlated with a reduced likelihood that a child will drink excessively in adolescence and adulthood. We concluded that 'tough love' parenting could reduce chances of excessive alcohol consumption among children.<sup>1</sup>

In the second report, *Feeling the Effects*, we found that the more a parent is perceived to drink by their children, the less likely they were to be 'tough love' parents. Our interviews with 50 parents who misused alcohol suggested that parenting approaches could be inconsistent, chaotic and lacking in emotional warmth and support.<sup>2</sup>

Given the suggestive nature of our findings, we wanted to explore whether the relationship between parenting and drinking was specific – or especially strong – in the UK, or whether it existed in other countries. The research presented in this report is a first step in trying to answer this question. In this case, our focus was on Romania.

This report presents the findings of our research. It is based on 26 interviews with families where at least one parent was

considered an alcoholic, and a new nationally representative survey exploring parenting and drinking behaviour in Romania.<sup>3</sup> We also make a series of recommendations to the government, NGOs and the alcohol industry.

## Findings

Data on drinking patterns in Romania suggest there are high levels of alcohol consumption in Romania compared with other European countries. An OECD report published in 2011 found that Romanians have the third highest alcohol consumption per capita in Europe, with adults drinking an average of 12.7 litres per capita in a year.<sup>4</sup> A report published by the World Health Organization (WHO) earlier in 2014 found that Romania has the fifth highest level of per capita alcohol consumption in both Europe and the world, each person consuming 14.4 litres of pure alcohol each year, on average.<sup>5</sup> Data from these surveys and others suggest there are notable gender differences in alcohol consumption.

Excessive alcohol consumption can have a huge impact on families. In the 2007 study *Cunostinte Atitudini Practici Parentale in Romania* (*Parental Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices in Romania*), 1 in 10 parents in urban areas and 1 in 5 parents in rural areas suggested that alcohol consumption was a cause of fighting within the family.<sup>6</sup> In the 2006 study *Educatia in Familie, Repere si Practici Actuale* (*Family Education, Guidelines and Current Practices*), 6.3 per cent of the surveyed children implied that alcoholism was among their parents' deviant behaviours.<sup>7</sup>

Building on this past research, our interviews with families with alcohol problems highlight the difficult situation that many families face in Romania:

- Numerous pressures and worries beyond those typical of day-to-day familial activity often afflict families suffering from parental alcohol abuse. These often include worklessness, chronic illness, a death in the family and mental health issues.
- There were very few cases of families with one or two alcoholic parents that did not contain some level of abnormal familial

dysfunction; 11 of the 26 interviewees came from a family unit containing at least one child with notable behavioural issues, some associated with a medical condition. In most cases the interviewers noted negligence, violence, over-indulgence or poor parenting of some type.

- More than half of the interviewees suggested that there was a conflict between the parenting styles used by each partner. In the cases where a family unit consisted of an alcoholic and a non-alcoholic parent, and where there was conflict between parenting styles, the parenting characteristics of the alcoholics were highly negative, often violent, authoritarian or negligent. This demonstrates that the parenting style of parents within the sample who were alcoholics was likely to be more strict, abusive or uninvolved than that of their partner, whose style was less strict, warmer and more involved.

In addition to these interviews we designed and undertook a national representative survey of over 1,000 Romanian citizens. The survey questions focused on drinking behaviour and parenting style, and are included in the technical appendix to this report.

Our survey showed that, notwithstanding possible gender effects, high levels of alcohol consumption are passed down the generations, and ‘authoritarian’ parents and their children drink more than ‘non-authoritarian’ parents and their children:

- Respondents who reported having high levels of alcohol consumption were likely to report high consumption levels among their parents.
- Respondents with young children who reported having high levels of consumption were likely to report that their children had a problem with alcohol.
- Respondents with minors who were classified as ‘authoritarian’ parents were likely to report drinking more frequently and in greater quantities than other parenting types.
- Respondents who considered their parents to be ‘authoritarian’ were more likely themselves to drink more frequently and in

greater quantities than children of parents who displayed other parenting types.

- Parents with minors who were classified as ‘authoritarian’ were more likely to report their children having a problem with alcohol either with school or the police than parents with minors who were classified as belonging to other parenting types.

The methodology limits the conclusions that we can draw from our research. Nonetheless, combined with our research in the UK, the data suggest there is a link between parenting and excessive alcohol consumption, and they underline the importance of there being high levels of emotional warmth, which are lacking in ‘authoritarian’ approaches to parenting. We also saw this in our interviews with families, where parents with alcohol problems can often be violent, authoritarian and neglectful. We thus argue that interventions designed to help families should include parenting support and encouragement with respect to emotional engagement and expressions of affection.

## Recommendations

We make our recommendations to a range of stakeholders, and argue that everyone from national government to regional authorities, NGOs and the alcohol industry all have a role to play. In particular, we recommend that there should be:

- a national alcohol strategy in Romania outlining key statistics, priorities and responsibilities and including a range of elements that focus on parenting
- information awareness campaigns drawing attention to the link between parenting and the drinking behaviour of parents’ children
- identification and brief advice (IBA) interventions carried out by Romanian GPs and hospitals, particularly targeting parents
- increased investment in early years interventions (particularly in high risk areas) that target expecting mothers, new families and children in primary school

- increased investment in family-based interventions that include parenting support (particularly those encouraging higher levels of expressed affection) at the heart of their approach





# Introduction

Excessive alcohol consumption continues to be a priority for governments and NGOs across Europe. The UK Government estimates that harms associated with excessive alcohol consumption cost the public approximately £3.5 billion each year.<sup>8</sup> Across Europe, 170,000 people die from cirrhosis of the liver every year.<sup>9</sup> Roughly a quarter of road fatalities in Europe are alcohol-related.<sup>10</sup> Some statistics suggest that alcohol-related hospital admissions have been on the rise in recent years.<sup>11</sup> The plight of those affected by harms caused by alcohol cannot be ignored.

Equally, a balanced consideration of the subject must take into account the social, economic and health benefits of moderate alcohol consumption. Alcohol is deeply engrained in our societies and cultures, marking special occasions like birthdays and weddings, and playing a key element in socialising and communal gatherings. The alcohol industry also contributes a significant amount of money to the economy. European wine, spirits and beer industry bodies estimate that the alcohol industry provides 398,000 direct jobs in Europe.<sup>12</sup> The Coalition Government estimates 1.8 million jobs in the UK are supported by the alcohol industry.<sup>13</sup>

Despite the worrying statistics cited above, there have been some encouraging trends in recent years. For example, in the UK there has been a marked decline in alcohol consumption among young people at school age. According to the annual statistics of the Health & Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC), in England approximately 1 in 4 school pupils reported drinking alcohol in the last week in 2003 compared with just 1 in 10 in 2013. There has also been a substantial increase in the number of 11-15 year olds who say that they have never tried alcohol in their lives, from 39 per cent in 2003 to 61 per cent in 2013. Attitudes

among school pupils have also shifted. Almost half (46 per cent) in 2003 thought it was OK for someone their age to drink alcohol once a week, compared with less than a third (26 per cent) who thought this in 2013.<sup>14</sup> Figures from the European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs show that there have also been significant declines in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Ireland, Norway, Portugal, Russia and Sweden. However, youth drinking has increased in Eastern Europe, Cyprus, Greece and Hungary.<sup>15</sup>

These declines are only partly due to increasing proportions of the population who are forbidden to drink alcohol by their religion. Additional factors could include ID schemes like Challenge 21 and Challenge 25 in the UK, the rise of social media and new technologies offering alternative activities, the difficult economic climate, and a potential generational shift towards sobriety, as a reaction to the more liberal attitudes of Baby Boomer and Generation X parents.<sup>16</sup>

There is also some evidence to suggest that these declines could also be caused by improved parenting. Demos research has shown that high levels of emotional warmth in the first five years of a child's life can have a significant impact on whether they develop problematic drinking patterns when they are teenagers.<sup>17</sup> In particular, there has been increasing emphasis on the importance of a child's early years.<sup>18</sup> According to Oxford academic Frances Gardner, while our knowledge about how parenting styles have changed over the years is limited there are a few studies suggesting there have been some improvements.<sup>19</sup> For example, a report for the Nuffield Foundation cites research showing that the amount of time children spend with their parents increased by around 30 per cent between 1986 and 2000. The research also suggests there has been an increase in parental monitoring of children from 1986 to 2006, including among single parent households.<sup>20</sup>

Of course, parenting is just one of many potential drivers of problematic alcohol use. In addition to other cultural, national and generational factors, academics, public health officials, politicians and industry representatives all hotly debate issues like price, availability, outlet density and marketing.

## ‘Wicked problems’ and systems theory

Excessive alcohol consumption can be described as a ‘wicked problem’. The term ‘wicked problem’ refers to social issues that are highly complex and often entail unintended consequences and difficult trade-offs. Complexity can be seen in the inability to identify the primary causes of excessive alcohol consumption: is it price, availability, advertising, culture, family, genetics, or some combination of all of these factors? Complexity can also pose obstacles to proposing policy solutions, because of the potential unintended consequences that different policy choices may have.

In the case of alcohol, stakeholders disagree about the extent of the problem and the best approach to tackling it. While differences are often discussed in evidence-based language and statistics, stakeholders’ disagreements can often be traced to irreconcilable values and moral judgements. The debate over a minimum unit price in the UK has been particularly contentious, with the Government proposing a minimum unit price on alcohol only to make a U-turn and abandon the policy.<sup>21</sup> The debate has dominated discussions about alcohol policy, and created an acrimonious relationship between public health officials, academics and industry representatives.

Approaching the issue of excessive alcohol consumption as a ‘wicked problem’, however, allows us to consider the problem and the policy solution from a different angle. The notion of ‘wicked problems’ was first developed by Rittel and Webber in their seminal article ‘Dilemmas in a general theory of planning’ published in 1973.<sup>22</sup> They argued that there is always more than one explanation for a wicked problem, and that different explanations depended greatly on individuals’ perspectives. They also argued that every wicked problem is a symptom of another problem – for example, alcohol abuse could be a symptom of depression, poverty or experience of trauma. The notion of ‘wicked problems’ and what they mean for public policy was developed further by Jake Chapman in 2002 in a Demos report called *System Failure*.<sup>23</sup>

Systems theory argues that governments fail to make improvements to policy on issues that can be characterised as highly emotional, polarised and where a lot is seen to be at stake

– ‘wicked problems’. Drugs policy is a classic example (with debates between ‘enforcers’ and ‘legalisers’), but in the past decade, alcohol policy has also come to be characterised as a highly polarised policy area. Indeed, in 1987, Steinglass et al applied systems model thinking to the issue of alcoholism in families.<sup>24</sup> More recently, an article in 2012 considered its application to public drinking laws in Australia, and one of the authors of this report used it in Demos’ *Taking Drugs Seriously*, when looking at the issue of new, emerging psychoactive substances – also known as ‘legal highs’.<sup>25</sup>

Systems theorists argue that a more fruitful approach is to focus on improvements to policy on areas where consensus can be found across the polarised spectrum. This is the approach that Demos has adopted, drawing on our history of approaching policy issues in this manner. We argue that parenting is one area where it may be possible to establish consensus among public health officials and industry representatives.

### Parenting style, ‘character’ and alcohol

In the past decade, Demos has explored the role and impact of ‘character’ skills on life chances and later life outcomes. The origins of the idea of ‘character’ can be traced back to Aristotle. In *Nicomachean Ethics* he proposed that the idea of ‘character’ is a moral virtue that is strongly tied to the notion of moderation, and the ability to delay gratification and to withstand peer pressure. The idea of ‘character’ continued to be a strong force in Victorian England – and elsewhere – and found its expression in various ways, for example, in Robert Baden Powell’s rationale for founding the Scout Movement. While the idea of character fell out of fashion in the late twentieth century, it has since been revived, particularly in public policy circles.<sup>26</sup> In its new guise, character is often described as a ‘skill’ – in particular a ‘soft’ or ‘non-cognitive’ skill.

In the past decade, research conducted by academics (and Demos) has suggested that individuals who have stronger ‘character skills’ are more likely to be healthier, happier and successful in the labour market<sup>27</sup> – proving Aristotle’s insight

that ‘character’ is essential to living a good life. For example, research presented in the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) report *Freedom’s Orphans* based on analysis of two longitudinal studies found that personal and social skills became 33 times more important in determining relative life chances between 1958 and 1970. Moreover, the role of family background in determining these skills led to decreased social mobility in the 1970 stream.<sup>28</sup>

Demos research has shown that parenting has one of the biggest impacts on the development of character skills (see for example *Building Character*, *Home Front* and *The Character Inquiry*<sup>29</sup>). In *Building Character*, Demos used longitudinal analysis of the Millennium Cohort Study and found that ‘tough love’ parenting – which combines high levels of affection with consistent enforcement of discipline – was correlated with the development of a range of ‘character’ skills in children, which in turn led to positive outcomes for them later in life.<sup>30</sup> In 2011 Demos drew on these findings to explore the relationship between parenting, character and alcohol.

In 2011 and 2012, Demos launched two research reports exploring the relationship between parenting style, parental drinking behaviour and children’s likelihood of developing a problematic relationship with alcohol.<sup>31</sup> Similar to the findings from *Building Character*, these reports found that ‘tough love’ parenting was the best protection against children developing a drinking problem. In particular, we found that:

- High levels of parental warmth when the child is under 5 significantly reduce the chances the child will drink excessively at 16.
- Disengaged parenting at age 10 and age 16 makes the child twice as likely to drink excessively at age 34.
- Disengaged parenting at age 16 makes the child over eight times more likely to drink excessively at that age.<sup>32</sup>

Based on these findings, we concluded that high levels of warmth until the age of 10 and consistent enforcement of discipline (of either the authoritarian or tough love kind) until

the age of 16 are the best parenting approaches to reduce the likelihood a child will drink excessively in adolescence and adulthood.

In the second report, *Feeling the Effects*, we conducted analysis to consider how parental drinking influenced parenting style and a child's likelihood of drinking excessively. We also conducted interviews with 50 families across the UK where at least one parent had a problematic relationship with alcohol in order to see in detail how this affected their parenting and how they could be best supported. Basing the first part of the analysis again on longitudinal data sources, we found that the more frequently a parent was seen to drink by their children, the less likely they were to be classified as a tough love parent.<sup>33</sup>

Given the interesting nature of our findings, we wanted to explore whether the relationship between parenting and drinking was specific to – or especially strong in – the UK, or whether it existed in other countries. The research presented in this report is a first step in trying to answer this question. In this case, our focus is on Romania.

### Feeling the effects: Romania

In the absence of longitudinal studies in Romania, we commissioned a new representative survey of the Romanian population to explore parenting style and drinking behaviour. As we did in the report *Feeling the Effects*, we also conducted 26 interviews with families where at least one parent was considered an alcoholic. Thus, it is important to stress at the outset that the results from Romania are not directly comparable to our research in the UK. For example, the numbers are far smaller in the Romanian survey; in the absence of longitudinal sources of data, we are unable to track people over a long space of time (eg 30 years); and we rely on fewer indicators for parenting and drinking behaviour. Thus, the research presented here is less methodologically powerful than our analysis in the UK. Nonetheless, it provides the first ever insight into parenting behaviour in Romania, and how these may link to drinking behaviour.

# 1 Setting the context: parenting and drinking in Romania

In this chapter we outline pre-existing evidence on drinking and parenting in Romania. We also detail the policy context in Romania with respect to alcohol and parenting, including strategies at the national, regional and local level. Taken together with our research presented in Chapters 2 and 3, this information informs our policy recommendations in the final chapter of this report.

## Drinking in Romania: what do we know?

The data available in Romania on monitoring alcohol consumption are extremely poor and sporadic. The latest survey conducted by the Ministry of Health on health determinants dates back to 1997. The overwhelming majority of studies that have been conducted in Romania within the past ten years are international surveys, such as the European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD) and Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC), and those carried out by the OECD and the WHO.

According to the European Status Report on Alcohol and Health 2010, in the period between 2003 and 2005, the recorded alcohol consumption by those aged 15 years and above in Romania was approximately 11.3 litres of pure alcohol per capita per year. This figure was stable throughout the surveyed period, but has doubled within the past three decades. To this consumption figure the unrecorded alcohol consumption figure must be added, which is about 4 litres of pure alcohol per capita per year, adding up to a final total consumption of 15.3 litres of pure alcohol per capita per year. The total alcohol consumption in European countries in the reference period was 12.2 litres of pure alcohol per inhabitant 15 years of age and above per year.

This figure is closer to the findings of a 2012 OECD report: Romanians rank third for alcohol consumption per capita in Europe, with adult Romanians drinking 12.7 litres per capita in a year. The report also found that there has been a substantial increase in consumption in Romania since 1980: consumption increased by 14 percentage points between 1980 and 2012.<sup>34</sup>

The most recent report, published by the WHO earlier in 2014, found that Romania had the fifth highest level of per capita alcohol consumption in both Europe and the world, with Romanians consuming 14.4 litres of pure alcohol each year per person, on average.<sup>35</sup>

It is important to note that the level of alcohol consumption expressed in litres per capita (a unit of measurement that depends on the number of adult population regardless of their behaviour with respect to alcohol) does not provide the actual level of alcohol consumption by individual people who declare they consume alcohol. The *European Status Report on Alcohol and Health* in 2010 found that the consumption of alcohol solely by those aged 15 years and above who declare themselves to be consumers of alcohol was 24.48 litres of pure alcohol per capita, of which 31.75 litres were consumed by men, and 15.02 litres by women.<sup>36</sup> These figures demonstrate that there is a substantial gender difference in alcohol consumption in Romania. These data are similar to the breakdown provided in the WHO report; this found that men consume on average 30.7 litres of pure alcohol and women on average 10.9 litres annually. This is one of the biggest differences between drinking patterns in the UK compared with Romania: in the UK annual per capita alcohol consumption is 18.9 litres and 8.5 litres for men and women respectively.<sup>37</sup>

These figures suggest that despite the UK's reputation for binge drinking, alcohol consumption in Romania is notably higher than it is in the UK (the UK was ranked thirteenth in world for alcohol consumption, while Romania was ranked fifth). According to an estimate presented by the Ministry of Health, in Romania over 17,000 people die every year because of alcohol consumption, and over half of them die during the active period of their life (between 20 and 64 years of age).<sup>38</sup>



The National Anti-Drug Agency in Romania conducted surveys on the knowledge, practice and attitude of the generation population (aged 15 years and above) regarding drug and alcohol consumption in 2004 and 2007. They found there are links between:

- alcohol consumption and socio-economic levels: people on a high income are more likely to consume alcohol than those on a low income
- alcohol consumption and marital status: married people are likely to consume more alcohol than those who are unmarried
- higher alcohol consumption and a higher level of education.<sup>39</sup>

### Teenage drinking

On measures of teenage drinking, the OECD survey showed that Romania had one of the highest levels of teenage drinking of all countries surveyed, with 47 per cent of boys aged 15 admitting to drinking at least twice in their lives.<sup>40</sup> A study conducted by Unicef Romania last year on the state of adolescents in Romania also shows that adolescents are at risk, finding that 42 per cent of adolescents consumed alcohol at least once.<sup>41</sup> Again, both studies suggest there are notable gender gaps in levels of alcohol consumption: in the UNICEF report, 57 per cent of boys reported consuming alcohol at least once in their life, while only 27 per cent of girls did.<sup>42</sup>

The European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD) includes data on the use of alcohol, tobacco, illicit drugs and new substances with psychoactive properties, among the school population at age 16. The latest report, published in 2011, covered adolescents in 39 countries – most of Europe – who had reached age 16 in the year of the study and attended courses in educational institutions. There have been five editions of this type of study, in 1995, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011; Romania has been included in the ESPAD project since 1999.

The latest ESPAD study conducted in Romania considered adolescents born in 1995, sampling 2,770 students (1,279 boys

and 1,491 girls) selected from 149 schools (268 classes IX and X). The results showed that 4 out of 5 16-year-olds reported having drunk alcohol at least once in their lives (referred to as 'lifetime' use). This was down by 2 per cent from the previous study in 2007 (81 per cent) and was, notably, 8 per cent below the European average (87 per cent).<sup>43</sup>

The UNICEF survey also shows that while adolescents in urban areas are more likely to have tried alcohol, adolescents in rural areas are likely to drink in larger quantities. Half of the adolescents living in urban areas consumed alcohol at least once in their lives, compared with only 32 per cent of those living in rural areas who had done so. However, adolescents in rural areas usually drink almost double the amount of that drunk by adolescents in urban areas. Data show that within the previous 30 days, the adolescents in rural areas had consumed 560 millilitres of alcohol on average, while their counterparts in urban areas had consumed only about half that quantity (approximately 300 millilitres).<sup>44</sup>

The Dutch–Romanian Network for Alcohol Policy Implementation (DRAIN) project has also produced research on youth drinking.<sup>45</sup> Financed by the Dutch Foreign Affairs Ministry as part of the Matra programme, the aims of the DRAIN project are to produce a series of studies investigating alcohol consumption among underage young people and assisting the development of local policy for the prevention of alcohol problems. One of the key strengths of the project is the creation of local networks for alcohol prevention with the help of specialists, supporters and researchers, who are well informed and motivated. Researchers from the Dutch Institute for Alcohol Policy (STAP) worked with the municipal authorities of Pitesti in Romania to carry out research on children and underage young people's ability to access alcohol (eg successful alcohol purchasing attempts and the number of alcohol outlets in the vicinity of schools), as well as studies on the attitudes and knowledge of students and parents on alcohol.

In 2008, the first study of the DRAIN project was based on a questionnaire given to 1,300 students in 50 classes in 17 schools. The results showed that only 12 per cent of the young people in

Pitesti (aged 14 and 19 years) claimed to have never drunk alcohol, so 88 per cent of them had consumed alcohol at some point in their lives. This is higher than the percentage found in the ESPAD study, but not by a large margin. The DRAIN survey showed that boys were more likely to drink than girls (93 per cent boys compared with 85 per cent girls), and almost half the boys reported that they had their first drink of alcohol before the age of 13. Moreover, only 28 per cent reported that they had not consumed alcohol in the past 30 days; 20 per cent had consumed alcohol once, so more than 50 per cent had drunk more than once and were considered to be ‘regular’ drinkers.

The survey *The Child Wellbeing in Rural Romania*, first conducted in 2012 and repeated in 2014, is unique in the field of child welfare research in Romania and is part of the constant series of periodic analysis conducted by World Vision Romania since 2005. This study is a comparative longitudinal analysis of the main indicators on child welfare, compiled in a set of data representative for the Romanian environment regarding the evolution of the indicators measured. The 2012 survey covers 2,774 households.<sup>46</sup>

Children and young people between 12 and 18 years of age were asked if they had smoked or drunk alcohol and, if so, how often they do these things. More than 1 in 5 (21 per cent) of the respondents reported that they had consumed alcohol at least once. Those who reported they had consumed alcohol were asked how often they had done so within the previous four weeks: 27 per cent had not consumed alcohol at all, 46 per cent had done so less than once a week, and 19 per cent had consumed alcohol at least once a week.

## Infrastructure and strategy to tackle harmful drinking in Romania

In Romania – as in many other countries – the Government’s approach to tackling alcohol addiction is most often included in the same sphere as tackling addiction to drugs and tobacco. The issue of excessive alcohol consumption is included in the National Health Programmes 2013–2014, conducted by the

Ministry of Health. Thus, there is the Mental Health Programme within the Drug Addiction Treatment Sub-programme. However, the only activity stipulated to discourage excessive alcohol consumption is to conduct an assessment of the nationwide economic impact of excessive alcohol consumption and alcohol addiction. Another programme developed by the Ministry of Health is the National Programme for Health Promotion and Health Education.

Despite these few examples, there appears to be less of a focus on tackling alcohol misuse among state institutions, private companies or NGOs than in countries like the UK. Moreover, according to members of our expert steering group, there is much less policy and media focus on alcohol consumption among underage young people than there is in Western European countries.

A few projects and programmes in Romania regarding alcohol consumption are noteworthy. For example, the National Agency Against Drugs is responsible for running research and programmes as part of ESPAD. Another project, co-financed through the European Social Fund, is the Social Inclusion Centre for Alcohol Addicted Persons. The project is a partnership between the Association Alliance for Fight Against Alcoholism and Addictions (ALIAT), the National Centre for Family Medicine Studies (CNSMF) and the Association for the Support of the Unemployed Dambovită (ASSD), which provides prevention and treatment of problems related to substance abuse of alcohol and drugs.

There are also industry-led efforts. The Romanian Forum for Responsible Drinking (RFRD) is a group of companies from the spirits industry and other interested parties that encourages the industry to adopt responsible self-regulation standards on marketing and advertising.

## Conclusion

For a number of political and cultural reasons, the topic of alcohol misuse is not as widely discussed and debated in Romania as it is in many Western European countries. This does

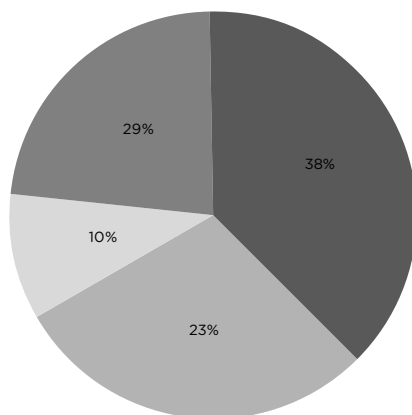
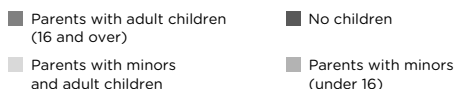
not mean that there is not a problem in Romania – particularly among certain segments of the population. Data on drinking patterns in Romania suggest a complicated picture. Moreover, many members of our expert steering group felt that the lack of public dialogue about alcohol in Romania might make many people hesitant to reveal their drinking patterns to researchers conducting surveys. Indeed, the findings in our survey presented in the next chapter suggest there are very moderate levels of alcohol consumption in Romania, but these findings must be considered in the proper context – including the OECD report cited above, which suggests there are high levels of alcohol consumption there. Nonetheless, it is our hope that this report and our research will help to raise the profile of alcohol in Romania and contribute to make the topic of alcohol less taboo and a subject for public debate.



## 2 Survey results: parenting style in Romania

There have been a few studies of parenting style in Romania. For example, a survey conducted in February 2013 studied the parents of the children enrolled in School Number 3 in the town of Rovinari, as well as other parents identified by the members of the Centre for Education and Consulting Structural Instruments and analysed parenting styles. The survey found that most of the 308 parents in the sample adopted a parenting style that generated positive school and social behaviour, and that only a small proportion of parents had a parenting style that generated negative school and social behaviour. A gentle and firm parenting style as well as a continuing, systematic and active determination to ensure a secure living environment led to increased self-esteem and better social skills among children.<sup>47</sup> The Unicef Romania study of 2005 entitled *Cunostinte Atitudini Practici Parentale in Romania (Parental Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices in Romania)* found that 22–30 per cent of parents reported fighting at least once a month, and over 42.6 per cent of parents admitted to fighting in the presence of a child. Approximately 6 per cent of parents reported that alcohol consumption was the cause of parental fighting, with this being more likely in rural areas.<sup>48</sup>

However, our survey provides a unique insight into parenting style in Romania. Like alcohol, parenting can be a delicate subject to discuss. It is very likely that many of our respondents' answers to parenting questions suffered from social desirability bias – respondents gave answers they believed to be socially acceptable and were not likely to report things that might be seen by researchers as blameworthy or problematic. Thus, our findings must be interpreted with this important caveat in mind.

Figure 1 **Parental status of survey respondents**

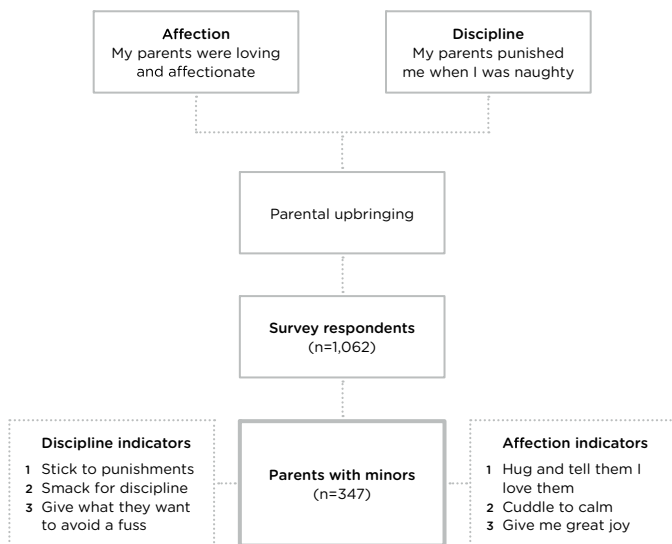
Just under two-thirds of the respondents (62 per cent) reported that they were parents of either minors (16 years or younger) or adults. Just under a third (29 per cent) of respondents have children over 16 years old; just under 1 in 4 (23 per cent) have children who are 16 years old or younger; and 1 in 10 (10 per cent) reported having both minor and adult children (figure 1).

Notwithstanding concerns over social desirability bias cited above, the picture of parenting presented in Romania through our survey is highly positive. Our survey provided two opportunities to gather data on parenting style.

First, we asked all respondents ( $n = 1,062$ ) to reflect and report on how affectionate their parents were and how consistent they were when enforcing discipline. This is referred to as 'older generation' parenting.



Figure 2 Measures of parenting style used in our survey

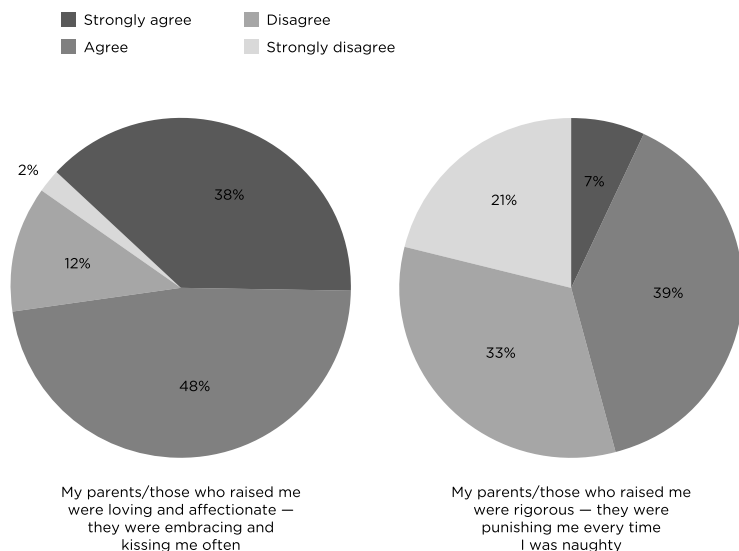


Second, we asked the parents in our survey who have younger children (under the age of 16) six 'parenting style' questions, some drawn from our work in *Under the Influence*, which used the 1970 Birth Cohort Study and the Avon Longitudinal Survey of Parents and Children in the UK. This is referred to as 'current generation' parenting.

The list of parenting style indicators that we used is included in figure 2. The parents with younger children (under 16 years old) comprised approximately one-third of the total survey sample. Figure 2 shows the measures of parenting style we used in the survey.

Both parenting measures (for the older and the current generation) paint a similar picture of parenting in Romania, which is marked by high levels of affection and moderate levels of rule enforcement. This is supported by previous research into parenting in Romania. The report *The Child Wellbeing in Rural Romania*, conducted by World Vision Romania in 2012, found

Figure 3 **Parenting style indicators and responses across the entire sample**

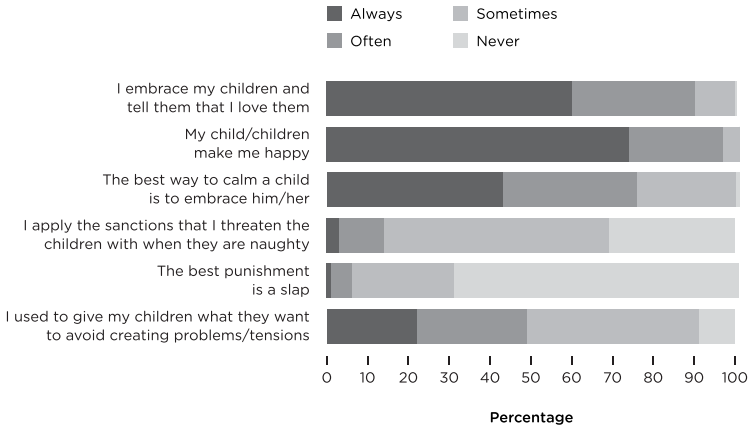


Source: IPP and Demos survey, 2014

that a high proportion (80.9 per cent) of parents rejected the idea that physical beating was an appropriate method for disciplining a child (with 3.6 per cent believing it is appropriate, and a further 12.4 per cent suggesting that they accepted physical force as being an appropriate form of punishment).<sup>49</sup>

The majority (81 per cent) of survey respondents in the older generation agreed with statements that their parents or those who raised them were loving and affectionate, while just under half reported that their parents were rigorous disciplinarians who punished them every time they were naughty (figure 3). Again, there may be a social desirability bias effect here, so survey respondents were more likely to report that their parents had been loving and affectionate, and respondents who

Figure 4 **Answers of survey respondents with children aged 16 or younger to parenting questions**



were parents with minors being more likely to report themselves as loving and affectionate towards their children.

We created a fuller measure of parenting style for the current generation of parents. Figure 4 shows the responses of respondents who have children aged 16 or younger to each of the six parenting style questions. Again, the picture that emerges is one of high levels of affection (eg 90 per cent said they hug and tell their children they love them always or often) and moderate levels of discipline (eg a third said that they never apply the sanctions that they threaten when their children are naughty).

In order to divide the survey respondents by different parenting styles, we calculated the mean and median scores on the affection indicators and on the control or discipline indicators. This was a similar approach to the one Demos adopted in *Under the Influence* and *Feeling the Effects*.

Researchers numbered and aggregated the responses for affection on the one hand and discipline on the other hand and then calculated the summary statistics for each axis. These are

presented in table 1 for all of the survey respondents, and table 2 for the parents with younger children in our sample.

**Table 1 Summary statistics for measures of the older generation's style of parenting**

	Mean	Standard deviation	Median	n
Had loving parents	3.2	0.7	3	1,033
Had strict parents	2.3	0.9	2	1,035

**Table 2 Summary statistics for affection and control indices for the current generation (parents in our survey with children under 16)**

	Mean	Standard deviation	Median	n
Affection	10.4	1.6	11	349
Control	5.6	1.5	6	347

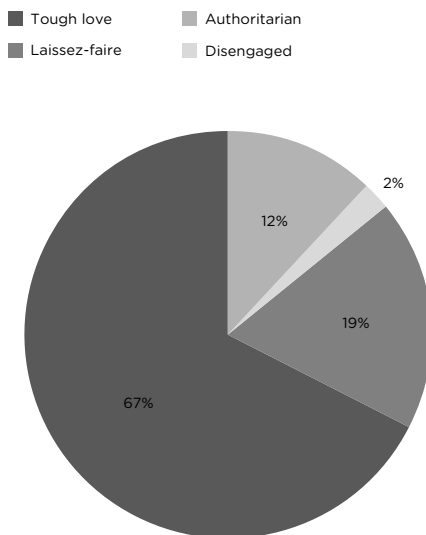
The scores reflect the findings above, with high mean and median scores for affection, and lower or middle scores for control and discipline.

Survey respondents were then classified by the four parenting styles based on their relationship to the median scores, as shown in table 3.

**Table 3 Classification of parental style**

		Affection	
		Low	High
Control	High	Authoritarian	Tough love
	Low	Disengaged	Laissez-faire

Figure 5 **Parental upbringing style of all survey respondents**



Source: Demos analysis, 2014

Approximately 2 out of 3 respondents classified the older generation's parenting style as characterised by 'tough love'. Approximately 1 in 5 described their parents in a manner consistent with having had a 'laissez-faire' style, and 1 in 10 described their parents as having had an 'authoritarian' style. Only 2 per cent of survey respondents described their parents in a manner consistent with having been 'disengaged' parents (figure 5).

Our measure of the older generation's parenting style suggests there is a trend in Romania away from 'authoritarian' discipline and towards a more 'laissez-faire' approach. For example, the older respondents in our sample were more likely to describe their parents as having imposed high levels of discipline and low levels of love and affection: 14.9 per cent of 46–60-year-olds described their parents' behaviour in a way consistent with

them having had an ‘authoritarian’ parenting style, compared with 8.3 per cent of 18–25-year-olds. Moreover, younger respondents were more likely to describe their parents as having displayed low levels of discipline and high levels of love and affection: 29.2 per cent of 18–25-year-olds cited their parents’ behaviour in a way consistent with them having had a ‘laissez-faire’ parenting style, compared with 16.1 per cent of 46–60-year-olds (table 4). These differences could point to changes in parenting styles across the generations in Romania that track – and may be influenced by – social, cultural, economic and political changes occurring in Romania over the past 30–50 years.

Table 4     **The older generation’s parenting style, by age**

Age	Authoritarian	Disengaged	Laissez-faire	Tough love	n
18–25	8.3%	0%	29.2%	62.5%	144
26–45	11.7%	3.0%	17.4%	68.0%	472
46–60	14.9%	1.5%	16.1%	67.4%	261
60 plus	12.1%	2.7%	15.4%	69.8%	149

There are also some notable gender differences in perceptions of parenting styles. Males were more likely to describe their parents as having demonstrated ‘tough love’ or having been ‘authoritarian’, while females were more likely to describe their parents as having been ‘laissez-faire’ or ‘disengaged’ (table 5).

Table 5     **The older generation’s parenting style, by gender**

Age	Authoritarian	Disengaged	Laissez-faire	Tough love	n
Female	10.1%	3.2%	22.2%	64.5%	535
Male	14.3%	1%	14.3%	70.5%	491

The distribution of parenting styles was more evenly spread among the current generation in our sample– probably in part because of the use of six indicators of parenting style instead of two.

It is important to emphasise that in this approach *parenting styles are determined by their relative position to the other respondents*. Thus, when our findings show that 30 per cent of our sub-sample of parents is authoritarian, this should be read in the broader context described above: on average Romanian parents tend to report high levels of affection and low levels of rule enforcement. Figure 6 shows the parenting style of Romanian parents based on their relative position to the other respondents.

## Conclusion

In the absence of a substantial body of prior data it is difficult to know precisely how accurate our findings on parenting in Romania are. The previous studies that do exist suggest findings that are largely consistent with those of our survey. However, as mentioned above, it is likely that both our findings and previous research may suffer from social desirability bias because of the sensitive nature of the questions, presenting a rosier picture of parenting in Romania than in fact exists. In the next chapter we explore the drinking behaviour of the older generation and current generation of parents before proceeding to chapter 4 where we bring the two indicators – parenting and drinking – together and examine the relationship between them.





### 3 Survey results: drinking behaviour

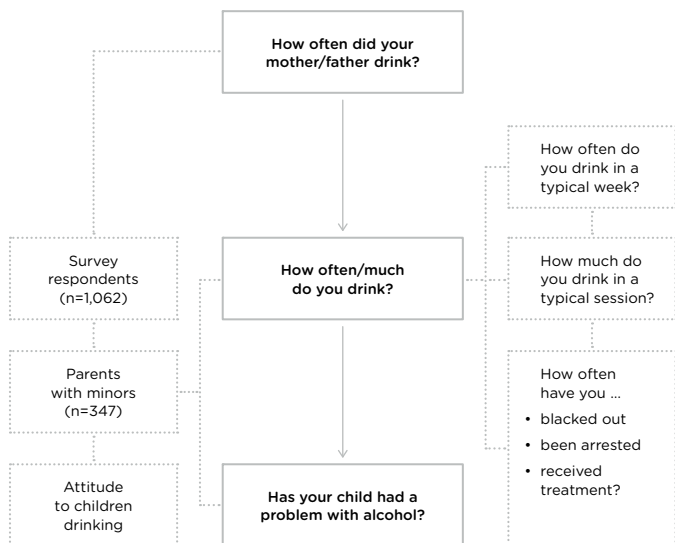
Our survey provides an interesting snapshot of drinking behaviour across the adult population in Romania. As noted above, it is essential that our survey be considered in the context of the research cited previously. As noted elsewhere, surveys about drugs and alcohol consumption in Romania are uncommon compared with other countries such as the UK. As a result, Romanian survey respondents might suffer from a more pronounced social desirability bias than in other countries, and some of the experts on our steering group felt that discussing such sensitive issues was particularly taboo in Romania given its culture and history. Our choice of conducting the survey interviews face to face may have contributed to this, so we took decisions to attempt to mitigate this effect (for example, in our choice of survey interviewers).

#### Drinking across three generations

Our survey sought to investigate drinking behaviours across three generations, using the questions shown in figure 6. First, we asked all survey respondents how often their father and mother drank. As in the previous chapter, we refer to these parents as the ‘older generation’.

Second, we asked all survey respondents a series of questions about their own drinking behaviour. We refer to these respondents as the ‘current generation’. Because we were asking respondents directly about their own behaviour, we were able to ask a greater range of questions, including about their frequency of drinking during a typical week, about their quantity of drinking during a typical drinking session, and about behaviour associated with having alcohol problems (including, getting into a fight while intoxicated, being arrested or hospitalised, or

Figure 6 **Questions asked to find out drinking behaviour across generations**



Source: Demos survey

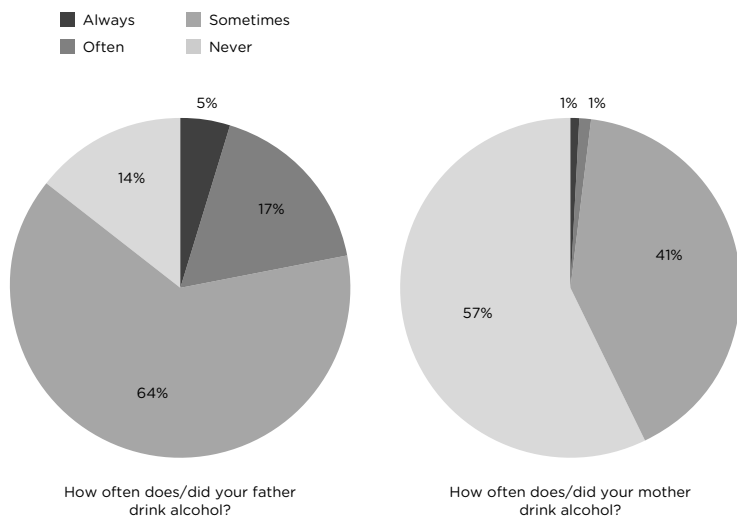
experiencing a ‘blackout’). Asking all of our survey respondents these questions also enabled us to explore the drinking behaviour of those parents in our survey with children under the age of 16.

Finally, we asked parents with minors whether their children have ever had a problem with alcohol, either at school or with the police. We refer to these children as the ‘next generation’.

## Reflections of parents’ drinking (‘older generation’)

On the whole respondents reported that their parents – the ‘older generation’ – had consumed alcohol in moderate levels. Figure 7 shows that only 1 in 5 respondents (21 per cent) said that

Figure 7 **Parents' drinking behaviour reported by survey respondents**



their father drank either always or often, while only 2 per cent said that their mother drank alcohol always or often. Indeed, over half (56 per cent) said that their mother never drank, while 40 per cent said that their mother drank alcohol 'sometimes'. Thus, bearing in mind the possibility of confirmation bias, it is likely that survey respondents were either under-reporting their parents' frequency of drinking, or possibly misremembering. Nonetheless, the picture presented is one of moderate consumption in family homes by the 'older generation'.

### Current levels of drinking ('current generation')

Given the nature of the methodology – and in lieu of having a longitudinal data source – we were able to probe drinking levels of survey respondents in the most detail. We measured drinking

behaviour by frequency (asking ‘in a common week, how often do you drink alcohol?’) and quantity (asking ‘on a regular occasion, how many drinks do you have?’). We also asked respondents a series of questions on behaviour that would suggest they had a problematic relationship with alcohol. For example, we asked them whether they had ever been arrested, hospitalised or involved in a fight while intoxicated, and whether they had ever ‘blacked out’ from a drinking episode or received treatment for alcoholism or alcohol misuse.

Very few respondents reported having experienced harms associated with alcohol. Young adults between 18 and 25 years old were among the least likely group to drink; middle-aged adults were the most likely to drink.

Specifically we found the following:

- 18–25-year-olds were substantially less likely to report drinking alcohol frequently (either daily, or 3–4 times per week); 26–45-year-olds were the most likely to report drinking very frequently.
- 26–45-year-olds were also most likely to report drinking over five drinks on a typical drinking occasion (40 per cent), followed by 18–25-year-olds (29 per cent).

The majority (57 per cent) of respondents reported drinking at home in most cases, while 1 in 4 reported drinking most commonly outside the home. Those who drank outside the home were also more likely to drink more. Approximately 1 in 10 respondents reported having ‘blacked out’ from alcohol consumption several times.

## Drinking of parents with minors

Tables 6 and 7 present the drinking patterns of survey respondents according to their parental status. The highest proportion of parents with minor children said that they never drank (46 per cent); approximately 6 per cent reported drinking alcohol everyday compared with 11 per cent of parents who had minor and grown-up children or those with grown-up children (table 6).

Table 6 **Drinking frequency in a typical week, by parental status**

	Never	1-2 days a week	3-4 days a week	Every day	n
No children	39.9%	45.9%	10.2%	3.9%	381
Minor children	46%	38.4%	9.7%	5.9%	237
Minor and grown-up children	35%	39%	15%	11%	100
Grown-up children	43.4%	35.1%	9.9%	11.6%	302

We asked respondents who drank sometimes how much they drank on a typical occasion. More than half of parents with minor children (56 per cent) reported drinking one drink, while 7 per cent reported drinking three or more; this compares with approximately 15 per cent of survey respondents without children who drank three or more glasses (table 7).

Table 7 **Drinking quantity on a typical occasion, by parental status**

	1 drink or glass	2-3 drinks	3 or more	n
No children	46.9%	38.3%	14.8%	311
Minor children	56.8%	35.8%	7.4%	176
Minor and grown-up children	51.9%	42.9%	5.2%	77
Grown-up children	60.4%	30.7%	8.9%	225

Thus, on the face of it, our survey suggests that parents with children aged under 16 are less likely to drink frequently and in large quantities than parents with grown-up children, or people with no children.

## Children's drinking ('next generation')

Unlike in our UK research where we could trace the drinking patterns of the 'next generation' over time through longitudinal studies, our measure of the 'child's' drinking behaviour in Romania depended on parents reporting it. We asked parents with children who were minors if their child(ren) had ever been in trouble at school or police because of alcohol. We also asked parents with children who were 14 or older if any one of their children had a problem with alcohol, had ever been arrested when they were intoxicated, or drank alcohol every day. Fewer than ten parents with minor children in total reported that their children had encountered a problem with police or school because of alcohol.

## 4 Survey results: the relationship between parenting style and drinking behaviour

Having established our findings on parenting style and drinking behaviour, in this chapter we consider the relationship between the two. In particular, our analysis explored:

- whether this is a link between the drinking behaviour and parenting style of the ‘older generation’ and the drinking and parenting of the ‘current generation’
- whether there is a link between the drinking behaviour and parenting style of the ‘current generation’, and the drinking behaviour of the ‘next generation’
- the relationship between drinking behaviour among the ‘older generation’, the ‘current generation’ and the ‘next generation’

### Drinking across the generations

The findings of our survey suggest there is a generational pattern of behaviour with respect to alcohol, showing a clear link between the three generations that our survey allowed us to explore.

As noted above in chapter 3, only a very small proportion of our survey respondents recalled their parents drinking either ‘always’ or ‘often’: 20 per cent of fathers were remembered to have had drunk this frequently, and only 2 per cent of mothers. However, those respondents who reported more frequent drinking by their parents were more likely to report drinking more often and in greater quantities themselves. For example, 41 per cent of respondents who drank more than five drinks on a usual occasion said that their parents (either one or both) drank alcohol either ‘always’ or ‘often’.

For the parents with younger children in our sample, we combined the two measures of drinking behaviour – frequency and quantity in a typical drinking session – to create an overall indicator of drinking behaviour with three categories: ‘teetotal’, ‘moderate’ and ‘liberal’. Because of the small proportion of respondents who reported excessive drinking, we labelled this category as ‘liberal drinkers’, rather than ‘excessive drinkers’. See the figures in bold in table 8.

Table 8      **Frequency and amount of alcohol consumption by parents with minor children**

	None	1 drink or glass	2–3 drinks	3–5 drinks	Over 5 drinks	Total
Never	28.7%	12.8%	0.9%	0.6%	0%	43%
1–2 days a week	0%	20.0%	16.1%	<b>1.8%</b>	<b>0.6%</b>	38.5%
3–4 days a week	0%	3.0%	<b>7.2%</b>	<b>1.2%</b>	0%	11.3%
Every day	0%	2.7%	<b>3.9%</b>	<b>0.6%</b>	0%	7.2%
Total	28.7%	38.5%	28.1%	4.2%	0.6%	100%

Percentages of total, n = 335, excessive drinking in bold

When we combine drinking behaviour of parents with minors in our sample with their view of their own parents’ drinking, we again see a generational link (table 9). Parents who drink more frequently are more likely to come from families where the previous generation of parents drank more frequently. They are also less likely to come from families where both parents were said ‘never’ to drink.

**Links between parenting style and drinking behaviour**

Moving from parental drinking behaviour to parenting style, our research and analysis suggests there is a clear link between parents who are classified as ‘authoritarian’ and those who drink more frequently. This can be seen across all three generations in our sample:



Table 9 **The relationship between the drinking behaviour of the ‘older generation’ and the ‘current generation’ of parents with minors, by current drinking style of respondent<sup>50</sup>**

	Teetotal family	Moderate family	Liberal family	n
Teetotal	22.4%	56.3%	21.2%	245
Moderate	11.6%	68.7%	19.8%	562
Liberal	5.7%	63.5%	30.8%	159

- Survey respondents who reported their parents as more ‘authoritarian’ were more likely themselves to drink more frequently and in greater quantities
- Parents with minors who were classified as ‘authoritarian’ were more likely to report drinking more frequently and in greater quantities

More than one-quarter (25.6 per cent) of survey respondents who reported having had an ‘authoritarian’ upbringing were also classified in the ‘liberal’ drinking category and formed the largest proportion of ‘liberal’ drinkers (table 10). Part of this effect may be due to gender, with male respondents being more likely to report more frequent drinking and more ‘authoritarian’ parents. Nonetheless, our analysis suggests there is a link between the two categories beyond the effects of gender.

Table 10 **Drinking style of parent respondents, by parental upbringing**

	Teetotal	Moderate	Liberal	n
Authoritarian upbringing	14%	60.3%	25.6%	121
Disengaged upbringing	33.3%	61.9%	4.8%	21
Laissez-faire upbringing	33.1%	55.1%	11.8%	178
Tough love upbringing	25.6%	58.1%	16.3%	664

This same relationship was evident among the parents in our sample. Current generation parents who were classified as ‘authoritarian’ were most likely to drink frequently. The proportion of authoritarian parents who reported drinking between three and seven days a week was roughly twice that for tough love parents. Just under 1 in 3 (31 per cent of) ‘authoritarian’ parents reported drinking between three and seven days a week, compared with just 15 per cent, 12 per cent and 11.5 per cent for ‘tough love’, ‘laissez-faire’ and ‘disengaged’, respectively (table 11). Again, gender may be significant here as male parents were more likely to fall into the ‘authoritarian’ parenting category.

Table 11 **Frequency of alcohol consumption by parent respondents, by parenting style**

	Never	1–2 days a week	3–7 days a week	n
Authoritarian	33%	36%	31%	100
Disengaged	44.2%	44.2%	11.5%	52
Laissez-faire	54.5%	33.3%	12.1%	99
Tough love	41.0%	43.4%	15.7%	83

Moreover, 1 in 4 authoritarian parents with minors drink ‘liberally’, compared with around just 1 in 10 for the other three parenting styles (13 per cent, 12 per cent and 9 per cent for ‘tough love’, ‘disengaged’ and ‘laissez-faire’ parents, respectively) (table 12).

## Parenting style and drinking behaviour of ‘next generation’

In *Under the Influence* and *Feeling the Effects* we were able to track the drinking behaviour of children over time through longitudinal data sources like the 1970 Birth Cohort Study. In

**Table 12 Drinking style of respondents who were parents with minors, by parenting style<sup>51</sup>**

	Teetotal	Moderate	'Liberal'	n
Authoritarian	22%	54%	24%	100
Disengaged	29.4%	58.8%	11.8%	51
Laissez-faire	39.4%	51.5%	9.1%	99
Tough love	24.1%	62.7%	13.3%	83

the absence of similar studies in Romania – combined with the difficulty of surveying children – we relied on asking parents themselves whether their children had ever had a problem with drinking alcohol.

Again, we found a link between ‘authoritarian’ parents and a greater likelihood of parents reporting their children to have problems with alcohol. We found that parents who were ‘authoritarian’ were more likely to report their children having a problem with alcohol with school or the police. While we cannot conclude from this that children of ‘authoritarian’ parents are necessarily drinking more than children of other parenting types, this finding provides further evidence to suggest there is a link between ‘authoritarian’ parenting and more excessive drinking behaviour across all three of the generations our survey sought to investigate (table 13).

**Table 13 Whether parent respondents with minors had experienced a problem with their child concerning alcohol with school or police, by parenting type**

	No problem	Problem	n
Authoritarian	90.6%	9.4%	53
Disengaged	97%	3%	33
Laissez-faire	95.3%	4.7%	43
Tough love	96.9%	3.1%	32

## Attitudes towards children drinking

We also asked parents whether they tolerated or approved of their children drinking alcohol. This allowed us to track their attitudes and compare them with parenting style and drinking behaviour to see if there were any patterns.

Our analysis confirms what might be expected: that parents who drink more frequently are more likely to adopt permissive attitudes towards their children's drinking.

Using the same drinking categories used above for parents in our sample – 'teetotal', 'moderate' and 'liberal' – we investigated whether parents adopted a 'zero tolerance' approach to their children aged under 16 drinking. There was a gradual decrease in those parents who 'totally agreed' with a zero tolerance approach (table 14).

Table 14 **Whether parent respondents agreed there should be zero tolerance of alcohol consumption by minor children, by parental drinking type**

	Totally disagree	Disagree	Agree	Totally agree	n
Teetotal	2.1%	0%	17%	80.9%	47
Moderate	6.7%	5.6%	19.1%	68.5%	89
Liberal	0.0%	8%	36%	56%	25

It is notable that parents who drink 'moderately' were the most likely group to disagree with a zero tolerance approach, opting instead – we can assume – for a supervised introduction to alcohol for their children. Indeed, parents who reported 'moderate' drinking levels were the most likely to 'totally agree' that they tolerated their children drinking alcohol as long as it was under adult supervision (table 15).

We asked parents whether their children had ever been in trouble with school or the police as a result of drinking alcohol. Only a very small number of parents reported a problem, and interestingly 'moderate' parents were the group slightly less likely to report a problem (bearing in mind the small sample size) (table 16).

**Table 15 Whether parent respondents agreed that children should be allowed to drink alcohol if under adult supervision, by parental drinking type**

	Totally disagree	Disagree	Agree	Totally agree	n
Teetotal	65.2%	15.2%	19.6%	0%	46
Moderate	51.7%	23.6%	19.1%	5.6%	89
Liberal	50%	22.7%	22.7%	4.5%	22

**Table 16 Whether the children of parent respondents had ever been in some kind of problem with school or police, by parental drinking type**

	No problem	Problem	n
Teetotal	91.3%	8.7%	46
Moderate	94.3%	5.7%	88
Liberal	92.3%	7.7%	26

Finally, we wanted to explore whether parents felt that their ability to discipline their child was impaired by their own drinking behaviour. While the overwhelming majority of parents disagreed that this was the case, ‘authoritarian’ and ‘liberal’ parents were the most likely to express some doubt about their resolve to punish their children because of their own drinking (tables 17 and 18).

**Table 17 Whether parent respondents felt their ability to discipline their children was impaired by own drinking, by parenting type**

	Totally disagree	Disagree	Agree	Totally agree	n
Authoritarian	74.5%	23.5%	0%	2%	51
Disengaged	93.9%	6.1%	0%	0%	32
Laissez-faire	97.6%	2.4%	0%	0%	42
Tough love	93.8%	6.2%	0%	0%	32

Table 18 **Whether parent respondents felt their ability to discipline their children was impaired by own drinking, by parental drinking type**

	Totally disagree	Disagree	Agree	Totally agree	n
Teetotal	93.5%	6.5%	0%	0%	46
Moderate	87.4%	11.5%	0%	0.1%	87
Liberal	83.3%	16.7%	0%	0%	24

## Summary

In conclusion, our survey is by no means a definitive study on parenting style and drinking behaviour – and the relationship between the two – in Romania. While the findings are not directly comparable to the research we conducted in the UK (as they used different data sources, analyses and indicators), nonetheless, the survey provides some interesting findings and potential relationships between parenting and drinking, which should serve as a basis for further academic and think tank research.

Overall, we found moderate levels of self-reported drinking in Romania, particularly by those who were parents with children 16 years old or younger. We also found that our respondents reported that the drinking levels of their parents had been low. Again, the self-reported nature of this indicator means that drinking levels may be misremembered or under-reported, but nonetheless our survey provides moderately positive findings relating to drinking in Romania.

Our survey also presents a positive picture of parenting styles in Romania, with high levels of affection reported, and moderate levels of rule enforcement or discipline. These were true for all survey respondents, when asked to comment on their parents, as well as for parent respondents with children aged 16 or younger.

With this broad picture of loving and moderately strict parents in mind, our analysis sought to divide parents into four discrete categories of parenting style, depending on their relative

position to other parents in the sample. In doing so we found that parents whose parenting style could be described as more authoritarian than their peers (high levels of discipline, lower levels of affection) were the most likely to drink excessively – again, compared with their peers.

These findings are by no means inconsistent with the findings from our UK work, and suggest an interesting supplement to our UK findings around the importance of ‘tough love’ parenting. Taken together with our findings in Romania, it may be possible to draw conclusions about the importance of the affection and emotional engagement aspect of parenting style. In the UK we found that high levels of emotional warmth and engagement by parents (particularly in the first five years of a child’s life) are correlated with a decreased likelihood of children drinking excessively as teenagers. Our findings in Romania suggest that tough, consistent discipline is not enough to break a generational link of excessive drinking.

In the next two chapters we argue that this has significant implications for how families with parents who are alcoholics should be supported. Evidence increasingly shows that family-based interventions can have a positive impact on families struggling with alcoholism. Our findings suggest that a key element of that support should focus on training and communicating to parents the importance of emotional engagement with their children. This is not easily taught, but nonetheless such programmes do exist and should be incorporated into support services.

Until now our research has aimed to present an overall view about drinking and parenting in Romania. While the picture painted is relatively sanguine, it must be remembered that there are a significant number of families in Romania that face severe struggles around alcoholism and family break-down. Because of the severe harms that these families face – particularly the children – it is natural that these families will be a priority for policy and support interventions. Thus, in the next chapter we present the findings of our in-depth interviews with 26 families in Romania who are struggling with a parent who drinks excessively.





## 5 Parenting in homes with excessive drinking: findings from our family interviews

This chapter presents the results of our qualitative analysis of 26 semi-structured interviews with a diverse range of alcoholic parents or their partners in Romania: alcoholics in denial, recovered alcoholics, former partners of alcoholics and in one case a couple interviewed together. The interviewees demonstrated a range of circumstances, behaviours, lifestyles and habits, but substantive trends and behaviours within the sample were evident. Full details about the methodology, recruitment method and limitations of this survey method are included in the technical annex at the end of this report.

Our primary objective for these interviews was to gain insight into the effect of alcoholism within a family unit; we looked at child wellbeing and behaviour, parenting styles, and the dynamics of the relationship between parents and between the children and their parents. To protect the anonymity of the interviewees, they have been assigned numbers 1 to 26.

### The interviewees

Of the 26 interviews (with 27 subjects) we conducted, four were with men, 21 with women, and one with a woman and a man. All interviewees were part of a family unit, together, separated or otherwise, containing children.

Although the interviewees were mainly women, the alcoholics discussed in the interviews were overwhelmingly men. Most of the interviewees (20) were the partners of alcoholics. Seven of the 27 people interviewed were both alcoholics and partners of alcoholics<sup>52</sup> and ten were alcoholics themselves. We had one interview with the adult daughter of an alcoholic.

The marital status of the interviewees varied, but most (17) were still living with their alcoholic partner. Seven of the interviewees were divorced or separated from their partners. Others were divorced but still together or in the process of divorce.

Around half (14) of the alcoholics in question were partially or completely in denial; they either demonstrated this themselves or their partner reported it:

*I sometimes drink, but not as much, only with friends... I am done with booze... currently, if I don't have any money, what can I drink?*<sup>53</sup>

*My husband went to have some blood tests and the doctor asked him... but he didn't tell her how much he drinks.*<sup>54</sup>

One interviewee told us that the fact that her partner 'only' drank 50ml (two shots) of brandy in the morning was proof of his moderation.<sup>55</sup>

### Causes or catalysts of alcoholism

Alcoholism does not come about in a vacuum. In this sample it was abundantly clear that alcoholism was, if not a direct symptom of unhappy circumstances or intolerable conditions, certainly influenced and exacerbated by them. Generally, the interviewees came from families afflicted by numerous pressures and worries beyond those typical of day-to-day familial activity. In most cases, these worries predated the onset of alcoholism.

Adults in 11 family units suffered from chronic unemployment or underemployment. Indeed, worklessness was a common theme. Few alcoholics were in full-time employment, and they therefore had acute financial worries:

*The arguments start because of the children, and because we do not have money.*<sup>56</sup>

*During the winter we have to shelter all in the same room; we have a single tile stove.*<sup>57</sup>

In seven family units, children had chronic illnesses. Other familial pressures included the suicide of an older son and adult health problems:

*I found out that my little girl had health issues... that was one [extra] stress element.*<sup>58</sup>

These pressures very often had contributed to the deterioration of both parent–parent relations and parent–child relations. While 12 interviewees did not recognise any single event that had catalysed or caused the descent into alcoholism in themselves or their partner, 15 did recognise that such a catalytic event had occurred.

Of those who identified a key event, six stated that it was a change of workplace, location and/or peer group. Four cited a suicide or natural death in the family, three cited their partner's mental health or more general health problems, and two cited relationship problems as a primary factor:

*It started from his entourage and he drank increasingly when we had problems with our daughter.*<sup>59</sup>

## Parenting and alcoholism

There were very few cases of families with one or two alcoholic parents that did not contain some level of abnormal familial dysfunction. The effect of having alcoholic parents on the children who were part of these families were varied, but a significant number were decidedly affected in a negative manner as a result. Of the 26 interviewees, 11 came from a family unit containing at least one child with notable behavioural issues, sometimes associated with a medical condition. Despite the common comments interviewees made to the contrary regarding their relationships with their children or the behaviour of their children, in most cases interviewers noted negligence, violence, over-indulgence or poor parenting of some type.

Parenting styles were evaluated through the typology established in our previous report *Under the Influence*. This

framework, based on specialist academic evaluative methodologies, establishes two core axes of parenting style. One relates to parental 'warmth' towards a child or children, from low to high warmth. The other concerns the disciplinary environment created by a parent, which ranges from very permissive to authoritarian parenting styles. These measures, established solely through analysing interview material, are referred to as high or low warmth and high or low discipline.

Parenting types demonstrated by the interviewees in this study were mixed. Of the 21 interviewees who clearly articulated the level of discipline they exerted in their relationships with their children, nine exerted predominantly high levels of discipline, and 12 predominantly low levels of discipline (not far from half and half):

*When he's wrong, especially in school, he is punished... I [have beaten] the elder one two times.*<sup>60</sup>

*I explain everything at his own level... If I 'hurt' him at the level that matters to him, he doesn't make the same mistake.*<sup>61</sup>

*Neither does the youngest one ask for help. He could do better, of course, but what can I do?*<sup>62</sup>

*I tell him to work harder, but he doesn't listen much to me.*<sup>63</sup>

Eight interviewees demonstrated low levels of emotional warmth within their households, while ten demonstrated high levels of emotional warmth. There was therefore no general disposition towards any particular parenting style within this sample:

*I am happy when they tell me they love me. The girl is more spoiled, because she is the youngest.*<sup>64</sup>

*I tell them to leave me alone when I go home drunk. If they get close to me, I give them a slap and I know they are afraid.*<sup>65</sup>

Of more significance, fully half of the interviewees indicated that there was a conflict between the parenting styles used by each partner. In two instances, where both partners were alcoholics, one demonstrated high discipline and the other low discipline. In the cases where a family unit consisted of an alcoholic and a non-alcoholic parent, and where there was conflict between parenting styles, the parenting characteristics of the alcoholics were highly negative, often violent, authoritarian or negligent.

In five cases alcoholics were uninvolved or absentee parents. In three cases alcoholic parents had a focus on high discipline. In two cases alcoholic parents were abusive. In one case an alcoholic parent was present, not abusive and not particularly inclined to discipline, but still demonstrated low warmth:

*They went to therapy for one and a half years, to get along in the house... he opted for beating the girl, because for him, 'beating is law'.<sup>66</sup>*

*My husband doesn't take care of the child at all... He only stays in front of the computer all day long.<sup>67</sup>*

This demonstrates that, within the sample, parents who were alcoholics were likely to be stricter, more abusive or less involved in parenting than their partners, who had a less strict, warmer, more involved parenting style. The only commonality of the parenting styles of alcoholics is that they had negative outcomes.

These findings are supported by previous research in Romania. Research for the 'Campaign Launch and Caravan Running' component of the public awareness campaign on preventing and combating family violence implemented by the Child Protection Directorate (DPC) and Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Protection and Elderly People (MMFPSPV) in 2013 found that the occurrence of domestic violence acts on adults is associated with alcoholism, poverty, lack of schooling and inadequate upbringing of family members. Poor schooling and upbringing is the main contributing factor to violence

against children, followed by parental alcoholism (in 55 per cent of cases) and poverty.<sup>68</sup>

### Histories of violence and alcoholism

Violence was a common feature of alcoholics' behaviour. In a third of the interviews, it was stated that the alcoholics in question (either the interviewees or the alcoholic partners of the interviewees) had been or were violent, while two of the interviewees had suffered violence at the hands of previous alcoholic partners:

*I take care of the children. When he drinks, he is violent, he breaks plates, swears at us...*<sup>69</sup>

In 14 of the interviews, the alcoholics concerned were not violent; in two it was unclear whether or not relationships were violent.

Of particular interest were the commonalities between alcoholics and their parents. Four of the alcoholics had violent parents; two of them were themselves violent; 14 did not have violent parents, while in seven cases it was unclear whether or not the alcoholic's parents were violent.

Where the drinking habits of an alcoholic's parent were clear, roughly half of alcoholics who were the subject of the interview had alcoholic parents. Ten of the alcoholics in question had at least one alcoholic parent. Nine had parents who were not alcoholics; in six cases it was unclear whether or not a subject's parents were alcoholics, and one alcoholic was raised in an orphanage.

Interestingly, nine of the partners of alcoholics had an alcoholic parent or parents, and in four cases a parent or both parents were violent. This tendency was approximately the same whether or not that partner was themselves an alcoholic:

*My father was often drunk... as a child my father was rough, he beat us.*<sup>70</sup>

*My father was a heavy drinker.. and even beat my mother.*<sup>71</sup>

This suggests that, in this sample, the partners of alcoholics were roughly as likely to have had violence and alcoholism in their childhoods as the alcoholics themselves.

### Consumption patterns

The harmful drinking habits of alcoholics varied extensively in quantity, location and context. Harmful drinking ranged from near-constant consumption inside the home to irregular binges outside it. A number of alcoholics drank regularly in front of their children;<sup>72</sup> one encouraged his daughter to drink;<sup>73</sup> and one admitted to lashing out at his children physically when they approached him.<sup>74</sup>

In 3 out of 5 cases, alcoholics drank inside and outside the family home. In 1 in 5 cases, the alcoholic drank predominantly outside the home. In 1 in 5 cases, the alcoholic drank predominantly inside the home.<sup>75</sup> In this sample, alcoholics were as likely to drink outside the home as to drink inside it, and most did both:

*My husband drinks alcohol when he's got some... he usually drinks at home.*<sup>76</sup>

*I drink more with the people where I work; I am reluctant to drink at home... I avoid the girls when I drink at home.*<sup>77</sup>

In just over half of cases, the alcoholic drank with both friends and family. In just under a quarter of cases, they predominantly drank with friends or alone, and one drank only with his family. In five cases it was unclear who the alcoholic drank with. It is relatively common for alcoholics to drink with their friends, and in our study there were six alcoholics who had found that a change of location or workplace and the related change of peer group had been a catalyst for alcoholism. In this sample, it appears that alcoholism is often not a solitary pursuit, but is stimulated by or takes place in the context of peer groups and social circles:

*If he was working at someone's place, he used to drink along with those people, then when he was on his way home, he took one more bottle and only came home to resume drinking.*<sup>78</sup>

In a third of cases, the alcoholic produced or produces alcohol, most often wine or spirits, in the home. In nine cases, they do or did not produce alcohol in the home. In the remaining eight cases, it was unclear. The practice of home-brewing is relatively common in Romania, particularly in rural areas:

*We make wine in the household, we own a vineyard, but we sell it during winter.*<sup>79</sup>

## Summary

Our interviews with these families highlight the chaotic and troubling experiences many families go through when at least one of the parents has a problem with alcohol. For the partners and children in these families, life can be unpredictable and extremely difficult. Our research suggests that the parenting characteristics of the alcoholics were highly negative, often violent, authoritarian or negligent.

Governments and NGOs need to ensure that these families get the proper and necessary support to help them overcome their alcohol problems. But perhaps even more importantly, these families need support in order to limit the damage caused to other family members, particularly children.

Our survey results suggest there is a pattern of negative drinking behaviour and approaches to parenting being passed down the generations. Working with these kinds of families can be an incredibly difficult task, but family-based interventions can have a positive impact.<sup>80</sup> An important component of family-based interventions should be focused on helping parents to be better parents.

Continuing to abuse alcohol will inevitably undermine a parent's ability to be a good parent, and working with alcoholics to limit or restrict their consumption should be a key priority of



interventions. However, alcoholic parents should also receive support and training on how to be better parents. This includes establishing rules with their children and consistently enforcing them, particularly with respect to their children drinking alcohol. Our research in the UK – and some of the evidence cited above – suggests that alcoholic parents are often more permissive towards their children drinking because of feelings of hypocrisy and guilt due to their own behaviour. Support from trained social workers and professionals can help parents to establish rules and patterns of behaviour that are more consistent with good parenting practices.

Possibly even more important than supporting parents to adopt the right levels of discipline is the importance of providing emotional warmth and affection to their children. Our research has shown that emotional warmth is particularly important in the first five years of a child's life; and our survey suggests there is a link between 'authoritarian' parents (who demonstrate low levels of affection) and children's drinking. Emotional warmth and affection between a parent and a child is not something that can necessarily be taught, but it is important to recognise that many parents who display low levels of affection were raised in households where affection and emotional warmth were absent or lacking. These parents can be taught the importance expressing their affection in small ways – such as hugging or telling their child that they love them – and learn how to show their affection more readily to their children.

In the final chapter we make a number of recommendations to governments and NGOs about the key principles for delivering an effective family-based intervention that focuses on parenting.



## Recommendations

One of our key objectives when undertaking this research was to help inform Romanian alcohol policy in supporting parents and families where alcohol may be causing a problem. Many components are involved in formulating a comprehensive alcohol policy – for example, decisions on price, taxation, restrictions on marketing and density – but our recommendations in this reported are limited to the topic of parenting.

As we argued in *Feeling the Effects*, reducing parental alcohol misuse must be a key priority for governments, NGOs and the alcohol industry. Of particular importance is supporting families, such as those of the interviewees for this research. This is difficult and involving work, particularly as alcoholism in these families is often mixed with a host of other difficulties, including worklessness, family breakdown, mental health issues and poverty. The last thing that these parents need is for someone to tell them that they are a bad parent, thus parenting support for these families must be evidence-based, well planned and sensitively executed. Provided correctly, many parents could be open to support.

Our recommendations are aimed at policy makers in national government, regional and local government authorities, and NGOs whose staff work to support alcoholics. We also believe that the alcohol industry has a key role to play in minimising the harms caused by alcohol.

### Devising a national alcohol strategy

Alcohol receives far less attention among Romania policy makers and the media than it does in countries like the UK. One positive step in helping to raise the profile of alcohol problems in Romania could be for the Government to devise and announce a

national alcohol strategy in Romania, in which it should outline the latest statistics about alcohol misuse and highlight areas of priority for policy and investment. Our research demonstrates that the link between parenting and children drinking should be a key element of any national strategy. This should include publicising information awareness messages about parenting to the broader population, consideration of IBA interventions for parents with children, and the provision of close support for families suffering from alcohol misuse.

### Information awareness campaigns

The government department responsible for public health should run a national information awareness campaign drawing attention to the link between parenting and a child's likelihood of developing problems with alcohol. Authorities need to be careful, however, that the tone of such a campaign avoids being patronising and paternalistic. Messages should emphasise the importance of establishing and consistently enforcing rules while children are adolescents and teenagers, as well as the importance of displaying emotional warmth and affection particularly in the early years of a child's life. The effect of such campaigns should be measured to determine their impact. The Government may want to prioritise such campaigns in regions and areas of Romania where alcohol consumption is seen to be particularly high. The alcohol industry may also have a role to play in information awareness campaigns, either running its own campaigns or contributing funding to government or NGO-led efforts.

Interventions such as health education in schools and parental education are also necessary. Children and teenagers need to be involved in educational programmes and awareness campaigns on preventing and combating alcohol consumption, which should be developed at school and community level. It is also necessary for teachers, school physicians, health mediators and community nurses to be involved in projects on preventing and combating alcohol consumption by children and teenagers and families, in general.

## Identification and brief advice interventions

One recent approach adopted in the UK has been the IBA intervention – asking all patients visiting their GP or going to hospital to answer a short questionnaire about their alcohol consumption. Individuals who report drinking above government guidelines then receive a very quick intervention by the GP or another health professional asking in more detail about their alcohol consumption and suggesting ways it can be reduced. Often people do not realise how much they are drinking, and that they are drinking above recommended limits. If this is pointed out to them it can help to change their behaviour. According to the UK Government's alcohol strategy, IBA 'has been proven to reduce drinking... at least 1 in 8 at-risk drinkers reduce their drinking as a result of IBA'.<sup>81</sup>

This type of intervention should be adopted in Romania, particularly in areas and regions that have higher levels of alcohol consumption. Moreover, these interventions should include specific guidance to individuals who are parents of children under the age of 16, which should include, at minimum, awareness of research suggesting a link between levels of affection and consistent discipline, and a child's likelihood of drinking excessively.

## Early years interventions

Numerous studies have shown the importance of the first five years of a child's life to their overall life outcome.<sup>82</sup> There have been two major policy reviews in the UK about the importance of early years interventions, particularly in families that may be at risk, by MPs Frank Field and Graham Allen.<sup>83</sup> The proposed interventions include giving specialist support to expecting parents, and programmes targeting at-risk teenagers in primary school. Research shows that investment in early years interventions can improve children's life chances when they grow up. This can help save governments future costs associated with negative outcomes related to people from traumatic backgrounds growing up.

One example of a programme that targets expecting mothers is Family Nurse Partnerships, which entails intensive

one-to-one support sessions with expecting young mothers from deprived communities who are perceived to be at risk. The programme has demonstrated a range of positive outcomes in the USA, and the UK Government has committed to doubling their number in England and Wales.<sup>84</sup> The Romanian Government should consider investing in the Family Nurse Partnership programme in areas of high deprivation and alcohol consumption in Romania. Such programmes should be coordinated with efforts to tackle foetal alcohol syndrome.

An example of an effective programme from the UK that works with children in primary school is the Place 2 Be programme, which provides one-to-one counselling sessions with children in primary school, as well as their parents. The sessions focus on ‘building children’s resilience through talking, creative work and play’, and ‘helping them to cope with wide-ranging and often complex social issues including bullying, bereavement, domestic violence, family breakdown, neglect and trauma’.

The Romanian Government should review the provision of similar programmes in Romanian primary schools and consider whether further investment is needed. Investing in early years intervention programmes that have evidence of impact could help save the Government future costs, as people who have traumatic upbringings are more likely to experience poor health, worklessness and crime (including drug and alcohol addiction).

### Prioritising family-based interventions

Our research in the UK on family-based interventions suggests there are a number of key principles that must underpin such work. In addition to increasing the number of family-based interventions that exist in Romania, the interventions that do exist should:

- develop consistent and trusting personal relationships between social workers and the family
- provide tailored, personalised support based on the specific situation of the family
- provide ongoing support, even if this is light touch

One of the key findings from our review of family-based interventions in the UK is the importance of a strong relationship between social workers and the families they are working with. Even the most structured and well-evidenced programmes depend on the trust and rapport that exist between families and their key workers. This is particularly true when a significant part of the intervention includes giving support on parenting style and approaches. Similarly, the unique nature of each family's situation requires a level of flexibility in any family-based intervention. Interventions that are too prescriptive and designed from the top down are less effective.

It is important that support is ongoing, although any intervention cannot go on forever; each family, at some point, needs to stand on their own. However, our review suggested that time-restricted programmes can lead to support for families being withdrawn abruptly, causing a relapse of problems. Therefore, provision of some form of ongoing support – even if very light touch – is necessary. Intervention programmes should be designed to steadily reduce support as family situations improve, rather than stopping abruptly at the end of a predetermined and arbitrary timeframe.

Parental education, which has been neglected in Romania within the past years, must focus on empowering parents and community members with respect to child rights and the services available for children. It is very important that parents be supported so that they can deal with life challenges and gain the skills necessary to bring up their children properly and provide adequate child care. Educating parents about child upbringing and care should be coordinated by authorities and civil society at national and local level.

### Align alcohol support services with other services

As seen in chapter 5, families struggling with alcohol often have a host of other difficulties, including domestic violence, worklessness, mental health problems and poverty. Often these can cause and exacerbate issues with alcohol. However, too often support services for each of these problems are handled

separately by different departments and specialists, rather than through coordinated approaches. In the UK our research suggested that this could lead to difficulties; for example, support for mental health and employment services can sometimes depend on the individual completely kicking their alcohol habit first. Yet, if mental health issues or worklessness is contributing to alcohol problems, then dealing with these issues in a comprehensive and coordinated manner could be more effective than dealing with them separately.

The same principle of service integration is important when it comes to providing services targeting adults and those targeting children. In the UK sometimes funding for family services falls between children services and adult services, with neither of the providers feeling fully responsible for the situation. Combining specialists from both fields into a family-based intervention can lead to more effective and coherent support.

As previously mentioned, interventions need to be holistic and integrated. They must involve the public social services responsible for prevention at city hall level as well as general practitioners and other medical staff. Last but not least, they must involve the general social and child protection services at county level, in case family level intervention is necessary to protect children against parental abuse or neglect. The counselling centres for parents play an extremely important role and should be taken into consideration by local authorities and NGOs. General practitioners, health mediators and community nurses also need more resources to develop programmes to prevent and combat excessive alcohol consumption.

Thus, the development of integrated socio-psychological-medical services with basic community services should become a priority. It is essential that prevention programmes and interventions receive European structural funds and public funds in order to secure a healthy population in the future, which will sustain economic benefits and more.

Mechanisms for establishing a more effective collaboration between the educational and social care systems are necessary to ensure children's right to education. It is required that integrated socio-educational services be created in each community in order



to prevent or reduce alcohol consumption by children and underage young people.

### Giving children a voice

Finally, we argue that it is critical that the voices of children in families where at least one parent has an alcohol problem are heard. In the UK, a recent report by the Children's Commissioner called *Silent Voices* emphasised the importance of listening to children to understand the impact that parental substance misuse has on them and what kind of support is needed.<sup>85</sup> Giving children a more prominent voice in support interventions could help parents recognise the impact of their behaviour and the need to seek help. Giving children a voice involves thinking about the future and the effects the present may have on the future, as the children of today are the adults of tomorrow.



# Technical appendix

The findings presented in this report are based on two key sources: a nationally representative survey of the Romanian population ( $n = 1,062$ ), and in-depth interviews with 26 families where at least one parent had a problem with alcohol. This technical appendix provides the methodological details for each of these sources.

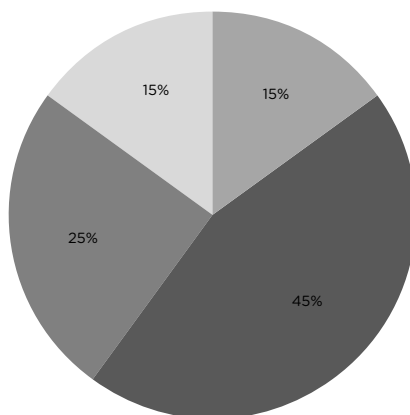
## Quantitative survey

The quantitative survey used in this report was designed by Demos and IPP Data Research, and administered by IPP Data Research. The semi-standardised questionnaire is provided below.

The survey was designed to focus on aspects of alcohol consumption and parenting styles of those aged 18 years and older in Romania. Data collection was based on a sample ( $n = 1,062$ ) probabilistic representative for the adult population of Romania (with an error margin of  $\pm 3$  per cent). Interviews were conducted at the respondents' homes face to face. Sampling, questionnaire development, data collection and recording of data, subsequent checks, statistical processing, data analysis and preparation of the research report was conducted by the IPP Data Research team. The data collection period was 9–20 December 2013.

## The demographics of survey respondents

The gender and place of habitation of those in the sample was nearly evenly split (48 per cent were male, 52 per cent were female; 53 per cent from an urban area, 47 per cent from a rural area).

Figure 8 **Age profile of survey respondents**

The differences between age groups were greater: the largest group was 'middle-aged adults' between the ages of 26 and 44 years. Figure 8 shows a breakdown of survey respondents' ages.

### Questionnaire design

The complete questionnaire used in our research is given in figure 9. The indicators and questions that were chosen by the research team were gathered from a range of other sources, which were used in *Under the Influence* and *Feeling the Effects*. For example, indicators 8b, 8c and 8e were drawn from the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children. The additional parenting style indicators (8a, 8d, 8f, 11a and 11b) were devised by Demos and IPP researchers. Question 15 about parental drinking behaviour was drawn from the 1970 Birth Cohort

Study, and covered the same points as those used in *Feeling the Effects*. The remaining questions and indicators in the survey were designed and developed by Demos and IPP Data Research.

Figure 9 Demos and IPP Data Research survey questions

- 1 What is your gender?
  - 2 How old are you?
  - 3 What is the nearest city to where you live?
  - 4 What is your income level?
  - 5 Are you employed?
  - 6 Are you married?
  - 7 Do you have children? Y/N
- <If yes, parenting style questions 8-10><if no, skip to question 11>
- 8 In this survey we are interested in respondents' parenting style. Which of the following statements best describes your parenting style:
 

<i>Always</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Never</i>
---------------	--------------	------------------	--------------
  - 8a. I hug my children and tell them I love them
  - 8b. My child/children give me great joy
  - 8c. The best way to calm a child is to cuddle
  - 8d. I stick to the punishments I threaten when my children are naughty
  - 8e. The best discipline is a smack
  - 8f. I tend to give my children what they want in order to avoid a fuss
  - 9 How many children do you have?
  - 10 What are their ages right now? [tick all that apply]
    - 0-5
    - 6-10
    - 11-14
    - 14-18
    - 19-25
    - Over 25
  - 11 **<FOR ALL RESPONDENTS>** In this survey we are interested in different parenting styles. Thinking about your own parents or the people who raised you, which of the following best describes their parenting? [everyone to answer this]

<i>Agree strongly</i>	<i>Agree somewhat</i>	<i>Neither agree or disagree</i>	<i>Disagree somewhat</i>	<i>Disagree strongly</i>
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- a. My parents (guardians) were loving and affectionate – they hugged and kissed me often
- b. My parents (guardians) were tough disciplinarians – they always punished me when I was naughty

In this survey we are also interested in levels of alcohol consumption in our society. Please answer the questions below as honestly as possible. All information is completely anonymous and confidential.

- 12 How often do you consume alcohol on a typical week?
- Every day
  - 3–4 times a week
  - 1–2 times a week
  - Never
- 13 1. On the typical drinking occasion, how much do you tend to drink?
- 1 drink
  - 2–3 drinks
  - 3–5 drinks
  - over 5 drinks
- 13.2. In most cases, you drink alcohol:
- At home
  - Other places than home (restaurant, bar, at friends)

- 14 Has the following ever happened to you:

Yes, many times	Yes, a few times	No, never
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- a. Been arrested while intoxicated
- b. Been hospitalised while intoxicated
- c. Been in a fight while intoxicated
- d. Woken up from a night of drinking and not remembered
- e. Received treatment for alcoholism/misuse

15 Thinking about your parents' drinking habits...

- a How often would you say your father drank/drinks alcohol? (Always, Often, Sometimes, Never)
- b How often would you say your mother drank/drinks alcohol (Always, Often, Sometimes, Never)

16 **<ONLY FOR THOSE RESPONDENTS WHO ARE PARENTS WITH CHILDREN BETWEEN AGES OF 11 AND 16 - LINK TO QUESTION 10 ABOVE>** Thinking about your child between the ages of 10 and 16, which of the following best describes your situation:

*Agree strongly    Agree somewhat    Disagree somewhat    Disagree strongly*

- a. I have a zero tolerance approach to my child drinking alcohol
- b. I tolerate my child's drinking occasionally if it is under adult supervision
- c. My child has been in trouble with school because of alcohol
- d. My child has been in trouble with the police because of alcohol
- e. I feel unable to punish my child for drinking because of my own drinking behaviour

17 **<ONLY FOR THOSE RESPONDENTS WHO ARE PARENTS WITH CHILDREN 14 AND OLDER - LINK TO QUESTION 10 ABOVE>** Thinking about your children who are aged 18 and older, which of the following best describes your situation:

*Agree strongly    Agree somewhat    Disagree somewhat    Disagree strongly*

- a. At least one of my children has a problem with alcohol
- b. At least one of my children has been arrested when they were intoxicated
- c. At least one of my children drinks alcohol every day

## Data analysis

Mirroring our approach in *Under the Influence* and *Feeling the Effects*, we created two indices of parental warmth and rules to encapsulate parenting ‘typologies’. First, we created a measure based on all survey respondents’ views about their own parents. This is referred to throughout the report as ‘parental upbringing’ or parenting style of the ‘previous generation’. Second, we created an index based on the responses from parents with minor children in our survey.

In both indices, the four quadrants are made up of parents who are ‘high’ or ‘low’ in various combinations of parenting style measures. The four categories are:

- tough love – high rule enforcement, high warmth
- authoritarian – high rule enforcement, low warmth
- laissez-faire – low rule enforcement, high warmth
- disengaged – low rule enforcement, low warmth

We created the parenting typologies using numerical scores on indices, and therefore the units they comprise are numerical and have specific values. Moreover, as we defined each typology using the ‘top’ or ‘bottom’ quadrant of the two indices from which they are derived, they are relatively evenly sized and spaced.

Table 19 shows the mean, median and standard deviation scores for parenting style of ‘previous generation’. Respondents were given answer choices based on a five-point Likert scale: ‘agree strongly’, ‘agree somewhat’, ‘neither agree nor disagree’, ‘disagree somewhat’ or ‘disagree strongly’ for questions 11a and 11b. These were then numbered to give a top score of 4 on affection (an ‘agree strongly’ response to 11a), and a top score of 4 on discipline (an ‘agree strongly’ response to 11b).

Table 20 provides the mean, median and standard deviation scores for parenting style among the parents with minors in our sample. We asked respondents who were parents with minor children to answer questions 8a–8f using answer choices of ‘always’, ‘often’, ‘sometimes’ and ‘never’. Table 20 shows the assigned numerical scores for each answer choice. In this instance, the highest score on the affection axis would



Table 19 **Summary statistics for measures of respondents' parents' style of parenting (parental upbringing)**

	Mean	Standard deviation	Median	n
Had loving parents	3.2	0.7	3	1,033
Had strict parents	2.3	0.9	2	1,035

Table 20 **Mean, median and standard deviation scores for parenting style among the parents with minors in our sample**

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
8a. I hug my children and tell them I love them	4	3	2	1
8b. My child/children give me great joy	4	3	2	1
8c. The best way to calm a child is to cuddle	4	3	2	1
8d. I stick to the punishments I threaten when my children are naughty	4	3	2	1
8e. The best discipline is a smack	4	3	2	1
8f. I tend to give my children what they want in order to avoid a fuss	1	2	3	4

be 12, and the highest possible score on the control axis is 12 (answering 'always' to 8d and 8e, and 'never' to 8f).

Each respondent's (in this case parents with minor children) answers were then aggregated through simple addition; summary statistics for affection and control were calculated and are shown in table 21.

Table 21 **Summary statistics for affection and control indices for parents**

	Mean	Standard deviation	Median	n
Affection	10.4	1.6	11	349
Control	5.6	1.5	6	347

Individuals were then classified by parental type on the basis of their relationship to the median. All those who were above or equal to the median on the measures of both affection and control are considered to be scoring 'high'. All those below the median were considered to be scoring 'low'.

### Qualitative interviews

In addition to our quantitative survey, we also conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 26 families where at least one of the parents had a problem with alcohol. The interviewee was not always the alcoholic, but the subject of the interview – the person whose behaviour was discussed in the interview – was always the alcoholic.

It is important to specify that there have been difficulties concerning the qualitative survey study. The respondents have been partly selected through the General Directorate for Social Assistance and Child Protection. Consequently, these are families registered with the social services, and only 4 of them were selected with the support of NGOs.

In most cases the interviewee was interviewed alone, but once an interview was conducted with the interviewee's partner. This may have affected what was said, but in general researchers were satisfied that there was no clearly observable restriction or change to what was said. The diversity of this sample places a number of limitations on the observations that can be derived from it. For example, in some cases, the relationship between an alcoholic and their partner was a past event, while in others it was ongoing. The extent to which past circumstances can be related to present conditions is therefore limited.

The interviews were qualitative and semi-structured in nature. Additionally, some questions in the interview script were skipped in a number of interviews, so while deductions can be drawn from the evidence present in the various interviews, on any one question there were frequently a relatively large number of transcripts that will not present clear evidence. It is worth keeping in mind that the small sample and diverse nature of the interview subjects and their relationship to the alcoholic who was

the focus in the interview (themselves, their current partner, their partner three years ago and so on) sometimes complicate categorisation. In some cases, although both partners in a relationship were alcoholics, the interview focused on one not the other. The 'alcoholic concerned' is the alcoholic being described by the interviewee, as the best way of defining the subject.

Of the alcoholics 24 were men, and seven were women.<sup>86</sup> According to the latest data, this distinction in the proportion of alcoholics by gender is representative of those accessing professional help and support for alcoholism in Romania. The prevalence of female interviewees and male alcoholics might be partly explained by the facts that male parents who are harmful drinkers often leave or are ejected from the family home, and most of the interviewees were the partners of alcoholics. The sample was ethnically homogenous; all interviewees were white Caucasian, native Romanians, and none of the interviewees was from a Roma background.



## Notes

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- 2 J Birdwell, E Vandore and B Hahn, *Feeling the Effects*, London: Demos, 2012.
- 3 The quantitative survey used in this report was designed by Demos and IPP Data Research, and administered by IPP Data Research. Data collection was based on a probabilistic sample (n = 1,062) representative for the adult population of Romania (with an error margin of +/-3 per cent). Interviews were conducted at the respondents' homes face to face. The IPP Data Research team conducted the sampling, questionnaire development, data collection and recording of data, subsequent checks, statistical processing, data analysis and preparation of the research report. The data collection period was 9–20 December 2013.
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- 50 Chi-squared test:  $\chi^2 = 34.6$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = 0.000 \rightarrow$  there is a significant relationship between parental drinking and drinking type.
- 51 Chi-squared test:  $\chi^2 = 15.5$ ,  $df = 6$ ,  $p = 0.017 \rightarrow$  there is a significant relationship between parent type and drinking type.
- 52 There were 27 because one interview contained two subjects.
- 53 Interviewee 5
- 54 Interviewee 25
- 55 Interviewee 5
- 56 Interviewee 6
- 57 Interviewee 5
- 58 Interviewee 14
- 59 Interviewee 14
- 60 Interviewee 3
- 61 Interviewee 13

- 62 Interviewee 12
- 63 Interviewee 12
- 64 Interviewee 18
- 65 Interviewee 8
- 66 Interviewee 1
- 67 Interviewee 17
- 68 Autoritatea Națională pentru Protecția Drepturilor Copilului și  
Adopție (National Authority for Child Rights and Adoption),  
[www.copii.ro](http://www.copii.ro) (accessed 8 Oct 2014).
- 69 Interviewee 18
- 70 Interviewee 7
- 71 Interviewee 16
- 72 For example, interviewee 12
- 73 Interviewee 1
- 74 Interviewee 8
- 75 In one case it was unclear where the alcoholic drank.
- 76 Interviewee 18
- 77 Interviewee 8
- 78 Interviewee 16
- 79 Interviewee 4

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- 86 This figure is more than 26 because some people were both alcoholics and the partners of alcoholics.

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Excessive alcohol consumption continues to be a priority for policy makers across Europe. Demos has conducted research into the issue in the UK context, exploring the role that parenting can have on reducing the next generation's likelihood of drinking excessively. Based on analysis of longitudinal data, we found that parenting style and parental consumption correlated with more harmful drinking behaviours in the next generation. Following these findings, we wanted to explore whether the relationship between parenting and drinking was specific – or especially strong – in the UK, or whether it existed in other countries. The research presented in this report is a first step in trying to answer this question, taking Romania as our case study.

Drawing on interviews of families with problems with alcohol and an original survey of the Romanian public, this report develops a picture of alcohol consumption and parenting style in Romania, and the possible impact that parenting style has on drinking behaviour. It finds that parents who drink more are more likely to have children who drink more, and that parents who adopt an 'authoritarian' style to parenting – with high levels of discipline, but low levels of love and affection – are more likely to have children who are prone to problematic drinking in later life.

The report has a number of recommendations for government, industry and the NGO sector. It argues that as a first step, the Romanian government should adopt a national alcohol strategy, to highlight key statistics, and outline its priorities and responsibilities. It also emphasises the importance of targeted interventions – both those focused on the early years and directed at the family – to help support families struggling with alcohol misuse and to prevent the next generation from suffering the same problems.

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