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Binge drinking deaths double in 15 years

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28th January, 2008

THE ARTICLE

Britain's Office for National Statistics has reported a sharp and alarming rise in the number of people dying from alcohol abuse. Binge drinking has become part of British culture and is now a serious social issue - people are literally drinking themselves to death. The figures are of near epidemic proportions. Alcohol-related fatalities among British adults doubled from 4,144 in 1991 to 8,758 in 2006. The steepest increase was the 132 percent rise in deaths among men in the 35 to 54 age bracket. They are suffering from liver failure and stomach cancers at a younger age than ever before. The figures for women in the same age group also show a dramatic rise of over 100 percent. These disturbing figures seem to be a legacy of people partying and drinking heavily in their twenties and early thirties.

Professor Ian Gilmore, a leading British doctor, said: "Liver disease is often symptomless until it becomes very serious, and so people often have no warning that they are destroying their liver until it is almost too late." Frank Soodeen from the group Alcohol Concern called for immediate action: "It is vital that the government finally starts investing more in alcohol treatment to help problem drinkers address these issues before the situation becomes irretrievable," he said. Britain's public health minister Dawn Primarolo said the government was launching a \$20m campaign to raise awareness of the dangers of too much alcohol, and was reviewing alcohol pricing and advertising. However, she warned: "We know we're not going to change people's attitudes to alcohol overnight - it's going to take time."

WARM-UPS

1. ALCOHOL: Walk around the class and talk to other students about alcohol and drinking. Change partners often. After you finish, sit with your original partner(s) and share what you found out.

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

statistics / alcohol abuse / serious social issues / epidemics / cancer / partying / symptoms / warnings / liver problems / alcohol advertising / changing attitudes

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

3. TO DEATH: Talk with your partner(s) about the deadly situations below. Rank them in order of the worst way to go. Change partners and share your findings.

- a. _____ drinking yourself to death
- b. _____ starving to death
- c. _____ freezing to death
- d. _____ being strangled to death
- e. _____ falling to your death
- f. _____ dieting yourself to death
- g. _____ being bored to death
- h. _____ eating your way to an early grave

4. DANGER CULTURE: Talk with your partner(s) about these social problems. Are they a strong part of your culture? How would you like your culture to change its attitudes toward these things? Change partners and share your findings.

- | | |
|---------------|---------------|
| • alcohol | • obesity |
| • junk food | • petty crime |
| • consumerism | • drugs |
| • credit | • partying |
| • bullying | • cyber crime |

5. DRINKING: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word 'drinking'. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

6. QUICK ROLE PLAY: Student A **strongly** believes that alcohol creates too many social and health problems and should therefore be banned; Student B **strongly** believes alcohol is an important part of culture and drinking should be encouraged. Change partners again and talk about your roles and conversations.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|--|-------|
| a. Alcohol abuse has risen in Britain over the past decade and a half. | T / F |
| b. An alcoholic epidemic has broken out all across Britain. | T / F |
| c. The age group most affected are those in their mid-fifties. | T / F |
| d. The cause of these deaths is people drinking in their teens. | T / F |
| e. There are many obvious symptoms of liver disease. | T / F |
| f. People often have no idea their liver is badly damaged. | T / F |
| g. Britain's government has launched a ban drinking campaign. | T / F |
| h. A government minister said attitudes could change overnight. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|------------------|------------------|
| 1. alarming | a. sign |
| 2. issue | b. deaths |
| 3. proportions | c. top |
| 4. fatalities | d. consequence |
| 5. legacy | e. irrecoverable |
| 6. leading | f. problem |
| 7. symptom | g. thinking |
| 8. vital | h. frightening |
| 9. irretrievable | i. essential |
| 10. attitudes | j. numbers |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| 1. a sharp and alarming rise in the | a. proportions |
| 2. people are literally drinking | b. becomes irretrievable |
| 3. figures are of near epidemic | c. drinking heavily |
| 4. deaths among men in the | d. symptomless |
| 5. a legacy of people partying and | e. themselves to death |
| 6. Liver disease is often | f. 35 to 54 age bracket |
| 7. people often have no warning that they | g. overnight |
| 8. address these issues before the situation | h. are destroying their liver |
| 9. raise awareness of the dangers | i. number of people dying |
| 10. change people's attitudes to alcohol | j. of too much alcohol |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words into the gaps in the text.

Britain's Office for National Statistics has reported a _____ and alarming rise in the number of people dying from alcohol abuse. Binge drinking has become part of British culture and is now a serious _____ issue - people are literally drinking themselves to death. The figures are of _____ epidemic proportions. Alcohol-related fatalities among British adults doubled from 4,144 in 1991 to 8,758 in 2006. The _____ increase was the 132 percent rise in deaths among men in the 35 to 54 age _____. They are suffering from liver _____ and stomach cancers at a younger age than ever before. The figures for women in the same age group also show a dramatic _____ of over 100 percent. These disturbing figures seem to be a legacy of people partying and drinking heavily in their twenties and _____ thirties.

Professor Ian Gilmore, a _____ British doctor, said: "Liver disease is often symptomless until it becomes very serious, and so people often have no _____ that they are destroying their liver until it is _____ too late." Frank Soodeen from the group Alcohol Concern called for immediate action: "It is _____ that the government finally starts investing more in alcohol treatment to help problem drinkers _____ these issues before the situation becomes irretrievable," he said. Britain's public health minister Dawn Primarolo said the government was _____ a \$20m campaign to raise awareness of the dangers of too much alcohol, and was reviewing alcohol _____ and advertising. However, she warned: "We know we're not going to change people's attitudes to alcohol _____ - it's going to take time."

early
near
failure
sharp
steepest
social
rise
bracket

vital
pricing
warning
launching
almost
leading
overnight
address

LISTENING: Listen and fill in the spaces.

Britain's Office for National Statistics _____ and alarming rise in the number of people dying from alcohol abuse. Binge drinking _____ British culture and is now a serious social issue - people are literally drinking themselves to death. The _____ epidemic proportions. Alcohol-related fatalities among British adults doubled from 4,144 in 1991 to 8,758 in 2006. The steepest increase was the 132 percent _____ in the 35 to 54 age bracket. They are suffering from liver failure and stomach cancers at _____ ever before. The figures for women in the same age group also show a dramatic rise of over 100 percent. These disturbing figures _____ of people partying and drinking heavily in their _____.

Professor Ian Gilmore, a leading British doctor, said: "Liver disease is often symptomless _____ serious, and so people often have no warning that they are destroying their liver _____ late." Frank Soodeen from the group Alcohol Concern called for immediate action: "_____ government finally starts investing more in alcohol treatment to help problem drinkers _____ before the situation becomes irretrievable," he said. Britain's public health minister Dawn Primarolo said the government was launching a \$20m campaign to raise awareness _____ too much alcohol, and was reviewing alcohol pricing and advertising. However, she warned: "We know we're not going to change people's attitudes to alcohol overnight - _____ time."

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'alcohol' and 'abuse'.

alcohol	abuse

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• sharp• serious• doubled• younger• women• heavily	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• leading• destroying• immediate• vital• launching• overnight
---	--

STUDENT ALCOHOL SURVEY

Write five GOOD questions about alcohol in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper.

When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

	STUDENT 1 _____	STUDENT 2 _____	STUDENT 3 _____
Q.1.			
Q.2.			
Q.3.			
Q.4.			
Q.5.			

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
 - b) What springs to mind when you hear the word 'alcohol'?
 - c) Do you think alcohol is dangerous?
 - d) What part does alcohol play in the culture of your country?
 - e) Does alcohol cause any social problems in your country?
 - f) Why do you think British people binge drink?
 - g) What's the most you've ever drunk in one night?
 - h) Do you think people should stop partying heavily in the twenties?
 - i) What do you think of this story?
-

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) Do you worry about the effects on your body of drugs like alcohol, caffeine, nicotine, etc?
- c) Do you do anything in life that might be / is destroying or harming your body?
- d) What immediate action do you think the government should carry out?
- e) Do you think alcohol abuse in countries like Britain is an irretrievable problem?
- f) Do you think societies would be better if alcohol was banned?
- g) Do you think the health minister's campaign will change attitudes in Britain?
- h) What questions would you like to ask the health minister in this article?
- i) Did you like this discussion?

LANGUAGE

CORRECT WORD: Put the correct words from a–d below in the article.

Britain's Office for National Statistics has (1) _____ a sharp and alarming rise in the number of people dying from alcohol abuse. Binge drinking has (2) _____ part of British culture and is now a serious social issue - people are (3) _____ drinking themselves to death. The figures are of near epidemic proportions. Alcohol-related fatalities among British adults doubled from 4,144 in 1991 to 8,758 in 2006. The steepest increase was the 132 percent rise (4) _____ deaths among men in the 35 to 54 age bracket. They are suffering from liver failure and stomach cancers (5) _____ a younger age than ever before. The figures for women in the same age group also show a dramatic rise of over 100 percent. These disturbing figures seem to be a legacy of people partying and drinking heavily in (6) _____ twenties and early thirties.

Professor Ian Gilmore, a (7) _____ British doctor, said: "Liver disease is often symptomless until it becomes very serious, and so people often have no warning that they are destroying their liver until it is (8) _____ too late." Frank Soodeen from the group Alcohol Concern called for immediate action: "It is (9) _____ that the government finally starts investing more in alcohol treatment to help problem drinkers address these issues (10) _____ the situation becomes irretrievable," he said. Britain's public health minister Dawn Primarolo said the government was launching a \$20m campaign to (11) _____ awareness of the dangers of too much alcohol, and was reviewing alcohol pricing and advertising. However, she warned: "We know we're not going to change people's attitudes to alcohol (12) _____ - it's going to take time."

- | | | | | |
|-----|---------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|
| 1. | (a) reporter | (b) reported | (c) reporters | (d) reporting |
| 2. | (a) become | (b) becoming | (c) became | (d) becomes |
| 3. | (a) lateral | (b) literal | (c) literature | (d) literally |
| 4. | (a) by | (b) of | (c) in | (d) with |
| 5. | (a) at | (b) of | (c) for | (d) in |
| 6. | (a) all | (b) their | (c) alcohol | (d) parties |
| 7. | (a) leaking | (b) leasing | (c) leaving | (d) leading |
| 8. | (a) such | (b) very | (c) almost | (d) never |
| 9. | (a) viral | (b) vitality | (c) virus | (d) vital |
| 10. | (a) before | (b) after | (c) when | (d) soon |
| 11. | (a) rising | (b) rise | (c) raise | (d) risen |
| 12. | (a) nighttime | (b) overnight | (c) nightmare | (d) nightlife |

WRITING:

Write about *alcohol* for 10 minutes. Correct your partner's paper.

[illegible]

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find out about alcohol abuse around the world. Share what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

3. SOCIAL ISSUES: What are the biggest social issues in your country? Make a poster about them. Include your solutions to address them. Show your work to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar things?

4. BINGE DRINKER: Write a magazine article about a binge drinker who is destroying his/her body and life. Include imaginary interviews with him/her.

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Write down new words and expressions.

5. LETTER: Write a letter to Britain's public health minister. Ask her three questions about binge drinking in Britain. Give her three suggestions on what more she could do to reduce the number of alcohol-related fatalities. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

a. T b. F c. F d. F e. F f. T g. F h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|------------------|------------------|
| 1. alarming | a. frightening |
| 2. issue | b. problem |
| 3. proportions | c. numbers |
| 4. fatalities | d. deaths |
| 5. legacy | e. consequence |
| 6. leading | f. top |
| 7. symptom | g. sign |
| 8. vital | h. essential |
| 9. irretrievable | i. irrecoverable |
| 10. attitudes | j. thinking |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| 1. a sharp and alarming rise in the | a. number of people dying |
| 2. people are literally drinking | b. themselves to death |
| 3. figures are of near epidemic | c. proportions |
| 4. deaths among men in the | d. 35 to 54 age bracket |
| 5. a legacy of people partying and | e. drinking heavily |
| 6. Liver disease is often | f. symptomless |
| 7. people often have no warning that they | g. are destroying their liver |
| 8. address these issues before the situation | h. becomes irretrievable |
| 9. raise awareness of the dangers | i. of too much alcohol |
| 10. change people's attitudes to alcohol | j. overnight |

GAP FILL:

Binge drinking deaths double in 15 years

Britain's Office for National Statistics has reported a **sharp** and alarming rise in the number of people dying from alcohol abuse. Binge drinking has become part of British culture and is now a serious **social** issue - people are literally drinking themselves to death. The figures are of **near** epidemic proportions. Alcohol-related fatalities among British adults doubled from 4,144 in 1991 to 8,758 in 2006. The **steepest** increase was the 132 percent rise in deaths among men in the 35 to 54 age **bracket**. They are suffering from liver **failure** and stomach cancers at a younger age than ever before. The figures for women in the same age group also show a dramatic **rise** of over 100 percent. These disturbing figures seem to be a legacy of people partying and drinking heavily in their twenties and **early** thirties.

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LANGUAGE WORK

1 - b 2 - a 3 - d 4 - c 5 - a 6 - b 7 - d 8 - c 9 - d 10 - a 11 - c 12 - b