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## **Alcoholism – Russia’s ‘national disaster’**

<http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/0908/090814-russia.html>

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# THE ARTICLE

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/0908/090814-russia.html>

Russian president Dmitry Medvedev has said alcoholism is a 'national disaster' in his country. He spoke of his shock at how much Russians drank each year. In particular, he said Russian people drank too much vodka, which is the nation's most popular alcoholic beverage. Mr. Medvedev quoted a recent report that showed the average Russian drank 18 litres of pure alcohol each year. That means around 350 litres of beer or about 45 litres of vodka. That's almost a litre of vodka a week. The president said: "When you convert that into vodka bottles, it is simply mind-boggling." He said measures aimed at reducing the levels of drinking have not worked. "This is a centuries-old problem and one cannot hope to solve it overnight," Medvedev said.

Doctors in Russia believe alcohol causes around half of all deaths of Russians between the ages of 15 and 54. An equally frightening statistic is that only 40 per cent of Russian school leavers are likely to live to the age of 60. This will have a huge impact on Russia's economy. The country has one of the highest rates of alcohol-related diseases in the world. Health Minister Tatyana Golikova said: "We are the absolute leader in terms of alcohol consumption." One problem Russia has is bootlegging – making and selling vodka illegally to avoid paying taxes. Quite often the alcohol content in bootleg vodka is much higher than that in commercially produced liquor. Officials say up to 50 per cent of Russia's vodka market is illegal.

# WARM-UPS

**1. ALCOHOL:** Walk around the class and talk to other students about alcohol. Change partners often. Sit with your first partner(s) and share your findings.

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

*alcoholism / national disasters / shock / vodka / mind-boggling / solving problems / doctors / frightening statistics / school leavers / bootlegging / avoid paying taxes*

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

**3. NATIONAL DISASTERS:** Does your country have any? Complete this table. Show your partner(s) your work. Change partners and share what you heard.

Disaster	Small or big?	How it affects you
Social problem		
Government		
Environment		
Natural events		
Man-made		
Young people		

**4. ALCOHOLISM:** Students A **strongly** believe alcohol is a dangerous drug that governments should ban; Students B **strongly** believe alcohol is an important part of many cultures. Change partners again and talk about your conversations.

**5. TOO MUCH:** Do you do things too much? Rate these and share your ratings with your partner: 10 = I do this way too much; 1 = I don't do this enough. Change partners and share your ratings again.

- drink alcohol
- eat unhealthy food
- tell lies
- watch TV
- worry
- go shopping
- study English
- play computer games

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

# BEFORE READING / LISTENING

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/0908/090814-russia.html>

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

- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| a. Russia's leader believes his people drink far too much.                  | T / F |
| b. Most people in Russia prefer drinking beer to vodka.                     | T / F |
| c. People in Russia drink the equivalent of nearly a litre of vodka a week. | T / F |
| d. The problem of Russians drinking too much started in the 1990s.          | T / F |
| e. Russian doctors say alcohol is a major killer in Russia.                 | T / F |
| f. The amount of alcohol Russians drink boosts the country's economy.       | T / F |
| g. A Russian politician said Russians are not the world's biggest drinkers. | T / F |
| h. As much as 50 per cent of Russian vodka is made illegally.               | T / F |

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

- |                  |                   |
|------------------|-------------------|
| 1. disaster      | a. change         |
| 2. beverage      | b. total          |
| 3. convert       | c. unbelievable   |
| 4. mind-boggling | d. leads to       |
| 5. solve         | e. catastrophe    |
| 6. causes        | f. effect         |
| 7. frightening   | g. keep away from |
| 8. impact        | h. drink          |
| 9. absolute      | i. answer         |
| 10. avoid        | j. scary          |

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

- |                                  |                            |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. He spoke of his shock at how  | a. vodka bottles           |
| 2. the average                   | b. related diseases        |
| 3. convert that into             | c. it overnight            |
| 4. a centuries-                  | d. statistic               |
| 5. one cannot hope to solve      | e. Russian drank 18 litres |
| 6. alcohol causes around         | f. much Russians drank     |
| 7. An equally frightening        | g. old problem             |
| 8. the highest rates of alcohol- | h. content                 |
| 9. selling vodka illegally to    | i. half of all deaths      |
| 10. alcohol                      | j. avoid paying taxes      |

# WHILE READING / LISTENING

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/0908/090814-russia.html>

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

Russian president Dmitry Medvedev has said \_\_\_\_\_ is a 'national disaster' in his country. He spoke of his \_\_\_\_\_ at how much Russians drank each year. In \_\_\_\_\_, he said Russian people drank too much vodka, which is the nation's most popular alcoholic \_\_\_\_\_. Mr. Medvedev quoted a recent report that showed the average Russian drank 18 litres of \_\_\_\_\_ alcohol each year. That means around 350 litres of beer or about 45 litres of vodka. That's almost a litre of vodka a week. The president said: "When you \_\_\_\_\_ that into vodka bottles, it is simply mind-boggling." He said measures aimed at \_\_\_\_\_ the levels of drinking have not worked. "This is a centuries-old problem and one cannot hope to solve it \_\_\_\_\_," Medvedev said.

*convert*  
*beverage*  
*shock*  
*overnight*  
*reducing*  
*alcoholism*  
*particular*  
*pure*

Doctors in Russia believe alcohol \_\_\_\_\_ around half of all deaths of Russians between the ages of 15 and 54. An equally frightening \_\_\_\_\_ is that only 40 per cent of Russian school leavers are likely to live to the age of 60. This will have a \_\_\_\_\_ impact on Russia's economy. The country has one of the highest \_\_\_\_\_ of alcohol-related diseases in the world. Health Minister Tatyana Golikova said: "We are the absolute leader in \_\_\_\_\_ of alcohol consumption." One problem Russia has is bootlegging - making and \_\_\_\_\_ vodka illegally to avoid paying taxes. Quite often the alcohol content in bootleg vodka is much \_\_\_\_\_ than that in commercially produced liquor. Officials say up to 50 per cent of Russia's vodka market is \_\_\_\_\_.

*selling*  
*rates*  
*statistic*  
*higher*  
*causes*  
*illegal*  
*huge*  
*terms*

## LISTENING – Listen and fill in the gaps

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/0908/090814-russia.html>

Russian president Dmitry Medvedev has said alcoholism is a 'national disaster' in his country. He \_\_\_\_\_ how much Russians drank each year. In particular, he said Russian people drank too much vodka, which is the nation's most \_\_\_\_\_. Mr. Medvedev quoted \_\_\_\_\_ showed the average Russian drank 18 litres of pure alcohol each year. That means around 350 litres of beer or about 45 litres of vodka. That's almost \_\_\_\_\_ week. The president said: "When you convert that into vodka bottles, it is \_\_\_\_\_." He said measures aimed at reducing the levels of drinking have not worked. "This is a centuries-old problem and one cannot hope \_\_\_\_\_," Medvedev said.

Doctors in Russia believe alcohol \_\_\_\_\_ all deaths of Russians between the ages of 15 and 54. An equally frightening statistic is that only 40 per cent of Russian school leavers are likely \_\_\_\_\_ 60. This will have a huge impact on Russia's economy. The country has \_\_\_\_\_ rates of alcohol-related diseases in the world. Health Minister Tatyana Golikova said: "\_\_\_\_\_ leader in terms of alcohol consumption." One problem Russia has is bootlegging – making and selling vodka illegally \_\_\_\_\_. Quite often the alcohol content in bootleg vodka is much higher than that in commercially produced liquor. \_\_\_\_\_ 50 per cent of Russia's vodka market is illegal.

# AFTER READING / LISTENING

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/0908/090814-russia.html>

**1. WORD SEARCH:** Look in your dictionary / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'national' and 'disaster'.

<b>national</b>	<b>disaster</b>
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- 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 how they were used in the text:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• spoke</li><li>• beverage</li><li>• pure</li><li>• convert</li><li>• aimed</li><li>• solve</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• half</li><li>• likely</li><li>• huge</li><li>• leader</li><li>• avoid</li><li>• content</li></ul>
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# STUDENT ALCOHOL SURVEY

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/0908/090814-russia.html>

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.

# ALCOHOL 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) Is there a drink problem in your country?
- d) What is your country's national drink and what do you think of it?
- e) Does your country have a similar 'national disaster'?
- f) Are you surprised at Dmitry Medvedev's words?
- g) Why do you think Russians drink so much?
- h) What do you think of someone drinking a litre of vodka a week?
- i) Have you heard anything else mind-boggling recently?
- j) What centuries-old problems are there in your county?

*Alcoholism – Russia's 'national disaster' – 14th August, 2009*  
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# ALCOHOL DISCUSSION

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

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) Why do you think Russia allows this disaster to continue?
- c) What frightening statistics have you heard recently?
- d) What do you think Russia should do to solve this problem?
- e) Alcohol is a drug that causes many social problems. Do you think it should be banned worldwide?
- f) What impact does alcohol have on your society?
- g) Are there any good things about alcohol?
- h) Do you think Russia can stop the problem of bootleg vodka?
- i) Do you think this problem will get better or worse?
- j) What questions would you like to ask Dmitry Medvedev?

*Alcoholism – Russia's 'national disaster' – 14th August, 2009*  
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# LANGUAGE – MULTIPLE CHOICE

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/0908/090814-russia.html>

Russian president Dmitry Medvedev has said alcoholism is a 'national disaster' in his country. He (1) \_\_\_\_\_ of his shock at how much Russians drank each year. In particular, he said Russian people drank too (2) \_\_\_\_\_ vodka, which is the nation's most popular alcoholic beverage. Mr. Medvedev quoted a recent report that showed the (3) \_\_\_\_\_ Russian drank 18 litres of pure alcohol each year. That (4) \_\_\_\_\_ around 350 litres of beer or about 45 litres of vodka. That's almost a litre of vodka a week. The president said: "When you convert that (5) \_\_\_\_\_ vodka bottles, it is simply mind-boggling." He said measures aimed at reducing the levels of drinking have not worked. "This is a centuries-old problem and one cannot hope to solve it (6) \_\_\_\_\_," Medvedev said.

Doctors in Russia believe alcohol causes around half (7) \_\_\_\_\_ all deaths of Russians between the ages of 15 and 54. An (8) \_\_\_\_\_ frightening statistic is that only 40 per cent of Russian school leavers are (9) \_\_\_\_\_ to live to the age of 60. This will have a huge impact on Russia's economy. The country has one of the highest rates of alcohol-(10) \_\_\_\_\_ diseases in the world. Health Minister Tatyana Golikova said: "We are the absolute leader in terms of alcohol consumption." One problem Russia has is bootlegging – making and selling vodka illegally to avoid (11) \_\_\_\_\_ taxes. Quite often the alcohol content in bootleg vodka is much higher than that in commercially (12) \_\_\_\_\_ liquor. Officials say up to 50 per cent of Russia's vodka market is illegal.

**Put the correct words from the table below in the above article.**

- |     |                |                  |               |                |
|-----|----------------|------------------|---------------|----------------|
| 1.  | (a) spoke      | (b) speak        | (c) speaking  | (d) spoken     |
| 2.  | (a) many       | (b) most         | (c) much      | (d) more       |
| 3.  | (a) on average | (b) averaged     | (c) averages  | (d) average    |
| 4.  | (a) meaning    | (b) means        | (c) meant     | (d) mean       |
| 5.  | (a) so to      | (b) onto         | (c) up to     | (d) into       |
| 6.  | (a) nightly    | (b) at night     | (c) overnight | (d) night time |
| 7.  | (a) by         | (b) of           | (c) from      | (d) for        |
| 8.  | (a) equally    | (b) equal        | (c) equals    | (d) equality   |
| 9.  | (a) likely     | (b) liked        | (c) likeable  | (d) likes      |
| 10. | (a) relations  | (b) relationship | (c) related   | (d) relative   |
| 11. | (a) pays       | (b) paid         | (c) payee     | (d) paying     |
| 12. | (a) production | (b) produced     | (c) producers | (d) produce    |



# 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 more about alcohol. Share what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

**3. ALCOHOL:** Make a poster about alcohol. Show how it is part of your culture and how it causes social problems. Show your work to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar things?

**4. DISASTER:** Write a magazine article about a disaster in your country. Include imaginary interviews with those affected by the disaster.

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Write down any new words and expressions you hear from your partner(s).

**5. LETTER:** Write a letter to Russian president Dmitry Medvedev. Ask him three questions about alcoholism in Russia. Give him three ideas he could use to reduce levels of alcoholism. 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. T      d. F      e. T      f. F      g. F      h. T

## SYNONYM MATCH:

- |                  |                   |
|------------------|-------------------|
| 1. disaster      | a. catastrophe    |
| 2. beverage      | b. drink          |
| 3. convert       | c. change         |
| 4. mind-boggling | d. unbelievable   |
| 5. solve         | e. answer         |
| 6. causes        | f. leads to       |
| 7. frightening   | g. scary          |
| 8. impact        | h. effect         |
| 9. absolute      | i. total          |
| 10. avoid        | j. keep away from |

## PHRASE MATCH:

- |                                  |                            |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. He spoke of his shock at how  | a. much Russians drank     |
| 2. the average                   | b. Russian drank 18 litres |
| 3. convert that into             | c. vodka bottles           |
| 4. a centuries-                  | d. old problem             |
| 5. one cannot hope to solve      | e. it overnight            |
| 6. alcohol causes around         | f. half of all deaths      |
| 7. An equally frightening        | g. statistic               |
| 8. the highest rates of alcohol- | h. related diseases        |
| 9. selling vodka illegally to    | i. avoid paying taxes      |
| 10. alcohol                      | j. content                 |

## GAP FILL:

### Alcoholism – Russia's 'national disaster'

Russian president Dmitry Medvedev has said **alcoholism** is a 'national disaster' in his country. He spoke of his **shock** at how much Russians drank each year. In **particular**, he said Russian people drank too much vodka, which is the nation's most popular alcoholic **beverage**. Mr. Medvedev quoted a recent report that showed the average Russian drank 18 litres of **pure** alcohol each year. That means around 350 litres of beer or about 45 litres of vodka. That's almost a litre of vodka a week. The president said: "When you **convert** that into vodka bottles, it is simply mind-boggling." He said measures aimed at **reducing** the levels of drinking have not worked. "This is a centuries-old problem and one cannot hope to solve it **overnight**," Medvedev said.

Doctors in Russia believe alcohol **causes** around half of all deaths of Russians between the ages of 15 and 54. An equally frightening **statistic** is that only 40 per cent of Russian school leavers are likely to live to the age of 60. This will have a **huge** impact on Russia's economy. The country has one of the highest **rates** of alcohol-related diseases in the world. Health Minister Tatyana Golikova said: "We are the absolute leader in **terms** of alcohol consumption." One problem Russia has is bootlegging – making and **selling** vodka illegally to avoid paying taxes. Quite often the alcohol content in bootleg vodka is much **higher** than that in commercially produced liquor. Officials say up to 50 per cent of Russia's vodka market is **illegal**.

## LANGUAGE WORK

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