COVID-19 Has Significantly Impacted Drinking Behaviours And Correlated Harm

Volume of consumption increased

Most people did not change their drinking amount but among those who did, a larger proportion increased consumption

Alcohol duty receipts in DEU, GBR and USA increased by 3-5%

Frequency of consumption increased too

In 11 countries, 43% of respondents increased drinking frequency; 25% decreased frequency

Binge drinking remained constant or, if anything, it decreased slightly

Place of consumption changed

The hospitality sector, such as hotels, bars and restaurants, was severely hit, other sectors such as retail stores and e-commerce saw increasing sales (e.g. +234% in online purchases in the USA)

Some groups were most affected

Women, parents of young children, people with higher income and individuals with depressive and anxiety symptoms reported the highest increase in alcohol consumption
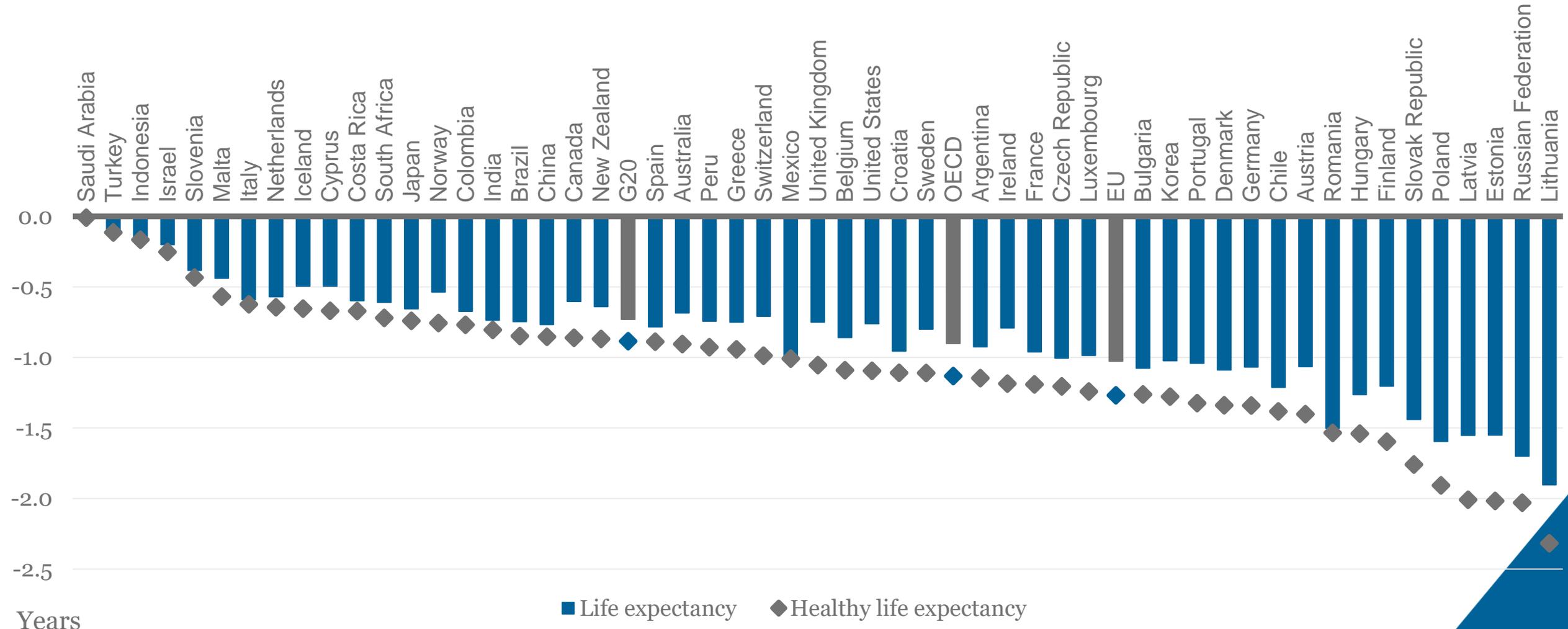
Domestic violence increased

Domestic violence was exacerbated by lockdowns and stay at home orders

Across EU countries, there has been a 60% rise in emergency calls about domestic violence

Impact of Drinking Above 1-1.5 drinks/day for women/men on Life Expectancy and Healthy Life Expectancy, average 2020-50

Years

■ Life expectancy   ◆ Healthy life expectancy

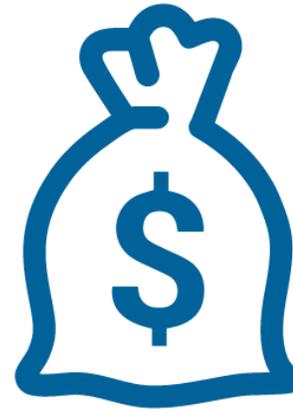Source: OECD (2021) Preventing harmful alcohol use – oe.cd/alcohol2021

Diseases Caused by Drinking ≥1-1.5 Drinks/day Carry A Significant Economic Burden For Countries And Individuals

2.6%
of healthcare expenditure in EU countries is attributable to conditions caused by drinking ≥1-1.5 drinks/day for women/men

1.9%
Reduction in GDP due to conditions caused by drinking ≥1-1.5 drinks/day for women/men in G20 countries

+30%
Chances to perform well at school in (mainly European) teenagers who have never experienced drunkenness

177 EUR
Equivalent tax increase per capita due to conditions caused by drinking ≥1-1.5 drinks/day for women/men in EU countries

Gaps Remain In Strategies To Tackle Harmful Alcohol Consumption

WHO data and evidence in the literature identify some gaps in the policy action to tackle harmful use of alcohol. Key gaps include:

- Only 37% of the 52 countries analysed have a written national policy and an action plan;

- 74% of countries do not automatically adjust alcohol taxes for inflation;

- The majority of countries does not have the most effective regulation of advertising, particularly for social media and sport sponsorships;

- In Europe and the United States, less than 10% of people potentially benefitting from screening and brief intervention in primary care are covered by this intervention .

A PPPP Approach Is An Excellent Investment and Addresses Many Of The Current Policy Gaps

A comprehensive prevention package

Police enforcement to limit alcohol-related injuries and violence;

Protecting children from alcohol promotion;

Primary care to help patients with harmful drinking patterns;

Pricing policies to limit the affordability of cheap alcohol.

In 48 countries, over 30 years (2020-2050)

8.5 million
Cases of alcohol-related conditions avoided per year

USD 28 billion
saved every year due to reduced healthcare expenditure (≈ health budget of Israel)

3.9 million
additional full-time workers per year due to increased productivity

16:1
USD 16 returned in economic benefit for each dollar invested, excluding the impact on alcohol industry

Preventing Harmful Alcohol Use

Do you have questions? Contact us at: Marion.Devaux@oecd.org Michele.Cecchini@oecd.org

Data, graphs, country notes and much more at: oe.cd/alcohol2021

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