

Alcohol's harm to others: Selected studies from the Nordic countries

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Research on harm from alcohol

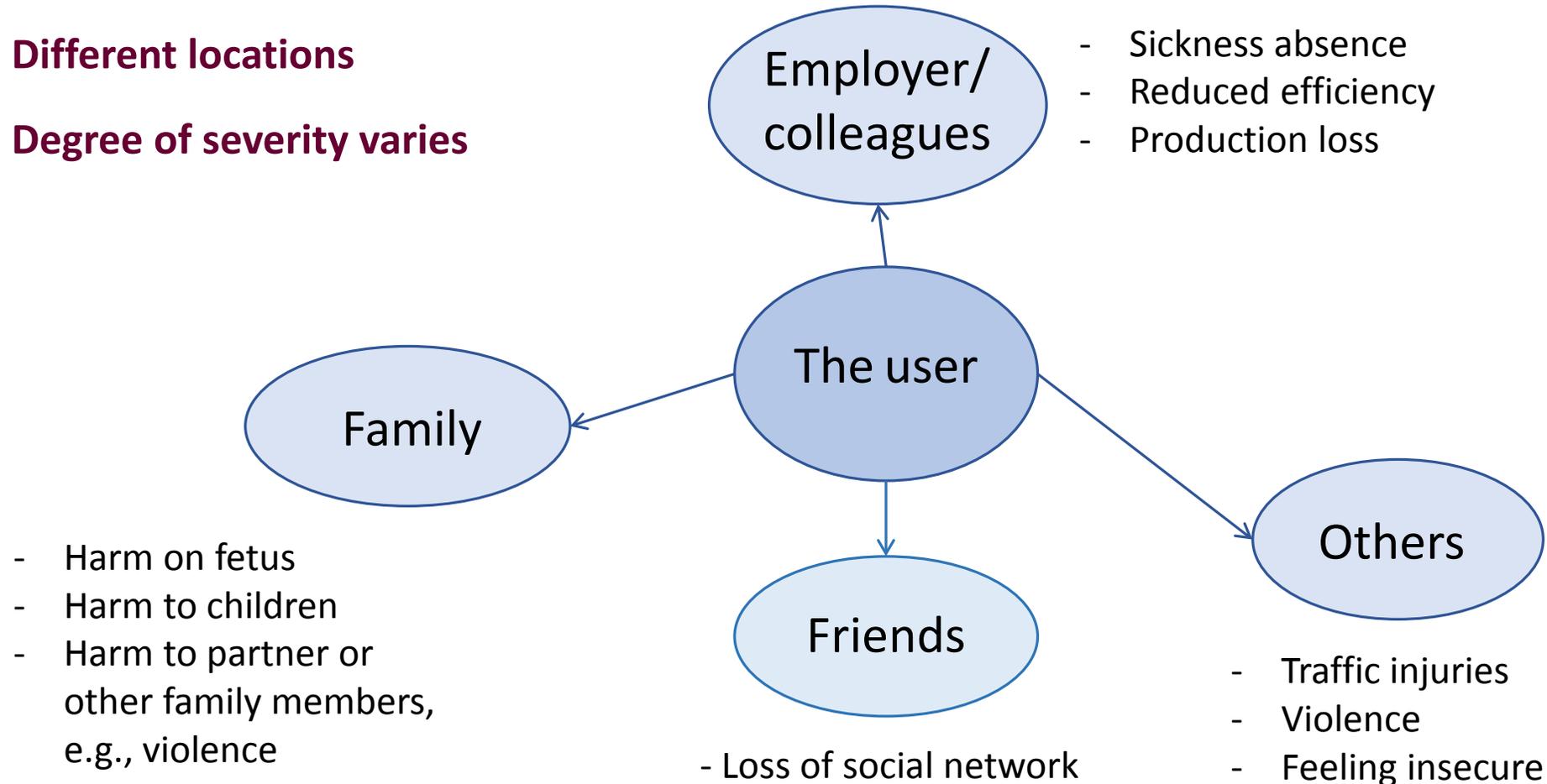
- Traditionally: focus on **alcohol's harm to others (AHTO)**
- Shift in the 70s-80s: more focus on **harm to the user**
- Recent years: Both researchers and politicians focus more on **AHTO**
 - *In the last white paper for the drug field in Norway (2011-2012), AHTO was presented as one of five prioritized areas*
 - *The same year, the Nordic Welfare Centre (NVC) published a special issue addressing AHTO*
- In 2013, researchers from the Nordic countries established a network addressing AHTO
 - *Funding from The Joint Committee for Nordic research councils for the Humanities and Social Sciences (NOS-HS), 2014-2016 and 2017-2018*
 - *Several articles have been published and more articles are in progress, e.g., using RARHA-data*



Examples of alcohol's harm to others

Figure based on Room, Ferris, Laslett et al. 2010

- **Different locations**
- **Degree of severity varies**



Storvoll, E. E., Moan, I. S. & Lund, I. O. (2016). Negative Consequences of Other People's Drinking: Prevalence, Perpetrators and Locations. *Drug and Alcohol Review, 35 (6), 755-762.*

- While both policy makers and researchers have shown renewed interest in AHTO, several questions remain unanswered.
- The aim of the first study was to:
 1. *Present updated figures on the prevalence of experience of some specific kind of harm from other people's drinking in various sub-groups, and*
 2. *Examine in which locations such episodes most often occur and who the perpetrators usually are*

Method

Participants

- A general population survey conducted among Norwegians aged 16-79 years (N=1947), response rate 51 %.

Measures

- *Experiences of five negative consequences, at which location the last episode occurred and who the perpetrator was*
- *Demographic variables*
- *Drinking habits*

Results

Table 1. Negative consequences experienced during the last 12 months (%)

(Lowest N = 1937)	Experienced neg. cons.
Been shouted at or insulted by someone who was under the influence of alcohol	8,3
Been exposed to unwanted sexual attention by someone who was under the influence of alcohol	6.3
Got their clothes or others belongings of some value damaged by someone who was under the influence of alcohol	3.8
Been afraid that someone who was under the influence of alcohol would harm you	5.7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Altogether, 17.3% had experienced at least one problem during the past 12 months Been physically harmed by someone who was under the influence of alcohol	1.5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ <i>Most (11.3%) had experienced one problem, 4.5% two problems and 1.6% three or more problems</i> 	

Results, cont.

- **At increased risk:** Young, not living with a partner, an urban resident, with low education and often intoxicated
- **Gender differences**
 - Women: unwanted sexual attention
 - Men: having had clothes/belongings damaged
- Episodes were spread across different **locations**, i.e. private homes, on premise outlets and outdoors
- **Perpetrators** were more often strangers or friends/acquaintances than partners or family members

Scheffels, J., Moan, I. S., & Storvoll, E. E. (2016). Everything in moderation? A mixed methods study on perceptions of parents' drinking in the presence of children *Nordic Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, 33, 551-566.

A mixed method approach was used to explore attitudes towards parents' drinking in the presence of their children:

Study 1: Web survey conducted among 2182 Norwegians aged between 18-69 years. Response rate: 55%.

- *Attitudes towards parents' drinking with their 10-year old child present in 9 different situations (i.e., various frequencies of drinking and various amounts of alcohol consumed)*

Study 2: Four focus group interviews were conducted among 10th grade students (N = 24) and four interviews with parents of students in grade 10 (N = 18).

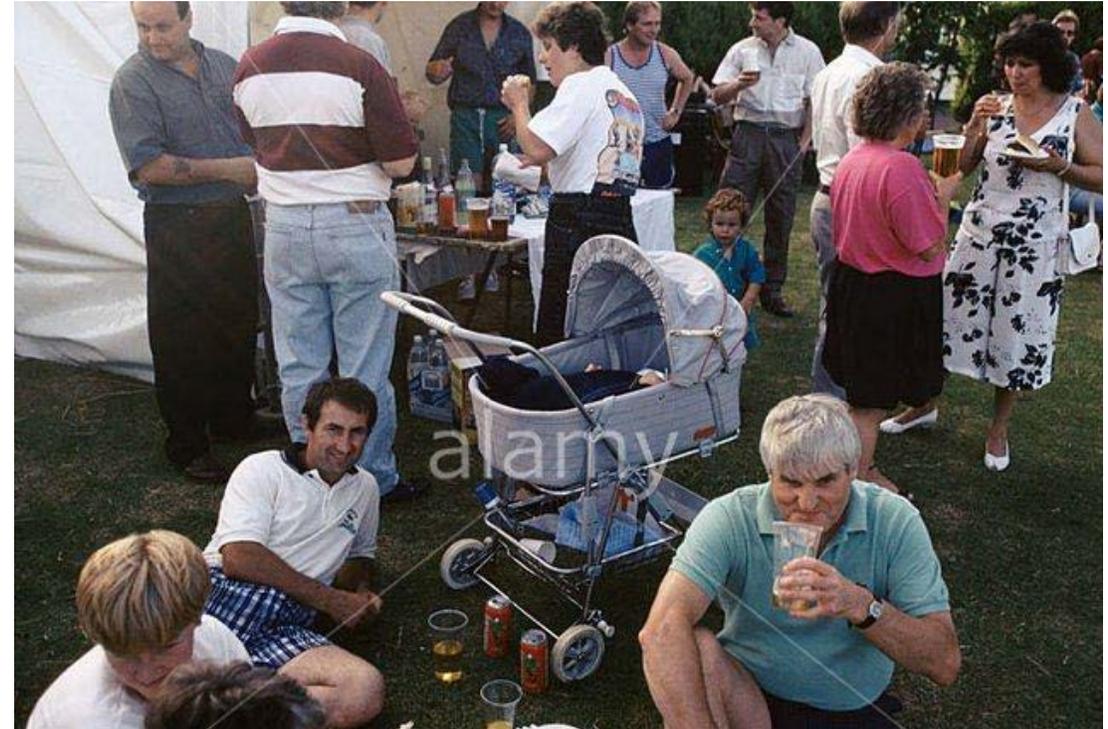
- Semi-structured interviews
- Photographs of various drinking situations were used as stimuli for the discussions

Pictures used in focus group interviews



Picture 1. Moderate drinking situation

Photo credit: NordicPhotos



Picture 2. Party drinking

Photo credit: Alamy

Results, study 1

- Overall, moderate drinking with children present was accepted
- The attitudes became more restrictive with:
 - *Increased drinking frequency*
 - *Signs of intoxication*
 - *Almost no difference in attitudes towards mothers' as opposed to fathers' drinking with children present*
- Women and younger participants had more restrictive attitudes than men and older participants

Results, study 2

- Moderate drinking with children was accepted by most participants
- However, the definition of what was regarded as moderate varied:
 - *Amount of alcohol (1 glass, 1 bottle, as much as you can take), intoxication, frequency of drinking, type of alcohol (spirits), mood, occasion, and changes in behaviour*
- Why was moderation considered to be important among the participants?
 - *Safety of the children, responsibility of the family as a unit, and socialization («learning how to drink in a responsible fashion»)*

Moan, I. S., Storvoll, E. E., & Lund, I. O. (2017). Worries about others' substance use – Differences between alcohol use, cigarettes and illegal drugs? *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 48, 108-114.

Background:

- No previous studies have examined which of the three substances – alcohol, cigarettes and illegal drugs – contribute to most worries among others than the substance user.

The aims were to describe:

1. The prevalence of worries about others' alcohol, cigarette and illegal drug use
2. Whose substance use people worry about
3. To examine how worries about others' use of each substance vary according to demographics, own substance use and experience of harm from others' use

Method

National survey on alcohol, tobacco and illegal drug use conducted among 16-64 year old Norwegians (N=1667). Response rate: 53.3%

Measures

Worries about others' substance use, asked separately for each drug:

- During the past 12 months, have you worried about someone else's alcohol/cigarette/illegal drug use?
- If yes: Who were you worried about?, with the response options "Spouse/boyfriend, girlfriend", "Another family member", "Friend/acquaintance" and "Someone else".

Demographic variables

Own substance use past 12 months

Experience of harm from others' use, asked separately for each drug: To what degree have the use of alcohol/cigarettes/illegal drugs by a member of your family, a girlfriend/boyfriend or another person you know, had negative consequences for you?

Results

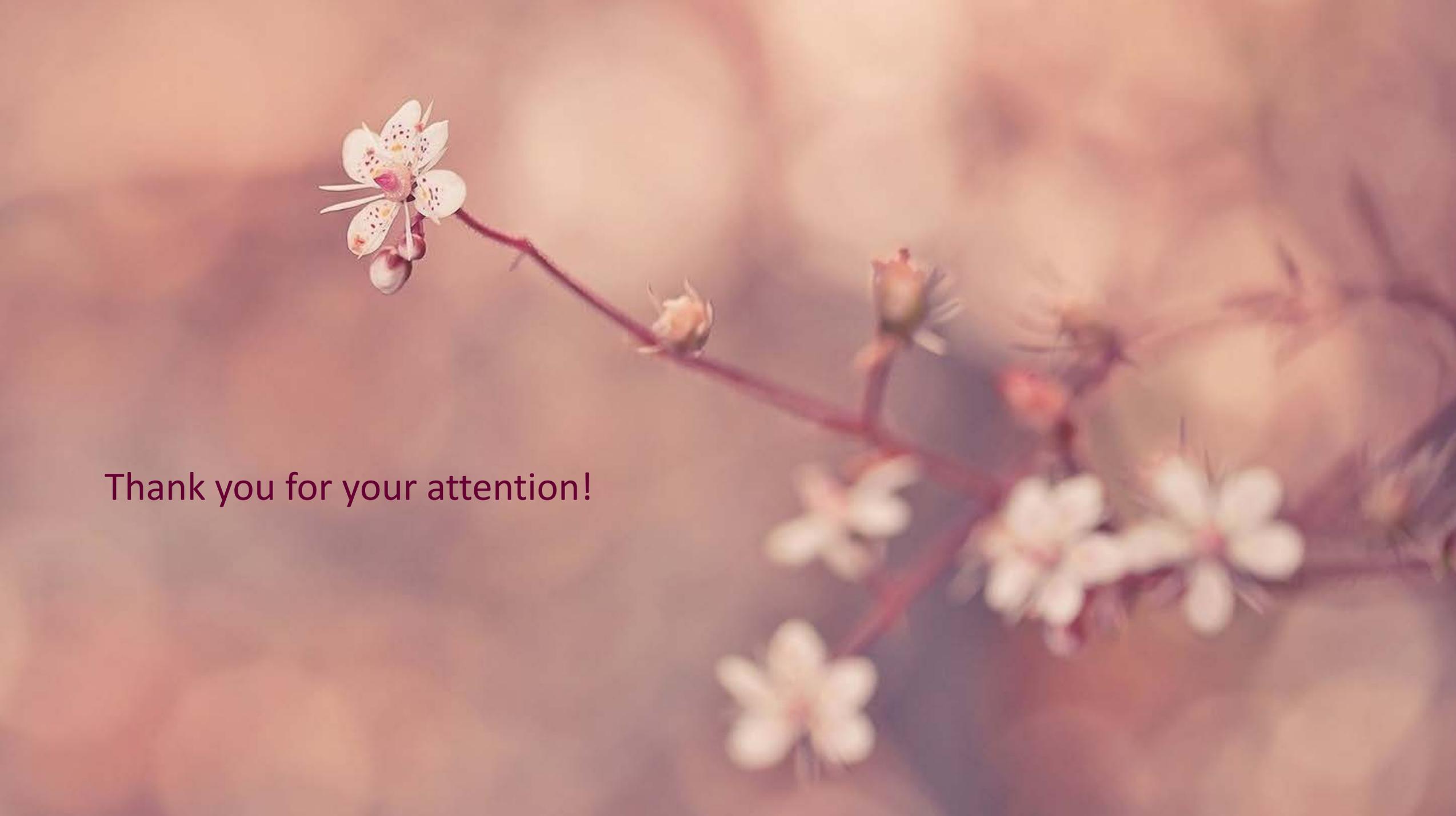
- Worries were **most prevalent** in relation to others' alcohol use (31.2%), followed by cigarette smoking (25.6%) and use of illegal drugs (10.3%).
- Worry about others' cigarette use mostly associated with family **members' use**, worry about others' alcohol/illegal drug use more often concerned **friends'/acquaintances' use**
- Across all three substances, **experience of harm** from others' substance use was most strongly related to worries
- Conclusion: Worries about others' substance use are common and reflect the prevalence of use of the substances in the population. The findings suggest that worry about others' alcohol and illegal drug use is primarily related to **acute harm** while worry about others' cigarette smoking is more related to **chronic harm**

Summary

- Increased focus on alcohol's harm to others (AHTO)
- A wide specter of harm, we have addressed some of the AHTO
- A substantial part of the population reported harm
- At increased risk: young, not living with a partner, an urban resident, with low education and often intoxicated
- Moderate drinking with children present was accepted, but the definition of moderate varied greatly
- More people worried about others' alcohol use than about others' cigarette smoking or use of illegal drugs

Ongoing projects on alcohol's harm to others

- The project «From cradle to grave: Alcohol-related harm and associated social inequalities from a life-course perspective” financed by NOS-HS (2017-2018) (Nordic network)
- «Alcohol use among Norwegian employees and consequences for workplaces and colleagues» (2015-2021): survey and qualitative data
- «Long-term consequences of parents’ drinking for children» using a combination of survey- and register data
- Our work on experience of harm across substances will continue



Thank you for your attention!