



# Schooling a key factor in drink patterns: study

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THE heaviest student drinkers are males who attended either all-boys schools, boarding schools or Church of Ireland schools, according to a new study.

Living in the Pale or an area with a strong historical British link also raises average drinking levels, researchers found.

The latest insight into "why some Irish people drink so much" identifies a host of factors that impact on the consumption of alcohol.

The heaviest student drinkers are males who attended either all-boys schools, boarding schools, or Church of Ireland schools, according to the new report.

The report is based on a 2006 survey among 4,450 students at University College Dublin (UCD), carried out by researchers at the UCD Geary Institute, with financial support from drinks giant Diageo.

On schooling, it states that "the culture of secondary schools does matter in the promotion of greater amounts of drinking of young men".

The raw data was published previously, but the discussion paper paper delves behind the figures to identify possible factors in students' drinking behaviours.

Irish students consume, on average, about 351 alcoholic drinks per year, but with wide variations. These range from the one in seven who drink more than 15 pints per week, to the one in 20 who don't drink.

Boys who went to either all-boys boarding, or Church of Ireland schools drank "substantially more" than other male

students. Drinking is heaviest in Dublin, Cork, Waterford and Kilkenny, and lowest in the midlands, Donegal and Monaghan.

There is a strong association between the amount of alcohol that students consume and the drinking behaviours of their parents and older siblings.

However, there is little evidence of any impact of other aspects of family background, such as father's education, parental income and whether parents were separated.

On the influence of the Catholic Church, it found that the more weekly Masses in a town, the less drinking.

Also, the higher the county vote in favour of divorce in the 1996 referendum, the more the locals drink.

And there is support for the hypothesis that heavy drinking patterns were partly imported through the influence of British culture, in that "both having a cricket club and being inside the Pale were associated with increased drinking".

## The report on influence of ...

■ **The Catholic Church:** "An increase in the number of Masses reduces drinking", while a "vote in favour of divorce law increases drinking".

■ **The British:** The findings "lend support to the hypothesis that Irish drinking patterns were partly imported through the influence of British culture".

■ **The weather:** "We find no effect of Irish weather on the drinking of students".

■ **Parents:** The report found a strong association between the amount of alcohol that students consume and the drinking behaviours of their fathers, mothers and older siblings.