

Happy and Drunk? Happiness and alcohol consumption.

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Alcohol consumption, and especially alcohol abuse, has significant individual and social costs, since it is related to a number of risky or harmful behaviours, ranging from drunken driving to violence, risky sex, lower school and work performance and health diseases. As for use and abuse of other substances, such as cigarettes or drugs, individual alcohol consumption may significantly depend on individual happiness and satisfaction with respect to family, friends, leisure and economic situation.

The objective of this paper is to investigate these effects. Both drinking and alcohol abuse may increase as a reaction to a unhappy life, for instance to compensate for a sense of loneliness and isolation. In this case, we would say that alcohol is a substitute for happiness. Tragically, systematic abuse may in turn further disrupt an individual's social network, creating a loop from which it is hard to escape, and whose cost is split between the individual and his or her social network.

At the same time, alcohol consumption is often a key ingredient of many social moments, from meals to parties, to socially enjoyed leisure. Thus the amount of drinking may be increasing in the richness of an individual's social life. Drinking together may make social interaction more pleasant and in this case we would say that alcohol consumption and happiness are complements.

The first aim of this paper is to investigate whether alcohol consumption and social relations are complements or substitutes, and in particular whether the answer changes for different kinds of alcoholic beverages, for different forms of social relations, for different consumption levels (in particular, use and abuse), and for individuals with different personal and social characteristics. We exploit several measure of direct happiness (with respect to family, friends, leisure and economic situation) but we also consider going the intensity of social life.

The second aim is to analyse family influence on alcohol consumption. Having a father, a mother or siblings who are heavy drinkers might raise individual alcohol consumption, for instance because of a tendency to drink together at home. Yet a tendency to abuse by other household members might also generate a countervailing reaction, inducing an individual to reduce this risky behaviour. We investigate both whether an effect of consumption by other household members is present. To deepen the investigation, we narrow the focus on young people living with parents and we ask whether they are differently influenced by the father, the mother and the siblings. To identify the effects we are interested in, we control for a great number of individual variables, including demographics and

socioeconomics characteristics of the social and residential context.