



Alcohol Issues in Canada

- Introduction: goal of presentation
- Overview
- A note on terminology



Policy domains

- Alcohol tax and price policy
- Physical availability of alcohol
- Policies relating to drinking contexts
- Impaired driving countermeasures
- Advertising and promotion
- Education and persuasion strategies
- Treatment and intervention



Policy Issues

1. Population-based strategies
2. Targeted interventions



Population-based strategies

1. Alcohol tax and price strategies
2. Drinking age restrictions
3. Advertising and promotion of alcohol
4. Regulating physical availability
5. Abstinence-oriented education and persuasion messages
6. Other population-based measures



Targeted interventions

- Description
- Key differences with population-based measures
- Examples of targeted interventions



Targeted interventions

1. Policies for modifying drinking contexts
2. Impaired driving countermeasures
3. Targeted educational strategies
4. Treatment and early intervention
5. Other targeted interventions



Comparison: population-based vs. targeted interventions

- Caveats
- Advantages and disadvantages of each
- Evidence favouring one vs. other
- Conclusions



Comparison of population-based strategies vs. targeted interventions

- Two Caveats:
 - The two approaches are complementary rather than necessarily opposed to each other.
 - The distinction between the two general approaches is not always clear:
 - Controls over availability may be targeted to specific drinking situations; and
 - Targeted interventions can impact on levels of consumption.



Population-based strategies

- Advantages:
 - Easy to implement
 - Can be effective
 - Secondary benefits such as revenue and symbolic effects



Population-based strategies

- Disadvantages
 - Lack of complete effectiveness
 - Poorly targeted: undesirable impacts on non-problem drinkers
 - Failure to address situational determinants of drinking problems
 - Reduction of health benefits from alcohol use by non-problem drinkers
 - Poor political support



Targeted interventions

- Disadvantages:
 - More difficult to implement
 - Sometimes more expensive
 - Lack of evidence of effectiveness
 - Rarely involve secondary benefits



Targeted interventions

- Advantages

- Well targeted
- Address situational determinants of drinking problems
- Do not interfere with positive effects of low-level drinking
- Generate less political resistance

Key aspects of population-based versus targeted strategies & evidence favouring one approach versus the other

	Population-based approaches	Targeted interventions	Evidence favouring targeted interventions
Focus of intervention	Level of drinking	High-risk patterns of drinking	High impact of drinking patterns on problem indices
Major types of problems addressed	Chronic disease and alcohol dependence	Acute consequences	High proportion of alcohol-related mortality and morbidity caused by acute consequences
Impact on moderate drinkers	Considerable and intended	Incidental and unintended	Health benefits of moderate drinking are significant



Bryson's phases of scientific discovery

- Phase 1: Everyone says the new discovery or theory is not true.
- Phase 2: Everyone says it may be true, but it's not significant.
- Phase 3: The discovery or theory is accepted as true and significant, but the wrong person is given credit for it.



Summary

The three most significant findings from alcohol epidemiology in the past two decades all support a greater focus on targeted interventions.



Summary

1. Drinking patterns play a major role in determining levels of alcohol problems. Targeted interventions focus on high-risk drinking patterns rather than level of alcohol consumption.



Summary

2. Acute consequences of alcohol consumption contribute much more to mortality and morbidity than previously thought. Targeted interventions have their greatest impact on levels of acute problems.



Summary

3. There are significant health benefits from moderate alcohol consumption. Targeted interventions are less likely to inadvertently reduce the significant, long-term health benefits of moderate drinking.



Conclusion

- The most efficient approach to the prevention of alcohol problems would be to maintain reasonable controls over alcohol availability while increasing measures to reduce the adverse consequences of excessive drinking in particular situations.