



Report on recent developments in the field of alcohol and substance abuse policy development

FINLAND

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A new substance abuse and addiction strategy is under preparation

- Includes alcohol, tobacco and nicotine products, drugs and gambling > Umbrella of different actions and strategies related to prevention and care in these areas
- The basic idea is to find links between different government strategies and support multisectoral cooperation
- COVID-19 has hindered the preparation, but the release is planned to happen on January 2021

Alcohol consumption during the Covid-19 pandemic



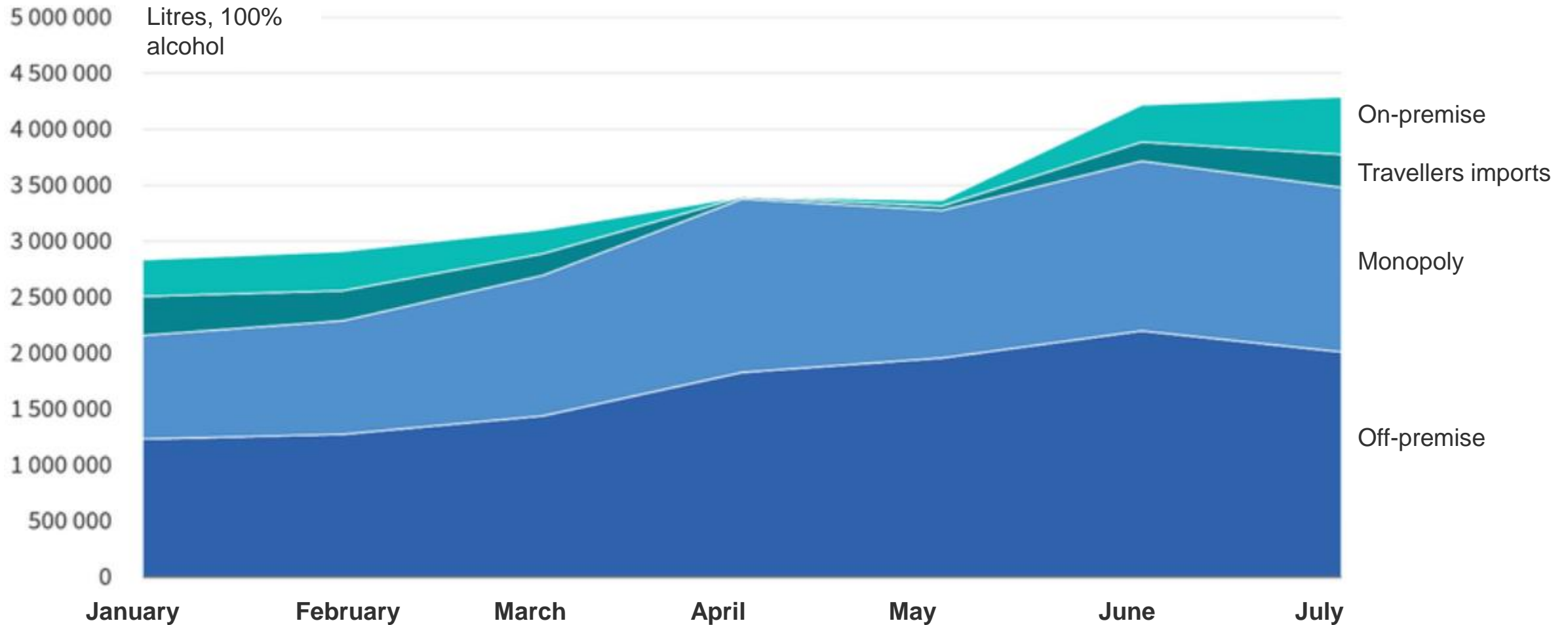
- During the Covid-19 pandemic, alcohol consumption has been on the decline in Finland: between April and June 2020 the total alcohol consumption was **10 % lower** than year before.
- The main reasons behind the decline were:
 - restrictions in travelling, which has decreased alcohol imports from abroad, and
 - the closing of on-premise establishments for two months in April and May.
- In 2019, travelers alcohol imports and on-premise sales of alcohol constituted 25 % of total alcohol consumption.

Alcohol consumption during the Covid-19 pandemic



- Domestic sales of alcohol off-premise has been on the rise. From January to September, the Monopoly's sales had **risen by 11,5 %**. Also grocery stores and other off-premise vendors have increased their sales.
- There has in other words been a clear shift **from on-premise to off-premise consumption during the pandemic**.
- The **majority of Finns seem not to have changed their consumption** habits during the pandemic.
- However, those who have been affected the most are **people under 35 years** and **those whose economy has had a negative effect** of the pandemic.

Estimated alcohol consumption in January – July 2020



Recent developments related to tobacco and nicotine products : smoking in prisons



- An amendment to a law related to prohibiting smoking in prisons and in pretrial detention under preparation
 1. To prevent health-related harms to other prisoners and to personnel caused by smoking
 2. To promote health of those prisoners who smoke by restricting smoking and increasing the availability of support to cessation
 3. To increase safety and decrease disturbance (damage to property, power blackouts)
- Tobacco Act revision expected in 2021

Recent developments related to tobacco and nicotine products: smoking cessation



- [The Council for Choices in Health Care](#) released the “Recommendation on factors supporting lifestyle changes when using methods for providing lifestyle counselling and supporting self-management of health to reduce the risk of smoking-related diseases” (11.6.2020)
 - The following smoking cessation methods are effective and belong to the range of public health services: brief advice based on the 5A-model (Ask, Advise, Assess, Assist, Arrange) and motivational interviewing
 - Effective methods typically contain five key factors: informing patient of the risks, goal setting, planning, follow-up and feedback.

Recent developments related to tobacco and nicotine products: smoking cessation



- [The Council for Choices in Health Care](#) (cont.)
 - It is important that the public health services ensure that
 - The methods used in their smoking cessation services include the five key factors
 - There is cooperation between different actors
 - The smoking cessation support is tailored individually to patient needs
 - The smoking cessation support is provided with a method that suits the current situation of the patient
 - The professionals have competence to different methods
 - Special groups are primarily offered tailored methods that have been shown to be effective in these groups

Recent developments related to tobacco and nicotine products : Covid-19 and smoking



- In 2020 before end of March the sales of cigarettes was on the same level than year before
 - Up to the end of June the sales increased
 - After that the increase bended, but the level of sales stayed on higher level than year before
 - In general, the trend mostly followed the changes of previous year, and the increases are likely to originate from travel restrictions limiting the import of cigarettes
- During the emergency conditions (end of March-May) the sales of nicotine replacement care products increased

Recent developments related to psychoactive drugs



- A citizens' initiative to decriminalize cannabis use and allow small home growing (max 4 plants) into law has passed the processing threshold (50,000 citizens' votes in favor). The initiative will be submitted to Parliament 5.11.2020.
- The new guidelines of the Police and the Prosecutor General were published in 2019 on cases considering personal drug use. The new guidelines emphasize referral to treatment.
- The Government Resolution on Drug Policy (2020-2023) is also under preparation.

Covid-19 and drugs



- No reduction observed in drug use or in supply
- Observed changes based on monitoring of low-threshold services
 - In replacement therapy: a shift to more injectable dosing
 - New ways of implementing services in municipalities and organizations were invented really quickly: eg. substitution treatment drugs have also been delivered home, outreach work has been strengthened, food packages have been distributed and digital services and virtual care programs have been introduced.
 - Co-operation between NGOs and municipalities has intensified

Recent developments related to gambling



Gambling in Finland 2019 -survey

- 78% of the population (15-79-years) have gambled in some way during the previous year
- 11% are at-risk gamblers
- 3% have a gambling problem
- 1,4% have a gambling addiction
- around 2,5% of gamblers account for around half of gambling profits: the proportion is smaller than before > the harms accumulate!

Recent developments related to gambling



- An active discussions related to status of monopoly Veikkaus: dissatisfaction related to responsibility and harm reduction activities of the Veikkaus
 - Even the Swedish model of licensing system has been suggested > BUT the situation is a bit different cause the monopoly does not "leak" as much than in Sweden (before their shift to licensing system)
- ⇒ The situation has forced Veikkaus to improve their activities related to responsibility
 - Compulsory authentication to all gambling (excl. Casinos)
 - Decreasing the number of slot machines in total and per outlet