

## *Patterns of Alcohol Use in Selected Cultures*



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**SUMMARY:** *The paper provides an overview of the patterns of alcohol use in the countries of the former Soviet Union, the Muslim countries, the countries of East Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, the USA, and Europe. Room & Mäkelä (2000) divide countries into four basic categories according to patterns of use: (a) abstinent societies; (b) cultures with constrained ritual drinking; (c) cultures where drinking is "banalised", and (d) cultures featuring the use of excessive amounts of alcohol at the weekends, on holidays, and on special social occasions ("fiesta drunkenness"). The overview indicates that the most alcohol is drunk in Europe, while the Muslim countries report the lowest levels of alcohol consumption. Certain changes can be observed in countries whose cultural traditions were not associated with frequent alcohol use and drinking was generally limited to holidays and other special social occasions. As a result of globalisation and the corresponding increased availability of alcoholic beverages, the consumption of alcohol is growing beyond the control of society and problematic patterns of alcohol use, such as binge drinking, are emerging. Given the relatively recent proliferation of risk patterns of drinking in these countries, the health and social consequences related to this phenomenon have not received adequate attention. It may be argued, however, that it is a transitional phase which some countries have already tried to address by policy interventions.*

**KEY WORDS:** ALCOHOL – PATTERNS OF USE – CULTURE – ASIA – EUROPE – AFRICA – AMERICA

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