

Effective science communication for public health: The Alcohol Atlas Germany 2022

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GERMAN
CANCER RESEARCH CENTER
IN THE HELMHOLTZ ASSOCIATION

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Research for a Life without Cancer

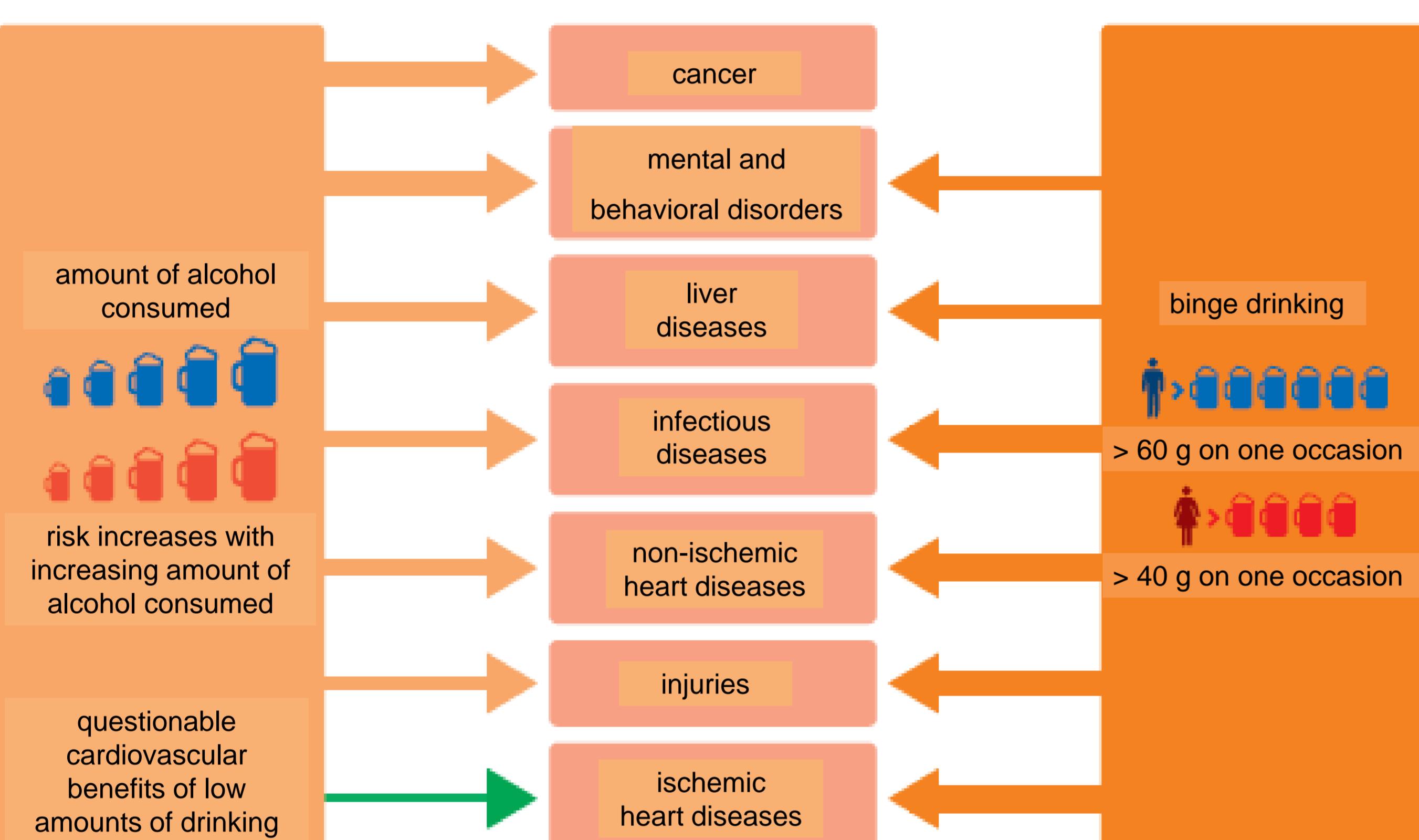
Background

Alcohol is an important risk factor for cancer. In Germany, alcohol consumption causes a high health burden, as well as high costs to the society. Therefore, effective alcohol prevention is urgently needed. For evidence-based alcohol prevention, political decision makers, public health advocates as well as journalists need sound, but easily understandable scientific information.

Methods

Development of a comprehensive alcohol atlas. Data on alcohol consumption in Germany, alcohol attributable diseases and the consequences of alcohol use for the society were compiled. Based on data relying on national polls, the number of alcohol-related cancer cases and cancer deaths has been calculated for Germany.

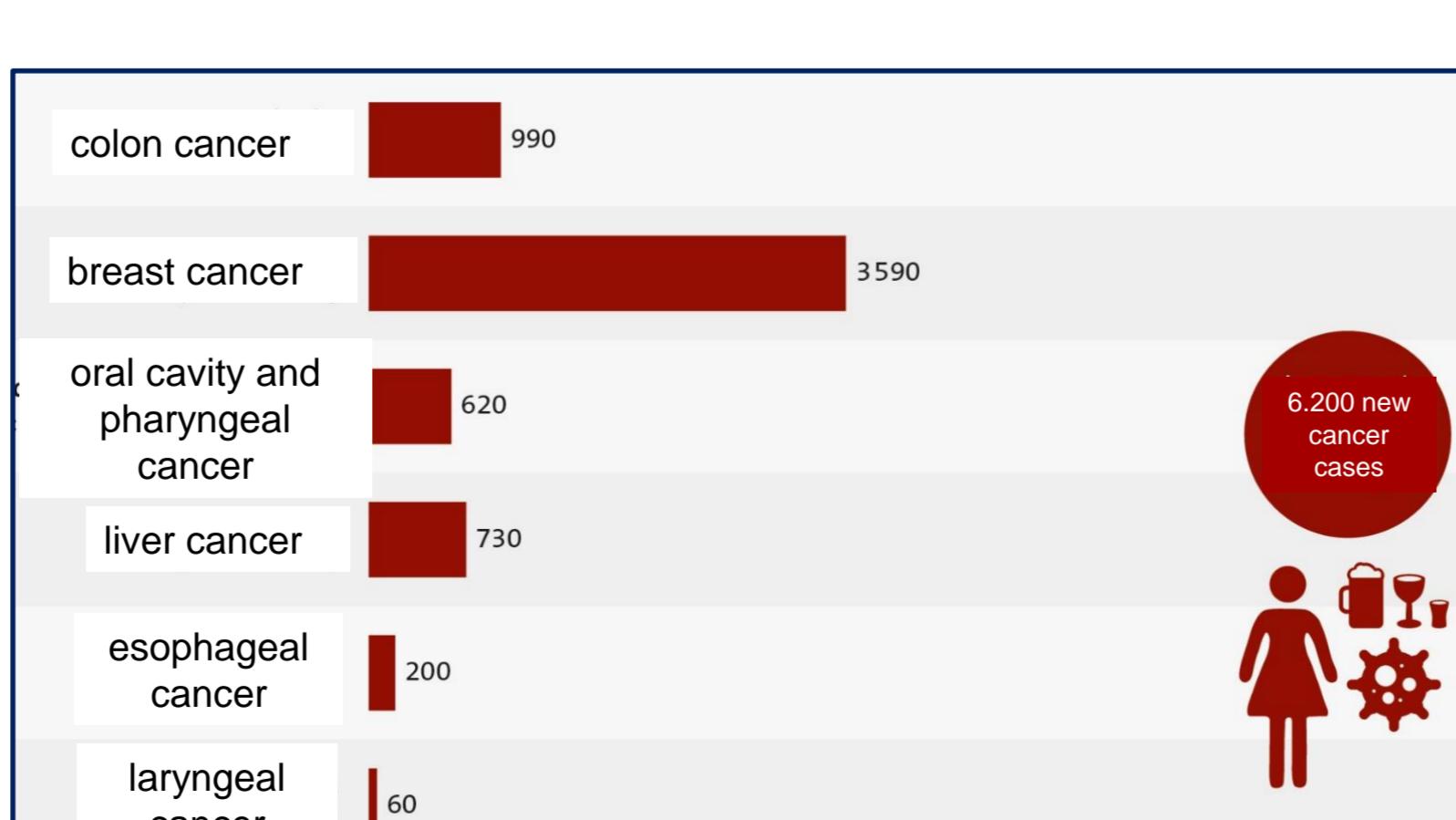
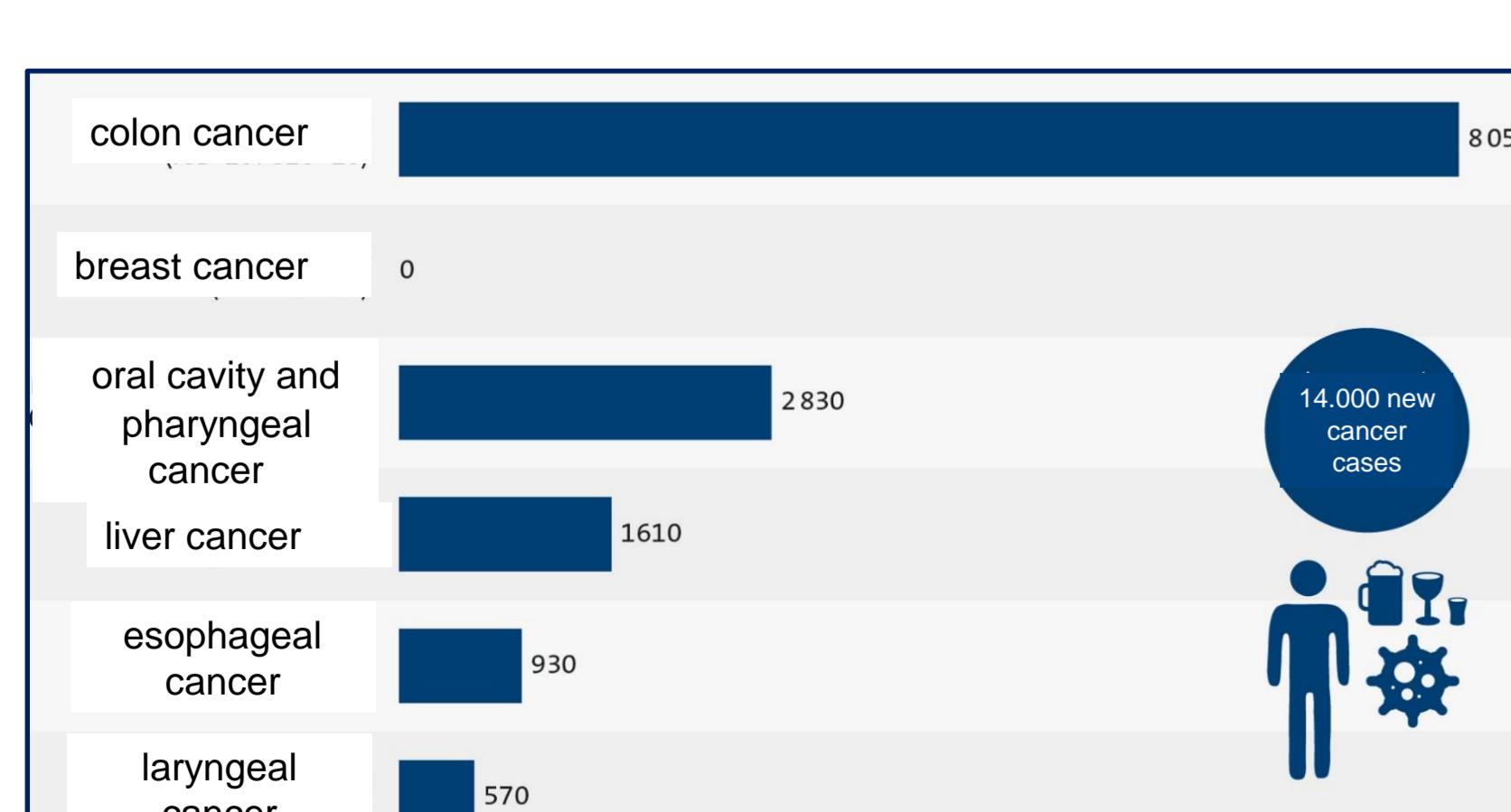
Alcohol is toxic and carcinogenic. Alcohol use has been causally linked to more than 200 disease and injury conditions. The risk of disease increases with increasing amounts of alcohol – especially for cancer, alcohol dependence and liver diseases, while heavy episodic drinking especially increases the risk for cardiovascular diseases, infectious diseases and injuries.



The risk of developing cancer increases with the amount of alcohol consumed. For cancer prevention it is best not to drink alcohol at all. Drinking alcohol and smoking have a synergistic effect, showing the strongest synergistic effect in mouth, pharynx and larynx.



In Germany every year more than 20.000 cancer cases can be attributed to alcohol consumption. Colorectal cancer accounts for the largest proportion of alcohol-related cancer cases (45 %), followed by breast cancer (18 %) and cancer of mouth and pharynx (17 %).



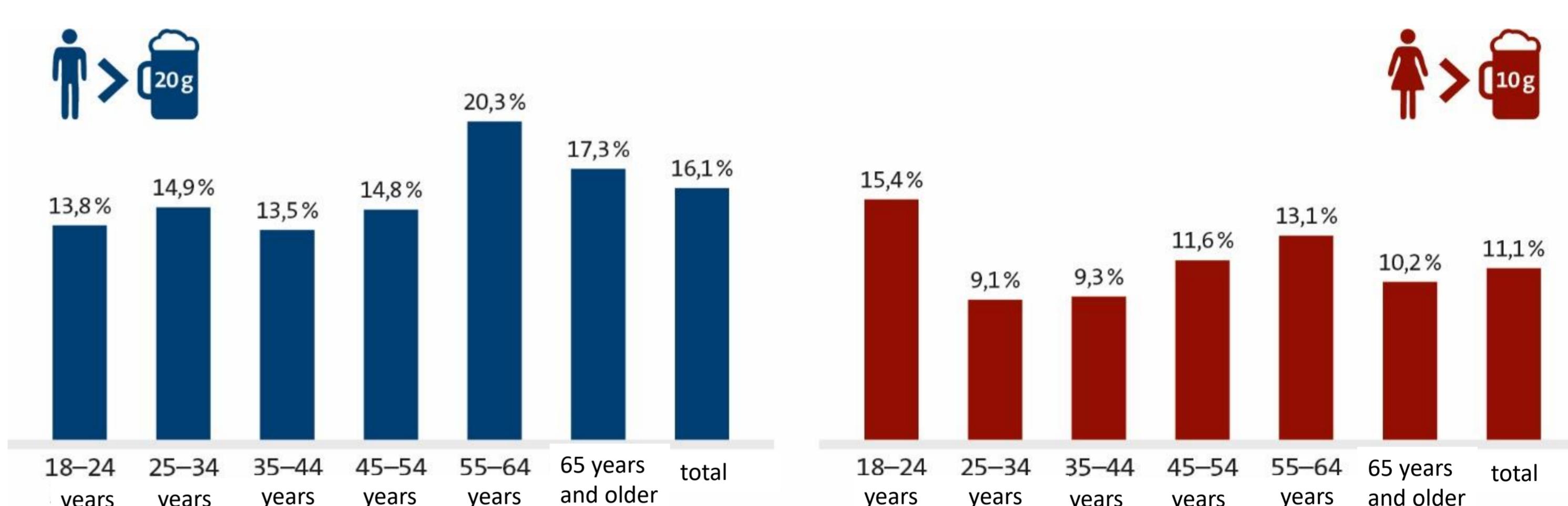
Results

In eight chapters the Alcohol Atlas Germany 2022 sums up recent data on alcohol consumption, its health effects, its death toll as well as its costs to the society in a clear and illustrative way. An entire chapter clearly shows the evidence for effective interventions in alcohol control and outlines considerations for policy-making.

Conclusions

Due to its comprehensive and highly illustrative information, the Alcohol Atlas Germany 2022 is a valuable and reliable reference book. It provides scientific evidence for health policies, supports public health experts in developing guidelines on alcohol use and raises awareness in the population on health effects of alcohol use, including an increased cancer risk.

In Germany, about 20 % of 18 to 59 year olds drink alcohol in hazardous amounts (>20 g pure alcohol/day for men and >10 g pure alcohol/day for women) at least once a week. More men than women drink hazardous amounts of alcohol.



The World Health Organisation (WHO) launched the SAFER initiative in 2018 alongside the United Nations third high-level meeting on prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases. The SAFER initiative focuses on five key alcohol policy interventions that are based on accumulated evidence of their impact on population health and their cost-effectiveness.

S trengthen	restrictions on alcohol availability	18+	- implement licensing systems - regulate number, density and location of alcohol outlets and the hours and days when alcohol may be sold - establish a minimum age for purchase of alcohol
A dvance	and enforce drink-driving countermeasures		- establish and restrict blood-alcohol concentration limits - sobriety checkpoints and random breath-testing - administrative suspension of licenses - well-executed mass media campaigns
F acilitate	access to screening, brief interventions and treatment		- prevention, treatment and care for alcohol use disorders - support and treatment for affected families - early identification and management of alcohol use among pregnant women
E nforce	bans or comprehensive restrictions on alcohol advertising, sponsorship and promotion		- regulatory frameworks with a legislative basis - effective administrative and deterrence systems for infringements of marketing restrictions
R aise	prices on alcohol through excise taxes and other pricing policies		- increase excise taxes and regularly review prices - ban or restrict the use of direct and indirect price promotions and discount sales - minimum prices for alcohol

Germany is one out of four EU countries allowing drinking beer and wine for youth aged 16 while only restricting spirits to persons aged 18 or older. When parents are present, even adolescents aged 14 are allowed to buy and drink beer and wine.

