

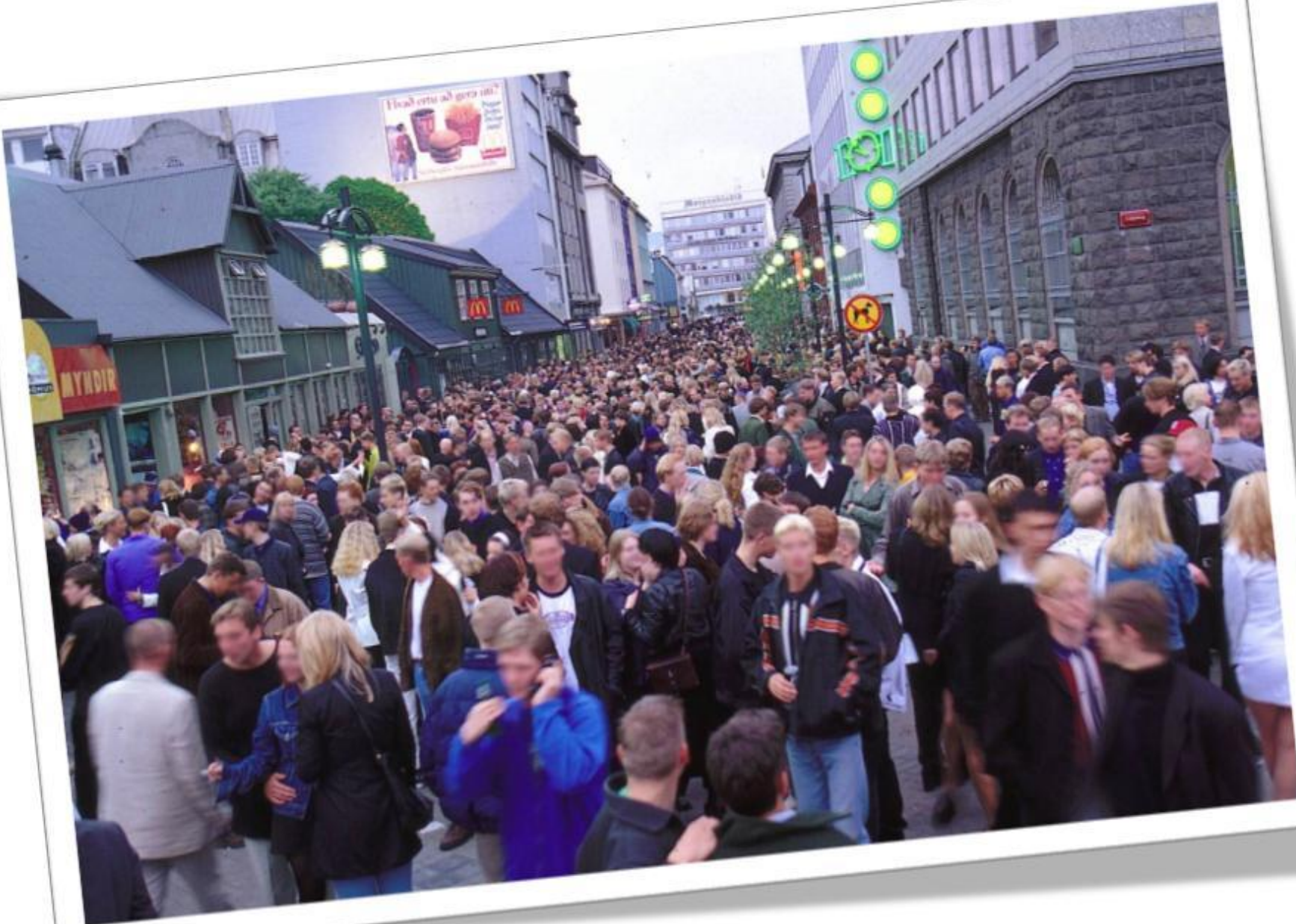
# Evidence Based Primary Prevention

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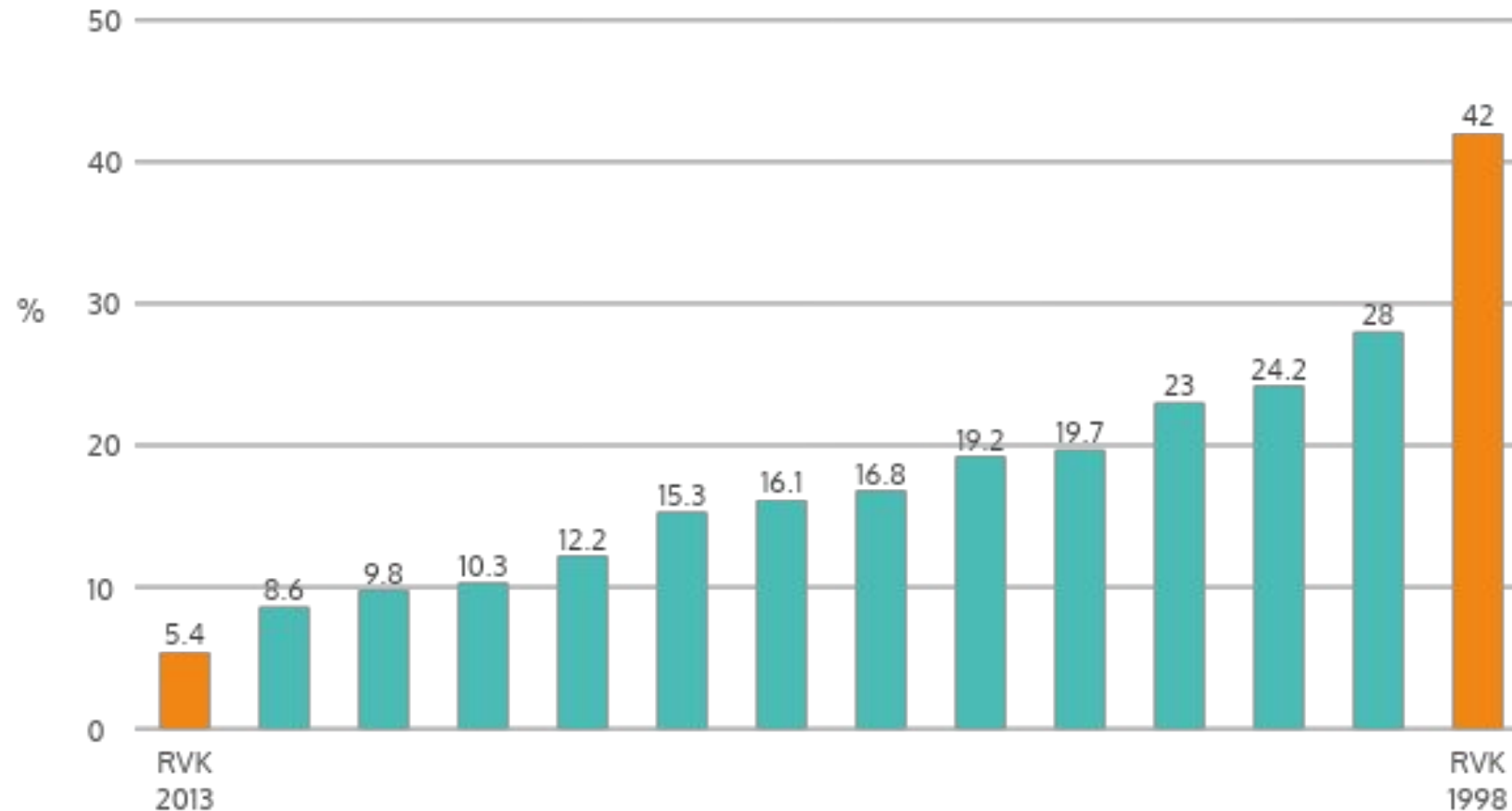
## The Icelandic Model

Jon Sigfusson  
ICSRA

## Reykjavik in the summer of 1997



## 15-16 year old who have become drunk past 30 days in some European cities 2017

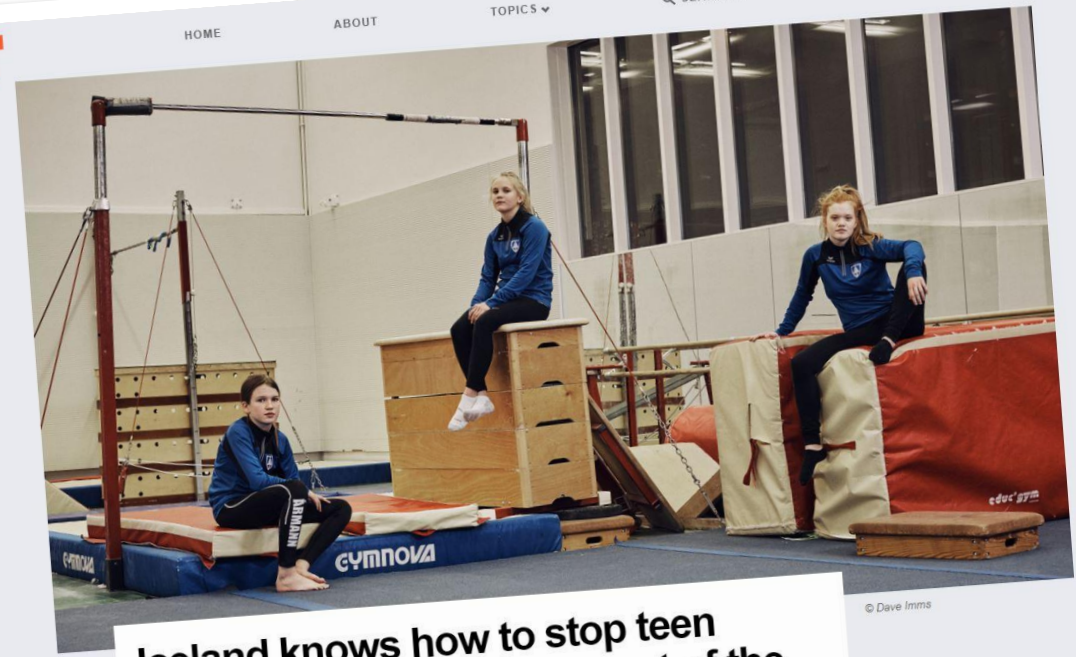


# Iceland knows how to stop teen substance abuse

But the rest of the world isn't listening







© Dave Imms

## Iceland knows how to stop teen substance abuse but the rest of the world isn't listening

By **Emma Young**  
17 JAN 2017

16 min

Health

Public health

In Iceland, teenage smoking, drinking and drug use have been radically cut in the past 20 years. Emma Young finds out how they did it, and why other countries won't follow suit.

It's a little before three on a sunny Friday afternoon and Laugardalur Park, near central Reykjavik, looks practically deserted. There's an occasional adult with a pushchair, but the park's surrounded by apartment blocks and houses, and school's out – so where are all the kids?

Walking with me are Gudberg Jónsson, a local psychologist, and Harvey Milkman, an American psychology professor who teaches for part of the year at Reykjavik University. Twenty years ago, says Gudberg, Icelandic teens were among the heaviest-drinking youths in Europe. "You couldn't walk the streets in downtown Reykjavik on Friday nights because of the number of people who were drinking."

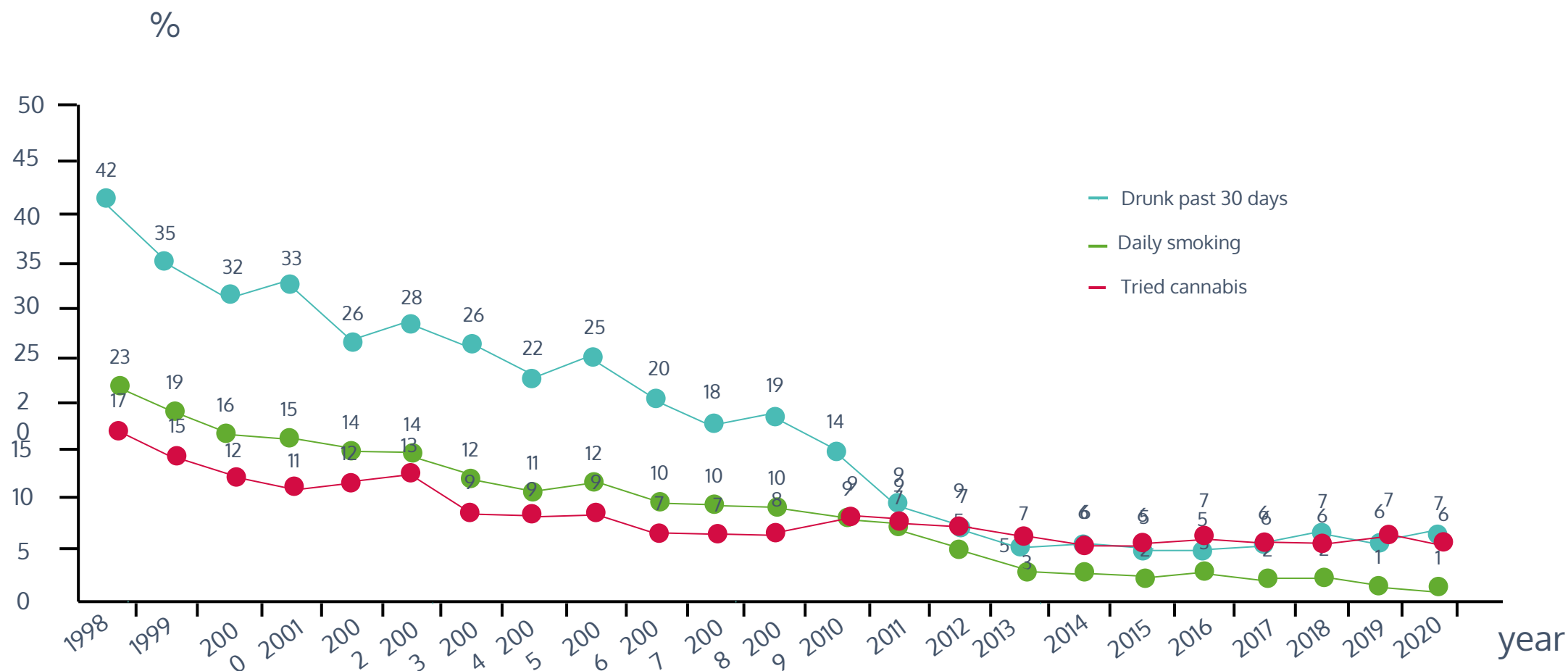
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From highest to lowest in substance use – 15/16 year old students

# Based on the Icelandic Prevention Model

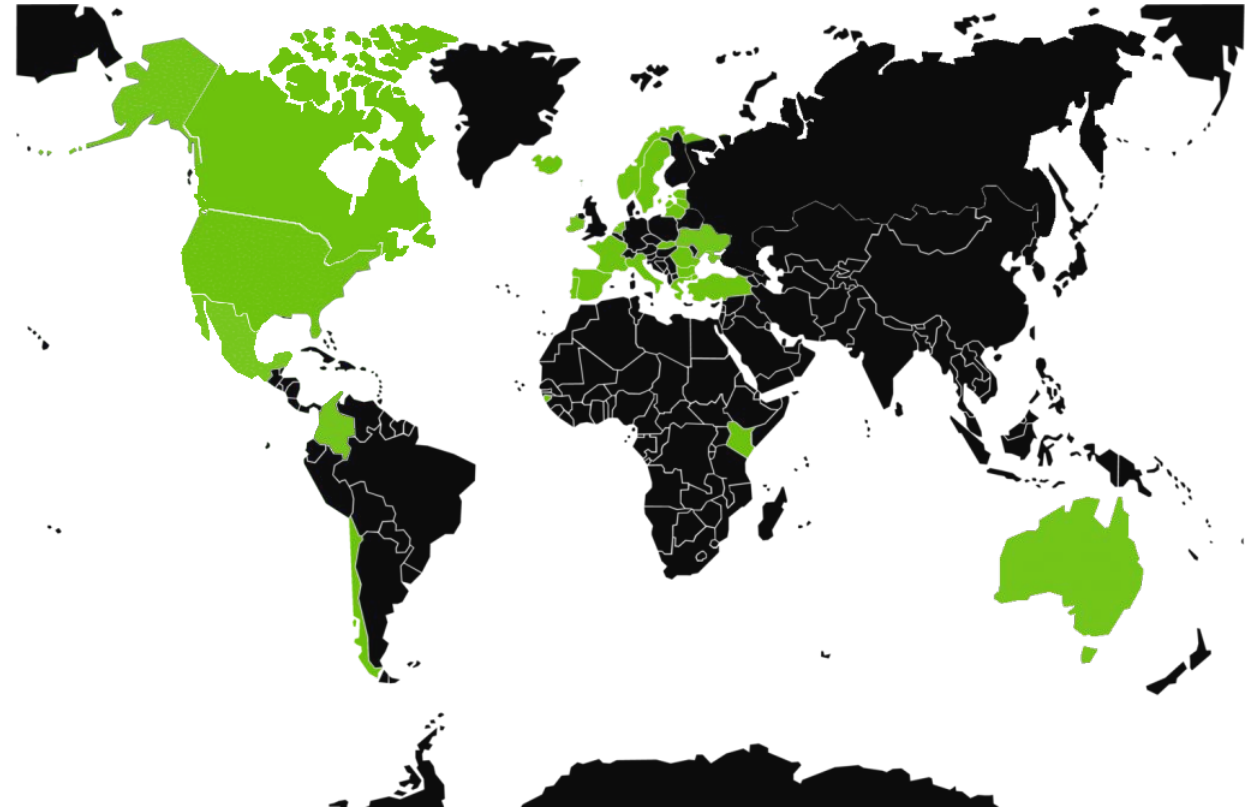


# International Development

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# Global reach

As of 2020 we have partnered with hundreds of communities in five continents.





# Building blocks

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# The three pillars of success

The Icelandic model is predicated upon three pillars:

- 1) Evidence-based practice
- 2) Using a community-based approach
- 3) Creating and maintaining a dialogue among research, policy and practice

Evidence

Community-based

Dialogue

# Why research based?

- Medicine
- Engineering
- Tourism
- Fisheries
- Pharmaceutical industries
- Children's lives, health and well-being



# Youth in Iceland database 1992 - 2020

## Data collections in schools

- 10 – 13 year old (since 2000) Primary school
- 14 – 16 year old (since 1992) Primary school
- 16 – 20 year old (since 1992) High-school

1992



# Indicators

anxiety

peer group economic and psychological issues

negative life events and strain

physical health status

values and attitudes

internet gambling

depressive symptoms

lifestyle and leisure time activities

Health status indicators

substance Use

studies and school

violence and delinquency,  
and more ...

local community networks

parents and family



# The twofold use of research

1. Scientific

2. Practical

# The scientific role of research

- In depth analysis of the data
- Over **100 peer reviewed** publications in international journals
- Science forms the platform for practice





# The practical role of research

- Data collections on substance use regularly
- Practical information immediately to the municipalities
- Local information INTO all levels of prevention work is a KEY issue

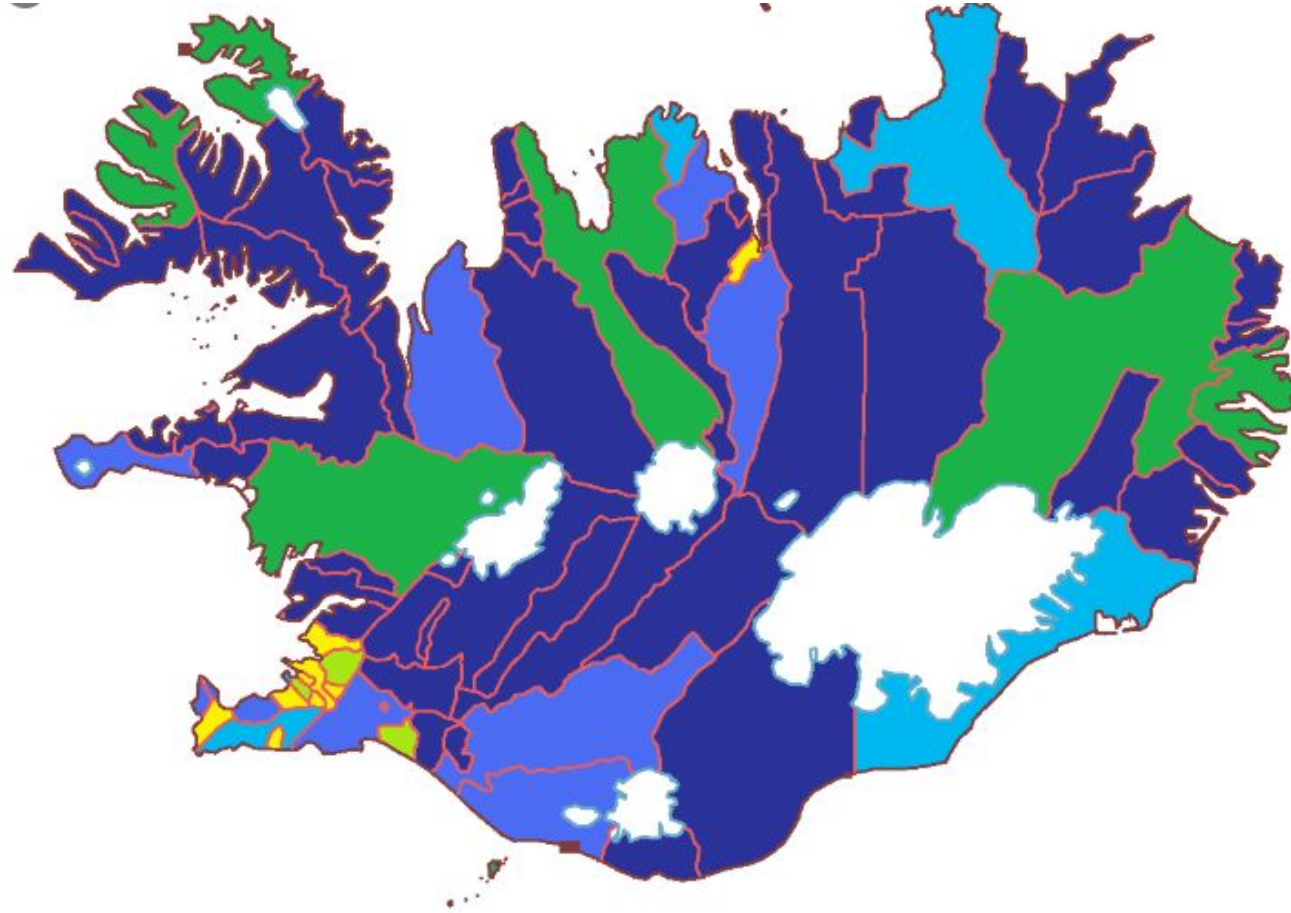




# Immediate feedback

- Make sure practical information is out immediately after data collection
- Not 3-4 years later but almost immediately
- Every school, every parent, every prevention worker can have access to current situation in the close community

# Municipalities with over 90% of the population get immediate information



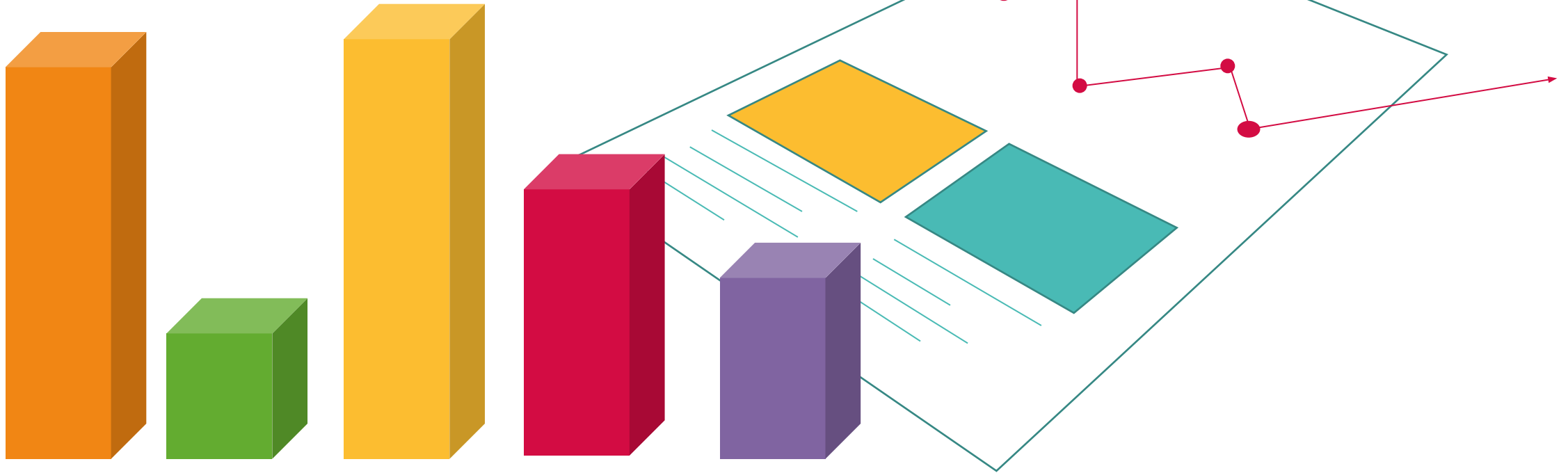


# What did we learn?

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# Analysis

- We learnt several things
- Use of substances on an upward trend

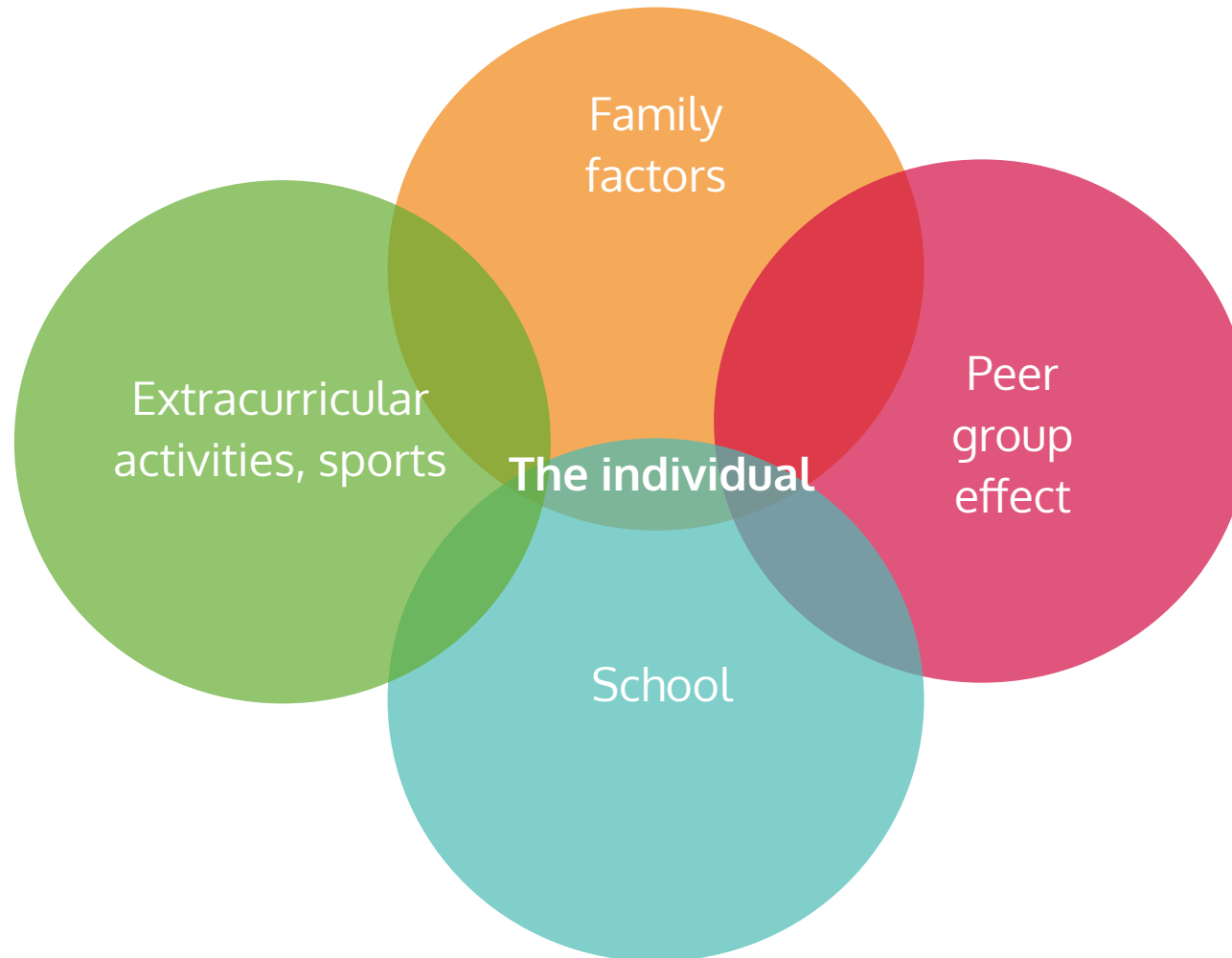


# The year is 1998

At this point in time research had already showed us that **certain circumstances and behaviour** in the lives of adolescents were strongly connected with substance use

We tried to  
**establish the risk  
and protective  
factors**

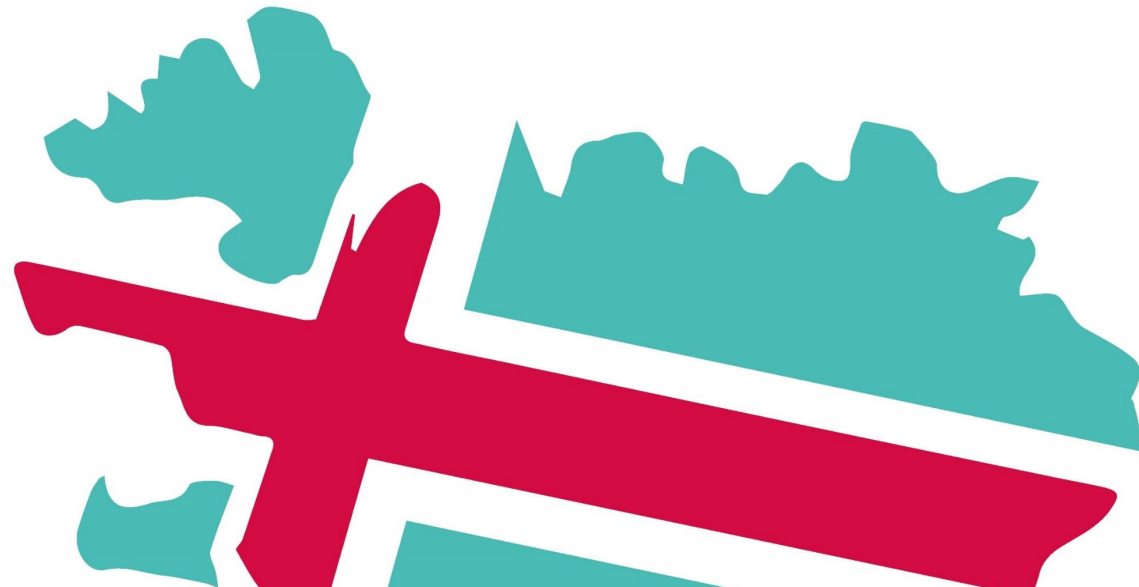
# Domains of interventions



Risk and  
protective factors

# 1998 Drug-free Iceland

- A totally new methodology in substance use prevention
- Obviously, what we had been doing before, was not working





# We had been doing this

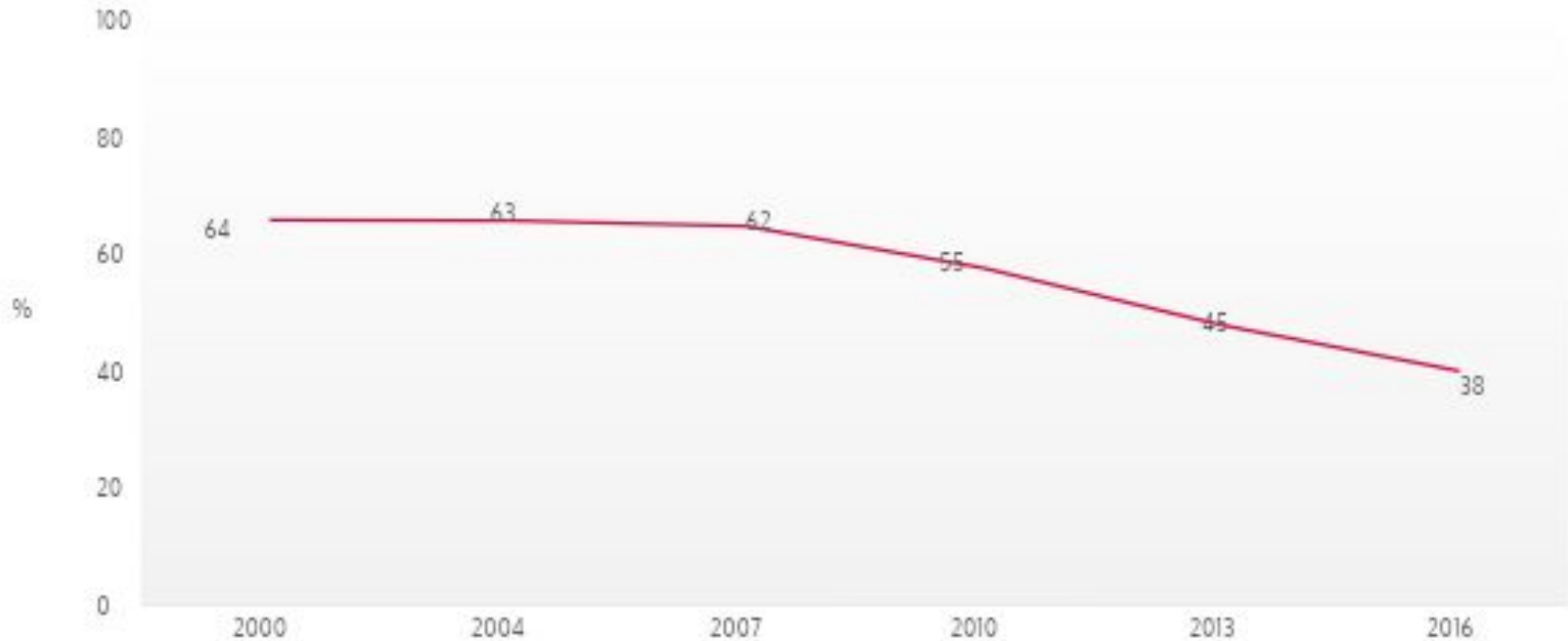


# Aim of Drug free Iceland

- To change the actual behavior of youth and not only their attitudes
- To change the life-style environment of our children so that they would be in lesser risk of substance use

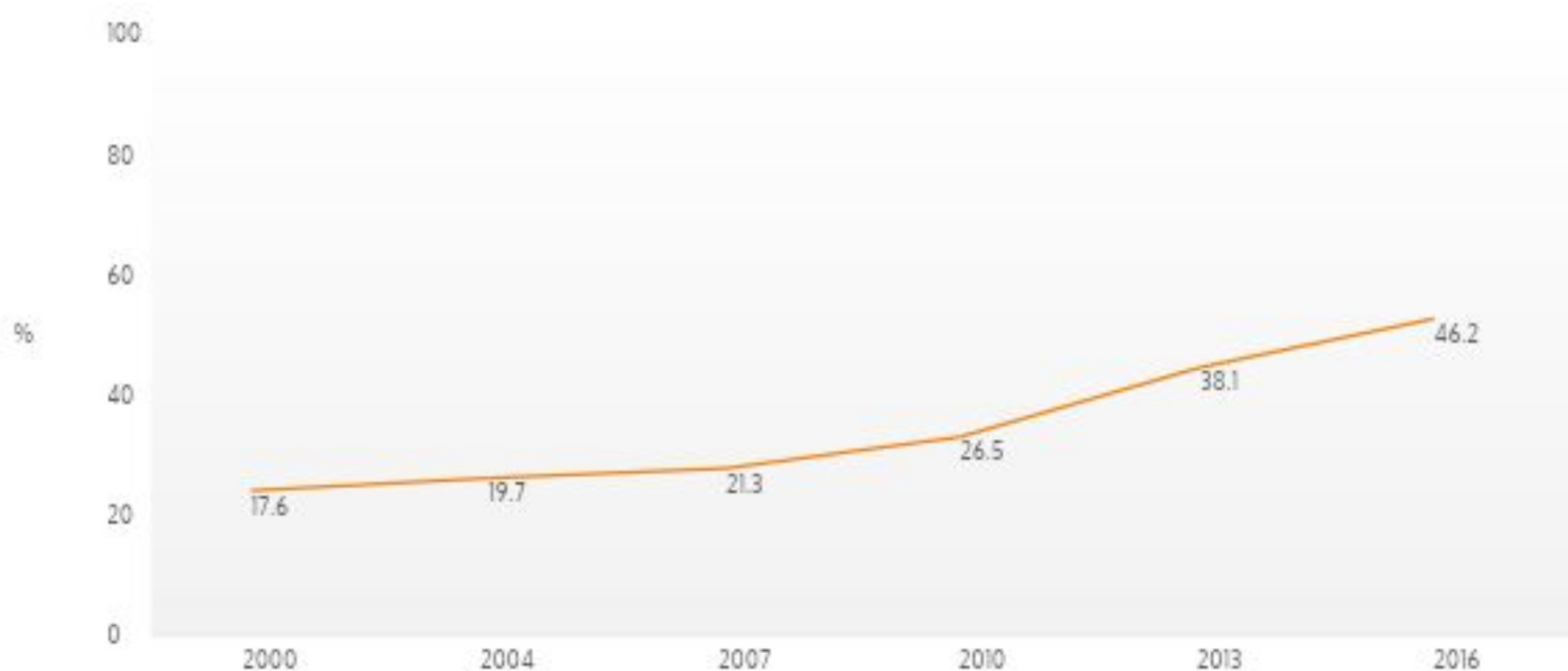


# Alcohol use trend in Icelandic High-Schools 16 - 20 year old students



# Never got drunk in lifetime

## High-Schools 16 - 20 year old students



# Quote from NIH\*

"Underage drinking is a leading public health problem.

People who reported starting to drink before the age of 15 were four times more likely to report meeting the criteria for alcohol dependence at some point in their lives"

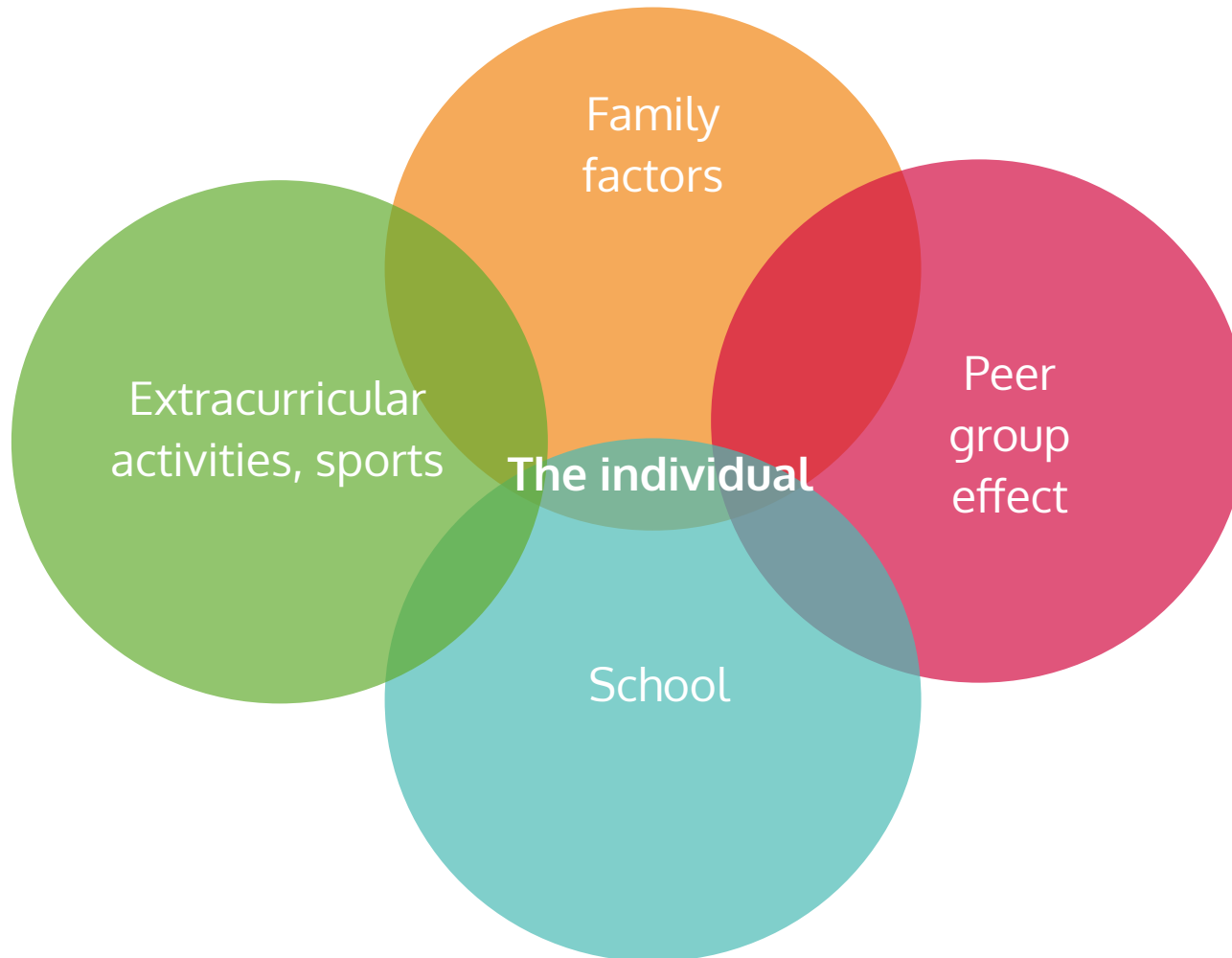
\* National Institute of Health



# How were the findings used?

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# This we knew was important



# Focus on close community

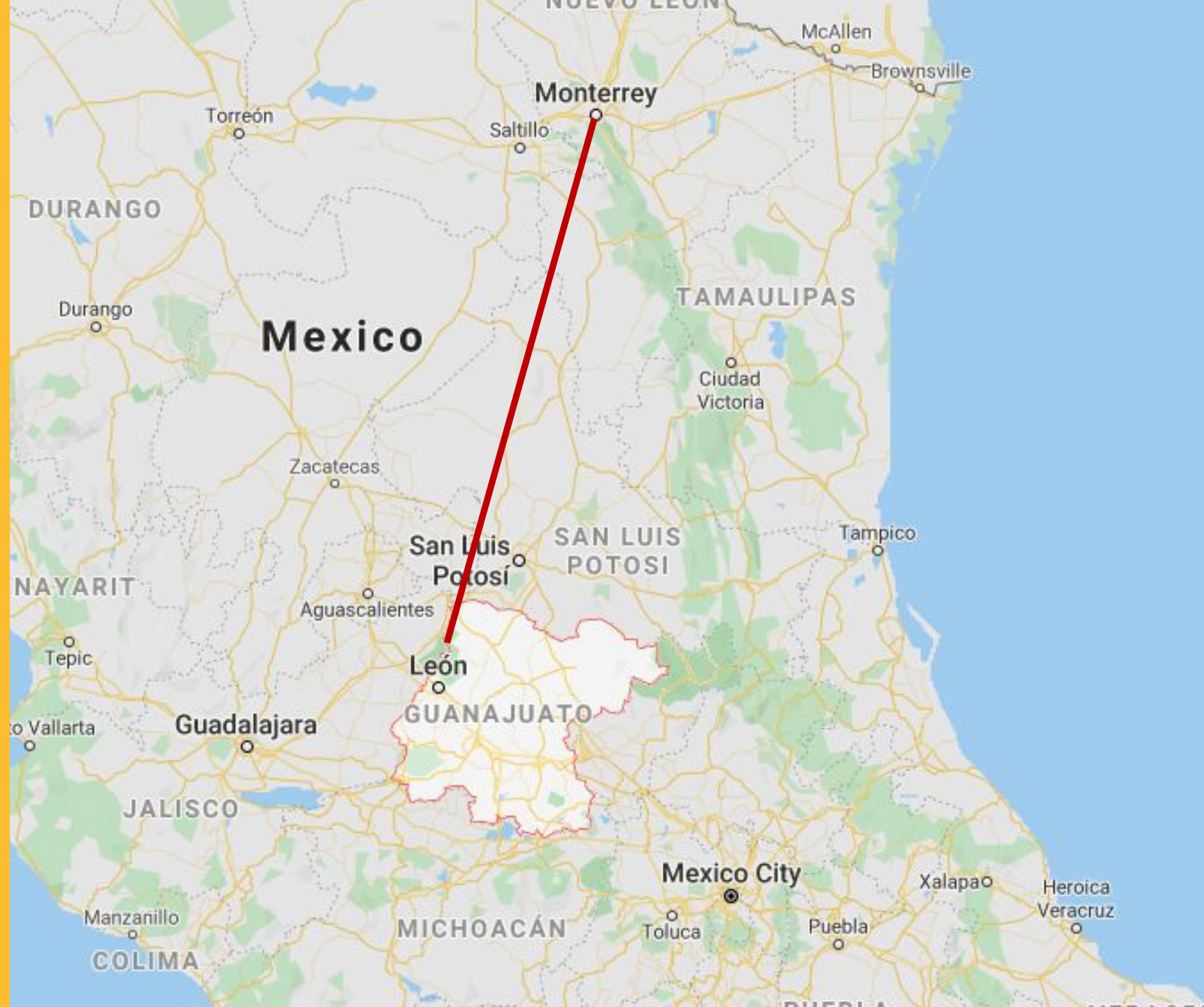
How could an average figure on alcohol use in your country help prevention workers in your community/municipality?

"Average" doesn't tell all the story!



**close  
community**

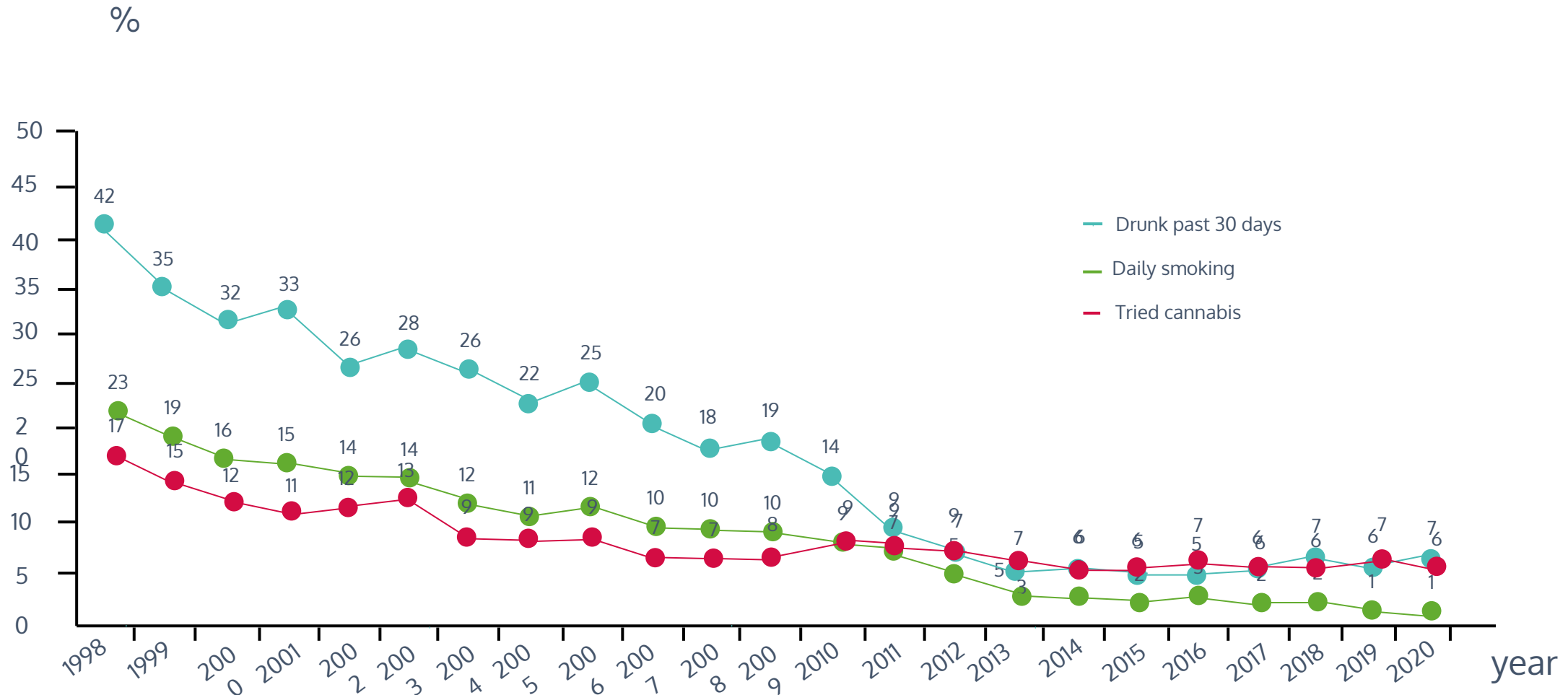
Focus on  
the close  
community





Strengthen the preventive factors  
Weaken or eliminate the risk factors

# And substance use is going down



# Thank you

[www.planetyouth.org](http://www.planetyouth.org)