

## Drinking habits among the employed and unemployed

"We are going towards a society which is characterized by heavily increased alcoholism, violence, drug use, and criminality. — We can be reasonably sure that in both Sweden and Finland the levels of alcohol use will considerably elevate among the long-term unemployed."

This grim outlook has been presented by a Swedish professor, Göran Therborn (cited in Viialainen 1993). As the reason for such pessimistic views he presents the prevalence of mass unemployment which he expects to be a long-lasting crisis. As the most severe consequences of large-scale unemployment Therborn discerns social poverty and despair. These, among other things, lead to increasing alcoholism.

If Therborn is correct, the present situation is serious. In August 1994, the number of unemployed in Finland was about 500,000 individuals. A similar level of unemployment has prevailed for more than a year. In a population numbering only about five million, such unemployment is enormous (Parkkinen 1993). In 1990, prior to the rapid increase in unemployment, the number of people out of work was less than 100,000. Hand in hand with growing unemployment the portion of long-term unemployed men and women has also increased (Kiiski 1993a). Unemployment among young adults has increased as fast as among the total population, but one should realize that the unemployment rate among these younger people has constantly been twice as high as among the older age categories. A period out of work used to be a normal, but short, interim phase of life for young people when they transferred from school

to working life. Nowadays, more and more of the young people are dropped outside the labor market for a prolonged period of time (Kiiski 1993b).

According to several forecasts the unemployment rate will remain very high in Finland at least until the end of the 1990s. Thus, it seems plausible that long-term unemployment will become one of the great social problems of the present decade.

For most of the people unemployment is primarily an economic misfortune. However, the mere event of becoming unemployed as well as a short period of unemployment can also have a detrimental effect on an individual's mental well-being. Prolonged unemployment usually leads to increasing problems, although the mental situation may even somewhat improve (Heikkilä 1992, 506; Lahelma 1989, 121-123; Vähätalo 1983, 149-152; Viinamäki et al. 1993; Warr et al. 1988). When a person is dropped outside the working life even other types of marginalization effects may follow. An unemployed easily remains outside (or, is excluded from) various social networks. Thus, unemployment may result in social isolation, and if the period outside work is long-lasting, social isolation may gradually become acute due to stigmatization (Vähätalo 1983, 150).

Each person is bound to adapt to unemployment in one way or another. In addition to individual's personal characteristics also cultural and social factors have an effect of their own in the process (Helne & Karisto 1992, 525-527). The more committed to work a person is, the more strenuous the adaptation process will be. The adapta-

tion to unemployment may be more exhausting for men than for women since the life of men is usually more centered around their work. Women find easier other commitments. They can, for example, focus on their role as home-makers or on their family duties (Penttilä 1993; Julkunen 1993).

When the relationships between unemployment and use of alcohol are considered, it is obvious that increased unemployment can have contradictory consequences for individuals. Increased use of alcohol may serve as a way to cope with unemployment which, in turn, would result in the grim conditions suggested by Therborn. On the other hand, economic distress related to job loss can lead to decreased use of alcohol.

Drinking habits have not been studied in any modern society during times of massive unemployment. In this respect the drinking habits survey which was conducted in Finland in 1992 provides exceptional opportunities. During the planning phase of the survey the exceptionality of the period was not yet realized. Nonetheless, the timing of the interviews automatically lead to a situation in which alcohol use was observed among a large number of people who had lost their job. By the time of the interviews unemployment had already reached massive proportions in Finland — 324,000 individuals, i.e., 13.2% of the labor force (Statistics Finland: Labour market 1992:21).

### **Previous studies**

The ongoing economic depression has already affected the average level of alcohol consumption in Finland. The consumption figures were increasing in the late 1980s during the period of rapid economic growth, but this trend was reversed in 1992. Thus, it seems that the average level of alcohol consumption is sensitive to changes in the overall consumption expenditure of households. Furthermore, the consumption structure has converged towards less expensive alcoholic beverages (Salomaa 1993).

Numerous studies have been conducted in different countries which have focused on relationship between job loss and use of alcohol at an individual level. The findings have not been consistent and each of the following conclusions have been supported: (1) unemployment in-

creases alcohol use and abuse; (2) unemployment reduces alcohol use and abuse; (3) unemployment does not alter drinking behavior. The fourth finding is that unemployment has all the above listed consequences, i.e., some drink more, some drink less, and some individuals do not alter their drinking habits following job loss (Crawford et al. 1987; see also Hammer 1992; Janlert & Hammarström 1992; Warr 1987).

The contradictory results obtained in both longitudinal and cross-sectional studies may be due to various factors. The target populations and the selection of variables differ from one study to another. There may also be various mediating factors which affect the relationship between unemployment and drinking habits. It is plausible that under particular conditions some individuals increase alcohol use following job loss, but this is not the general pattern (Lahelma 1993). The conclusion which has received strongest support in existing studies is that unemployment increases alcohol use and abuse among heavy drinkers (Crawford et al. 1987; Dooley et al. 1992; Lahelma 1993; Winton 1986).

Since several studies have shown that unemployment may increase as well as decrease alcohol use, it has been suggested that moderate drinkers and heavy drinkers may respond differently to job loss. The former may decrease and the latter increase their alcohol consumption (Crawford et al. 1987; Janlert & Hammarström 1992).

Most studies focusing on unemployment have excluded women's alcohol use. The usual reason has been that women consume only little alcohol. It should be realized, however, that the relationship between unemployment and alcohol use may be different among women than among men (Plant 1979). Hammer showed that unemployed men consumed more alcohol than those in employment, while there was no similar relationship among women (Hammer 1992, 1575). Lahelma's study revealed that health problems related to alcohol use were more common among unemployed men than among those in employment. Women showed a reverse relationship (Lahelma 1993). Thus, it is of importance to study men and women separately when the relationships between unemployment and drinking habits are investigated (Janlert & Hammarström 1992, 711).

Various hypotheses have been presented in

order to explain why unemployment would affect alcohol use (Lahelma 1993). The deteriorated economic situation and the declined opportunities to invest into one's physical well-being and health may reduce alcohol use (Warr 1987; Plant 1979; Hill 1977). On the other hand, unlimited spare time and related boredom, lack of control and unstructured use of one's time are factors which can increase alcohol use (Janlert & Hammarström 1992; Plant 1979).

But, which is the cause and which is the effect? Is unemployment a result of alcohol use, or, does alcohol use (abuse) follow job loss? Three hypotheses regarding the direction of causation have been presented (Dooley et al. 1992; Forcier 1988, 250):

(1) An alcohol disorder results in job loss. According to this drift hypothesis, alcohol disordered persons are particularly vulnerable to become or remain unemployed, even during periods of low unemployment rates. The hypothesis is based on an idea of a selection process which is supposed to function in the labor market. The evidence presented in a few longitudinal studies has supported the drift hypothesis (Dooley et al. 1992).

(2) Unemployment results in increased levels of alcohol use. According to this social causation model, job loss provokes a situation which leads to increasing alcohol use and abuse. Several studies have supported this hypothesis (Crawford et al. 1987; Dooley et al. 1992; Heather et al. 1987; Janlert & Hammarström 1992).

(3) The relationship between job loss and alcohol use is a reciprocal process, and therefore, both alcohol abuse and unemployment can be viewed as cause factors. The reciprocal causation hypothesis has been presented in studies in which the findings have given support to both the drift and the social causation hypothesis (Dooley et al. 1992). The contradictory findings regarding the relationship between unemployment and drinking behavior suggest that the reciprocal causation hypothesis reflects most accurately the reality.

### **Aims of the study**

In this article we investigate the interrelations between employment status and drinking behavior

as well as associations between employment status and the consequences of alcohol use. Employment status refers to the classification as either employed or unemployed. Based on findings in previous research we have assumed that these relationships differ between women and men.

Duration of joblessness is regarded as one of the most significant factors characterizing an individual's employment situation, particularly, the selection which takes place in the labor market, as well as the degree of marginalization. Our basic premise is that alcohol use and problems related to drinking increase along with prolonged unemployment.

The information provided by the 1992 drinking habits survey which concerns alcohol use and employment status covers the 12-month period preceding the interviews. The associations between the employment status and alcohol use are examined by comparing the drinking habits of the employed and the unemployed. Those who are classified as employed have not been out of job even for a single day during the 12-month period. The unemployed have been classified into three categories based on the duration of joblessness: less than 9 weeks, 9-26 weeks, and 27-52 weeks. We have also examined how well respondents belonging to the different employment status categories have been able to control their alcohol use and what kind of social problems related to alcohol use they have encountered during their entire lifetime.

### **Data and methods**

A random sample of 3,446 Finnish individuals aged between 15 and 69 years were interviewed for the 1992 drinking habits survey. The number of women and men respondents was 1,737 and 1,709 respectively. The interviews were held primarily during the three first weeks of September. The response rate was 87 percent. Sixty-two percent (1,090) of the women and 71 percent (1,200) of the men belonged to the labor force at the time of the interviews. Of these economically active individuals 10 percent of the women and 14 percent of the men were unemployed at the time of the interviews. During the 12-month period preceding the interviews 22 percent of the women

and 30 percent of the men had been jobless once or several times. Unfortunately, the respondents had not been asked whether their unemployment had been incessant or split into several episodes. In addition, we do not know if those who reported themselves as jobless had been in the labor force prior to their unemployment. The figures obtained from the drinking habits survey which concern the employment status are in good compliance with information provided by the labor force survey which is collected by the Statistics Finland (Tilastokeskus) in September 1992. According to the latter survey women's labor force participation ratio was 60 percent and the unemployment rate was 11 percent. The respective figures for men were 70 percent and 15 percent (Statistics Finland: Labour market 1992:21).

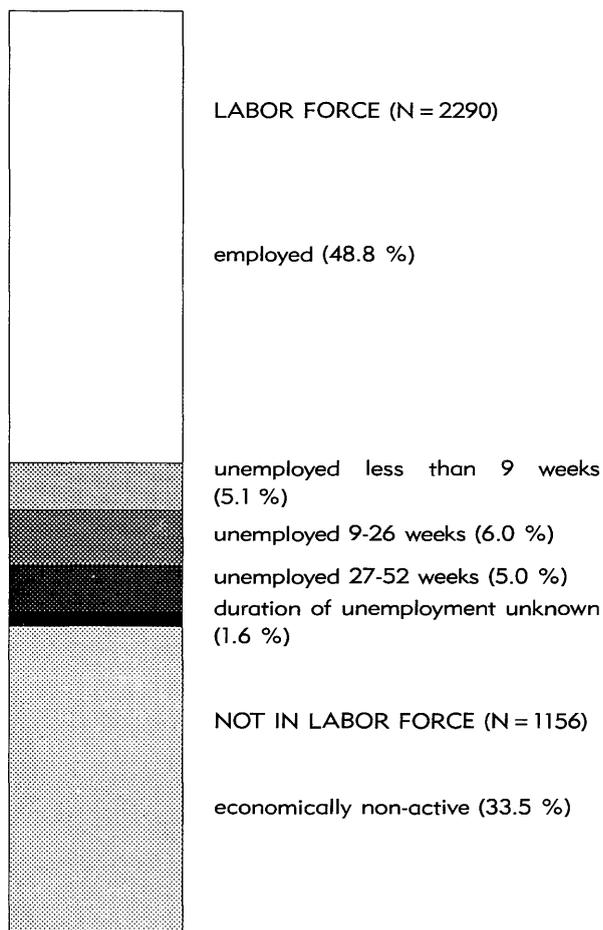
The somewhat lower unemployment rates among the respondents of the drinking habits survey are probably due to a poorer response rate when compared to the labor force survey. It seems plausible that those unemployed were more likely to be selected among the non-respondents. An unemployed person may have considered it frustrating to provide information regarding his or her alcohol use. Furthermore, the topic of the drinking habits survey may have created feelings of guilt among the unemployed, even in cases when they have consumed only little alcohol.

The data used in this paper have been restricted to those respondents who belong to the labor force (Figure 1). Therefore, retired persons, students, home-makers (men and women), as well as other economically inactive individuals have been excluded. Table 1 (next page) shows the included respondents tabulated by their employment status (employed/unemployed), duration of unemployment, and age. The differences in the age structure between the employed and the unemployed are statistically highly significant. Unemployment is heavily concentrated to the young people, and this fact has to be kept in mind when interpreting the results.

The associations between employment status and drinking habits have been examined by using the following information characterizing alcohol use:

- Proportion abstainers
- Annual consumption of 100 percent alcohol
- Drinking frequency

Figure 1. Respondents of the 1992 Finnish drinking habits by labor force participation<sup>1</sup> and by duration of unemployment<sup>2</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Labor force participation at the time of the interview  
<sup>2</sup> Duration of unemployment during the 12-month period preceding the interview

- Intoxication frequency
- Alcohol related control measures
- Consequences of a single drinking occasion
- Changes in alcohol use
- Incidence of health problems related to alcohol use

Information about the above listed items covers the 12-month period preceding the interviews. In addition, we analyze self-control of alcohol use and incidents of social drawbacks related to alcohol use. The latter information covers the entire lifetime of the respondents.

The method of analysis is cross-tabulation.

Table 1. Employment status categories by age; women and men (%)

Age	Employment status				P-Value
	Employed	Unemployed less than 9 weeks	Unemployed 9–26 weeks	Unemployed 27–52 weeks	
Women					.000***
15–24	8	26	28	16	
25–49	74	58	58	62	
50–69	18	15	13	21	
All	100	100	100	100	
(N)	(850)	(71)	(82)	(66)	
Men					.000***
15–24	6	19	24	22	
25–49	73	70	70	64	
50–69	20	11	6	14	
All	100	100	100	100	
(N)	(830)	(105)	(125)	(107)	

\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ , groups differ statistically highly significantly.

More emphasis is placed on the consistency of the inter-group differences or similarities than on the statistical significance of the pair-wise differences between the groups.  $\chi^2$ -test is used to confirm whether there is a statistically significant difference between any groups.

An overview of the changes in the drinking habits in Finland has been presented in several other papers (e.g., Simpura et al. 1993). In this article the only reference is the 1992 survey. The materials do not permit an examination of those changes which may have taken place in the relationships between unemployment and drinking habits since the preceding survey, which was collected in the 1980s.

### Drinking habits among employed and unemployed

#### Proportion of abstainers

When drinking habits are compared between population groups, one of the basic measures is the proportion of abstainers. Table 2 (next page) shows the distribution of abstainers and users among the employed and unemployed. Those classified as abstainers reported that they had

consumed no alcohol during the 12-month period preceding the interview. The proportion of abstainers does not significantly differ from one employment status group to another. The proportion of abstainers is somewhat larger among those men who had been jobless for 27-52 weeks, but the difference is not statistically significant.

#### Drinking frequency and intoxication frequency

No significant differences in drinking frequency are found between employed and unemployed drinkers. However, the results (not detailed here) show that for both men and women who had been unemployed for 27-52 weeks the portion of those who use alcohol at least four times a week is larger than in other employment status categories.

Among men the differences in intoxication frequency between the employment status categories are statistically highly significant (Table 3, next page). In all the unemployed categories the proportion of those men who drink at least once a week "so that you can really feel it" is higher than among those employed. Weekly intoxication is most common among those men who had been unemployed for 27-52 weeks. In this category

Table 2. Alcohol use by employment status and duration of unemployment, women and men

Alcohol use	Employment status								P-Value
	Employed		Unemployed less than 9 weeks		Unemployed 9–26 weeks		Unemployed 27–52 weeks		
	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)	
Women									.594
Drinkers	87	(737)	92	(65)	85	(70)	89	(59)	
Abstainers	13	(113)	8	(6)	14	(12)	11	(7)	
All	100	(850)	100	(71)	99	(82)	100	(66)	
Men									.278
Drinkers	93	(773)	92	(97)	93	(116)	88	(94)	
Abstainers	7	(57)	8	(8)	7	(9)	12	(13)	
All	100	(830)	100	(105)	100	(125)	100	(107)	

Table 3. Intoxication frequency by employment status and duration of unemployment, women and men (% of drinkers in a given group)

Intoxication frequency	Employment status				P-Value
	Employed	Unemployed less than 9 weeks	Unemployed 9–26 weeks	Unemployed 27–52 weeks	
Women					.242
At least once a week	0	2	2	4	
Once or twice a month	6	8	8	7	
3-6 times a year	14	19	22	18	
Less frequently	40	33	43	32	
Never	38	38	23	40	
(N)	(715)	(63)	(69)	(57)	
Men					.000***
At least once a week	6	12	12	16	
Once or twice a month	21	25	30	29	
3-6 times a year	24	18	28	26	
Less frequently	33	25	20	24	
Never	14	18	8	2	
(N)	(758)	(96)	(115)	(89)	

\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ , groups differ statistically highly significantly.

Table 4. Percentiles of the consumption distribution, and mean consumption, by employment status and duration of unemployment, women and men (centilitres of 100 % alcohol)

Employment status	Percentile <sup>1</sup>					Mean consumption
	P10	Q1	Md	Q3	P90	
<b>Women</b>						
Employed	0	8	62	210	442	172
Unemployed						
less than 9 weeks	0	12	69	257	562	196
9–26 weeks	0	12	74	261	541	230
27–52 weeks	0	12	66	216	936	473
<b>Men</b>						
Employed	7	66	296	784	1 413	574
Unemployed						
less than 9 weeks	9	62	208	764	1 559	556
9–26 weeks	12	112	316	797	2 418	863
27–52 weeks	0	35	408	1 389	3 185	1 094

<sup>1</sup> P10: The quantity under which 10 % of all respondents in a given group lie (the lowest decile)

Q1: The quantity under which 25 % of all respondents in a given group lie (the lower quartile)

Md: The quantity under which 50 % of all respondents in a given group lie (the median)

Q3: The quantity above which 25 % of all respondents in a given group lie (the upper quartile)

P90: The quantity above which 10 % of all respondents in a given group lie (the uppermost decile)

16 percent of the respondents become intoxicated at least once a week, whereas the respective figure among the employed men is only 6 percent. The highest proportion of respondents who had never become intoxicated are found among the employed category and among those who had been jobless for less than nine weeks.

For women the findings are much alike: to become intoxicated at least once a week is more common among those unemployed. However, the differences between the categories are not statistically significant (Table 3).

#### *Annual consumption of alcohol*

The differences in the annual consumption of alcohol between the employment status categories are examined by looking at the consumption distributions (Table 4; about the method of measuring the annual consumption see Simpura 1987, 230). The annual consumption is roughly the same for the employed men and for those men who had been jobless for less than nine weeks. Consumption increases with the duration of unemployment and shows the highest levels among those men who had been unemployed for 27-52

weeks. Among these men the uppermost decile consume more than twice as much as the respective decile among those employed or unemployed for less than nine weeks. It should be emphasized, however, that even among those men who had been jobless for 27-52 weeks there is a large portion of abstainers and infrequent drinkers. This finding implies that along with prolonged unemployment the consumption patterns tend to become even more divergent between the different user categories. The infrequent users diminish drinking, whereas the heavy drinkers keep their consumption at the previous levels or may even start drinking more. However, a similar change could also be due to a selection process which takes place in the labor market.

Among women the consumption distributions are more or less similar from one employment status category to another. Nonetheless, those women who had been unemployed for 27-52 weeks consume on the average slightly more than women in the other employment categories. The cause for this difference can be traced to the uppermost decile: these women consume twice as much alcohol as those belonging to the respective decile in the other employment status categories.

Table 5. Changes in alcohol use during the 12-month period preceding the interview by employment status and duration of unemployment, women and men (% of all respondents in a given group)

	Employment status				P-Value
	Employed	Unemployed less than 9 weeks	Unemployed 9–26 weeks	Unemployed 27–52 weeks	
Change in alcohol use					
Women					
Decreased or quit	13	14	13	18	.917
Increased	2	2	1	3	
No change (drinkers and abstainers)	84	82	84	78	
(N)	(846)	(71)	(82)	(66)	
Men					
Decreased or quit	12	20	27	18	.000***
Increased	1	2	2	2	
No change (drinkers and abstainers)	86	78	70	79	
(N)	(828)	(105)	(125)	(107)	

\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ , groups differ statistically highly significantly.

### Changes in the drinking habits

The respondents of the drinking habits survey were asked whether they had diminished, increased, kept their previous consumption levels, or quit drinking during the preceding 12-month period. It has been uncommon to increase alcohol use. Most of the respondents have kept their previous consumption levels (Table 5). 78-84 percent of the women and 70-86 percent of the men have not changed their alcohol use. Among women there is no apparent association between the employment status category and changes in alcohol use. Among men there is a statistically significant difference in the changes in alcohol use between those employed and unemployed. The employed category shows the lowest portion of men who have decreased their alcohol use (12 percent) and the highest portion of those who have kept their consumption at the previous levels (86 percent). The largest portion of those who have decreased their alcohol use is found among those men who have been unemployed for 9-26 weeks (27 percent). However, the differences between the unemployed categories are not statistically significant.

### Summary of the drinking habits

- Women's drinking habits do not vary by the employment status category or by the duration of unemployment.
- The proportion of abstainers as well as the drinking frequency are roughly the same for both employed and unemployed men.
- Intoxication frequency is higher for unemployed than for employed men. Intoxication frequency increases with duration of unemployment.
- Annual consumption of alcohol is almost the same among the employed men and among those men who had been jobless for less than 9 weeks. Average annual consumption increases with duration of unemployment. This pattern is related to differences in the average consumption levels of heavy drinkers. The extremes in the consumption distribution are exceptionally well represented among those men who had been unemployed for 27–52 weeks: the portion of abstainers as well as of infrequent drinkers is large, but on the other hand, heavy drinkers consume twice as much as those classified as heavy drinkers in the other employment status categories.
- A larger portion of the unemployed than of the

Table 6. Consequences of single drinking occasions by employment status and duration of unemployment, women and men (% of drinkers having experienced a given consequence at least once during a period of 12 months)

Type of consequence	Women Employment status				P-Value	Men Employment status				P-Value
	Employed	Unem- ployed less than 9 weeks	Unem- ployed 9–26 weeks	Unem- ployed 27–52 weeks		Employed	Unem- ployed less than 9 weeks	Unem- ployed 9–26 weeks	Unem- ployed 27–52 weeks	
Quarrel and argument	14	20	26	16	.066	15	18	26	32	.000***
Scuffle or fight	2	3	6	2	.166	4	8	12	20	.000***
Accident or injury	2	2	4	3	.374	2	4	4	10	.0001
Loss of money or other valuable items	2	3	7	8	.018 <sup>1</sup>	5	3	5	20	.000***
Damage of objects or clothing	2	3	8	6	.033 <sup>1</sup>	8	8	14	16	.007**
Victimized by cheating or swindling	0	2	1	2	.369	1	1	5	7	.000 <sup>1</sup>
Driving a car under the influence of alcohol	1	2	1	2	.551	4	8	5	14	.001**
Victimized by robbery or theft	1	2	2	0	.396	0	2	2	1	.684
Regretted something one has said or done	20	31	37	20	.004**	24	26	37	44	.000***

<sup>1)</sup>  $\chi^2$ -test used may not be valid because of too few cases.

\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ , groups differ statistically highly significantly.

\*\*  $0.001 < p < 0.01$ , groups differ statistically significantly.

employed men have decreased their alcohol use. The proportion of men who have decreased their consumption level does not correlate with the duration of unemployment.

### Consequences of alcohol use among employed and unemployed

The problems related to alcohol use can be divided into two categories: 1) the consequences of a single heavy drinking occasion, and 2) the consequences of prolonged drinking.

#### Consequences of a single drinking occasion

Each respondent who used alcohol was presented a list of various consequences of a single drinking occasion and requested to inform which consequences he or she has experienced during the preceding 12-month period. Unemployed men

have experienced such consequences much more frequently than have employed men, and most of the differences between the employment status categories are statistically significant (Table 6). Various adverse consequences are more common among men undergoing prolonged unemployment than among those men who had been jobless for a shorter period of time. Accidents, loss of money, and drunk driving are exceptionally common among men who had been unemployed for 27–52 weeks. Quarrels, fights, damage of objects or clothing, victimization by cheating or swindling, and regretfulness for something one had said are consequences which are relatively often experienced by those men who had been unemployed for at least nine weeks. There are only minor differences between the employed and the men who had been jobless for less than nine weeks.

Women have seldom had any of the consequences of a single drinking occasion, and there are only small differences between the various

Table 7. Alcohol-related control measures, by employment status and duration of unemployment, women and men (% of drinkers having experienced a given control measure at least once during a period of 12 months preceding the interview)

Type of control	Women Employment status				P-Value	Men Employment status				P-Value
	Employed	Unem- ployed less than 9 weeks	Unem- ployed 9–26 weeks	Unem- ployed 27–52 weeks		Employed	Unem- ployed less than 9 weeks	Unem- ployed 9–26 weeks	Unem- ployed 27–52 weeks	
Arrested by police	1	0	4	3	.009 <sup>1</sup>	11	9	17	28	.000***
Criticized by family	8	22	13	15	.007**	27	30	36	42	.008**
Warned by doctor	0	0	0	2	.014 <sup>1</sup>	2	4	3	7	.010 <sup>1</sup>
Criticized at work	0	0	1	2	.608 <sup>1</sup>	2	4	4	5	.150 <sup>1</sup>
Have had the impression that some friends have thought you should drink less or exercise a little more caution	4	11	11	5	.035 <sup>1</sup>	12	16	19	27	.001***

<sup>1</sup> X<sup>2</sup>-test used may not be valid because of too few cases.

\*\*\* p < 0.001, groups differ statistically highly significantly.

\*\* 0.001 < p < 0.01, groups differ statistically significantly.

employment status categories. The only statistically significant difference is in the consequence phrased as "regretted something one has said or done". This consequence is reported less frequently by those women who were either employed or had been jobless for 27-52 weeks. Contrary to the situation among men, the harmful consequences of a single drinking occasion are only in a few instances more common among women with longer duration of unemployment. Such consequences are "loss of money or other valuable items" and "damage of object or clothing" (Table 6).

#### Alcohol-related control measures

Unemployed respondents experience control measures more frequently than those employed (Table 7). The longer the duration of unemployment is, the more likely it is to experience control measures. The following measures show statistically significant differences between the employment status categories for men: arrested by police, criticized by family, and concern from one's friends.

Very few women report any control measures; this makes it difficult to determine which differences between the employment status categories might be significant. The only statistically significant difference concerns the measure "criticized by family." Women's reports are like men's in the respect that the proportion of those unemployed who have been criticized by their family is much larger than among those employed. However, the incidence of this measure does not increase with duration of unemployment — contrary to the situation prevailing among men. The highest incidence is among women who had been jobless for less than nine weeks. However, the difference between the unemployed categories is not statistically significant.

#### Health problems

The prevalence of health problems was examined by asking each respondent the following question: "Have you during the past 12 months had health problems which you believe to have been caused by your use of alcohol?" Among men the proportion of affirmative answers is only a couple

Table 8. Alcohol-related social drawbacks, by employment status and duration of employment (% of drinkers having experienced a given drawback at least once in lifetime), men

Type of social drawback	Men (%)	P-Value
Change of job		.000***
Employed	.1	
Unemployed less than 9 weeks	..2	
Unemployed 9–26 weeks	.....7	
Unemployed 27–52 weeks	.....10	
Contact with welfare authorities		.000 <sup>1</sup>
Employed	...3	
Unemployed less than 9 weeks	..2	
Unemployed 9–26 weeks	.....5	
Unemployed 27–52 weeks	.....12	
Financial difficulties		.000***
Employed	.....6	
Unemployed less than 9 weeks	.....9	
Unemployed 9–26 weeks	.....17	
Unemployed 27–52 weeks	.....37	
Arrest for drunkenness		.000***
Employed	.....16	
Unemployed less than 9 weeks	.....20	
Unemployed 9–26 weeks	.....18	
Unemployed 27–52 weeks	.....38	
Absence from work		.000***
Employed	.....14	
Unemployed 9–26 weeks	.....20	
Unemployed 9–26 weeks	.....20	
Unemployed 7–52 weeks	.....39	

<sup>1</sup>)  $\chi^2$ -test used may be not valid because of too few cases.

\*\*\* p<0.001, groups differ statistically highly significantly.

of percentages in most employment status categories. However, 14 percent of those men who had been unemployed for 27-52 weeks give an affirmative answer. This result is statistically significant. Among women, health problems are rare, regardless of employment status.

### *Social drawbacks during an entire lifetime*

The lifetime prevalence of social drawbacks was measured by asking if the respondents had ever changed their job, had contact with welfare authorities, had financial difficulties, had been arrested, or been absent from work because of alcohol use. Among women these drawbacks are

extremely rare, and therefore, they are excluded from these analyses. Unemployed men experience the listed drawbacks considerably more often than those employed (Table 8). Thirty-seven to thirty-nine percent of those men who had been jobless for 27-52 weeks report that alcohol use had caused financial difficulties, or had resulted in arrest for drunkenness or absence from work. For the employed, the respective percentages are 6, 16, and 14. The differences between the employment status categories are statistically highly significant.

### *Control of drinking during an entire lifetime*

Four questions were presented to examine the control of one's drinking during the entire lifetime: 1) Have you ever felt that you use alcohol more often than you actually would like to?

2) Have you ever felt you use greater quantities of alcohol than you actually would like to? 3) Have you ever found yourself drinking more than you have initially planned to? 4) Do you find it difficult to confine yourself to one single drink once you have begun to drink? The reply categories were: often, occasionally, seldom, never.

The scores illustrating control of drinking were formed by adding up the replies in such a way that "never" equals 0; "seldom" equals 1; "occasionally" equals 2; and "often" equals 3 points. The higher the score, the more difficulties the respondent has had in controlling his or her drinking.

Women have very little difficulties in controlling their drinking, and the differences between the employment status categories are not statistically significant. For men the findings show a very different pattern. Regarding each type of control difficulties there are statistically significant differences between the employment status categories. Anxiety due to one's drinking is much more common among jobless men than among those employed. The proportion of those men who often or occasionally have difficulties in controlling one's drinking increases with the duration of unemployment. Classification by the total scores summarizes the findings (Table 9, next page). Nineteen percent of those men who had been jobless for 27-52 weeks have a total score between 9

*Table 9.* Score of difficulties in controlling drinking during one's lifetime, by employment status and duration of unemployment (% of drinkers in a given group), men

Employment status	Score of control difficulties				(N)	P-Value
	0	1-4	5-8	9-12		
Employed	17	50	29	4	(737)	.000***
Unemployed less than 9 weeks	20	48	27	4	(89)	
9-26 weeks	11	45	32	11	(111)	
27-52 weeks	15	35	31	19	(91)	

\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ , groups differ statistically highly significantly.

and 12. Such high scores are reached by only 4 percent of employed men and of those men who had been unemployed for less than 9 weeks. Those men undergoing prolonged unemployment often reported at least some of the control difficulties. The employed and those men who had been jobless for less than 9 weeks have no differences in their self-control patterns.

#### *Summary of the consequences of alcohol use*

— Unemployed men experience adverse consequences following a single drinking occasion, as well as alcohol-related control measures, more frequently than employed men. Such consequences become more common with the duration of unemployment. As a matter of fact, only minor differences are found between employed and those men who had been jobless for less than nine months.

— Fourteen percent of those men who had been unemployed for 27–52 weeks have some health problems, while the respective proportion for other employment status categories is only a few percentages.

— Unemployed men experience social drawbacks related to alcohol use much more frequently than employed men. Thirty-seven to thirty-nine percent of those men who had been unemployed for 27–52 weeks report that some time during their lifetime alcohol use had resulted in financial difficulties, arrest for drunkenness, or absence

from work. The respective figures for those employed are 6, 16, and 14 percent.

— Difficulties in controlling one's drinking are much more common during the lifetime of those men who had been unemployed than among those employed. The longer the duration of unemployment the more common the difficulties are.

— Among women the associations between consequences of alcohol use and employment status are much less conspicuous.

#### **Conclusions**

In this article we have used the 1992 Finnish Drinking Habits Survey to examine the relationships between employment status and drinking, including the consequences of alcohol use. The significance of the respondents' employment status was investigated by comparing the drinking habits and consequences of alcohol use between those employed and unemployed. The latter were divided into three categories based on duration of unemployment.

Among men, the drinking habits and consequences of alcohol use vary in a consistent fashion between the employment status categories. Among women there are no apparent associations between drinking habits and employment status. Employed women are not significantly different from those who are jobless, and even prolonged unemployment does not seem to affect women's drinking habits. Thus, it does not seem plausible that even long-lasting mass unemployment would result in increasing alcohol use or abuse among women. These findings also confirm that men and women should be studied separately when investigating the relationships between alcohol use and employment status (Janlert & Hammarström 1992; Lahelma 1993).

There are even other observations which make the findings regarding women acceptable and understandable. It seems that alcohol does not have a significant role in women's life when they are employed, and job loss does not alter this situation. Unemployed women have plenty of things to do, and their everyday life is better organized than men's. These interpretations are supported by the classical findings concerning Marienthal,

an Austrian village which suffered from overwhelming unemployment in the 1930s, as well as by the present-day findings obtained from the Finnish time use surveys. Raija Julkunen's (1993) comment on the cover picture of the Marienthal study tells it all: "On the cover picture there are six men, not boys but grown-up men, who lean against the railing of a bridge and stare into the water. They could not be women; not even today could one imagine replacing them with housewives doing the same thing as the men are doing."

In the present-day time use studies, women report that they do a larger variety of things than men do. When women become unemployed they focus on home-making or increase their pursuits and educational activities more frequently than men. Even when employed women share their time between a greater number of activities and their time use is not necessarily as strictly controlled by work and spare time (Penttilä 1993).

Women's and men's drinking habits are alike in one respect: the proportion of abstainers and drinking frequency are not associated with employment status. However, unemployed men have a greater intoxication frequency and higher average consumption levels than those employed. Furthermore, various adverse consequences of alcohol use are more common among jobless men. The differences between the employed and unemployed men increase with duration of unemployment.

The drinking habits survey is a cross-sectional study, and as such, the results obtained do not positively establish whether the differences between the employed and unemployed men are due to an increase in alcohol use during unemployment or if they are a result of a selection process in the labor market. The hypothesis of increased alcohol use is contradicted by the fact that unemployed men report having decreased their use of alcohol more frequently than those employed. In the same vein, the selection hypothesis is supported by those findings which show that social drawbacks and difficulties in controlling one's drinking are much more common during the lifetime of those men who suffer from prolonged unemployment. These problems were much less frequent among employed men and among those who had been unemployed for less

than 9 weeks. Thus, problem drinkers were obviously selected among the long-term unemployed men. Many of the problem drinkers may constitute a core group among the jobless people, a group which would be found among the unemployed even during periods of more fortunate economic circumstances (cf. Vähätalo 1982; Winton 1986).

During periods of mass unemployment individuals who tend to drink until intoxicated and have above-average consumption levels are selected among the unemployed. The selection process is not only related to drinking habits. There are also other contributing factors, such as age and education. Young people, as well as unskilled workers, are over-represented among the unemployed. Even though the 1992 survey was held during a period of mass unemployment, the number of jobless individuals is too small to control various group characteristics.

It is obvious that the results obtained in this article do not readily support Therborn's predictions of increasing alcohol abuse. We have shown that unemployed men decrease their alcohol use to a greater extent than those employed. This finding may be related to financial difficulties following job loss. However, the decrease in alcohol use did not become more pronounced with the duration of unemployment, as one might have expected. It is possible that the restrictions caused by economic problems are compensated by directing alcohol consumption to cheaper products.

On the other hand, we should emphasize that our results do not positively prove Therborn wrong, either. Rather, the findings underscore the complexity of the associations between unemployment, drinking habits and alcohol abuse. Some people suffering from prolonged unemployment decrease drinking, while others keep their previously high levels of alcohol use and, henceforth, experience more severe alcohol-related problems.

Finally, one should raise the following question: What if the survey had been done in September 1994, two years after the survey was actually done? By then mass unemployment would have continued for many years and the social problems related to it would have had time to intensify.

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