

Campaign to reduce alcohol drinking in Estonia – acknowledging problems and seeking for help.

Helen Noormets, Karin Kilp, Esta Kaal, Triin Ülesoo
National Institute for Health Development, Estonia

 **Tervise Arengu Instituut**
National Institute for Health Development

BACKGROUND

In Estonia, **about 30%** of the adult population (15–64 years) is estimated to drink alcohol at the **high-risk level**, including 5% with alcohol dependence and the rest drinking at hazardous or harmful levels.

- 1 Alcohol is an integral part of everyday life in Estonia and **social norms favor alcohol consumption in large quantities.**
- 2 People generally don't have a realistic idea how much alcohol they actually drink and they **underestimate** their **drinking**. It is a widespread belief to regard alcohol consumption as moderate as long as the person is able to control his/her life.
- 3 People with alcohol addiction are **stigmatized**.

OBJECTIVES

To help people with risky and hazardous alcohol consumption to **identify** their alcohol problem at an early stage, **motivate** them to take steps to reduce their alcohol consumption and thereby **prevent/avoid** harmful consequences of their drinking patterns.

- 1 **Raise awareness** of one's **drinking** levels.
- 2 **Introduce** a method of self-assessment (**AUDIT test**) and in case of risky drinking motivate to take steps to reduce alcohol consumption.
- 3 **Reduce stigmatization** of risky drinkers in the society to create an understanding that this can be any person with no obviously visible features that could refer to the problem.

SOLUTION

Campaign message directed people to check their drinking behavior by conducting the AUDIT test on the campaign webpage **alkoinfo.ee**. Depending on the test score the respondent was **provided with recommendations** and links to further reading. Respondents with high scores were provided links to information about **professional help**.

Media Mix
Campaign website **alkoinfo.ee**, **TV media**, **outdoor media**, **internet banners**, **below the line media** in the shops, **print media**, **PR**.

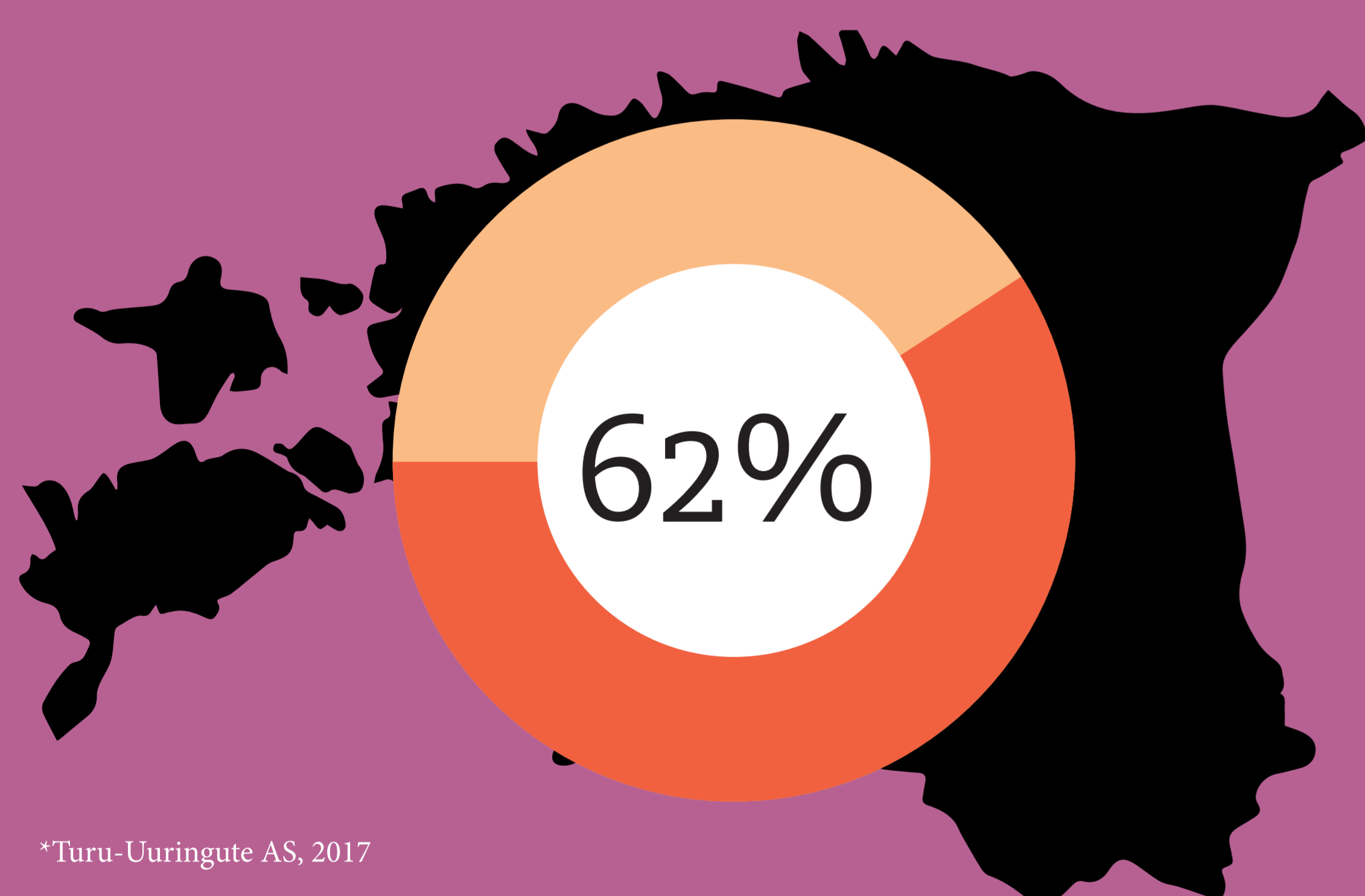
Timing
Communication carried out in **two waves**, both 3 weeks long with a 5-months break between two waves.

Theories used to design the programme and campaign: Stages of Change Model (Prochaska J.O., DiClemente C.C., 1983) and Cognitive Dissonance Theory (Festinger, 1957).



RESULTS

- 1 Campaign awareness among target audience

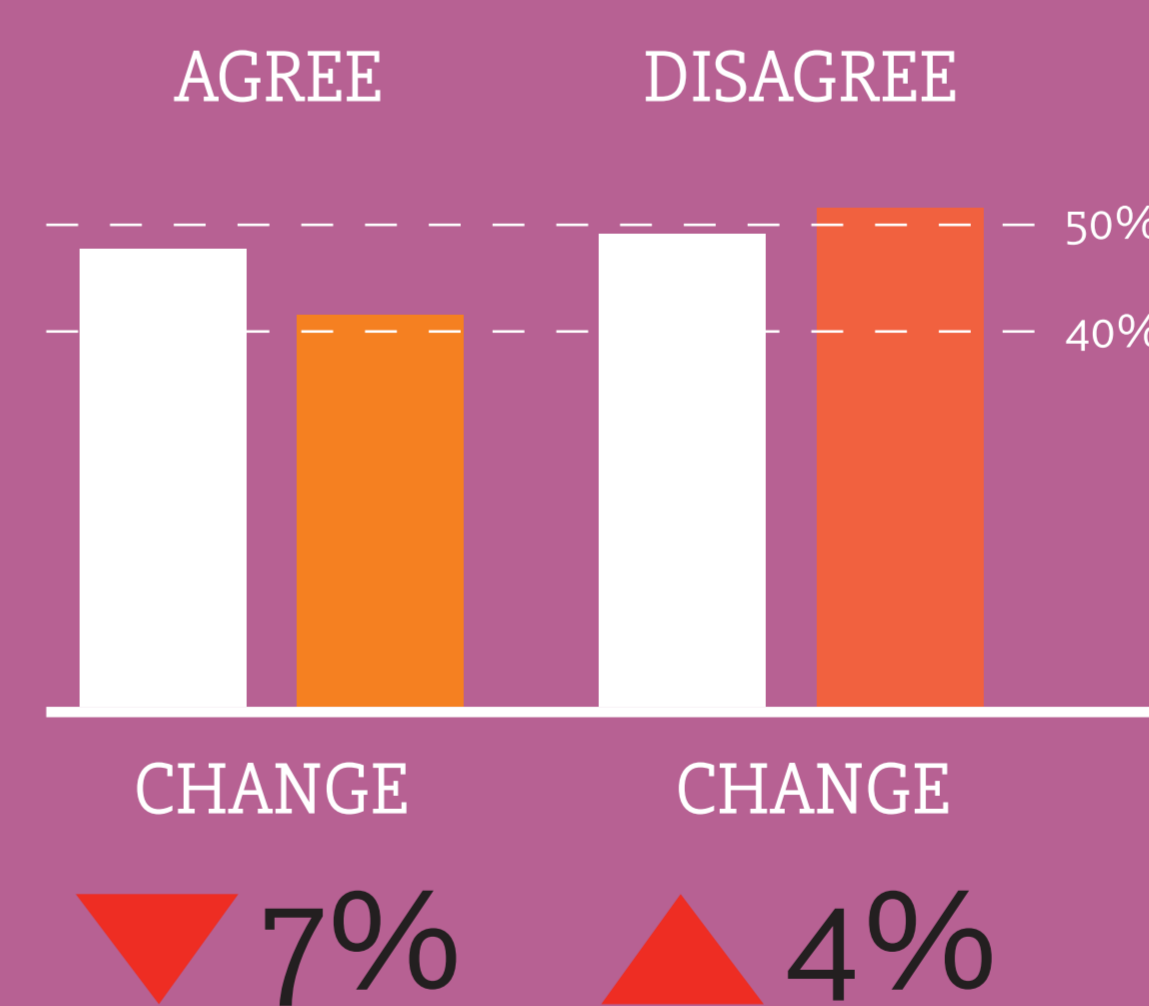


- 2 During the campaign 70 324 visitors visited website **alkoinfo.ee**



- 3 According to the pre and postcampaign researches **attitudes towards frequent consumption of alcohol** in half a year **became somewhat more critical**.

“Excessive alcohol consumption is not a problem as long as one can handle his family and work relationships”.



- 4 During the campaign year (2017) 60 842 people **completed AUDIT test** on campaign website **alkoinfo.ee**.

4,5% of Estonian population completed AUDIT test.

CONCLUSIONS

- A mass media campaign can **successfully activate** the target group to consider their alcohol consumption.
- **AUDIT test**, which is used in general practice for screening patients **can also be successfully used in mass media campaigns**.
- A considerable share of the population can be activated to take the test.
- **Qualitative research is an essential part** to get insight from the target group and design campaign message and materials.
- Stigmatization of alcohol “problems” makes it complicated to get the target group’s attention and processing the message.