

# ALCOHOL ALERT

MARCH 2019

WWW.IAS.ORG.UK



**TWO PARTNERS, ONE GOAL**

**SHAAP TO TEAM UP WITH SWF IN SUPPORT  
OF GIRLS' FOOTBALL IN SCOTLAND**

**IAS**

Institute of  
Alcohol Studies

- 3 COVER STORY **  
**SHAAP becomes sponsor of Scottish Women's Football**
- 4 How alcohol companies are using International Women's Day to sell more drinks to women**
- 6 Scottish Labour touts new alcohol tax ahead of spring conference**
- 7 Scottish Government urges drinkers to 'Count 14'**  
**The CSR doesn't fall far from the industry**
- 8 Creating alcohol labelling chaos**
- 10 Ireland: Drink-driving figures slide into reverse**
- 11 Marketing linked to youth drinking**
- 12 Non-drinkers may still suffer from alcohol**  
**Ban on duty-free drinks during flights**
- 13 Computer says 'no': Volvo tech aims to stall drink drivers**
- 14 Alcohol, are we kidding ourselves?**
- 15 HMRC awarded for tackling alcohol fraud at source**
- 16 Lifetime risk of drinking measured in cigarettes**
- ALCOHOL SNAPSHOT**
- 17 Youth drinking in Nordic countries: falling everywhere, but substantial differences remain between countries**

---

# SHAAP becomes sponsor of Scottish Women's Football

MARCH  
7

*Deal to support elite youth league until the end of the 2020 season*



In an unprecedented move, [Scottish Women's Football](#) (SWF) has agreed a new sponsorship agreement with Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems (SHAAP) to become the named advocate of the National Performance League (NPL) and NPL Cup, the elite level for girls' club football in Scotland, for the 2019 and 2020 seasons.

SWF will make history in becoming the first ever Scottish football organisation to be sponsored by an organisation aimed at tackling and solving alcohol problems.

The announcement of the partnership comes after SWF Chair Vivienne MacLaren's speech at the Scottish Parliament in February 2019 where she told lawmakers that [she would never accept sponsorship](#) from the alcohol and gambling industries.

She said: 'Scottish Women's Football is clear that accepting alcohol and gambling sponsorship would be incompatible with our role in promoting healthy lifestyles amongst girls and women and supporting them to make positive choices.'

'We believe positioning ourselves as a "clean" sport is both beneficial to those who participate in and follow women's football but also to the long-term growth and sustainability of our organisation.'

Fiona McIntyre, executive officer for SWF, said of the new partnership: 'We are delighted to be working with SHAAP. We have had a strong stance regarding alcohol sponsorship for a number of years now. Not only do we feel this is socially responsible as an organisation but we feel our stance has been financially justified and supported by the sponsors we have attracted to the game in recent years.'

'We think that the National Performance League is the perfect opportunity to partner with SHAAP' McIntyre added.

'These leagues (under-15s and under-19s) are part of the performance pathway for elite players within our youth game.



They are the next generation of talent and we hope that such a partnership will be of great benefit to the game and allows us to promote positive messages around health and wellbeing.'

The sponsorship will see an increase in coverage of the leagues and also research and education around alcohol for the teams, coaches, and players within the National Performance League.

Dr Eric Carlin, director of SHAAP, which is based at the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, said: 'We are excited to be kicking off our partnership with SWF. We have lauded their stance on not accepting alcohol sponsorship since its announcement and we're delighted to now be able to support them.'

'This is a historic moment for SHAAP as SWF become our first ever sponsorship agreement. We hope that through this partnership we can raise awareness regarding alcohol problems in Scotland and encourage other organisations, sporting or otherwise, to reject alcohol sponsorship.'

Dr Peter Rice, SHAAP chair, also noted: 'Another benefit to this sponsorship is that SHAAP will have the opportunity to research perceptions of alcohol use with those involved in the National Performance League, including the benefit of regular sporting activity.'

'We are very excited about this partnership and look forward to publicising the findings of our research.'

---

# How alcohol companies are using International Women's Day to sell more drinks to women

*Originally published on The Conversation website*

International Women's Day on March 8 celebrates women's achievements across the world and calls for action to speed up gender equality. Many alcohol companies also see it as an ideal opportunity to market their products to women. Diageo, the world's largest spirits business, is an official supporter of this year's international day. It has launched a series of tie-in videos, mainly of senior female staff talking about professional and personal challenges they face as women.

Diageo's Smirnoff brand is in the third year of an Equalising Music campaign to increase women's representation in the music industry. Originally launched to tie in with International Women's Day, Smirnoff recently unveiled BBC Radio One DJ Annie Mac to help spearhead the campaign. For this year's international day, it is co-launching a new Spotify feature called Smirnoff Equaliser that enables users to see what percentage of female artists they have listened to in the last six months.

Elsewhere in the Diageo universe, don't be surprised to see toasts of Jane Walker Scotch to celebrate female diversity. This limited edition version of Johnnie Walker black label, featuring a striding woman in a top hat and boots, was originally launched to coincide with last year's International Women's Day, 'as another symbol of the brand's commitment to progress'. For each bottle sold, the company donated US\$1.00 (£0.76) to women's organisations.

BrewDog, the Scottish-based brewer, has also used International Women's Day as a marketing vehicle. Last year it repackaged its Punk IPA brand as Pink IPA 'Beer for Girls' as part of a campaign to supposedly highlight the gender pay gap and sexist advertising. The company later expressed regret after many people attacked the branding for itself being sexist. Perhaps unsurprisingly, BrewDog has not opted for a re-run, but numerous other brewers have launched commemorative beers for this year's International Women's Day – in many cases emphasising the role of female brewers.

Women are an important market to the alcohol industry. In the UK, for example, while men still drink significantly more than women, and suffer more harm as result, the gap has shrunk dramatically. Men born in the early 1900s were 2.2 times more likely than women to drink alcohol; three times more likely to drink in a way that suggested problematic use; and 3.6 times more likely to experience alcohol-related harms.

Men born in the late 1990s, on the other hand, are only 1.1 times more likely to drink, 1.2 times more likely to drink problematically and 1.3 times more likely to experience alcohol-related harms. Many marketers will probably see the remaining gap as proof of growth potential in women's drinking.

## The pitch

To appeal to women, alcohol companies have gradually developed different drinks, which tend to be sweet, pink, fruit flavoured or low calorie. Their marketing strategies evolved as well. Where alcohol marketers used to regularly sexualise and objectify women to sell alcohol to men, they now often align brands with fun, sophistication, female friendship and empowerment. Baileys, for example, targets millennial girls – and their mothers – with its 'Here's To Us' campaign. This celebrates the 'power of female friendship' and encourages women to get together and toast one another.

According to research I co-authored, there is a clear link between alcohol and our gendered identity: both younger and older women show people who they are by what they drink and how they drink it. The alcohol industry is aware of this and exploits it fully in its advertising.

---

The industry's pitch to women's empowerment is [particularly strong](#) in poorer countries, which are often less regulated and have lower advertising costs. For example, Diageo [markets](#) a fruit-flavoured alcohol drink called Snapp at women in parts of Africa. According to the strapline, 'Snapp celebrates today's woman: she is empowered, confident and stylish.'

Researchers have [argued that](#) this doesn't only seek to attract female customers, but also to influence how alcohol is perceived by local women's networks who might otherwise see female drinkers as distasteful. This echoes tobacco marketing campaigns over the years: a good example is Virginia Slims' 'You've Come a Long Way Baby' [campaign](#) in the late 1960s, which linked the product to women's liberation.

The tension in whether alcohol marketing has women's interests at heart is possibly most pronounced around ['pinkwashing'](#), where companies engage in breast cancer awareness activities like the pink ribbon campaign while selling products that are [known to be](#) carcinogenic. For example, some Californian wine producers [give money](#) to breast cancer charities for every bottle of wine sold, fund clinical trials for women with breast cancer or pay for mammograms.

A [study from 2015](#) emphasised that alcohol is responsible for an estimated 8% of breast cancers worldwide. It raised concerns that pinkwashing 'contributes to risk in the name of prevention' and 'extends the marketing reach with links to charitable causes and access to young women, many of whom may already drink at risky levels'.

## Brand bandits

Alcohol brands [piggyback](#) on every notable date in the calendar, including [Mother's Day](#), [Valentine's Day](#) and even [Pancake Day](#). On one level, International Women's Day is just another of these marketing opportunities to normalise alcohol consumption. Yet linking alcohol brands with empowerment is particularly troubling, given that alcohol is a [leading global risk factor](#) for early death among women aged 15-49 years. In the UK, alcohol-specific death rates [increased](#) 21% for women between 2001 and 2017.

This year's [theme](#) for International Women's Day is [#BalanceforBetter](#), a call to build a more gender-balanced world. To achieve this, the campaign suggests challenging stereotypes and raising awareness. In Scotland, where I am based, we have been running a social media campaign with Alcohol Focus Scotland [#dontpinkmydrink](#), to identify and expose examples of cynical alcohol marketing. When it comes to achieving true equality for women, raising rates of alcohol-related diseases and death rates to the same levels as men is one type of progress that we could really do without.

A Diageo spokesperson said: 'Diageo's celebration of International Women's Day is linked to the strong focus we put on inclusion and diversity as a business. Forty percent of Diageo's executive committee are women; we've been ranked the fourth most diverse and inclusive business in the world by Thomson Reuters; are listed in the Bloomberg Gender Equality Index; and have been ranked as the best company in the UK for gender equality by Equileap. Our communications activity is focused on celebrating the women and men throughout our business, with the primary objective of engaging potential future employees.'

**Original article written by Carol Emslie, Professor / Lead Substance use & misuse research group, Glasgow Caledonian University, and published on 07 March 2019, on [The Conversation](#) website. Reproduced under a Creative Commons Attribution-NoDerivs licence (CC BY-ND) **

---

# Scottish Labour touts new alcohol tax ahead of spring conference

## *Social responsibility levy 'would raise £100m a year'*

Scottish Labour promises to introduce a social responsibility levy to tackle alcohol and drug misuse if the party wins power at the next Scottish elections in two years' time.

Health spokesperson Monica Lennon made the pledge on the first day of the party's spring conference in Dundee, claiming the levy would raise an extra £100 million a year that could be invested in tackling the impact of alcohol and drugs misuse across Scotland.

Scottish Labour's proposal draws on an old piece of legislation (the [Alcohol Scotland Act 2010](#)) that allows a ruling administration to introduce such a levy at local authority level (which can apply to any licensed premises). However, to date, it has yet to be brought into force. Doing so would add £0.022 per unit of alcohol sold (equivalent to a 22 pence rise in a bottle of wine) if the cost is passed on to consumers.

In her address to delegates, Lennon mentioned how [years of alcohol misuse contributed to her father's death](#). She said:

'Drugs and alcohol misuse are ruining lives in every community. It is a Scottish public health emergency.'

'My much-loved dad died from decades of alcohol abuse. Emotional scars of addiction run deep.'

'Families affected by the harm caused by alcohol or drugs misuse feel isolated.'

'Investment in recovery scant. We will change this.'

'Over 50,000 young people are affected by parental drinking. We will put support in place for them on the first day of a Scottish Labour government.'

'We will end the predatory industry practices that saturate our poorest communities with betting shops, booze and unhealthy food, starting by enacting the social responsibility levy.'



[Responding to Lennon's announcement](#), a spokesperson for the Scottish Government said: 'We continue to have a deep-rooted and troubling relationship with alcohol and we must do all we can to prevent the harms of higher-risk drinking, as they are avoidable. That's why we are taking measures to reduce the availability, attractiveness and affordability of alcohol, including minimum unit pricing and our plans for alcohol marketing restrictions.'

'Our alcohol and drug strategy also focuses on improving how we provide support to those who need it and treat the wider issues affecting them. We are supporting this with an additional £20 million a year for alcohol and drug services and we have invested £746 million to tackle problem alcohol and drug use, with a focus on local prevention, treatment and recovery support services since 2008.'

# Scottish Government urges drinkers to ‘Count 14’

*Campaign to raise low awareness of guidelines*

The Scottish Government and NHS Scotland have launched a national alcohol public information campaign to promote awareness of the UK chief medical officers’ lower-risk guidelines of 14 units per week.



**Count 14** aims to explain the unit measurement means in terms of specific alcoholic drinks, as well as the health risks of drinking more than 14 units on a regular basis.

The campaign was broadcast on TV across the main live channels as well as via on-demand services, and across print, radio and digital channels (including a dedicated Facebook page), and has a dedicated website with interactive resources including a drinks / unit calculator and a 14-unit generator.

The launch of Count 14 came in the week that reports (in *The Herald*) found that not even a fifth of Scots know of the 14-unit guideline limit ‘according to Progressive, which also found 53% agree they do not think about the amount of alcohol they are drinking.’ A total of 840 Scottish adults took part in interviewing, with just 17% aware of the 14-unit-a-week limit.

‘However 57% agreed that monitoring their consumption was important, with more than a quarter (27%) saying they are looking to try and cut down the amount they drink.’

Scotland’s Chief Medical Officer Dr Catherine Greenwood said: ‘The guidelines are based on scientific evidence on the short and long-term impacts drinking alcohol has on health.’

‘Regularly exceeding the recommended maximum amount can lead to serious problems, including cancer of the mouth, throat and breast. If men and women limit their alcohol intake to no more than 14 units a week, it keeps the risk of developing these conditions low. This important campaign was launched not only to make people aware of the guidance, but to help understand what 14 units means in terms of what they drink, so they can make informed choices and reduce the risk of harm.’ ■■■

MARCH  
11

# The CSR doesn’t fall far from the industry

*Research of social media finds SAPROs’ scant health messaging consistent with funders*

Social Aspects / Public Relations Organisations (SAPROs) may reflect the interests of the alcohol producers that fund them, according to research published in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*.

Evidence of their activity on the social media platform Twitter calls into question claims made by such groups over their independence from the industry – SAPROs were more likely to reference excessive drinking than physical health harms such as alcohol-related heart disease and cancers.

Researchers from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) and Imperial College London examined tweets from alcohol industry funded actors Drinkaware UK (and its Irish counterpart) and DrinkWise in Australia alongside those of alcohol policy NGOs free of industry influence: Alcohol Change UK (formerly Alcohol Concern); Alcohol Action Ireland; and the Foundation for Research and Education in Australia.

They looked for evidence of whether the tweets – published during 2016 – aligned with industry and / or public health objectives centred around eight hypotheses (illustrated, p.8). They categorised their findings into 45 topics, the most common among them involving: drinking too much; marketing, advertising, sponsorship or restrictions; drink driving; cancer; and cutting down / cutting back.

With the exception of mental health and calories / obesity, alcohol industry funded organisations were significantly less likely to tweet about health-related topics. Instead, they were significantly more likely to tweet about drinking too much, cutting down, children and underage drinking, teens / parents, staying safe while drinking, alcohol-free or low alcohol drinks, and drink-driving.

The research team also discovered some glaring inaccuracies, such as the fact that in Drinkaware’s case, four of the organisation’s tweets about oral cancer wrongly stated that the risk of contracting the condition derives from ‘excessive’ drinking.

Overall, seven of the eight hypotheses were proven to be true. Only hypothesis six was rejected: there was no evidence of industry funded groups using imagery in their tweets to extend drinking occasions.

The team concluded: 'This analysis provides further evidence that SAPROs such as Drinkaware and DrinkWise may be a mechanism by which alcohol industry framings are disseminated to the public.'

# Creating alcohol labelling chaos

MARCH 13

## *Eurocare response to spirits producers' proposals*

SpiritsEUROPE, the trade association representing the producers of spirits in Europe, has unveiled a so-called new one-stop-shop webportal that provides consumers with easy access to detailed information on all spirit drinks legally sold in the EU.

Sorry, this is not good enough.

Please go online and check how long it takes you to find the relevant information regarding your favourite drink. The [www.responsibledrinking.eu](http://www.responsibledrinking.eu) website is misleading to the true nature of the spirit drinks and creates more chaos around the issue of labelling.

This industry once again proved it can't deliver and the European Commission should not accept this charade.

If labelling is provided only on a website, it needs to be an independent website not run by the alcohol industry. Would we allow Volkswagen to have a European Commission endorsed website telling people how to use diesel cars responsibly?

Hypotheses	Finding
H1: The topics covered by AI-funded bodies would be similar to the Global Alcohol Producers Commitments. (reducing under-age drinking; strengthening and expanding marketing codes of practice; providing consumer information and responsible product innovation; reducing drinking and driving; and enlisting the support of retailers to reduce harmful <a href="#">drinking</a> ).	AI-funded bodies were more likely to tweet about reducing underage drinking; alcohol-free and low-alcohol drinks (relevant to product innovation); and drinking and driving. Not enough tweets clearly attributable to marketing codes of practice, or enlisting the support of retailers to permit analysis. They were significantly more likely to mention information aspects of drinking—e.g., the alcohol guidelines, and knowing about units.
H2. That AI-funded tweets would have a focus on behavioural aspects of drinking and drink-related harms (i.e., visible antisocial behaviour, rather than chronic health harms).	AI-funded organisations were much more likely to tweet about behavioural aspects of drinking (e.g., drinking too much; 'staying safe'; 'cutting down/cutting back').
H3. That AI-funded bodies would be less likely to tweet warning consumers about pregnancy and related issues, and about cancers.	AI-funded organisations were significantly less likely to tweet about pregnancy or fertility; cancers, and breast cancer specifically; and alcohol harms more generally.
H4. That AI-funded organisations' Twitter communications would be primarily addressed to young women (because visible public drinking and alcohol-related anti-social behaviour in young women is a PR risk to the industry).	AI-funded organisations' images were significantly more likely to include women, and young women specifically.
H5. That they would emphasis non-regulatory and self-regulatory initiatives.	AI-funded organisations were significantly less likely to mention taxation or pricing (e.g., minimum unit pricing); more likely to mention the alcohol guidelines, which are non-regulatory.
H6. That they would show evidence of normalisation of new drinking occasions (e.g., work drinks days), because of evidence that industry CSR 'responsible drinking' campaigns can have the dual effect of promoting drinking.	No clear evidence of this was observed in the data; the hypothesis was, therefore, rejected.
H7. Related to H6, that industry-funded organisations' Twitter activity would be more likely to include alcohol, and drinking-related images.	Industry-funded organisations' tweets were significantly more likely to show people drinking, and alcoholic beverages.
H8. For the analyses of images in the tweets, based on previous research and knowledge of AI priorities we hypothesised that industry-funded organisations' images would be more likely to include women, and young women in particular; children; images of alcoholic drinks, and images of people drinking.	Industry-funded bodies (predominantly Drinkaware) were significantly more likely to show the relevant drinking, image or population group in every case.

### Summary of findings relating to the eight key hypotheses

---

The current website provides health related information (in the section on moderation) as when to drink and how. Conveniently, spirits industry does not mention that drinking alcohol can lead to more than 200 diseases, including cancer and as stated in European Code against Cancer - *If you drink alcohol of any type, limit your intake. Not drinking alcohol is better for cancer prevention.*

Spirits should not be disguising itself as a health information source, this is the remit of public health institutions and authorities.

In addition, provision of information online could lead to more targeted marketing as the companies would know better which products we buy and try to seduce us to buy more. Not to even mention the problem with targeted marketing to youngsters if they scan a QR code of a specific product. On-line labelling for the alcohol products has a lot of unintended consequences. Public authorities should reject it.

## Historical background

In 2011 the European institutions passed Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 that requires food and soft drinks, including fruit juice and milk, to label nutritional information and ingredients. However, after heated debates alcoholic beverages were exempted from this obligation.

In March 2017, the European Commission published a report clearly stating that no objective grounds were identified which would justify the absence of information on ingredients and nutritional information on alcoholic beverages.

The European Commission gave the alcohol producers one year to deliver a self-regulatory proposal that would cover the entire sector of alcoholic beverages. In March 2018 industry produced a self-regulatory proposal.

Public health and consumer organisations pointed out the flaws of the system on numerous occasions.

Industry failed to produce a uniform approach for the whole sector, instead presenting sector specific annexes. Additionally, the proposal leaves it up to the food business operators responsible for the food information to decide how to display the information.

Discrepancies in implementation and interpretation of the EU Reg 1169/2011 could create a mosaic of styles and forms instead of following the already existing framework (set out in EU Reg 1169/2011) to which consumers are accustomed to.

The brewing sector reports that three quarters of beers will be labelling ingredients and half will be labelling energy per 100ml by the end of this year.

Unfortunately, the spirits and wine industries want to provide information online, in form of weblinks, QR codes, bar codes etc. As stated in the European Commission's report on alcohol labels from 2017, the majority of consumers 'never or rarely' use off-label information sources to access information on nutrition values and ingredients of alcoholic beverages. According to the Digital Economy and Society Index (2017) 44% of Europeans (169 million) between 16 and 74 years do not have basic digital skills. 'Off-label' information would exclude millions of Europeans of their right to know what they consume.

Originally published on the [Eurocare website](#). 

# Ireland: Drink-driving figures slide into reverse

*DUI arrests up by 17%; RSA blames alcohol for failure to wear seatbelts*

Ireland's road collision stats indicate a growing problem with road users failing to put seatbelts on in vehicles, and alcohol is a major reason for the resulting spike in accidental deaths, says the Road Safety Authority (RSA).

Figures released from the Gardai (Irish police) also show that there were **17% more arrests for driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs** in the first two months of 2019, compared with the same period last year (illustrated).

Numbers of drink driving arrests: January – February 2018 & 2019  
An Garda Síochána arrest statistics

Provisional enforcement data	January 2018	February 2018	January 2019	February 2019
Intoxicated driving	597	627	695	734

**Between 01 January and 28 February, 1,429 drivers were arrested**

Ms Moyagh Murdock, RSA chief executive officer, warned citizens of the dangers of navigating Ireland's roads while under the influence, noting that almost half of pedestrians killed on Irish roads have consumed alcohol.

'I'm also reminding drivers and passengers to wear seatbelts and to understand that there is a close link between drinking alcohol and non-wearing of seatbelts in fatality statistics,' she added.

MARCH  
14

RSA analysis of An Garda Síochána Investigation Files for fatal collisions that occurred on Irish roads between 2008 and 2012 found that:

- 196 drivers in the 867 collisions analysed were recorded as not wearing a seatbelt at the time of the collision, of which 111 (57%) had consumed alcohol
- Of all 174 passengers in the 867 collisions recorded as not wearing a seatbelt, 87 (50%) of these had consumed or were suspected of consuming alcohol.

Speculating on the figures, an RSA spokesperson told the *Irish Times* that while about 94% of road users wear seatbelts, the cohort failing to do so tend to be young people who have been out socialising.

'They are typically young, out socialising at the weekend, getting into the car with alcohol on board, and not wearing the seatbelt,' he said.

'That is something that is coming through in the crash statistics.

'People are impaired. It's as simple as that. They are not making proper, sound decisions. Alcohol impairs drivers, but it impairs passengers as well.'

In terms of those individuals circumventing the in-built alarms for seatbelts, he said an educational programme was needed. 'Seatbelts are proven lifesavers. It defies logic not to wear them. The consequences could be devastating.'

There have been number of road fatalities in recent months involving individuals who were not wearing seatbelts. Four people, none of whom were wearing seatbelts, were killed after they were thrown from the rear of the Peugeot 306 which struck a wall and a lamp post at West End in Bundoran, Co Donegal, last August. ■■

---

# Marketing linked to youth drinking

## *New study exposes association as WHO push for restrictions*

Young people's awareness of alcohol marketing is associated with the likelihood of increased and higher-risk consumption, even among those who are underage. And among young people who have never consumed alcohol, those who own alcohol-branded merchandise are twice as likely to be susceptible to drink in the next year.

These are the findings of *BMJ Open* published research led by Dr Nathan Critchlow of the University's Institute of Social Marketing (ISM), the first of its kind to examine awareness of alcohol marketing and ownership of alcohol branded merchandise in a demographically representative sample of young people across the UK, including those above and below the legal purchasing age for alcohol.

The study used data from the 2017 *Youth Alcohol Policy Survey* – a cross-sectional, YouGov-conducted survey with 11 to 19-year-olds across the UK. The weighted sample – of 3,399 young people – had an average age of 15.18 years old, an even distribution for gender, and 76% were below the legal purchasing age. Of the weighted sample, 1,590 were current drinkers – with 44% of those classified as being at higher risk – and 1,623 were never drinkers, with half of those classified as susceptible to drink in the next year.

The team measured how frequently young people recalled seeing nine different forms of alcohol marketing in the month preceding the study, ranging from traditional advertising – for example, in the press and on television; alternative marketing – such as sponsorship and competitions; and retail marketing – including price promotions. Awareness was also estimated across the past month, and young people were categorised as reporting either low awareness (approximately every other day or less), medium awareness (approximately every day), and high awareness (almost twice a day or more).

The team found that 82% of young people recalled seeing at least one form of alcohol marketing in the month preceding the survey, with at least half estimated to have seen 32 or more instances – equating to one per day. Meanwhile, nearly a fifth (17%) of respondents said they owned alcohol-branded merchandise.

In sum, alcohol marketing awareness was associated with increased consumption and greater likelihood of higher-risk consumption among current drinkers, and ownership of branded merchandise was associated with susceptibility among never drinkers. It is important to note that the cross-sectional nature of the survey does not enable us to infer casual relationships between those factors.

Dr Critchlow said of the findings: 'The new study provides insight into the forms of alcohol marketing that young people are aware of, how frequently they recall seeing alcohol marketing, and what factors are associated with higher awareness of alcohol marketing and ownership of alcohol branded merchandise.'

'The influence that alcohol marketing has on young people, and how it is self-regulated in the UK, continues to be a topic of debate. The Scottish Government's latest alcohol strategy includes plans to consult on alternative controls for alcohol marketing, and Ireland have recently passed legislation to this effect. Our findings lend support to these steps to examine further feasible, appropriate, and effective ways of reducing exposure in young people.'

Dr Jyotsna Vohra, head of cancer policy research for Cancer Research UK, who funded the study, said: 'Alcohol can cause seven different types of cancer: mouth, breast, bowel, liver, pharyngeal, esophageal, and laryngeal. It's responsible for almost 12,000 cancer cases annually in the UK, and worryingly only one in ten people know its link to cancer. The more you drink the greater the risk and this is why the chief medical officers' guidelines recommend no more than 14 units per week as a safer level of drinking. We know that not everyone who drinks will develop cancer but it doesn't hurt to cut down.'

## **WHO: more action needed to monitor digital marketing**

The findings of the study appear to support calls from WHO Europe for 'greater monitoring of the digital marketing of alcohol, tobacco and unhealthy food products' to children.

Lamenting the lack of progress, Dr João Breda, head of the WHO European Office for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases, said: 'the overriding concern is that nearly a decade after introducing the 2010 WHO recommendations on the marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children, exposure of children to the online marketing of unhealthy food products, tobacco and alcohol remains commonplace'. The WHO report urgently calls for developing and implementing a set of tools for monitoring the exposure of children to digital marketing. Dr Critchlow's study sheds light on how exposure at current levels risks raising the chances of that exposure to marketing impacting on young people's alcohol consumption, and in turn, their health. ■■■

---

## Non-drinkers may still suffer from alcohol

*Study finds alcohol harms to others inflicted on teetotallers*

The harmful effects of alcohol on people other than the drinker need to be recognised as a public health problem, say authors of a new study published in *BMC Medicine*.

Much of the research into alcohol-associated harms investigates harm to the drinker, not to others. So researchers at Institute for Therapy Research in Bayern, Germany, estimated the harms caused to others by alcohol during pregnancy, in road traffic accidents, and as a result of interpersonal violence.

They found that alcohol was responsible for 1,214 (45.1%) third-party road traffic deaths and 55 (14.9%) interpersonal violence deaths, and was implicated in 2,930 incidences of foetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) and 12,650 cases of foetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD). The authors note that FAS and FASD are not the only potential consequences of drinking alcohol during pregnancy. Overall, these results indicate that alcohol may not only cause harm to the drinker, but also substantial harm to third parties.

Dr Ludwig Kraus, lead author of the study, said: 'Although the estimates across the three harm domains are not directly comparable, the results suggest that alcohol use in pregnancy followed by road traffic fatalities account for significantly more harm to others than alcohol-related violence.'

The researchers also warn that accurately assessing the prevalence and extent of alcohol use during pregnancy in Germany is challenging as the data are self-reported and so may be vulnerable to bias or misremembering.

'Although measures such as pricing policies or limiting the marketing of alcoholic beverages are unpopular, targeted measures addressing particular populations at risk, such as women of childbearing age or road users, may help to reduce harms to others as well as harms to the drinker,' Dr Kraus added. ■■

MARCH  
18

## Ban on duty-free drinks during flights

*WDF embraces move; airlines want to go further*

Airline passengers have been banned from drinking duty-free alcohol on flights following rising numbers of drunken air-rage incidents.

*The Times* reported that World Duty Free – which runs 22 stores in airports including Heathrow, Gatwick and Manchester – has introduced new rules requiring all duty-free alcohol to be placed in sealed bags to stop travellers opening bottles onboard flights. Doing so is already against many airlines' rules and sealed bags are currently widely used in Europe.

Some airports have gone further. For example, Gatwick, Britain's second biggest airport, has banned the sale of miniature bottles from duty-free shops and introduced a 'no shots' policy in its bars.

A World Duty Free spokesperson said the voluntary step would help make booze-fuelled behaviour 'socially unacceptable'.

'The industry is working together to tackle this problem and disruptive behaviour such as this socially unacceptable. The vast majority of our customers understand that the alcohol we sell can only be consumed when they reach their destination, and this message is already clearly conveyed at tills, on receipts and on bags.'

Many airlines have gone further, calling for the use of sealed duty-free bags to be mandatory. Airlines UK, which represents carriers, said that every airport should follow Gatwick's lead in banning miniature bottles.

A spokesperson said: 'Airlines have seen far too many examples of passengers illicitly consuming their own alcohol – most if not all of which has been bought from duty free – and this has contributed to the sharp increase in incidents we've seen over recent years. We've been calling for the introduction of sealed bags for some time and welcome their roll-out across all airports.'

'We not want to see the retailers go further and remove the sale of miniatures and mixers, as these are a particular problem area for carriers.'

MARCH  
19

---

The news came as figures from the UK Civil Aviation Authority's Mandatory Occurrence (MOR) database revealed that there was no significant change in the number of incidents involving passengers on flights in 2018 (413, see illustrated). There have been between 413 and 417 such incidents annually during the period 2016–2018. Airlines UK disputes the aviation regulator's figures, claiming that there were more than 4,000 disruptions, half of which were alcohol-related.

Year	Number of reports
2016	415
2017	417
2018	413

\*Note: due to a change in regulations, the reporting requirements and criteria changed in 2016, leading to an increase in the number of incidents reported.

**31% of the incidents in 2017 were explicitly linked to alcohol**



## Computer says 'no': Volvo tech aims to stall drink drivers

MARCH 20

*Part of aim to eliminate all-vehicle fatalities*

Swedish carmaker Volvo plans to equip future vehicles with technology that monitors drivers for signs of being drunk and stages interventions in order to prevent accidents.

From 2020/21, all new models will have cameras and sensors that will monitor changes in the physical movements of both the driver and the car to determine if an intervention is required.

If a 'safety concern' is detected, the car will first broadcast a warning to the driver to take caution, and if nothing changes then the car will slow down while alerting the Volvo call centre in an 'emergency state' response.

These safety features mark another step by Volvo toward its pledge to eliminate passenger fatalities.

CEO Hakan Samuelsson told *Reuters*: 'These active safety technologies are there from 2021... smart sensors, smart speed limiters, smart distraction sensors, smart intoxication sensors. That will come.'

The advanced technology will be fitted on all larger models such as the XC90 SUV before being added to smaller cars in the range.

---

# Alcohol, are we kidding ourselves?

MARCH  
25

## *High risk drinkers in North East in denial over their consumption habits*

Are we kidding ourselves when it comes to alcohol? That's the question being raised as a [new report released highlights the North East's drinking habits](#).

Around 550,000 North East adults are drinking above the recommended limit of no more than 14 units a week to stay 'low risk'. And most drinkers who are drinking at these higher levels believe they are moderate or low risk drinkers.

The report by Balance, the North East Alcohol Office, warns many thousands of people in our region are risking health problems and an early death from alcohol without being aware of the necessary information around units.

'*Alcohol: Are we Kidding Ourselves?*' is the second ever report from Balance into the "state of the region" when it comes to the North East's relationship with alcohol.

The survey of 800 people found a worrying picture about lack of awareness:

- 89% of adults living in the North East (NE) drink alcohol compared with 78% of Brits across the UK
- Just over a quarter (26%) are drinking above the Chief Medical Officer's low risk guidelines of 14 units a week – that's around 550,000 people – compared with one in five (20%) across the entire UK
- Nearly nine out of every ten NE adults drinking above 14 units a week consider themselves to be either 'light or moderate' drinkers – that's around 467,000 people
- 8% NE adults are drinking at over 28 units a week – more than twice the weekly low risk guidelines. That's over 169,000 people putting themselves at greater danger of over 200 alcohol-linked diseases and injuries
- Three out of every four people who drink more than 28 units a week believe they are a light or moderate drinker – that's an estimated 123,000 people in the North East.

## Who is drinking the most?

The report also found that men continue to drink the most, with one-third (34%) of North East men drinking above 14 units a week compared with 19% of women.

And despite assumptions that it is young people who drink the most, it is actually middle-aged people who are most likely to exceed the weekly units, with 35% of 45–54-year-olds drinking 15 units or more a week:

- One in four people aged 45–54 are drinking between 15–28 units a week, compared with 20% of 18–24-year-olds
- And 11% of 45–54-year-olds are drinking more than 29 units a week, compared with just 4% of 18–24-year-olds.

Colin Shevills, director of Balance, said: 'The worrying conclusion is that thousands of people in our region are putting themselves at greater risk of premature death and disease from alcohol while considering themselves moderate drinkers and remaining oblivious to the risks they are taking.

'Evidence is now very clear that any level of regular drinking raises the risks of cancer, but drinking over 14 units a week increases even more the risks of cancer, heart disease, stroke, dementia, high blood pressure and diabetes.

'Heavy drinking is often blamed on younger people but it is people in their 40s and 50s who are putting their health most at risk, although they might feel they are drinking responsibly.'

But he added: 'Our survey shows people clearly believe they have a right to know what they are drinking and the risks associated.

'Most, if not all, major alcohol brands are refusing to feature health warnings or information about units on their products and so drinkers are deliberately being kept in the dark. This is at a time when alcohol is far too cheap and far too heavily promoted.'

**7 in 10 believe**  
the UK has an unhealthy relationship with alcohol  
**With 56%** Saying more needs to be done to tackle alcohol problems at the societal level.



---

The survey also found:

- 70% of NE people think the UK has an unhealthy relationship with alcohol (illustrated)
- People in the NE are significantly more likely to associate alcohol with child abuse, sexual assault, ill health and violent crime than people in the rest of the country
- Most people in the NE believe the government (60%) and alcohol producers (59%) have a responsibility for communicating the harms associated with drinking alcohol
- The majority 53% of NE adults support minimum unit pricing, with only one in five (21%) opposed
- There was strong support across the board for more information on alcohol, including alcohol units (84%) and weekly guidelines (52%); drink drive warnings (80%); warnings not to drink when pregnant (74%); cancer warnings (65%); information on underage drinking (64%); and calorie information (56%).

Article adapted from the [Balance North East website](#). 

## HMRC awarded for tackling alcohol fraud at source

*Department scheme recognised in the Government Counter Fraud Awards this year*

An education campaign partnership with the alcohol industry aimed at helping alcohol producers reduce fraud won the Excellence in Fraud Prevention Award at this year's [Government Counter Fraud Awards](#).

A team within Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) launched the 'tackling alcohol fraud at source' education campaign – or TAF@S for short – employing the use of a highly visual education tool to help highlight the nature of illicit alcohol movements and educate producers of the importance of managing supply chains.

Brand owners have subsequently taken decisive action to cease supplies to particular customers or destination markets, or now only supply duty-paid alcohol to help limit potential fraud.

'TAF@S fosters partnership working with industry to stop the supply to criminals before it starts,' team member Gary Lampon, who represents organised crime operations at HMRC, told website [Public Finance](#).

'HMRC focused on a small number of popular brands of beer and wine featuring regularly in HMRC and Border Force seizures and also appearing in supply chains that have led to tax losses.'

These brands were traced to market-leading producers and the TAF@S campaign was developed to educate these businesses on how to improve supply chain integrity, thereby reducing supply to the illicit market. The team collected data on alcohol movements as well as seizures and tax losses to provide a rich and intricate picture of how alcohol fraud works and the key risks to popular brands. 

---

# Lifetime risk of drinking measured in cigarettes

MARCH  
28

## *Research finds even moderate levels of consumption may raise cancer risk*

Drinking a bottle of wine a week is associated with an increase in the lifetime risk of cancer by [the equivalent of smoking five to ten cigarettes](#), suggests a new study in *BMC Public Health*.

A team of researchers from Southampton and Bangor calculated risk estimates in conjunction with Cancer Research UK's Cancer Intelligence Team. Alcohol and tobacco attributable fractions were subtracted from lifetime general population risks of developing alcohol- and smoking-related cancers, to estimate the lifetime cancer risk in alcohol-abstaining non-smokers. This was multiplied by the relative risk of drinking ten units of alcohol or smoking ten cigarettes per week, and increasing levels of consumption.

In terms of absolute risk, their calculations suggest that if 1,000 non-smoking men and 1,000 non-smoking women each drank one bottle of wine per week across their lifetime, then around 10 men and 14 women would develop cancer.

In other words, drinking one bottle of wine on a weekly basis is associated with an increased absolute lifetime cancer risk for non-smokers of 1% among men, equivalent to five cigarettes.

For women, the increased risk was 1.4%, equivalent to ten cigarettes, mostly due to an increased risk of breast cancer caused by drinking.

The relationship is not linear, however – three bottles a week was estimated to be equivalent of smoking roughly eight cigarettes per week for men and 23 for women.

And the research team was quick to point out that the equivalence is more complex than it first appears. [Dr Theresa Hydes, who worked on the study, told the \*Independent\*](#): 'We must be absolutely clear that this study is not saying that drinking alcohol in moderation is in any way equivalent to smoking. Our finds relate to lifetime risk across the population.'

In the paper, the team state that the aim of the study is to raise awareness of the relationship between alcohol and cancer, as it is 'poorly understood by the public'.

Commenting on the study, Professor Sir Ian Gilmore, chair of the Alcohol Health Alliance, said: 'Even at relatively low levels, alcohol can have serious consequences for our health.'

'The chief medical officers recommend drinking no more than 14 units a week to keep the risks low but, worryingly, few people are aware of the guidelines.'

Sophia Lowes, from Cancer Research UK, said: 'Smoking remains the biggest cause of cancer, so this comparison can be useful to raise awareness of less well-known factors like alcohol. It highlights that even low levels of drinking can increase the risk of cancer.'

'Research is clear – the less a person drinks, the lower the risk of cancer. Small changes like having more alcohol-free days can make a big difference to how much you drink.'



## ALCOHOL SNAPSHOT

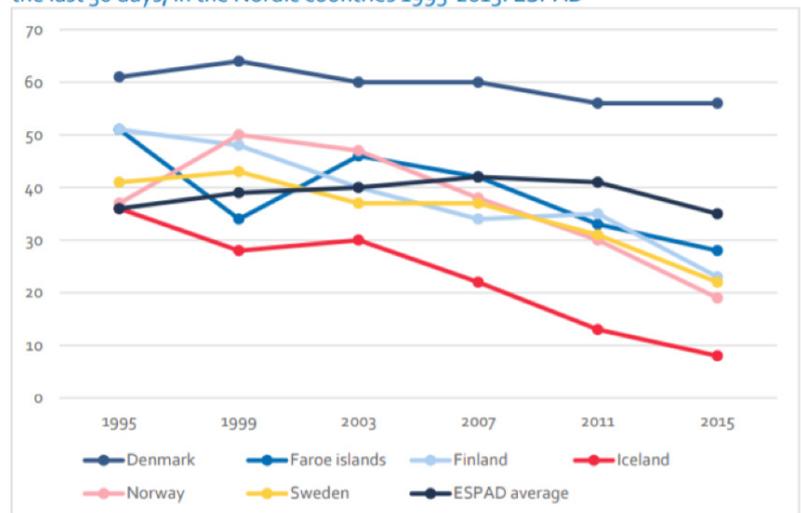
### Youth drinking in Nordic countries: falling everywhere, but substantial differences remain between countries

The decline in young people's drinking over the past 15-20 years has attracted a lot of attention. One of the striking features of this development is how widespread it is: teenage drinking has fallen in almost every country in Europe, as well as the US and Australia. Yet focusing too much on the downward trend common to all these countries risks obscuring the fact that many of them have had quite different experiences.

The chart below, taken from a recent Nordic Welfare Centre report, *What's new about adolescent drinking in the Nordic countries?*, illustrates that though young people's drinking has been falling across the region, it has fallen at very different rates to very different levels in different places.

The chart shows the proportion of 15–16-year-olds to have engaged in heavy episodic drinking (five or more drinks on one occasion) in the past month, using data from the [European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs](#). It shows that rates of heavy episodic drinking were above the European average in every Nordic country in 1995, but by 2015 only Denmark remained above average. In general, Denmark is something of an outlier, with extremely high rates of heavy episodic drinking (56%), and only a modest decrease since 1999. In part, this is likely explained by the fact that Denmark has a lower legal purchase age: 16 for wine and beer, as opposed to 18 in the rest of the region, as well as more liberal regulations and social norms.

Figure 2 Prevalence (%) of heavy episodic drinking (five drinks or more) during the last 30 days, in the Nordic countries 1995-2015. ESPAD



The other extreme is Iceland, where only 8% of 15–16-year-olds reported heavy episodic drinking in the past month in 2015 – a seventh of the Danish rate. Iceland already had the lowest rate of heavy drinking in 1995, but has seen by far the fastest decline among the Nordic countries in the 20 years since. This has drawn a lot of attention to the 'Icelandic model', which involved a raising of the legal drinking age, marketing restrictions, encouragement of parents to be more engaged with their children, curfews for 13–16-year-olds and funding for recreational activities.

The report was produced by the [Nordic Welfare Centre](#), an inter-governmental organisation that seeks to share best practice and provide up to date evidence to policymakers in the region. It summarises trends in youth drinking in the different Nordic countries, and reviews the evidence on possible explanation for the decline. It suggests that better parenting and reduced availability of alcohol are the most plausible candidates based on the available evidence, but that more research is needed to understand the causes of falling youth drinking, in the Nordic countries and abroad. ■■

**An Institute of Alcohol Studies publication**



Alliance House  
12 Caxton Street  
London SW1H 0QS

Telephone | 0207 222 4001  
Email | [info@ias.org.uk](mailto:info@ias.org.uk)  
Twitter | [@InstAlcStud](https://twitter.com/InstAlcStud)  
Web | [www.ias.org.uk](http://www.ias.org.uk)

The Institute of Alcohol Studies is a registered charity (no. 1112671)