

Institute of Alcohol Studies response to ONS consultation on statistical products 2013

Introduction

The Institute of Alcohol Studies (IAS) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the ONS consultation on statistical products and to provide comment on the areas outlined in the consultation document.

The core aim of the Institute is to serve the public interest on public policy issues linked to alcohol, by advocating for the use of scientific evidence in policy-making to reduce alcohol-related harm. The IAS is a company limited by guarantee, No 05661538 and registered charity, No 1112671. For more information visit www.ias.org.uk.

ONS statistical products relevant to the work of IAS

IAS sees the following statistical products of ONS as of critical importance to public policy and public health outcomes relating to alcohol:

1. **General Lifestyle Reports (Smoking and Drinking; General Health; Households, Families and People; and Marriage and Cohabitation) and associated data**
2. **Integrated Household Survey core questions in the Living Costs and Food Survey**
3. **Annual statistical bulletin on Suicides in the United Kingdom**
4. **Annual statistical bulletin on Alcohol-related deaths in the United Kingdom**
5. **Annual statistical bulletin on cancer incidence and mortality in the UK**
6. **Decennial Analysis of social inequality in all-cause and cause specific mortality by NS-SEC and sex, 2010-12 England and Wales**
7. **Decennial Analysis of social inequality in alcohol-related causes of death by NS-SEC and sex**
8. **Decennial Analysis of social inequality in preventable causes of mortality by NS-SEC and sex**

Rationale

Data collection, via the listed statistical products, is essential to shape effective public policy to reduce levels of harms caused by alcohol. Such data forms the basis for needs assessment and resource allocation, and is crucial to monitoring and evaluation of existing public policies related to alcohol. Data from the above statistical products can play a key role in illustrating regional and social

inequalities, and measuring the progress of major government public health strategies.

Major government strategies that currently rely on the listed ONS statistical products above for monitoring and evaluation include:

1. **The Government's Alcohol Strategy (2012)**. Ambitions include:
 - a. A change in behavior so that people think it is not acceptable to drink in ways that could cause harm to themselves or others
 - b. A reduction in the number of adults drinking above the NHS guidelines
 - c. A reduction in the number of people "binge drinking"
 - d. A reduction in the number of alcohol-related deaths
2. **Public Health Outcomes Framework 2013-2016 (2012)**. Indicators include:
 - a. Alcohol related admissions to hospital
3. **Living well for longer: A call to action on avoidable premature mortality (2013)**. Action on alcohol cites the following data:
 - a. UK Per Capita consumption of alcohol (10.2l)
 - b. Wholly alcohol related deaths (6,800) and total attributable alcohol related deaths (15,000)

Alcohol is the third biggest behavioural risk factor for disease and death in the UK after smoking and poor diet. Data collection that can support the monitoring and evaluation of public policies to reduce alcohol harms is of critical importance to public health.

There currently exist major gaps between the evidence base to support effective policy interventions and the Government's chosen approach to reduce alcohol harm. Most recently, the decision to abandon minimum unit pricing has left the Government's Alcohol Strategy defunct, with no plans to take forward actions that will reduce the health, social and economic burden alcohol poses. It is therefore of the upmost importance that trend data relating to alcohol harm continues to be collected and made publically available, to enable the Government to evaluate it's policy approach and ensure resources and interventions are targeted on a needs basis.

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