

IAS Institute of Alcohol Studies

2021/22

ANNUAL
REPORT



Bringing together evidence, policy and practice to reduce alcohol harm



A Message From Our Chief Executive

I joined IAS in late 2021 to cover for IAS chief executive Dr Katherine Severi while she is on maternity leave and I am delighted to present our annual report for 2021/22, showcasing the extraordinary work that Katherine and the team have done in research and public affairs during the period. From helping to bring together civil society, linking research with policy, and supporting early career researchers, IAS excels in collaboration and effective action.

After years of IAS and many other groups advocating for a more sensible alcohol duty system, the Chancellor announced that the system will be reformed from 2023, with alcohol taxed based on its strength. This is a hugely positive step towards reducing alcohol harm and IAS will continue to push for the system to focus on public health and have appropriate duty bands.

The breadth of research that IAS has developed and supported over the past year – with many pieces referenced across Parliament and the political spectrum – has allowed us to work with world-leading researchers and contribute to progressive steps towards the implementation of evidence-based policies.

Sadly the pandemic has led to an exacerbation of alcohol harm, with an almost 20% increase in deaths. It is therefore more important than ever for the UK to develop a comprehensive Alcohol Strategy, focusing on proven, cost-effective control measures such as those within the World Health Organization's ['Best Buys'](#) policies. IAS will continue to advocate for this through our membership of the Alcohol Health Alliance.

Alcohol has much in common with the other unhealthy commodities of tobacco and foods high in fat, sugar, and salt and so it is great to see and be part of a strengthening of civil society working together across these issues. In the coming year we will also continue our work on alcohol, sustainability and human rights, and further examine the role of the alcohol industry in education and misinformation.

We have a long way to go but by continuing to work in collaboration we can form a strong and influential collective voice that works towards improving public health and reducing health inequalities.

Dr Alison Giles





Our Year in Numbers

6 pieces of research published

25

Parliamentarians met

40



Parliamentary Questions asked

6

IAS mentions in Parliament



60

references to IAS briefings in Parliament



14

consultations responded to



1,730

mentions in the media



33



blogs published

6

broadcast media appearances



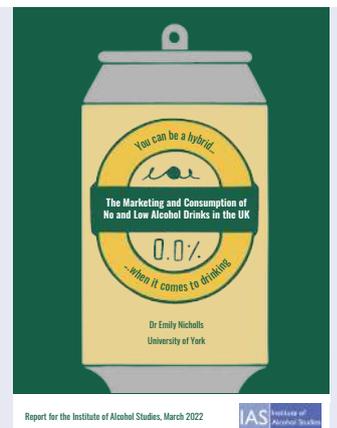
Support for researchers: IAS' Small Grants Scheme

The Small Grants Scheme was established to fund novel research ideas that can help to inform public policy debates about how to tackle alcohol harm. Three publications arose from the scheme this year and contribute to a growing body of evidence:

"You can be a hybrid when it comes to drinking": The Marketing and Consumption of No and Low Alcohol Drinks in the UK - Dr Emily Nicholls, University of York

The research found that No and Low alcohol products (NoLo) are valued by both drinkers and non-drinkers, with some adopting a 'hybrid' model of substituting alcohol for a NoLo at specific times. However, it also highlighted problematic marketing strategies encouraging 'addition' style drinking and others reinforcing gender norms.

[Watch Dr Nicholls' presentation of the findings](#) and [read the report here](#).



Preventing underage alcohol purchasing online using payment card details - Jessica Muirhead, Wrexham Glyndŵr University

Building from previous research for Alcohol Change UK, Jessica Muirhead looked at how Merchant Category Codes could be applied to alcohol and other age-restricted sales to approve and decline transactions depending on the buyer's age. The process would make the sale of age-restricted products more efficient and more effective in preventing underage sales.

[Watch Jess Muirhead's presentation of the report](#) and [read the paper here](#).

Exploring men's alcohol consumption in the context of becoming a father - Dr Elena Dimova, Glasgow Caledonian University

This scoping review brought together evidence on men's experiences of alcohol consumption in the context of fatherhood, and on the effectiveness of existing interventions to reduce drinking among new fathers.

[Read the report here](#) and [Dr Dimova's blog on the topic here](#).



Pricing of Alcohol

Alcohol has become much more affordable in the last 30 years, and rates of tax have been repeatedly frozen in the last 10. This has contributed to an increase in the number of alcohol-related deaths and hospitalisations.

Evidence shows higher alcohol prices through tax rises and minimum unit pricing (MUP) policies reduce harm from alcohol and reduce health inequalities.

Supporting progressive change [IAS submitted evidence to HM Treasury](#) ahead of the Autumn Budget on 27 October 2021, calling for duty increases and a reform of duty structures.

The Chancellor announced proposals for [reforms to alcohol duty](#). Supporting public health was mentioned throughout his speech, with many of the arguments IAS has promoted over the past five years referenced. IAS produced a podcast interview with health economist Colin Angus to explain the implications of these proposals, [which is available here](#).

IAS was invited to attend a roundtable with the Exchequer Secretary and other public health organisations in January 2022 and made recommendations on the Government's proposed changes. IAS submitted a formal response to the Government's consultation, [which can be read here](#).

Check out [our analysis of the Government's October 2021 Budget](#), which shows duty cuts will cost the Treasury over £16.2 billion from 2013-2027



'England needs minimum pricing to tackle alcohol's hidden harms'

IAS' chief executive Dr Katherine Severi co-authored [a commentary in Addiction](#) with Baroness Finlay of Llandaff, Chair of the Commission on Alcohol Harm.

This outlined the policy implications of a report evaluating the impact of minimum unit pricing in Scotland on off-sales of alcohol one year after implementation. The authors argue that sufficient evidence exists to warrant the introduction of MUP in England.



Marketing

Alcohol marketing increases consumption, leads to children drinking, and endangers people in recovery, therefore increasing harm. It should be far more restricted, banned in sport, and regulated by an independent body.

Guinness Six Nations

IAS published a study in September 2021 in partnership with co-funders SHAAP and Alcohol Action Ireland, about alcohol sports sponsorship during the Guinness Six Nations Rugby Tournament 2020.

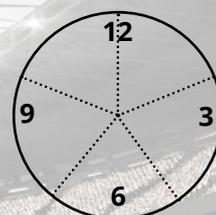
The research found alcohol ads appeared every 12 seconds in the England vs Scotland match, and every 15 seconds in the Ireland vs Wales match.

In all four broadcasts studied, no references contained age restriction warnings and only a minority had clearly visible harm-reduction messages, with only 0.4% of references containing 'responsible drinking messages' in the England game.

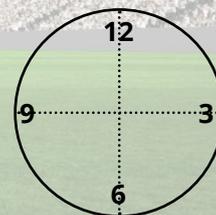
IAS hosted an online event, which was attended by 92 participants including parliamentarians, policy officials, researchers, practitioners, and NGO partners.

IAS supported MPs and peers in 11 written Parliamentary Questions on the study, questioning the UK's ineffective marketing restrictions in protecting children.

Every 12 seconds



Every 15 seconds

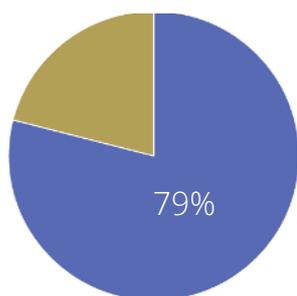


Adolescents' attitudes to labelling

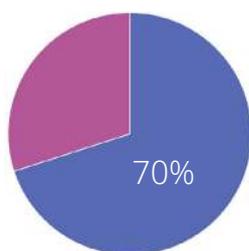
IAS' Head of Research Dr Sadie Boniface and co-author Snigdha Peddireddy published a study that found adolescents are supportive of improved product labelling.

Support was high for all forms of labelling, including:

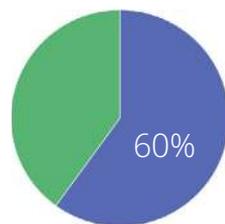
Health warnings



Alcohol-related health conditions



Number of calories



"Our findings bring young people's voices into the discussion on alcohol labelling, adding to the evidence base about high public support for improved labelling in adults."





Crime

Drive to reduce drink driving limit

IAS worked with peers in the House of Lords on the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill in tabling amendments to recognise alcohol as a driver for serious violence and reducing the drink drive limit.

In doing so IAS enhanced its collaboration with the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety (PACTS), issuing a joint briefing to peers. The drink drive limit amendment received support from peers across all parties, with some speaking very personally about their experiences of the impact of drink driving.

In response, the Minister said that there will be a call for evidence on parts of the Road Traffic Act and encouraged submissions from all interested parties.

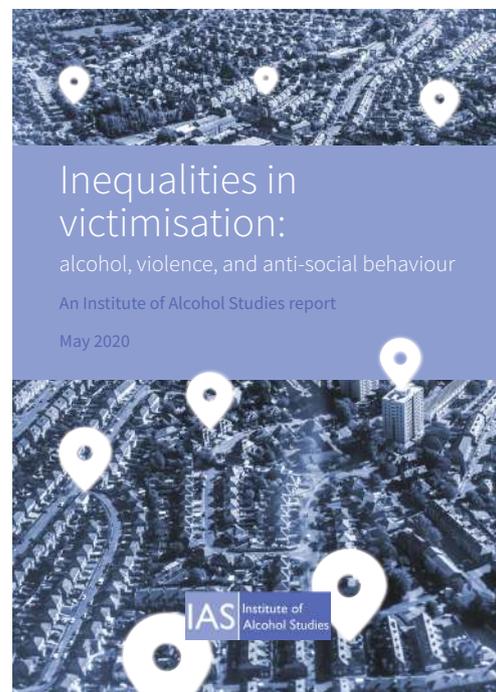
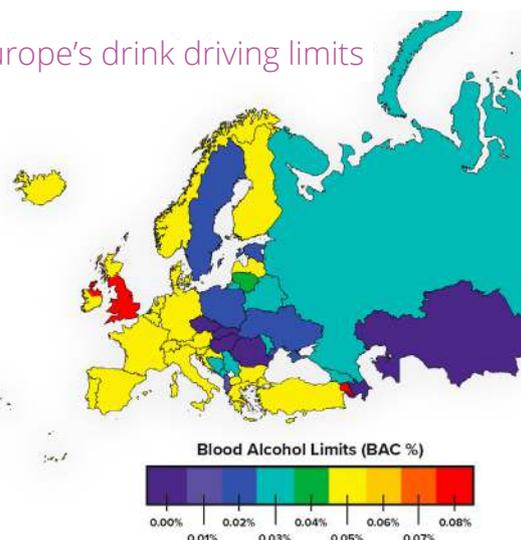
Alcohol-related crime

In the House of Lords IAS' [research on inequalities in victimisation](#) was cited and used to inform a House of Commons [Early Day Motion](#) calling for a government alcohol action plan to address alcohol harm and vulnerability. Data from the report was also cited in a further House of Lords [debate](#) on alcohol harm. The report was cited in the Government's [Domestic Abuse: Draft Statutory Guidance Framework](#) published in October 2021.

Additional work on alcohol-related violence was developed and will be published shortly. The work explores different theories to explain the recent decline in such violence, including the 'crime drop' from the mid-1990s, the decline in youth drinking, and limitations in reporting official crime statistics. The findings were presented at the [KBS](#) conference in June 2021.

IAS researcher Lucy Bryant presented the above work at the British Criminology Society Conference, the ONS Research Excellence Series, and presented findings to the Home Office.

Europe's drink driving limits





Social and Environmental Impacts

Sustainability series

IAS ran a four-part webinar series looking at Alcohol and Sustainability with expert speakers focusing on:

The UN's Sustainable Development Goals

The speakers demonstrated that alcohol is an impediment to 13 of the 17 goals and that cost-effective pricing measures would be an excellent investment for countries as it would improve health and economic sustainability.

Industry sustainability commitments

The speakers discussed how alcohol multinationals use corporate social responsibility and voluntary commitments to present themselves as engines of development, despite exacerbating social and economic unsustainability across the world.

Alcohol's impact on the environment

The speakers showed the adverse impact alcohol has on the environment, from extraordinary levels of greenhouse gas emissions and water use in water-scarce areas, to its production of plastic and glass waste.

This impact was presented through the lens of alcohol as a non-essential product, and its displacement of essential food production.

Human rights

The speakers closed off the series by describing many of the human rights abuses of alcohol multinationals particularly in the Global South and how human rights litigation could be used to advocate for improved alcohol control policies.

The webinars were attended by alcohol researchers, civil servants, health NGOs and clinicians from across the globe, and provoked lively debate during the Q&A sessions. [The series was recorded and can be watched here](#). The webinars will be developed into a report and published in Summer 2022.

Calorie labelling evidence review

With the Government planning to consult on alcohol calorie labelling, IAS developed [an evidence review on calorie and health information](#) on alcohol product labels and their impact on consumer knowledge, awareness and drinking behaviours.

LGBTQ+ briefing

[IAS published a briefing report](#) summarising the evidence on alcohol and the LGBTQ+ community.





Networks and alliances: Building collaboration

IAS continues to collaborate with a range of research and advocacy groups, in order to support their work, raise awareness of relevant issues, and strengthen civil society in alcohol harm reduction.





Acknowledgements

Thank you to our team this year for their dedication in working towards reducing alcohol harm. Thank you too to our Trustees and Expert Advisors for their support and collaboration.

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Interim Chief Executive

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Head of Policy

Interim Head of Policy

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practice to reduce alcohol harm