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TRENDS IN ALCOHOL SCOTLAND
1. Introduction

Background

The consumption of alcohol, and particularly the impact of its misuse, remains a key consideration in terms of public policy making at both local and national levels. The diverse nature of harms and patterns of consumption means public policy has the ability to impact on a range of stakeholders beyond industry including local authorities, health professionals, the emergency services, community groups and the public.

To fulfil the demand for information and data about trends in these areas there are a wide variety of data sources that cover various different aspects of alcohol consumption and harms. With no universal source of data available statistics are often quoted in isolation without considering the wider context in which they are set. It is vital that the facts on the scale of the problem are presented clearly and in the appropriate context to enable the debate to focus on the issues that remain.

Methodology

This document aims to provide a single point of reference by pulling together the latest comparable data on alcohol consumption, underage issues, health harms and crime from official Government sources. While this does not include all available data and some data included has queries associated with it, this has been highlighted as appropriate.

Where possible data used is from a base year of 2000 to the most recent data available. If data collection started later than 2000 or data is no longer collected, the most recent data samples are labelled and included for information.

All data referenced is published by independent organisations and is not financed or commissioned by the alcohol industry. All data is correctly reproduced to best knowledge of all associations. All data and narrative is intended to be used for illustrative purposes only and for all other purposes the original source should be used.

Comparisons to other nations

This document is primarily focussed on Scotland. However, where appropriate, comparisons with Great Britain or England and Wales have been provided. It should be noted that these do not necessarily represent the full range of data available on those geographies.
2. Key Figures

**Consumption**
- Alcohol consumption per capita aged 16+ in Scotland peaked in 2007 and had fallen by 10% to 2013.
- In 2013 alcohol consumption per capita aged 16+ was 17% higher in Scotland than in England and Wales.
- The proportion of men and women aged 16-24 ‘binge drinking’ declined 15% between 2003 and 2013. The only increase was in those aged 55-64 and 65-74.
- The frequency of alcohol consumption among both men and women has declined since 2003.
- The proportion of hazardous and harmful drinkers (defined as more than 21 units of alcohol for men a week and 14 for women) has declined significantly since 2005, with the largest decreases among those aged 16-24.

**Health**
- Since peaking at 43,053 or 856 per 100,000 population, in 2007/2008, alcohol-related hospital stays have declined to 36,206, or 697 per 100,000 population.
- The alcohol-related death rate peaked in 2003. In 2013 there were 29.8 alcohol-related deaths per 100,000 men (741 men in total), down 28% since 2000, and 37% since 2003. For women it was 13.0 deaths per 100,000 (359 women) representing a fall of 19% compared to 2000, and 30% since 2003. Alcohol related deaths in Scotland make up 2.0% of total deaths.
- Deaths from alcoholic liver disease have shown a marked decline over recent years, falling 32% to 682 (13.1 per 100,000 people) in 2013, from a high of 1003 (20.6 per 100,000 people) in 2006.

**Underage issues**
- The proportion of children aged 13 who have ever tried alcohol has dropped from 64% to 32% since 2000, and the proportion of children aged 15 who have ever tried alcohol has dropped from 87% to 69%.
- Since 2000 the proportion of 13 year olds drinking once a week or more often has declined from 13% to 2%, and for 15 year olds the proportion fell from 30% to 12%.

**Crime**
- Drink driving casualties have declined from 1270 in 2002 to 580 in 2012.
- Recorded offences of drunkenness per 100,000 population have increased from 60 in 2008-09 to 81 in 2013/14.
- The number of drivers that tested positive in a roadside breath test following an accident has dropped 58% since 2002, from 509 to 212 in 2013.
- The number of drink driving convictions in 2000 was 6003, rising to 8125 in 2002, before falling to 4087 in 2013.
3. Consumption

3.1 Scotland’s Alcohol Consumption (including comparison with England & Wales)

Enjoying a drink remains a part of Scottish culture. Alcohol consumption per capita aged 16+ in Scotland peaked in 2007 and had fallen by 10%, to 10.5 litres, in 2013. Using the same data sources (CGA Strategy and Nielsen), per capita consumption in England and Wales shows a similar trend, with consumption peaking in 2005 and declining 14%, to 9.0 litres, in 2013. However, the gap between per capita consumption in Scotland and England and Wales has widened in recent years: In 2000, per capita consumption was 10% higher in Scotland than in England and Wales, while in 2013 it was 17% higher.

Litres of pure alcohol sold per adult (aged ≥16 years)

Source: MESAS Fourth Annual Report, reproducing data from CGA Strategy and Nielsen.
3. Consumption

3.2 Alcohol consumption – international comparison

Based on latest comparable data, per capita alcohol consumption in Scotland is less than that in several OECD countries, including Spain, Germany and France.

Consumption of alcohol per adult, 2011

Source: OECD Health at a Glance 2013 .xls, MESAS Fourth Annual Report .xls
3. **Consumption**

3.3 **Binge drinking**

The Scottish Health Survey provides, among other things, detailed information on patterns of alcohol consumption.

The Scottish Health Survey and Health Survey England define binge drinking as consuming double the daily guidelines in one day/session. For men this would be equivalent to 8 units of alcohol, and 6 units for women. The definition of ‘binge drinking’ varies from country to country. For this reason robust international comparisons of binge drinking are not routinely published.

In 2003, 24% of Scots had binge drunk in the previous week, compared to 19% in 2013.

**Percentage of people binge drinking weekly**

![Graph showing percentage of people binge drinking weekly from 2003 to 2013.](source: Scottish Health Survey Annual Report 2013, .xls)
The proportion of men and women aged 16-24 ‘binge drinking’ declined 15% between 2003 and 2013. The only increase was in those aged men aged 55-64 and men and women aged 65-74.

### Binge drinking among men, by age group

![Binge drinking among men, by age group chart]

Source: Scottish Health Survey Annual Report 2013, [xls](#)

### Binge drinking among women, by age group

![Binge drinking among women, by age group chart]

Source: Scottish Health Survey Annual Report 2013, [xls](#)
3. Consumption

The rate of binge drinking has declined over recent years, both in Scotland and in Great Britain as a whole. However, Scots remain more likely to binge drink than people living in England and Wales.

Percentage of people binge drinking weekly, Scotland and Great Britain:

3.4 Frequency of drinking

Survey data also shows that among both men and women in Scotland the frequency of alcohol consumption has declined since 2003. The largest decline among men was amongst those aged 45-54 (22% to 11%) and 75 and over (51% to 29%), and among women the largest decline was amongst those aged 45-54 (15% to 7%) and 35-44 (11% to 4%).

Men drinking on more than 5 days a week

![Graph showing frequency of drinking for men](source)

Source: Scottish Health Survey Annual Report 2013 [xls]

Women drinking on more than 5 days a week

![Graph showing frequency of drinking for women](source)

Source: Scottish Health Survey Annual Report 2013 [xls]
3. Consumption

3.5 Hazardous and harmful drinking

‘Binge drinking’, as defined above, focuses on the amount of alcohol consumed in the heaviest drinking session per week. However, other important indicators are ‘hazardous’ drinking, defined as consuming more than 21 units of alcohol for men a week and 14 for women, and ‘harmful drinking, more than 50 units for men and 35 for women.

The graphs below show that the proportion of hazardous and harmful drinkers has declined significantly for both men and women since 2003. While figures increased for 16-24 men and women between 2003 and 2008, this was followed by a sharp decline to 2013, from 41% to 19% for men, and 37% to 15% for women.

Men drinking more than 21 units a week

Source: Scottish Health Survey Annual Report 2013

Women drinking more than 14 units a week

Source: Scottish Health Survey Annual Report 2013
3. Consumption

3.6 Alcohol consumption by group

Because not everyone chooses to drink alcohol in the same way it is important to break down population level consumption statistics and examine drinking patterns among different age, gender, profession and income groups.

Note: In the following charts mean weekly consumption is based on the total population aged sixteen or over. The percentage of people drinking on more than five days in the last week is based on people who drank in the last week.

The proportion of drinkers who drink on more than five days per week increases with age. However, mean consumption (based on all people aged 16+) is broadly flat from 16-25 4 to 35-44, peaks at 45-54 and 55-64, before declining to a low in the 75+ age group.

Drinking patterns by age group

Source: Scottish Health Survey Annual Report 2013 .xls
3. Consumption

Men continue to consume more alcohol than women; average weekly consumption is greater and men are more likely to consume alcohol on five or more days in a week.

**Drinking patterns by gender**

Average consumption and propensity to drink on more than 5 days per week are greatest among those in managerial and professional occupations.

**Drinking patterns by employment type**

Source: Scottish Health Survey Annual Report 2013 .xls
3. Consumption

Both mean weekly consumption and drinking frequency are higher among the top two income quintiles than the bottom three.

**Drinking patterns by weekly household income quintile**

![Bar chart showing drinking patterns by income quintile]

Source: Scottish Health Survey Annual Report 2013. **xls.**
4. Underage Issues

4.1 Underage consumption

Measures of underage drinking rates are significant as young people are at an increased risk both in terms of alcohol’s impact on developing bodies, and in relation to its link to risky behaviour.

As outlined in the graph below, the proportion of children aged 13 who have never tried alcohol has increased from 36% to 68% since 2000, and the proportion of children aged 15 who have never tried alcohol has increased from 13% to 31%.

Not only are fewer children trying alcohol, but those who are consuming it are doing so less frequently. There has been a decline in the proportion of children who report drinking once a week or more often. Since 2000 the proportion of 13 year olds drinking this frequently has declined from 13% to 2%, and for 15 year olds the proportion fell from 30% to 12%.

Drinking among 13 year olds

Drinking among 15 year olds

Source: Scottish Schools Adolescent Lifestyle and Substance Use Survey.xls

Source: Scottish Schools Adolescent Lifestyle and Substance Use Survey.xls
4. Underage Issues

4.2 Access: How do 13 and 15 year old drinkers acquire alcohol?

Few Scottish 13 and 15 year olds who drink alcohol purchase it from shops, pubs or other licensed premises.

Scottish 13 and 15 year olds who obtain alcohol are much more likely to do so from friends, relatives or the home.

Source: Scottish Schools Adolescent Lifestyle and Substance Use Survey .xls
4. Underage Issues

The likelihood that a child aged 13 or 15 has tried alcohol is similar for Scottish and English children.

**Percentage of 13 year olds who have ever tried alcohol, 2013:**

Source: Scottish Schools Adolescent Lifestyle and Substance Use Survey 2013 .xls, Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use Among Young People in England - 2013 .xls

**Percentage of 15 year olds who have ever tried alcohol, 2013:**

Source: Scottish Schools Adolescent Lifestyle and Substance Use Survey 2013 .xls, Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use Among Young People in England - 2013 .xls
4. Underage Issues

However, the data suggest that Scottish children who do drink, drink more heavily than their English counterparts.

**Mean alcohol consumption in the past week of 15 year olds who had drunk alcohol, 2013:**

![Mean Alcohol Consumption Chart]


**Median alcohol consumption in the past week of 15 year olds who had drunk alcohol, 2013:**

![Median Alcohol Consumption Chart]


The difference in mean consumption is particularly striking, suggesting that the mean is skewed by some individuals consuming very large amounts. Indeed, SALSUS 2013 states that 10% of 15 year olds who had drunk in the last week drank 49 or more units.
5. Harms – Health

5.1 Alcohol-related hospital stays

The number of alcohol-related hospital stays has declined by 15.9% since 2007/08, from 43,053 (855.7 per 100,000 people) to 36,206 (696.9).

Alcohol-related hospital stays, number and European Age Standardised Rate

![Bar chart showing the number of alcohol-related hospital stays from 1999/00 to 2013/14.](Source: Alcohol-related Hospital Statistics Scotland 2013/14 .xls)

The diagnosis accounting for most alcohol-related hospital stays in 2013/14 was harmful use of alcohol, followed by acute intoxication.

Alcohol-related hospital stays by diagnosis, 2013/14

![Pie chart showing the distribution of alcohol-related hospital stays by diagnosis.](Source: Alcohol-related Hospital Statistics Scotland 2013/14 .xls)
19.6% of alcohol-related hospital stays are experienced by people aged 65 and older.

**Alcohol-related hospital stays by age, 2013/14**

![Bar chart showing alcohol-related hospital stays by age group in 2013/14](image)

- Source: Alcohol-related Hospital Statistics Scotland 2013/14

### 5.2 Alcohol-related deaths, number and rate per 100,000

Alcohol related deaths in Scotland rose from 2000 to a peak in 2006 before entering a period of decline. However, the rate per 100,000 peaked in 2003. The alcohol-related death rate peaked in 2003. In 2013 there were 29.8 alcohol-related deaths per 100,000 men, down 28% since 2000, and 37% since 2003. For women it was 13.0 deaths per 100,000 representing a fall of 19% compared to 2000, and 30% since 2003. Alcohol related deaths in Scotland make up 2.0% of total deaths.

**Alcohol-related deaths, number and rate per 100,000**

![Line chart showing alcohol-related deaths by year](image)

- Source: Alcohol-related deaths, General Register Office for Scotland

Consistently around double the number of men than women are dying from alcohol-related causes which include alcohol hepatitis, liver cirrhosis and alcohol poisoning.
Alcohol-related deaths by age

The largest cause of alcohol-related deaths in Scotland is alcoholic liver disease. Deaths from alcoholic liver disease have shown a marked decline over recent years, falling 32% to 682 (13.1 per 100,000) in 2013, from a high of 1003 (17.1 per 100,000) in 2006.

Deaths from alcoholic liver disease, number and rate per 100,000

The alcohol-related death rate in Scotland is higher than in England and Wales for both men and women.
5. Harms – Health

Deaths from alcoholic liver disease by age

The alcohol-related death rate in Scotland is higher than in England and Wales for both men and women. However, while death rates have declined in Scotland in recent years, death rates in England and Wales have stagnated following a small increase in the years following 2000.

Alcohol-related deaths, European Age Standardised Rate, Males:

Source: MESAS fourth annual report .xls

Source: MESAS fourth annual report .xls and Alcohol-related deaths in the United Kingdom, 2013 .xls
5. Harms – Health

Alcohol-related deaths, European Age Standardised Rate, Females:

![Graph showing trends in alcohol-related deaths in England and Wales compared to Scotland from 2000 to 2013.]

Source: Source: MESAS fourth annual report .xls and Alcohol-related deaths in the United Kingdom, 2013 .xls

5.3 Drink driving

Injuries and casualties from drink driving have seen a marked decline overall since 2002, a likely result of increased enforcement of drink driving laws including tougher penalties, alongside public awareness campaigns about the dangers.

Drink driving casualties

![Bar chart showing drink driving casualties from 2000 to 2012.]

Source: Reported Road Casualties Scotland 2013, Transport Scotland .xls
5. **Harms – Health**

The number of drink driving casualties per capita in Scotland is similar to that in England and Wales.

**Drink driving casualties per capita, England & Wales and Scotland:**

![Graph showing drink driving casualties per capita, England & Wales and Scotland]


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6. Harms – Crime

6.1 Alcohol-related crime

Available data show a small increase in the proportion of violent crime offenders perceived to be under the influence of alcohol since 2008-09. However, it should be noted that this could be influenced as much by general public perceptions of alcohol and harms associated with it as by the actual role alcohol might play in violent crime.

**Violent crime: offenders perceived to be under the influence of alcohol**

![Graph showing the proportion of violent crime offenders perceived to be under the influence of alcohol from 2008-09 to 2012-13.](Source: Scottish Crime and Justice Survey 2012/13 .xls (n.b. historical data from previous editions of the publication.)]

**Homicide: persons accused of homicide, and number of those who were reported to have been under the influence of alcohol, or of alcohol and drugs**

![Graph showing the number of homicide cases where the suspect was under the influence of alcohol, or of alcohol and drugs, from 2004-05 to 2013-14.](Source: Homicide in Scotland, 2013-14 .xls)
6. Harms – Crime

6.2 Drunkenness

Recorded drunkenness offences per 100,000 population increased by 34% between 2008-09 and 2013-14.

**Recorded offences of drunkenness per 100,000 population**

![Graph showing recorded drunkenness offences per 100,000 population from 2008-09 to 2013-14.]

Source: Recorded Crime in Scotland for 2013-14, Scottish Government .xls

**Drunkenness offences by type, excluding offences of consumption of alcohol in designated places (local byelaw)**

It should be noted that the bulk of these offences are accounted for by offences of consumption of alcohol in designated places (local byelaw). The number of drunkenness offences excluding offences of consumption of alcohol in designated places (local byelaw) declined 18% since 2008/09, to 4,939 in 2013/14.

![Graph showing drunkenness offences by type from 2008-09 to 2013-14.]

Source: Response to ad hoc request, Scottish Justice Analytical Service
6. Harms – Crime

6.3 Drink driving

In the last 20 years policy has been focussed on reducing drink driving including greater penalties and tougher enforcement in conjunction with campaigns to reduce the social acceptance of drink driving.

The graph below shows a steady drop in the number of drivers that tested positive in a roadside breath test. This number has dropped 58% since 2002.

Number of drivers involved in accidents who tested positive in a breath test

![Graph showing a steady drop in the number of drivers involved in accidents who tested positive in a breath test. The number has dropped 58% since 2002.](image)

Source: Reported Road Casualties Scotland 2013 .xls

Similarly, the number of convictions for drink driving (overwhelmingly of males), has declined 50% since 2002.

Number of convictions for drink driving

![Graph showing the number of convictions for drink driving from 2000 to 2013. The number has declined 50% since 2002.](image)

Source: Criminal Proceedings in Scotland, Scottish Government .xls (n.b. historical data drawn from previous editions of the publication)
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