

Galway City Alcohol Survey

Summary

Key results and actions for Galway City to prevent and reduce alcohol-related harm (April 2016)

Background

Galway City is the first city in Ireland to develop an alcohol strategy to prevent and reduce alcohol-related harm. This five-year strategy (2013-2017), which was prepared by the Galway Healthy Cities Alcohol Forum¹ in partnership with a range of organisations and groups, is informed by research on effective approaches to tackling alcohol-related harm. Taking a community-action approach, the strategy focuses on the following key policy areas:

- A Prevention**
- B Supply, Access and Availability**
- C Screening, Treatment and Support Services**
- D Research, Monitoring and Evaluation**

Community action on alcohol is based on the premise that changes in public policies (regulation, enforcement, laws, systems change) are necessary to prevent and reduce alcohol-related problems, rather than focus just on individual change (treatment for people with alcohol problems/ alcohol dependent).

According to evidence, community action on alcohol is best implemented in towns and cities, with at least a population of over 5,000 people, for maximum chance of success.

As part of the strategy, a key action identified was the need to gather information from the citizens of Galway City on alcohol issues. To this end, research was commissioned by Health Promotion and Improvement, HSE, on behalf of the Galway Healthy Cities Alcohol Forum, to establish a benchmark on

behaviours and attitudes towards alcohol within Galway City. Specifically, the research was designed to:

- (i) report on current attitudes, awareness and behaviours in relation to alcohol use and alcohol-related harm in Galway City;
- (ii) examine the views of citizens on current alcohol policy issues in Galway City; and
- (iii) provide information to assist the Galway Healthy Cities Alcohol Forum in implementing the strategy to prevent and reduce alcohol-related harm in Galway City.

Galway City Alcohol Survey



500
adults aged 18
years and over

The Galway City Alcohol Survey was a cross-sectional, representative survey undertaken in Galway City, using a quota sample of 500 adults, aged 18 years and over. The data was collected by research company Ipsos MRBI in the fourth quarter of 2015. Questions on drinking patterns, drinking context and harm were based on existing survey items (used with permission), and the alcohol policy items were based on the Galway City Alcohol Strategy key areas. Analysis was undertaken by Dr Ann Hope.



Galway Healthy Cities Project
Gaillimh Tionscnamh na gCathracha Sláintiúla



GALWAY CITY STRATEGY TO PREVENT AND
REDUCE ALCOHOL-RELATED HARM 2013-2017

¹Galway Healthy Cities Alcohol Forum is a sub group of Galway Healthy Cities Forum, which is a multi-agency group involved in the leading out of the World Health Organizations Healthy Cities Project in Galway City www.galwayhealthycities.ie

Drinking Patterns

- A total of 79% of the Galway City adult population consumed alcohol in the past 12 months, with 21% abstainers.
- Among drinkers, 60% were weekly drinkers; more men and younger adults (18-34 yrs) drank weekly.
- 42% of drinkers reported drinking 6+ Standard Drinks (SD)² on a typical drinking day, with the highest level (70%) among younger men.



- Overall 55% of drinkers were hazardous drinkers (WHO AUDIT-C; score 5+)³, highest among younger men (77%) and younger women (60%).
- Over two-thirds of drinkers reported drinking enough to feel drunk in past 12 months.
- One-third (32%) of younger men and 27% of younger women reported drunkenness on a weekly basis.

Drinking Context

Most popular settings for drinking on a weekly basis were at **home 38%** and in a **pub/bar 36%**, more frequent by men and younger adults

- Drinking at a friend's house was more popular among younger adults (61% at least monthly).
- In social situations where alcohol is more likely to be available, such as out at a bar with friends, at a party or with friends at home, heavier levels of drinking was considered acceptable ('feel the effect but not drunk' or 'getting drunk is ok').
- Those with damaging drinking patterns were more likely to consider that getting drunk was ok.
- In contrast, 'no drinking' was the preferred option when going to drive a car (97%) or for parents spending time with small children (80%).

Alcohol-Related Harm

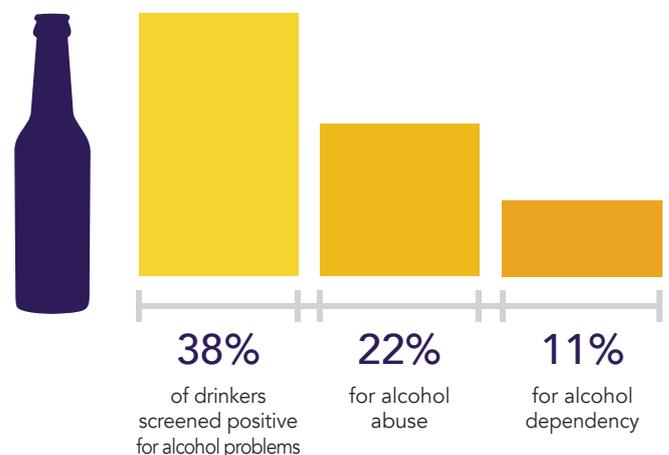
- A key finding was the similar rate of harm for men and women in most of the alcohol-related harm measures and highest among those under 35 years.
- A total of 38% of drinkers screened positive for alcohol problems, 22% for alcohol abuse, and 11% for alcohol dependency. More common among younger adults with no difference in gender.
- The profile of those most likely to screen positive for alcohol problems, abuse and dependency, controlling for demographics and drinking patterns, were hazardous drinkers and those under 35 years.
- One in five (20%) reported one or more harms due to their own drinking (accident, fight, problems in work, friendship, home-life, should cut down, health problems). The rate was similar across gender, with two exceptions, fights and harm to work, which was higher among younger men.



1 in 4

Experience one or more harms as a result of someone else's drinking

- One in four (25%) of all respondents reported experiencing one or more harms as a result of someone else's drinking, with family problems (15%) the most common.
- Those who were hazardous drinkers increased their risk of experiencing assaults or being a passenger with a drunk driver.
- 39% of respondents reported knowing a heavy drinker. Of those, almost two in every five (39%) said they were negatively affected in the past 12 months. The relationship with the heavy drinker was a family member not in the household or a friend or a household member.



² One standard drink in Ireland contains 10 grams of alcohol (12.5ml) and is equivalent to a single measure of spirits or half a pint of beer or a small glass of wine.

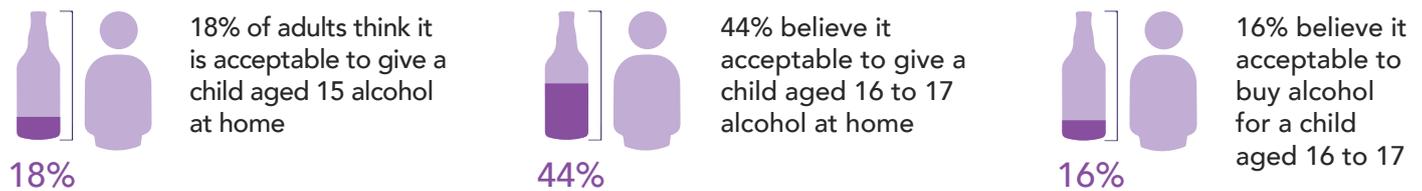
³ Alcohol use disorders identification test (AUDIT-C) is a 3-item alcohol screen (frequency and quantity of drinking and frequency of 6+ drinks) that identifies hazardous drinkers, developed by the World Health Organization.

Based on the findings of the survey in relation to drinking patterns and alcohol-related harm, there are two key findings

- There is an urgent need to reduce risky drinking (hazardous drinking and drinking to intoxication), in particular among men and younger adults in Galway City.
- The impact of the common risky drinking patterns is felt not only by the drinkers themselves, but also by those around them, be they family, friends or strangers.

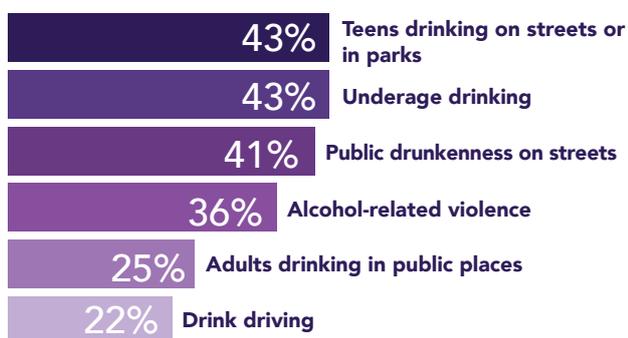
These results increase the importance and requirement to implement the Galway City Alcohol Strategy to prevent and reduce alcohol-related harm. Taking the community approach, action is required in all areas across the entire population. Results and actions are outlined below under the specific policy areas of the Galway City Alcohol Strategy.

Prevention - Results and Actions



Results

- Currently, 18% of adults think it is acceptable to give a child aged 15 alcohol at home, 44% believe it acceptable to give a child aged 16 to 17 alcohol at home and to buy (16%) alcohol for them.
- The top alcohol-related problem areas identified by respondents in Galway City (within a 15 minute walk of their home) were teens drinking on streets or in parks (43%), underage drinking (43%), public drunkenness on streets (41%), alcohol-related violence (36%), adults drinking in public places (25%) and drink driving (22%).
- A total of 46% of respondents agree that Gardai are doing a good job in preventing the sale of alcohol to those under 18 years in Galway City.



- 74% of survey respondents were in favour of a ban on alcohol advertising that appeals to young people.
- Only 70% of people were aware of the risk of alcohol-related cancers.
- Level of awareness of the Galway City Alcohol Strategy was just 13%, however, the vast majority (81%) believe that a strategy to prevent and reduce alcohol-related harm is a good idea.

Actions

- Address inconsistent attitudes and practices of adults who consider that underage drinking and teens drinking on the street or in parks are the main problems in Galway City, yet facilitate underage drinking by giving alcohol to youths.
- Provide greater protection for children from access or exposure to alcohol.
- Increase awareness among adults of the risk to children from alcohol.
- Delay the onset of alcohol use among children under 18 years of age.
- Increase enforcement of minimum age for alcohol sales.
- Reduce exposure of alcohol marketing (outdoors) in Galway City to protect children.
- Develop specific actions to address the key alcohol problems identified in Galway – underage drinking, public drunkenness and alcohol-related violence.
- Increase awareness that alcohol can cause several cancers.
- Increase awareness of Galway City Alcohol Strategy to prevent and reduce alcohol-related harm.

74%

of survey respondents were in favour of a ban on alcohol advertising that appeals to young people

Supply, Access and Availability – Results and Actions

Results

- Availability of alcohol has increased in Galway City, with 74% of respondents stating that the number of shops selling alcohol has increased compared to five years ago.



62% agree there should be a **minimum price for alcohol** below which it cannot be sold

- 40% agree that they would likely drink more alcohol when free alcohol is provided or when alcohol is available at a special discount.
- Under half (45%) agree that enforcement by Gardai was good in relation to enforcement of the law that curbs selling of alcohol to intoxicated person, both off and on trade.

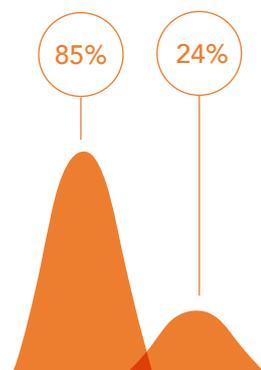
Actions

- Develop proposals, with community consultation, to restrict further increase in off-trade licenses.
- Encourage local public representatives to lobby for minimum pricing.
- Restrict price promotions.
- Increase enforcement of the law that curbs selling of alcohol to intoxicated person, both off and on trade.
- Encourage the business community in Galway City to ensure their business practices enable and support the reduction of alcohol-related problems in the community.

Screening, Treatment and Support Services – Results and Actions

Results

- The vast majority (**85%**) of respondents in Galway City agreed that health professionals should ask all patients about their drinking habits as standard practice, yet only one in four (**24%**) were asked about their drinking habits in past two years.



- A significant number (42%) of those who screened positive for alcohol abuse were not aware of the availability of treatment services in Galway.
- 44% of all respondents were unaware if youth counselling services existed in Galway.
- Of those who reported harm due to other people drinking, 35% were unaware if help was available.

Actions

- Alcohol screening by health professionals as standard practice should be in place in Galway City.
- There is a need to ensure that a range of treatment and support services are available in Galway City, that these services are made known to the public and that a referral pathway for both clinicians and patients is put in place to meet the needs of people.

Alcohol screening by health professionals as standard practice should be in place in Galway City.