

Online Health Taskforce Stakeholder Submission Survey 2025

Fields marked with * are mandatory.

Background

The Online Health Taskforce was established by the Minister for Health in September 2024, with Jillian van Turnhout as Chair. The Taskforce was set up because of evidence that some online activity can harm the physical, mental, social, and sexual health of children and young people. Problems include anxiety, lack of sleep, eating disorders, self-harm, and suicide ideation. The job of the Taskforce is to recommend strategic Public Health responses to address these harms.

The Online Health Taskforce wants to hear ideas from all kinds of stakeholders, including not only experts and people who work on these issues, but also young people and parents affected or worried by them.

We have set up this submission system to help people to contribute.

Submissions

The Online Health Taskforce is inviting stakeholders to put forward clear ideas for what can be done to protect the health of children and young people from harm caused by online activity.

To help you make your case, we have made a template below. It is designed so that members of the Taskforce can read and consider every submission made.

Please note:

- Keep your responses short and to the point.
- You do not have to fill every box in the template – it is just a guide.
- The deadline for submissions is 31 MARCH 2025.

Please keep in mind that the focus of the Taskforce is on protecting public health and that its recommendations will be based on evidence.

If you wish to alert us to any research or articles, please do not paste them in the template but instead provide a link or reference in the final box.

If you are considering a submission, you are strongly advised to read our privacy notice below which explains how submissions will be made public and how your data will be stored.

If you would like to make your submission in Irish, please contact ohr_Submissions@health.gov.ie.

What happens to your submission?

The Online Health Taskforce wishes to inform stakeholders that any submissions, including the submitter's name, may be published in whole or in part, either within a Taskforce report or separately, at the discretion of the Taskforce.

The Taskforce maintains the right to decline submissions and is not obliged to publish any submission content.

The Online Health Taskforce expects to finalise and submit its final report to the Minister of Health in October 2025.

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Name of organisation, if applicable:

Alcohol Action Ireland

Which best describes your organisation, if applicable?

- ☐ Business
- ☐ Educational organisation
- ☐ Government Body

☒ NGO/Charity

☐ Other

* Where are you/your organisation based?

☒ Ireland

☐ Outside of Ireland

If outside of Ireland please specify:

Your Recommendation

We have provided this template to help you make your case. It is important that submissions are not too long. There is space for links to additional information in the final box.

While character counts for individual sections are provided as guidance, please do not exceed 1000 characters.

Provide a brief statement of your recommendation. What specific action or change are you proposing and why?

1000 character(s) maximum

Social media platforms have provided alcohol companies with new, cheaper ways to promote alcohol to children and young people. Research has found that almost 40,000 distinct alcohol ads are placed social media platforms, such as Instagram and Facebook, each year, with similar research highlighting a prevalence rate of one alcohol advertisement every 35 seconds.

Children should not see alcohol ads online, because research shows that exposure of children and young people to alcohol marketing leads them to drink at an earlier age and to drink more if they are already using alcohol.

Unfortunately, measures currently in place to protect children from alcohol marketing are ineffectual, or non-existent. Techniques such as age-gating restrictions do not work. Children can easily bypass the mechanisms and thereby be exposed to privacy and safety threats.

Regulation is required to protect children from seeing alcohol marketing online.

What issue or challenge is your recommendation trying to solve? Why is this important?

1000 character(s) maximum

As young people's lives are now entwined with the digital world, this is now where marketers target them, and yet there are scant protections for children and young people. This situation led the WHO to state: "the invasion of children and young people's digital social spaces by companies promoting alcohol consumption normalizes a drinking culture from a very young age, placing them especially at risk of harm."

However, alcohol is no ordinary commodity; it is a depressant drug with significant health implications for those who use it and is associated with a risk of developing serious health problems as well as injuries resulting from violence as well as road collisions, as recognised by the WHO.

Children should not see alcohol ads online, because research shows that exposure of children and young people to alcohol marketing leads them to drink at an earlier age and to drink more if they are already using alcohol.

How does your recommendation help to solve the problem?

1000 character(s) maximum

Regulation is required to protect children from seeing alcohol marketing online. There is a need to restrict, monitor, and enforce. Robust restrictions must be introduced, and then closely monitored (including advertisers and platforms providing evidence of who is seeing their advertisements), and where there are breaches, then enforcement measures need to be imposed against all actors in the marketing supply chain including upon brands, online platforms and/or influencers.

To protect children's rights, there should be a specific prohibition on gathering data from children. Evidence should also be provided by platforms and advertisers of who has seen alcohol ads. Gathering this data is essential to ensure transparency around industry activity.

What results do you expect if this recommendation is acted on? Consider both short-term and long-term outcomes.

1000 character(s) maximum

A strong regulatory environment, supported by proactive monitoring and effective enforcement, would ensure children are not targeted by alcohol advertising while also significantly reducing their chances of seeing alcohol marketing.

What difficulties might come up if we act on this recommendation? How could these be overcome?

1000 character(s) maximum

There would certainly be push-back from the alcohol industry, as well as social media platforms. This requires leadership from the government to protect children's rights.

Has what you are suggesting, or something similar, been tried elsewhere, in another country or in another field? If so, please point us to information.

1000 character(s) maximum

Yes, the restrictions we are proposing have already been applied in Ireland in relation to tobacco advertising. Norway and Lithuania also have comprehensive bans on internet alcohol advertising.

Please list or provide links to any reports, papers, websites or technical information that supports your recommendation.

- <https://www.ias.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Alcohol-and-marketing.pdf>
- <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/373130/9789240077249-eng.pdf?sequence=1>
- <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/352521/9789240045002-eng.pdf?sequence=1>
- <https://fare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Alcohol-advertising-on-social-media-platforms.pdf>
- <https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/41153/1/Digital-Youth-brief-Final-2.pdf>
- <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/352521/9789240045002-eng.pdf?sequence=1>
- <https://fare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Alcohol-advertising-on-social-media-platforms.pdf>
- <https://fare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Alcohol-advertising-on-social-media-platforms.pdf>
- https://arrow.tudublin.ie/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?params=/context/aaschmedart/article/1104/&path_info=Digital_Age_of_Consent_and_Age_Verification_Can_They_Protect_Children.pdf
- <https://alcoholireland.ie/booze-up-at-the-aviva-underlines-dark-nature-of-alcohol-sponsorship-of-sport/>
<https://alcoholireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Stage-2-Review-Coimisiun-na-Mean-consultation-on-revised-Broadcasting-Codes-and-Rules.pdf>

Privacy Notice

Any personal information, which you volunteer to the Online Health Taskforce, will be treated with the highest standards of security and confidentiality, in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation 2016/67 and the Data Protection Act 2018. However, please note the following:

- By providing a submission to the Online Health Taskforce, you are consenting to your data being processed by the Online Health Taskforce. Your data will only be used in the context of the Terms of Reference of the Online Health Taskforce* and for no other purpose. If, at any time, you wish to withdraw your submission please contact oh_t_submissions@health.gov.ie.
- The Online Health Taskforce expects to publish submissions and a report outlining the key themes arising from the public consultation. The Online Health Taskforce may include a full list of those who make submissions in an appendix to any report.
- Submissions received by the Online Health Taskforce may be subject to Freedom of Information requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2014. In this regard, submissions will be considered for release under the Act.
- The information provided in the submissions may be shared with members of the Online Health Taskforce, the Secretariat to the Online Health Taskforce and relevant Department of Health officials.
- Submissions will be retained until the final report of the Online Health Taskforce, including the implementation of any accepted recommendations, has been concluded.

[*Online Health Taskforce details and Terms of Reference](#)

☒ I accept your Terms

Contact

oht_submissions@health.gov.ie