

# 2024



## ANNUAL REVIEW

Alcohol  
Action  
Ireland

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## About us

Alcohol Action Ireland (AAI) is the national independent advocate working to reduce harm from alcohol.

Our vision is a society free from alcohol harm.

Our mission is to advocate to reduce alcohol harm.

We are committed to the following values:

- Compassion – avoiding any judgements on the individual
- Evidenced-based approach
- Integrity
- Transparency and honesty
- Commitment to long-term well-being and public health
- Working in partnership

We campaign for the burden of alcohol harm to be lifted from the individual, community and State, and have a strong track record in effective advocacy, campaigning and policy research.

Our work involves providing information on alcohol-related issues, creating awareness of alcohol-related harm and offering public policy solutions with the potential to reduce that harm, with an emphasis on the implementation of the Public Health (Alcohol) Act 2018.

AAI support the work of the HSE Alcohol Programme, informing strategic alcohol initiatives as an instrument of public health planning. We act as the secretariat to the Alcohol Health Alliance Ireland, as its co-founding member, and serve on the HSE Alcohol Programme Implementation Group and on the Board of the European Alcohol Policy Alliance, (Eurocare), Brussels.

Alcohol Action Ireland directors:

- Pat Cahill, former President ASTI (Company Secretary)
- Aidan Connaughton, Chartered accountant, former partner and head of risk, Grant Thornton
- Paddy Creedon, Recovery Advocate
- Michael Foy, Head of Finance, Commission for Communications Regulation
- Prof Jo-Hanna Ivers, Associate Professor, Addiction: Public Health & Primary Care, Trinity College Dublin
- Prof Frank Murray (Chair) Consultant in Hepatology & Gastroenterology. M.B., B.Ch. B.A.O., M.D., F.R.C.P.I., F.R.C.P. (Ed)
- Dr Mary T. O'Mahony, Consultant in Public Health Medicine & Medical Officer of Health, Department of Public Health, Public Health Area D (Cork & Kerry)
- Dr Bobby Smyth (Vice Chair), Consultant Child & Adolescent Psychiatrist

Patron: Prof. Geoffrey Shannon

Alcohol Action Ireland is a registered Irish charity  
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## Summary

Alcohol Action Ireland (AAI) made significant advances in raising awareness of alcohol issues. A key goal is to ensure the full implementation of the Public Health (Alcohol) Act 2018. We are pleased to note that 28 out of the 31 measures have either been commenced or have a start date. We have strongly supported this legislation and in 2024 kept up a high level of advocacy particularly around Ireland's groundbreaking alcohol health information labelling regulations.

We are pleased to note that in 2024, alcohol consumption per capita dropped by 5% from 2023 to 9.4 litres per capita. The modest Department of Health target of consumption at 9.1 litres per capita though is still some way off and points to the urgency of the implementation of this life-saving legislation. We have also raised concerns about the legislation being undermined by the practice of advertising 0.0 alcohol products using identical branding to alcohol master brands in spaces restricted for alcohol advertising.

Another threat to Ireland's progress around reducing alcohol consumption comes from proposals to extend alcohol licensing hours. Throughout 2024, AAI, ran a highly visible and strong campaign against this. We were pleased to note that during the year, the then Taoiseach Simon Harris said that the proposals needed a 'second look.'



Minister of State for Public Health, Colm Burke TD, at the Voices of Recovery policy document launch event at University College Cork

AAI has specific initiatives which examine the harms to people from alcohol. Silent Voices raises awareness of the harm experienced by those growing up with parental problem alcohol use, the trauma of which can last a lifetime. Our annual End the Silence week in November brought together multiple speakers and projects putting forward proposals to help address this very hidden harm from alcohol.

Our Voices of Recovery initiative seeks to bring the experience of those in recovery from alcohol harm to the policy making process. We were very pleased to launch our first policy document in this area in September in Cork with Minister of State for Public Health, Colm Burke.

A key activity this year was putting forward our ideas during the General Election campaign to ensure alcohol issues were considered. We strongly advocated for the establishment of an Alcohol Office to drive alcohol policy development across government. During the year we also produced multiple reports and consultation responses on areas including education, health care, online media, social affairs, justice system and the economy as well as on global issues, particularly with our international partners.

Finally we produced our new strategic plan for the period 2025-2029.



Deputy Lord Mayor of Cork, Honore Kamegni, at the Voices of Recovery policy document launch event at University College Cork



## A message from our chairperson

It has been good to see the progress made in Ireland in recent years in recognising alcohol harms and putting in place measures to reduce these harms. However, alcohol harms in Ireland remain at a dreadfully high level, and there is much more to do.



Ireland is rightly recognised and praised internationally for legislating to reduce alcohol harms in the Public Health (Alcohol) Act (2018) (PHAA), introducing 31 moderate and evidence-based measures. Many of these measures have been implemented. However, a critical measure on the control of the content of alcohol advertisements remains outstanding. Full implementation and enforcement of the Act remains a key objective of AAI given its potential to substantially reduce alcohol harms.

There is also an urgent need for substantial controls to control online marketing of alcohol, which is not covered by the Act. This gap must now be addressed through codes being developed by Coimisiún na Meán, the newly established, online media regulator.

The overall intent of the Public Health Alcohol Act is potentially undermined and contradicted by plans the Sale of Alcohol Bill, which proposes to liberalise alcohol licensing regulations. Proposed measures in this bill would permit for greater availability of alcohol through both increased licensing hours and relaxation of a number of licensing measures. The international evidence is clear in relation to this -these measures will lead to greater alcohol consumption and an increase in alcohol harms. For example, a one-hour extension of trading hours has been shown to be associated with a 16% increase in alcohol-related crime, a 34% increase in alcohol-related injuries, and up to a 40% increase in road collisions in rural areas.

Harm to children as a result of parental use is an enormous problem in terms of its gravity and the huge numbers of children damaged. About 200,000 children in Ireland currently experience parental problem alcohol use, and almost one million adults in Ireland live with the legacy of this trauma. The AAI Silent Voices awareness week highlighted the issue under the banner: 'End the Silence'. This series of events in October 2024 examined multiple concerns. This initiative was also very active in providing training for professional bodies. AAI continued to

advocate for the introduction of early intervention measures, such as Operation Encompass, to provide immediate support for children impacted by domestic violence, which is often fuelled by alcohol consumption.

In 2023 AAI launched Voices of Recovery, an initiative to harness the lived experience of people in recovery from alcohol, with a view to making their voices heard to influence policy change. In 2024, Voices of Recovery developed a key document outlining the policy changes needed to address alcohol issues from the perspective of those harmed by alcohol.

AAI has advocated strongly for revision of the current low-risk alcohol consumption guidelines in Ireland. These are outdated and at variance with the evidence-informed guidelines developed in the UK and other OECD countries. In particular, they fail to recognise adequately the harmful effect of binge drinking in men and the effects of alcohol in causing seven cancers. Current Irish guidelines also reflect outdated, discredited views regarding potential health benefits of alcohol. These guidelines need to be updated urgently.

For these and many other reasons, AAI is advocating strongly for the development of an Office for Alcohol Harm Reduction, which would gather and analyse data, and coordinate and drive policy development across Government, with the focused aim to reduce alcohol harms in Ireland. This formed a major part of AAI's activities during the 2024 General Election.

A core function of AAI is to develop potential policy solutions for an Irish context. In 2024, AAI developed 39 position papers and submissions to public consultations across many areas of public alcohol policy, including taxation, online safety, domestic violence and the EU4Health Work Programme. AAI has established strong working relations with partner organisations nationally and internationally, which helps to inform this work. Such collaboration is essential and underscores the need for a strong 'whole of government' approach.

I wish to take this opportunity to recognise the expertise, professionalism and commitment of the AAI Executive, Dr Sheila Gilheany (CEO), Conor Keane and Eoin Ryan. I wish to thank them for all they have done and continue to do. They have made a significant impact and continue to maintain alcohol harm high on the public consciousness. I also want to particularly thank Jennifer Hough, our former policy and advocacy lead who has moved on after five years with the organisation. She made an immense contribution to AAI.



I acknowledge and commend our volunteer Board members. I especially thank two retiring members, Catherine Brogan and Anita Whyte. They have made a significant contribution to reducing alcohol harm in Ireland.

We acknowledge the financial support of our funders in 2024– HSE, Hospital Saturday Fund and the many generous individuals who have made donations. Finally, we want to thank the many organisations in the Alcohol Health Alliance Ireland who continue to support the campaign for the full implementation of the Public Health (Alcohol) Act. I am also very appreciative of the many individuals who work with us through social media, contacting their elected representatives and often sharing their painful but powerful stories of the devastation caused by alcohol on individuals, families and the wider community.

AAI plays an important role in reducing alcohol harms in Ireland and will continue to work together with other like-minded to build on the progress seen in recent years.

*Prof Frank Murray MD FRCPI  
Chair, Alcohol Action Ireland*

## 2024: A year in review

2024 was the final year of Alcohol Action Ireland's five-year strategic plan 'Leading Change: A Society Free from Alcohol Harm, 2020-2024'.

This report highlights achievements across the period of the plan as well as activities in 2024 which included drawing up a new strategic plan for the following five years.

Throughout the year, AAI worked across the five strategic goals laid out in the strategy.

1. Coherent and urgent implementation of the Public Health (Alcohol) Act
2. A childhood free from alcohol harm
3. Services for all affected by alcohol harm
4. Establishment of a state sponsored Office to lead on alcohol policy
5. Be the authority on alcohol advocacy and policy in Ireland

These goals are cross-cutting, for example full implementation of the Public Health (Alcohol) Act will help to protect children from alcohol harm, while the establishment of a state Alcohol Office has the potential to drive innovative alcohol policy development across all areas of alcohol harm.

Our approach is to research the policy solutions, publish the evidence and bring our proposals to the public and policy makers. We arrange direct meetings with stakeholders, seek parliamentary questions, organise awareness events, generate media coverage and create innovative social media campaigns with tools such as videos, graphics and podcasts. We work closely with national and international partners, who share common public health goals, to advance our vision and contribute to global action.

Using these methods, we have made significant progress across all areas of the plan in 2024 as outlined below.

## Goal 1

### Coherent and urgent implementation of the Public Health (Alcohol) Act

The Public Health (Alcohol) Act 2018 (PHAA) is a suite of measures designed, when fully implemented, to reduce alcohol use in Ireland by 20% over a period of seven years. The legislation reflects the World Health Organisation's 'best buys' on alcohol policy – i.e. controls on price, marketing and availability.

At this stage the following measures are now in operation:

- Restrictions on placement of outdoor advertising, on children's clothing and in cinemas, operational from November 2019
- Structural separation of alcohol products in shops and supermarkets, operational from November 2020
- Ending of promotions to incentivise alcohol use, operational from January 2021
- Restrictions on alcohol advertising related to sporting activities, operational from November 2021
- Minimum Unit Pricing of Alcohol, operational from January 2022
- Notice to Health Service Executive in relation to applications for grant or renewal of license to sell alcohol, operational from November 2022
- Health information labelling of alcohol products – operational from May 2026
- Broadcast watershed for alcohol advertising – operational from Jan 2025

28 out of the 31 measures have now either been implemented or a date has been given for coming into operation. This has required sustained advocacy from AAI and others since the passage of the legislation. However, two important areas remain outstanding – controls on the content of alcohol advertising and restrictions on alcohol advertising in publications.

Throughout the year, AAI maintained a high level of activity in this area, particularly in relation to Section 13, control of advertising content. This is especially important as this measure complements Section 12, which provides for comprehensive health information labelling of alcohol products and is due to become operational in May 2026.

This world leading measure ensures that no alcohol product can be sold without bearing a label that informs the public that:

- Drinking alcohol causes liver disease
- There is a direct link between alcohol and fatal cancers
- Displays a health symbol intended to inform the public of the danger of alcohol consumption when pregnant
- Details of calories and grams of alcohol in the product
- Details of the HSE Askaboutalcohol website

These same warnings will also be included in any alcohol advertisements when Section 13 is implemented thus ensuring a coherent approach to informing the public of the risks from alcohol. During the year, the then Minister for Health indicated in responses to Parliamentary Questions, that publishing these alcohol content regulations was a priority and that the Office of Parliamentary Counsel was engaged in this work. However, by the end of the 33rd Dáil in November 2024, they had still not been published. AAI will continue to press this with the new government.

AAI also continued to strongly support Ireland's labelling regulations which is attracting significant international interest. We provided public health context to multiple media items including a significant piece in the New York Times as well as countering alcohol industry misinformation. In addition, we kept a watching brief as the matter is being discussed by the Barriers to Trade Committee of the WTO.

Ireland's position has been defended at Committee meetings by the EU and by the World Health Organisation. AAI is leading a campaign to ensure that public health advocates in countries which have raised queries about Ireland's regulation at the WTO contact their ministers for trade to highlight the public health issues of concern. By the end of 2024 the number of countries making comments on the regulations had dropped from 12 to 6.

AAI is also running a campaign urging alcohol producers to respect consumers' rights and introduce the labels ahead of the May 2026 deadline.



## International labelling initiatives

Ireland's comprehensive health information labelling regulations are world-leading, particularly in relation to the cancer warning. The announcement was followed by intense media coverage worldwide and its progress is being closely watched internationally. It seems likely that other jurisdictions will follow suit. For example, following a Norwegian Directorate of Health recommendation to its government for cancer warnings to be included on alcohol products sample labels were published by the Norwegian government in Dec 2024 with this key message while the outgoing US Surgeon General called for cancer warnings in Jan 2025.

AAI has also worked closely with the European Alcohol Policy Alliance, Eurocare, to progress labelling of alcohol products across the EU. There have been moves in the EU to revise the Regulation on Food Information to Consumers to provide for nutritional information on alcohol products. AAI has contributed to a number of consultations on this. We also strongly endorsed the EU Beating Cancer plan with its proposal to have health warning labels before the end of 2023. However, progress in this area is slow.

AAI's CEO contributed a case study on Ireland's labelling initiative to a significant report from the World Health Organisation on the Commercial Determinants of Health, highlighting industry actions in this area.



## European Parliament election

During the European Parliament election in June 2024, AAI carried out a strong campaign with all the candidates highlighting Ireland's leadership in the area of labelling and seeking their support for it. Following the election, we met with newly elected members on this issue and to introduce the work of Eurocare.

## Enforcement of the Public Health (Alcohol) Act

As highlighted above there has been significant progress in the implementation of the PHAA though the pace is slow.

AAI has also advocated strongly for enforcement and evaluation of the measures which is critical if the Act is to achieve its aims. AAI has observed multiple apparent violations of Section 23, Sale and Supply of Alcohol Products through offers such as 'bottomless brunches' where for a set price a customer can drink all they want over a set time period. In addition, there are issues around the use of supermarket club schemes to supply alcohol at discounted prices.

AAI has made complaints to the relevant authorities, sought PQs on these issues and raised them with policy makers. It is essential that resources are made available to the HSE Environmental Health Service to ensure that the Act is fully enforced.





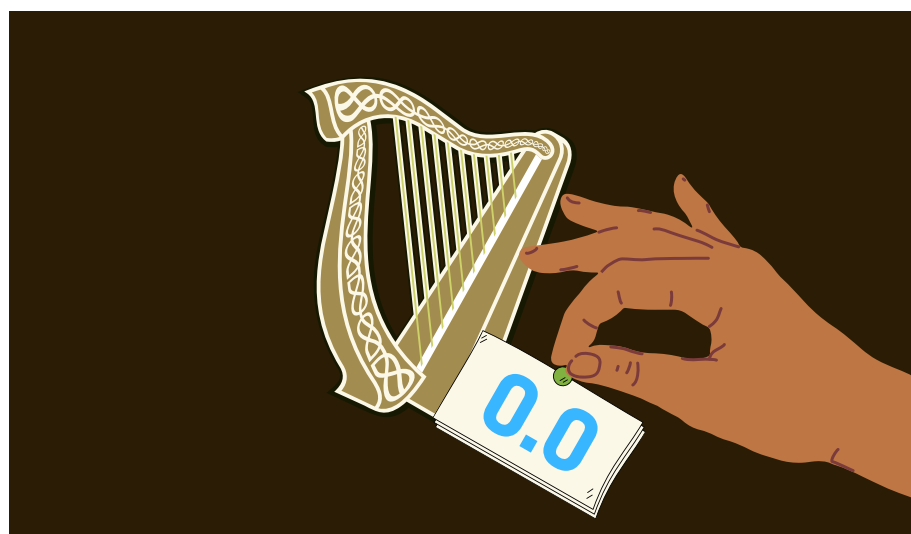
## Alibi marketing

There is also a serious concern about the current restrictions being circumvented by the use of zero alcohol product advertising. These products have identical branding to their alcoholic versions and are being widely advertised in areas which have been restricted under the PHAA e.g. on public transport, on the field of play during sporting events and in shops outside the alcohol zone.

Our concern about this form of brand sharing or alibi marketing has also been raised by other public health bodies including the World Health Organisation and the UK Alcohol Health Alliance. Even the alcohol industry has said that these products are not suitable for children so the question must be asked, why are they being advertised in the very areas which are deemed protected for children. Our view is that it is actually alcohol brands which are being marketed, not just 0.0 products and that this practice is undermining the Act.

AAI has raised these issues with both the Department of Health and the Health Service Executive which has responsibility for monitoring and enforcing the PHAA. We have also drawn attention to this many times in the media and invariably there has been a strong public response. Multiple complaints have been made by members of the public to the HSE as noted in the response to a PQ on this matter. In May 2023, the Minister for Health noted that such advertising was 'cynical' and committed to examining the issue.

To date there has not been a satisfactory response and AAI will continue to advocate for comprehensive controls on advertising these products stating that they should be subject to the same controls as the master brand.



## Evaluation of the Act

AAI is a part of a UCC research project which is examining the implementation of the PHAA. This 3-year project, 2024-2026, is funded by the Health Research Board.

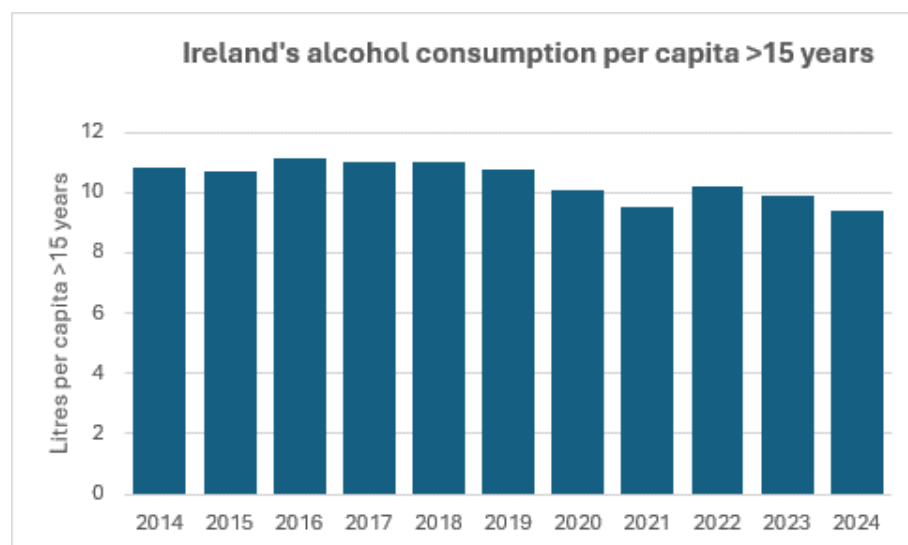
Separately, the former Minister for Health, Simon Harris, established the Public Health Alcohol Research Group. Its purpose was to provide recommendations in relation to the monitoring and evaluation of the PHAA. AAI's CEO is a member of the group which submitted its final report to the current minister, Stephen Donnelly in June 2023. Since then, AAI sought to have a response from the Minister to the report. Towards the end of 2024 it was announced that a technical group would be established to carry out research to evaluate the legislation. The work of this group is due to get underway in 2025.

It is important that the recommendations from the group are implemented, particularly given the range of measures within the Act. Ireland's approach is being watched closely internationally and evidence from Ireland will help inform other jurisdictions about useful public health approaches to harm from alcohol. Equally important is that the government is also seeking to make other policy changes around alcohol including changes to licensing hours through the Sale of Alcohol Bill. It is essential that before any such changes are made that the PHAA is implemented in full and evaluated.

## Alcohol consumption levels

The original target when the legislation was first proposed in 2013 was for alcohol consumption to be reduced to a level of 9.1 litres per capita by 2020. Due to a combination of significant obstruction in the legislation being passed and indeed watered down from its original format and ongoing delays in it being implemented, this was not achieved. In 2024 the level of consumption in Ireland was 9.4 litres per capita - a decrease of 5% since 2023.

This compares with an increase of 3% in the UK over the same period and is an indicator that the modest measures in the Act are having an impact. However, it should be noted that if adults in Ireland were consuming alcohol within the current HSE lower-risk drinking guidelines, consumption would be 40% lower. This points to the need for a renewed focus in government on alcohol issues.



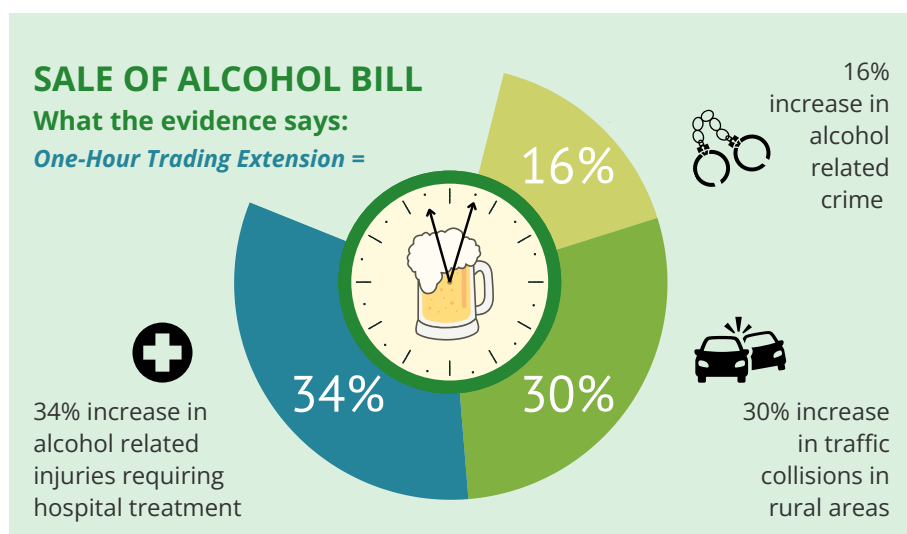
## Sale of Alcohol Bill

On 25 October 2022, the Minister for Justice, Helen McEntee, brought forward plans to Cabinet for a General Scheme of a Sale of Alcohol Bill. There are significant concerns about a number of aspects of the Bill as proposed which are likely to lead to increased alcohol use and consequent increased alcohol harms. These include:

1. The general extension of licensing hours of all bars/restaurants from 11.30pm to 12.30am
2. The facilitating of late-night opening of bars to 2.30am
3. The extension of nightclub hours to 6am
4. The introduction of cultural amenity licenses to venues not usually having a license
5. The revoking of the requirement to extinguish a license before opening a new premises. This will increase the number and density of alcohol outlets.

It is clear that the intent of the Sale of Alcohol Bill is to increase the availability of alcohol which will lead to increased use and with that, increased harms. This is completely against stated government policy which aims to reduce alcohol use by 20%, a target that has not been achieved.

Since the publication of the General Scheme, AAI has worked strenuously to raise concerns about its public health implication and has gathered a significant evidence base around the multiple harms associated with increased licensing alcohol availability from domestic violence to pressure on health services.



In particular we are seeking to have a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) of the proposals carried out before there is any further movement. This was a key recommendation by the Oireachtas Justice Committee who heard evidence from AAI and other public health bodies. Our concern is also shared by the public with polling data commissioned by AAI finding that 67% are worried about increased pressure on public services. Our activities in this area in 2024 have included generating significant media coverage, meeting policy makers and organising a briefing session for Oireachtas members.

Our Silent Voices and Voices of Recovery initiatives joined together to send an open letter to Minister for Justice highlighting the impact of the Bill on the more than 1.5 million people living with the direct harm of alcohol.

An important issue to which AAI drew attention, is the likely impact on road safety of increased alcohol availability. Given the concern about current high levels of road fatalities we were pleased to note that having made contact with the Road Safety Authority, their Chair wrote to the Government seeking a HIA.



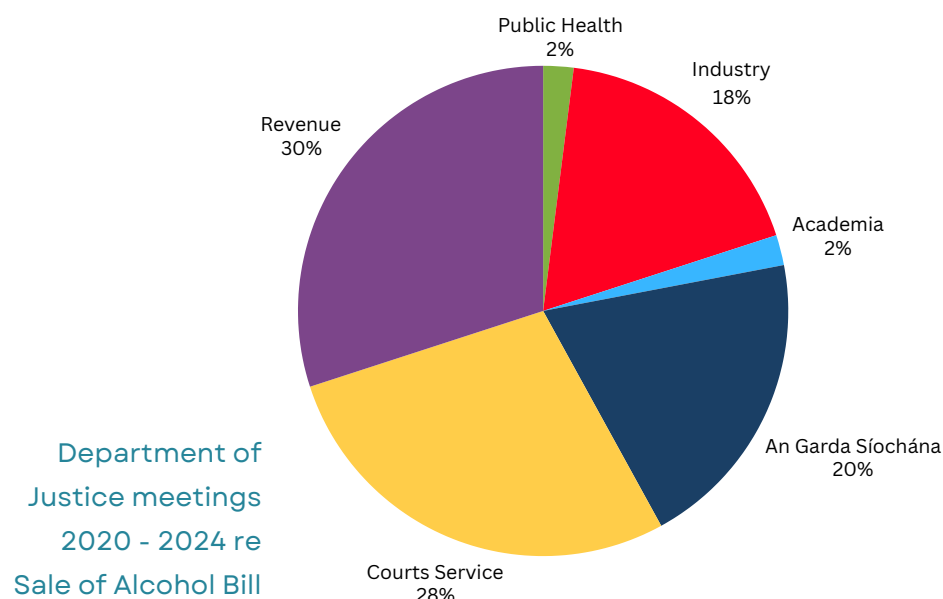
During the year AAI drew together 80 organisations and advocates from multiple areas including domestic and sexual violence, children's groups, medical organisations and road safety bodies who expressed strong support for a HIA and wrote to the three government party leaders on this issue. The Chief Medical Officer also raised public health concerns about the bill.



Despite government announcements that the proposals would be split into two bills with the first to be brought forward in 2024, this did not happen and the then Taoiseach Simon Harris, noted that the proposals needed ‘a second look.’ We believe our strong campaign played a significant role in this.

However, there are indications that this issue will continue to be pressed by vested interests and an investigation by AAI through Freedom of Information requests demonstrates high levels of lobbying on this issue.

The modest gains of the Public Health (Alcohol) Act are threatened by these proposals and significant advocacy by AAI and others will be needed in 2025.





## Goal 2

### A childhood free from alcohol harm

The impact of alcohol on children can have life-long implications. Children in Ireland are currently experiencing harm from alcohol in multiple ways including:

- Exposure to alcohol during pregnancy
- Brought up in families where there is parental problem alcohol use
- Exposure to risk in their community from others who are engaged in high-risk alcohol consumption
- Introduced to alcohol at an early age

Throughout the year, AAI has worked on policy initiatives and advocacy across these areas. AAI is a member of the Children's Rights Alliance (CRA) and the Prevention and Early Intervention Network (PEIN) and has worked to ensure consideration of such issues in these groups.

### Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)

The use of alcohol in pregnancy in Ireland has led to a corresponding high level of Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) among children in Ireland – found to be the third highest rate in the world with a prevalence of 2.8-7.4% in the population.

This aspect of alcohol harm remains very hidden, yet the children affected are compromised from a neurobiological perspective, resulting in problems carried with them throughout their lives. One example of this outcome is that such children are over-represented in the care and justice systems. We have highlighted this throughout the year and, noted that the importance of seeking a reduction in the whole-of-population alcohol consumption as a vital factor in reducing the incidence of FASD. An important part of this advocacy was to point to concerns about proposed increased alcohol availability via extended licensing hours and venues.

We have also highlighted the lack of services in this area and called for a national strategy to address this issue. Such a strategy must cover areas including health, education, social care and justice. Given the international evidence that people with FASD are over-represented in the justice system, AAI raised this with colleagues in the prison and probationary services.

## Silent Voices

AAI's 'Silent Voices' initiative aims to raise awareness and understanding of the specific issues for the estimated more than one million children and adult children who have grown up with parental problem alcohol use in Ireland and the adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) caused to their lives.

It is informed by the lived experience and expertise of the members of its Advisory Group and the personal testimonies which are shared anonymously on its online platform, Shared Voices. It has worked closely with national and international partners including Drug and Alcohol Taskforces, ISPCC and in the UK, National Association of Children of Alcoholics, NACOA, to develop policies and raise awareness.

A significant part of our work in 2024 in this area was our National Awareness Week in November: [End the Silence](#).



Silent Voices' Barbara Whelan (left) speaks to MC Ali Warner at AAI's End the Silence event, Voices of Hope and Courage

## End the Silence 2024

Building on the previous three years of this week, the theme was Collateral Damage – living with the aftermath of problem alcohol use in the home.

### Activities:

- 2 webinars: [Trauma's ripples through time](#) / [Breaking the domino effect](#)
- 1 in-person event: [Voices of hope and courage](#) at the Mansion House
- 1 podcast: [Silent Voices](#)
- 1 opinion piece: [Fear, love and omerta in the home](#)
- [1 media release](#)
- 2 newsletters to AAI mailing list
- [Updated policy document](#) printed
- Dedicated [campaign page](#)
- Outreach to multiple partner organisations
- Social media campaign financially boosted on Facebook
- Follow up with distribution of resources to contacts

### Contributors at the events included:

- Richard Hogan, psychotherapist, media contributor and author.
- Prof Karen Hughes, Directorate of Policy, Research and International Development, Public Health Wales
- Dr Clíona Ní Cheallaigh, Associate Professor, TCD, Consultant St James Hospital.
- Aisling Creegan, author
- Barbara Whelan, writer, media contributor and Silent Voices co-founder
- Eileen Beamish, musician
- Dr Hannah Todman, Stockport Family Workforce Development Manager.
- Dr Annemarie Millar, Queen's University Belfast
- Hilary Henriques, Nacoa UK
- Fiona Kearney, Familiabase.
- Caroline Jordan, Tusla

316 people registered for the events and across the week, Alcohol Action Ireland had 35 media mentions with a reach of 2.2 million and an advertising value of €53,787. There was also significant traffic to the dedicated website pages and downloads of the podcast which was launched that week of a conversation between co-founder of Silent Voices, Marion Rackard and author, Aisling Creegan.



Aisling Creegan

## Operation Encompass

As part of the Silent Voices initiative, there has been extensive advocacy for the introduction of Operation Encompass which is a programme deployed in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It is designed to support children and young people experiencing domestic abuse by facilitating an early information sharing partnership between police and education services to offer immediate intervention and support.

There is strong support for the proposal from organisations such as the Children's Rights Alliance, Irish Association of Social Workers, INTO, ISPC, the Office of the Ombudsman for Children and the Special Rapporteur on Child Protection in relation to the need for Operation Encompass.

Following our sustained campaigning, led by Silent Voices co-founder, Carol Fawsitt, consideration of this programme was included in the new Domestic Violence Strategy published in 2022. During 2024, there was considerable engagement with Department of Justice officials on this matter which is very welcome. AAI have been pointing out that in the first year of the programme in Northern Ireland, beginning in 2023, over 23,000 referrals were made, indicating the scale of need.

There is a lack of urgency though, in progressing this straightforward, low-cost measure which has the potential to make a significant difference to the lives of traumatised children.

## Professional development

Since the establishment of Silent Voices, the initiative has highlighted the need for professional development for anyone whose work is likely to bring them into contact with those living with the impact of alcohol harm in the home. Over the past five years, Silent Voices has established relationships with teachers' unions, third level institutions, medical organisations and professional bodies representing therapists.

This has provided opportunities to distribute resources and to provide specialist training. In 2024 the co-founder of Silent Voices, Marion Rackard and her colleague Mick Devine, Clinical Director of Tabor, developed and delivered a six-hour module for therapists through the Irish Association of Humanistic and Integrative Psychotherapy.

Plans are in train to bring this to other bodies.

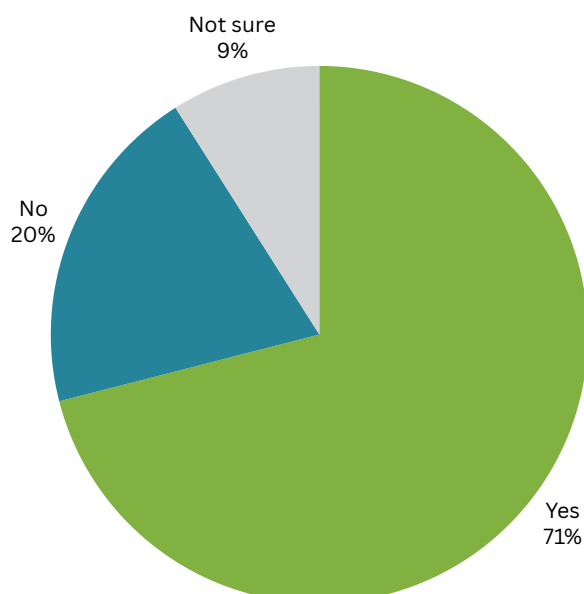
## Marketing to children

The early introduction of children to alcohol continued to be highlighted by AAI using the findings from a range of studies such as Growing up in Ireland, My World Survey and the Health Behaviour of School Aged Children. While there have been some modest improvements in recent years, Ireland still has a significant problem with at least 50,000 children starting to drink every year, 40% of 15-year-olds using alcohol and by early adulthood 93% of Ireland's youth are regular drinkers.

A significant factor in this is the marketing of alcohol in such a way that captures young people and in particular its linkage to youth interests such as sports, music and other cultural events. Online marketing is especially powerful in this context with children being targeted through these interests with alcohol advertising. Digital advertising is far more harmful for children than any other form. Estimates suggest that by the time a child turns 13, advertisers already hold over 72 million data points about them, and the surveillance advertising industry for children is worth in excess of \$1 billion.

Polling commissioned by AAI (below) indicates that there is strong public support for action on children's exposure to online alcohol marketing.

“Do you think there should be an enforceable ban on online alcohol advertisements being viewed by children?”



During 2024, we highlighted these issues in a number of public consultation submissions to the newly established Coimisiún na Meán for its first online safety code and on its revised broadcasting codes.

A key recommendation is that alcohol brands must be prohibited from collecting data on young people and must provide evidence that they are not tracking and profiling young people. We worked closely with the Children's Rights Alliance and Irish Heart Foundation to ensure alcohol issues were included in their deliberations and ongoing work advocating that industry bodies such as the Advertising Standards Authority do not become part of the statutory process around the codes.

### Health Promotion Alliance Ireland

AAI is a founding member of the Health Promotion Alliance Ireland and its CEO a member of its steering group. This is an all-island coalition with a shared interest in advocating for major policy change to promote the primary prevention of chronic disease.

A key issue for the Alliance is the reduction of the amount of marketing of unhealthy products such as alcohol. As part of this alliance, AAI's CEO was invited to give evidence to the Oireachtas Justice Committee and used the opportunity to highlight specific issues around alcohol marketing to children.





## Goal 3

### Services for all affected by alcohol harm

Alcohol has serious implications for many aspects of our health and across all stages of life. A major goal for AAI is to advocate for appropriate services for all affected by alcohol harm.

Of significant concern is the lack of services compared with the scale of alcohol problems in Ireland. For example, Health Research Board data indicates that nearly 15% of the population have an alcohol use disorder (AUD). This corresponds to approximately 578,000 people with 90,000 having a severe AUD problem. However, in 2023, only 3,591 new cases were treated out of a total of 8,163 cases. This illustrates the massive gap between need and provision.

Throughout the year, AAI has brought attention to the need for widespread, timely availability of appropriate, trauma-informed services including the need for family services irrespective of whether the person is in treatment or not.

An important issue in alcohol related harm is the impact on mental health. AAI made a detailed submission to the review of the reducing suicide strategy, Connecting for Life, highlighting the role of alcohol.

## ***Voices of Recovery***

Harnessing the lived experience of people in recovery from alcohol harm to drive policy change



## Voices of Recovery

A major new initiative from AAI was launched in the last quarter of 2023 – Voices of Recovery. The initiative, led by people in recovery from alcohol harm, aims to remove the stigma around getting treatment for alcohol problems and to drive evidence-based policy change on issues such as better alcohol treatment services, curbs on alcohol marketing and holding the alcohol industry to account for the harm its product causes.

Membership of Voices of Recovery is open to all who self-declare that they have a minimum of two years' continuous sobriety at the time of application and who support the work of AAI and can be done by signing our [Charter](#). We really appreciate the valuable and public contributions from our first ten signatories.

### First 10 signatories:

1. Paddy Creedon, recovery advocate and Board member of Alcohol Action Ireland
2. Gary O'Heaire, recovery advocate and COO Tiglin.
3. Senator Frances Black, recovery advocate and founder of the Rise Foundation, which is focused on family members of those with addictive behaviour.
4. Keith Cassidy, recovery advocate and clinic manager, Smarmore Castle
5. Kenneth Egan OLY, recovery advocate, Olympic Medal winner and psychotherapist.
6. Shane McVicker, recovery advocate, musician and musical director
7. Val Ward, recovery advocate
8. Mary Coughlan, recovery advocate and musician
9. Danielle Hughes, recovery advocate
10. Dr. Stephen Dansiger, recovery advocate

In 2024 the initiative organised two events, in Belfast and Cork, which included a blend of music, poetry and lived experiences. At each event there was also a contribution from AAI's Silent Voices initiative which proved powerful in bringing together these issues of alcohol harm.

A key achievement of Voices of Recovery this year was the development of its strategic policy asks. This [document](#) was launched at an event in Cork, attended by Minister of State at the Department of Health, Colm Burke TD and Deputy Lord Mayor of Cork, Cllr Honore Kamegni.



Voices of Recovery event, Belfast

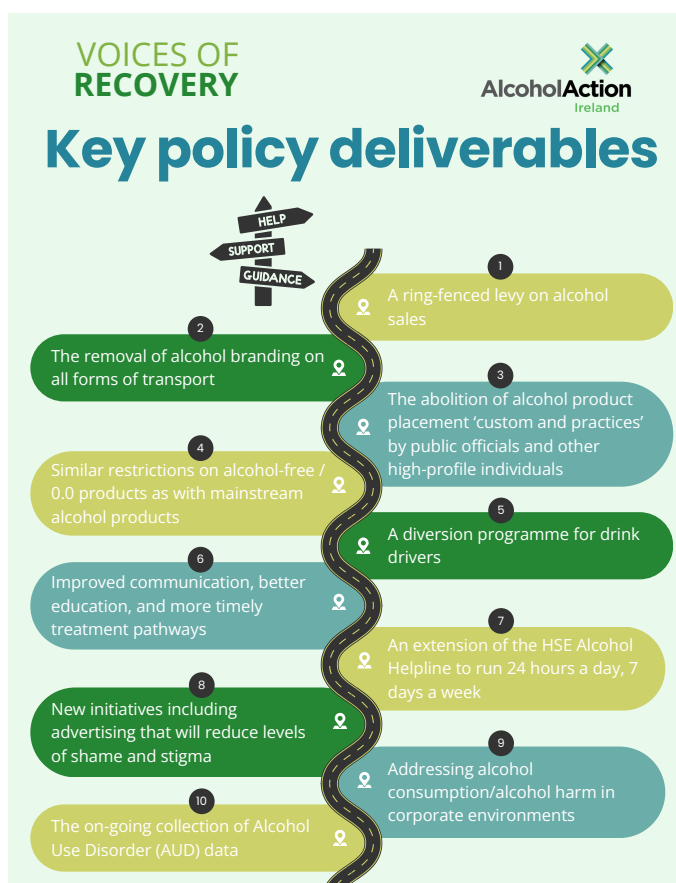


Minister of State at the Department of Health, Colm Burke (left) and Viva Voce choir (right) at the Voices of Recovery event, Cork

During the year, Voices of Recovery engaged with the International Organisation for Migration in relation to developing services for international protection applicants in Ireland. AAI carried out a scoping exercise of international literature and practice in this area and brought the issues to the attention of the HSE.

Voices of Recovery members made contact with services in the UK and arranged meetings with services in Ireland. The Voices of Recovery initiative supported an international research project on the impact of widespread alcohol marketing on those in recovery with members taking part in structured interviews on this issue.

A key achievement of Voices of Recovery this year was the development of its strategic policy asks



## Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery. A health-led response to drug and alcohol use in Ireland 2017-2025

Following a mid-term review of the government's main strategy in relation to alcohol there was a proposal to establish a number of strategic implementation groups. AAI's CEO was invited to join Group 6 whose aim is to 'Strengthen evidence-informed and outcomes focussed practice, services, policies and strategy implementation.'

The group set out a programme of work in this area to be carried out over the remainder of the term of the strategy. A key goal of AAI in this regard is to have a mapping of alcohol treatment services carried out and we were pleased to note the government commitment to this in 2023 and that this was launched by the Health Research Board in 2024.

As the strategy's operational period draws to a close, AAI has been active in highlighting the need for alcohol to be given much more attention in policy making. Given that alcohol is by far the biggest drug problem in Ireland, this seems a logical approach.

### Alcohol Care Teams

Alcohol Care Teams are clinician-led, multidisciplinary teams with integrated alcohol treatment pathways across primary, secondary and community care. With co-ordinated alcohol policies for emergency departments and acute medical units, a 7-day alcohol specific nurse service, addiction and liaison psychiatry services, an alcohol assertive outreach team and consultant hepatologists and gastroenterologists with liver disease expertise, they facilitate collaborative, person-centred care. They reduce acute hospital admissions, readmission and mortality, improve the quality and efficiency of alcohol services and have multiple evidence-bases, cost-effective and aspirational components.

AAI's CEO is a member of the Beaumont Hospital Alcohol Care Initiative, under the chairmanship of Dr John Ryan, consultant hepatologist, which is seeking to introduce Alcohol Care Teams into the hospital system in Ireland. The group met regularly, bringing together strands of evidence of the impact of alcohol on multiple areas of hospital services. The importance of this approach was highlighted by AAI in its [pre-budget submission](#) as a low cost, highly efficient way of reducing the impact of alcohol harm.

## Goal 4

### Establishment of a state sponsored Office to lead on alcohol policy

There are many areas where alcohol has harmful effects across Irish society – e.g. public safety, demand on hospital services, workplace productivity and the highly destructive but most hidden of all, the impact on family life. Addressing alcohol issues requires a co-ordinated ‘whole of government’ approach.

The scale of the problem and the challenges presenting, is such that it needs a dedicated focus. This is particularly important given the highly contested environment with the global alcohol industry actively agitating against the development and implementation of public health alcohol policy.

AAI seeks to establish a statutory office, which can take a strategic lead on co-ordinating all aspects of alcohol in Ireland viewed through a public health lens including licensing, marketing and controls, strategic development of treatment services, education/prevention programming, commissioning of relevant data, with capacity to monitor and evaluate public alcohol policy.



During the year AAI raised the issue of an Alcohol Office at a senior government level including with the acting Chief Medical Officer, the Minister of Health and with politicians across multiple parties. The need for this was highlighted in multiple media contributions, reports and submissions. AAI also exhibited at the Green Party Convention and the Sinn Féin Ard Fheis, which provided good opportunities for engagement on this issue.

## General Election 2024

For the General Election 2024 campaign AAI developed its election manifesto with a clear set of asks designed to reduce the burden of alcohol harm on Ireland.

There was a dedicated section on the AAI website in relation to the election which provided a facility for members of the public to send emails to party leaders calling for action on alcohol and the establishment of an Alcohol Office. We also directly contacted candidates standing in the election several times seeking support for our ideas. 116 candidates signed our election pledge to establish an Alcohol Office. This included representatives from Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, Green Party, Labour, People Before Profit, Sinn Féin, Social Democrats and a number of independents.

Most of the parties included some element of support for addressing alcohol issues in their manifestos including increased funding for alcohol services. During the course of the campaign four parties directly supported the Alcohol Office proposal.



Alcohol Action Ireland stands at the 2024 Sinn Féin Ard Fheis (left) and the 2024 Green Party Convention (right)

## Election asks:

### Public health approach to alcohol

Alcohol harm costs high-income countries like Ireland 2.5% of GDP - €12bn annually - according to the World Health Organisation. 1,500 hospital beds are in use daily due to alcohol harm; almost one million people have grown up with a problem drinker in the home; 600,000 people are classified as having alcohol use disorder and 37% of driver fatalities with a toxicology result available had a positive toxicology for alcohol.

Given the cost of alcohol to the state as well as individuals, families and communities it is imperative that government implements evidence-based policies. The World Health Organisation recommends that alcohol policy's 'best buys' are controls on price, marketing and availability. Ireland needs government to commit to this approach, which puts public health at the core of policy in relation to alcohol.

- 1 Establish a dedicated Office for Alcohol Harm Reduction in Dept of Health, which would co-ordinate all policy matters in relation to alcohol - licensing, marketing, development of services, commissioning of relevant data plus monitoring and evaluation of policy - in one place.
- 2 Align alcohol excise duties (Dept of Finance) and Minimum Unit Price (Dept of Health) with consumer price index annually.
- 3 Carry out a health impact assessment of any proposed changes in licensing laws (Dept of Justice)
- 4 Protect children from the pervasive marketing of alcohol, especially online, where children are targeted and profiled. Research shows marketing increases likelihood of early and heavier drinking (Dept of Health and Dept of Media)
- 5 Invest in trauma-informed state services for all affected by alcohol harm, including children impacted by the adverse childhood experience (ACE) of parental problem alcohol use. Currently very low numbers access support compared to the scale of need. (Dept of Health and Dept of Children)



## Goal 5

### Be the authority on alcohol advocacy and policy in Ireland

AAI is an independent national advocate for reducing alcohol harm. We seek to reinforce our position not only as the source of trusted information, analysis, data, opinion and research but also as a leader in communication – dissemination, innovation and distribution.

An essential element of Alcohol Action Ireland's work is to research the issues around alcohol, develop the policies to address the harms caused by alcohol to individuals, families and society and advocate for their implementation. Throughout the year, AAI developed a series of themes and policy positions on alcohol harm and also contributed to a range of events and public consultations as indicated below as well as multiple conferences, webinars and meetings with policy makers.

We also acted to highlight areas of attempted alcohol industry influence on public health matters pointing to issues around involvement with the development of government policy in areas such as sustainable food, despite alcohol not being a food stuff.

AAI worked with a range of organisations to advance these issues. In November 2023, AAI was a founding member of the newly established Health Promotion Alliance Network. This is a broad coalition of organisations with a shared interest in advocating for major policy change to promote the primary prevention of chronic disease through controls across a number of industries producing unhealthy commodities such as tobacco, alcohol and junk food.

We have continued to develop our links with academics and engaging in policy research programmes with colleagues in University College Galway as well as providing input to courses at University of Limerick and University of Galway. AAI also participated in a number of meetings with academics in Trinity College Dublin on the issue of the commercial determinants of health – an emerging field of study which provides an insight into the forces at play in relation to health matters.

At international levels we worked closely with Eurocare – the European Alliance of Alcohol Policy Organisations and the World Health Organisation to advance alcohol issues, particularly around labelling of alcohol products. We also maintained strong contacts with colleagues in the UK including the Institute for Alcohol Studies, Alcohol Focus and Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems contributing to discussions and reports.

We are pleased to have such collaborative opportunities to bring our expertise to a range of issues and welcome the support of others for our objectives.



## Pre-Budget submission

This was prepared, submitted to the Minister for Finance and Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform and circulated widely in September. Building on the finding of the Alcohol Affordability report, advice provided included:

- Retention of existing excise duties on alcohol products and the introduction of a Consumer Price Index for these duties in recognition of the erosion by inflation of their value
- Extension of treatment intervention services
- Introduction of a social responsibility levy to adequately fund the cost to society from alcohol harm including resourcing a dedicated policy office on preventing such harm

Earlier in the year, AAI met with officials from Dept of Finance re alcohol taxation with follow-up material being presented. We were pleased to note that our comments were included the Tax Strategy Paper on Excise.

The concept of health taxes has been put forward by the Commission on Taxation and Welfare in its 2022 report as a key measure to reduce the consumption of health harming products such as alcohol. Such a levy was also a recommendation of the Oireachtas Justice Committee in its pre-legislative scrutiny of the Sale of Alcohol Bill. Meanwhile the recent legislation on gambling regulation provides for a social responsibility levy on gambling activity to fund education and treatment services. In addition, the 'polluter pays' concept has precedent in other parts of the economy for example in recycling schemes.

An examination of the lobbying register noted significant contact between the alcohol industry and the Department of Finance in the run up to the Budget who lobbied intensively for a reduction in alcohol duties. During the same period no contact between the Department of Health and the Department of Finance was found through Freedom of Information requests. While the alcohol industry did not achieve their aim of a reduction, neither was there any increase in excise duties which have remained at the same level for a decade.

Given that alcohol excise duties raise only €1.2 billion annually compared with the burden of alcohol on the state of at least €12 billion annually, as indicated by the World Health Organisation, it is clear that public health considerations must be at the heart of any alcohol policy in Ireland yet there does not appear to be a formal mechanism for public health input to such decisions.

This points again to the need for the establishment of an Office for Alcohol Harm Reduction which would drive policy in this area and provide a co-ordination mechanism across government departments.



#### Lower-risk drinking guidelines – Expert Advisory Group

Alcohol Action Ireland has advocated for a revision of the current HSE lower-risk drinking guidelines which have not been changed since 2015 and are now very high in comparison with other jurisdictions.

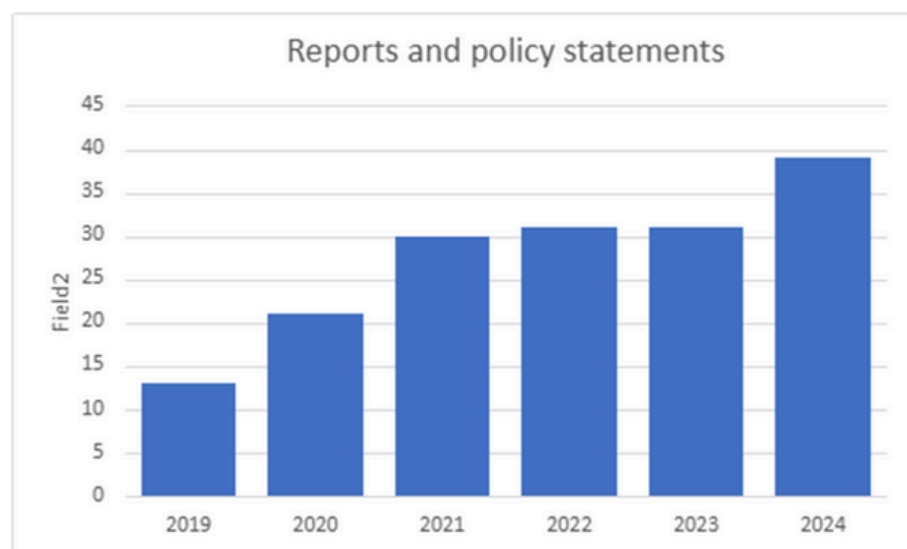
HIQA has been tasked by the Department of Health to support the update of the guidelines. Part of this support will involve producing a report modelling the lifetime risk of mortality and morbidity attributable to alcohol in Ireland. Additionally, a separate review on the relationship of alcohol consumption with mental health will be performed at a later date.

The modelling report will be undertaken by an evaluation team from the Health Technology Assessment directorate with monitoring and oversight provided internally by HIQA. An appropriately represented and constituted Expert Advisory Group (EAG) has been established to inform the process and provide expert advice. AAI has been asked to join this panel.

AAI gave evidence at a meeting in June 2024 and also made follow up written submissions.

## Policy statements

Alcohol issues arise in a multitude of environments including the home, education, health care, online media, social affairs, justice system and the economy. AAI has made submissions and policy statements throughout the year on these issues, drawing on expertise from within the organisation and from our multiple partners, nationally and internationally. This policy research is essential to the mission of Alcohol Action Ireland and is the basis for all our advocacy work.



### Reports and policy statements in 2024:

- [A river of alcohol: lifebelts and safety barriers needed](#)
- [AAI submission online safety code](#)
- [AAI TRIS submission Sweden Oct 2024](#)
- [Alcohol control enforcement in Ireland: A paper tiger](#)
- [Alcohol industry denies cancer and other health risks](#)
- [Alcohol industry marketing is increasingly targeting women – especially through sport](#)
- [Alcohol industry marketing is increasingly targeting women – especially through sport](#)
- [Alcohol issues across the population examined in detail in new report](#)
- [Alcohol taxes must increase, for good of our nation's health](#)
- [Alcohol: A commercial driver of crime](#)
- [All publicity is good publicity for alcohol industry as it uses zero-alcohol products to circumvent public health rules](#)
- [Annual accounts 2023](#)
- [Annual review 2023](#)

- Booze-up at the Aviva underlines dark nature of alcohol sponsorship of sport
- Chilling alcohol statistics reveal lost and disrupted lives
- Claims and 'counter' claims – Alcohol industry's internal disagreements regarding Sale of Alcohol Bill highlight ill-considered nature of proposed legislation
- Coimisiun na Meán consultation on revised broadcasting codes and rules
- Coimisiún na Meán consultation on revised Broadcasting Codes and Rules – Stage 2 review
- Connecting for Life submission
- Cynical alcohol industry spin never stops – media and politicians have responsibility to critically analyse its messages
- Determined focus by government needed to comprehensively address alcohol harm
- Drinks industry has zero interest in answering the real questions
- Election asks & Budget 2025 recommendations
- Europe's Beating Cancer Plan: How Big Alcohol lobbying diluted a historic public health breakthrough
- Evidence relating to licensing hours and road safety needs to be examined
- Fear, love and omerta in the home
- Fighting talk! Calling out alcohol's shockingly privileged position is an essential battleground
- Free children's book supports conversations around parental substance use
- Irish government the perfect mixer for alcohol industry
- Online Safety Code TRIS submission
- Policy flip flops and decisions that lack evidence have consequences – especially when it comes to alcohol
- Powerful industries are driving ill-health and premature mortality – when will we say, enough is enough?
- Pre-budget 2025 submission
- Strategic Plan 2025-29
- Submission for the Coimisiún na Meán consultation on audiovisual on-demand media service providers
- TRIS submission Finland 2024
- TRIS submission for Latvia's draft law 'Amendments to the Handling of Alcoholic Beverages Law'
- Voices of Recovery policy document
- Web of influence of the global alcohol industry undermines work to offset harm its product causes

## International networks and events

### **Alcohol Health Alliance UK**

AAI is a member of the Alcohol Health Alliance UK. This is an alliance of more than 40 non-governmental organisations who work together to promote evidence-based policies to reduce the damage caused by alcohol. AAI contributed to discussions between members and to their regular news bulletins on alcohol policy.

### **Alcohol Research Network (ACORN)**

AAI is a member of this network of researchers in UK and Ireland and staff have contributed to a number of seminars organised by the network.

### **DEEP SEAS and FAR SEAS Thematic Capacity Workshops**

DEEP SEAS (Developing and Extending Evidence and Practice from the Standard European Alcohol Survey) is a tendered service contract awarded by the European Commission to a coordinated group of institutions lead by the CLÍNIC Foundation for Biomedical Research (FCRB, Barcelona). AAI executive participated in a number of workshops around this area.

### **Balance Northeast**

AAI was invited to give a presentation to this group's Balance Alcohol Champions Meeting on 15 May, speaking about AAI's advocacy efforts.

### **Canadian Alcohol Policy Evaluation (CAPE) and Community of Practice**

AAI's CEO was invited to meet this group to provide insight to alcohol issues and advocacy. Throughout the year provided updates on Ireland's alcohol policy development.

### **DIS Study Aboard Programme, Public Health**

This is a programme organised by the Karolinska Institute in Sweden. AAI provided input on public health alcohol policy to the DIS Study Abroad Programme which included a week-long visit to Dublin for USA students in July.

### **European Alcohol Policy Alliance - Eurocare**

AAI is a member of Eurocare which is an alliance of non-governmental and public health organisations across Europe advocating for the prevention and reduction of alcohol-related harm. AAI's CEO is a Board Member of the organisation and participated in all Board meetings throughout 2024. A key element of the work plan of Eurocare is around advocating for health information labelling of alcohol products and AAI has worked closely with its European partners to advocate in this area. AAI also provided contributions to Eurocare's work with Codex (UN Food and Agriculture/WHO body) on alcohol labelling. AAI's CEO presented and

also chaired a session at the conference organised jointly by Eurocare and the Youth Health Organisation - Challenging Big Industry Narratives: Alcohol Tobacco, Unhealthy Food and Drinks: Population Measures and Policies. Ljubljana Slovenia June 2026. AAI also contributed to the European Alcohol Awareness Week, 28 November-2 December which is co-ordinated by Eurocare, providing input to its information campaign.

#### **European Public Health Alliance (EPHA)**

AAI is a member of EPHA and participated in meetings.

#### **Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) Australia**

There was ongoing contact between FARE and AAI throughout 2024 particularly around the campaigns in both countries on alcohol and family violence.

#### **World Health Organization (WHO)**

AAI's CEO was invited to contribute to a case study on Ireland's alcohol labelling legislation to a WHO Europe report on the commercial determinants of health. AAI also provided input to the WHO EVID-ACTION project via discussion on its public-facing campaign element on reducing alcohol consumption and to support its work on cancer warning labelling.

## National networks and stakeholders

### **Alcohol Health Alliance Ireland**

The Alliance was established in 2015 by Alcohol Action Ireland and the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland (RCPI) and brought together over 50 NGOs, charities and public health advocates. Chaired by Prof Frank Murray, a liver specialist at Beaumont Hospital, Chair of Board of AAI and former RCPI President, it provided a strong voice throughout the campaign to enact the PHAA and now, under the guidance of AAI, works to ensure its implementation.

### **Beaumont Hospital Alcohol Care Initiative**

AAI is a member of the Beaumont Hospital Alcohol Care Initiative which was set up to audit the burden of alcohol on the Hospital and to secure support for the development of an Alcohol Care Team (ACT). AAI attended meetings throughout the year and provided input to the initiative's strategic goals.

### **Children's Rights Alliance**

AAI is a member of the Children's Rights Alliance (CRA). Throughout the year AAI worked with the CRA to raise issues around alcohol and children, particularly in the context of children living in homes impacted by alcohol harm and the significant increase in home drinking during the pandemic. Through the Alliance AAI made contact with the Secretary General of the Department of Education and the Assistant Secretary General in the Department of Children, highlighting the need for services for children in this area.

### **Commission on Older People**

AAO was asked to join an advisory group in relation to alcohol and older people and provided evidence in this regard.

### **Growing Up In Ireland**

AAI's head of policy and advocacy was invited to join Growing Up in Ireland Research and Practice Expert Advisory Group.

### **Galway City Forum**

SG invited to speak at an event organised by Galway City Forum on Alcohol in March on opportunities to support policy work on alcohol at national level.

### **HSE Alcohol Programme**

AAI's received welcome funding from the HSE Alcohol & Mental Health and Wellbeing Programme and from the National Social Inclusion Office.

AAI has provided expert policy and communications advice to the HSE Alcohol Programme and 'Ask About Alcohol' website on a range of alcohol and mental health issues. Throughout the year we have contributed to, and reviewed,

multiple reports, research and media campaigns sharing our expert knowledge, skills and an international network of policy advice with the Programme. AAI's CEO is also a member of the HSE Alcohol Data and Research Working Group and contributed to the organisation of the Group's first conference on alcohol research in Nov 2024.

#### **Institute of Public Health in Ireland (IPH): North South Alcohol Policy Advisory Group**

AAI is a constituted member of this All-Island forum and its team members attended its meetings in May and November 2024 and its event in the Northern Ireland Assembly on Minimum Unit Pricing (MUP).

#### **Irish Health Promotion Alliance**

AAI has joined an alliance with Irish Heart Foundation, Irish College of General Practitioners, Irish Medical Organisation, Royal College of Surgeons of Ireland, Irish Cancer Society and others to promote prevention strategies at a whole of population level around price, marketing and availability of unhealthy commodities. There is a strong emphasis on highlighting the commercial determinants of health. As part of this Alliance AAI's CEO was invited to give evidence to the Oireachtas Health Committee on issues around alcohol marketing.

#### **Northern Ireland Alcohol and Drug Alliance Eurocare and Youth Health Organisation Conference**

AAI joined this body in 2024 as part of its work in relation to the campaign for MUP in Northern Ireland.

#### **Local and Regional Drug and Alcohol Task Forces**

Throughout the year, AAI has provided expert alcohol policy advice and support to a number of the Local and Regional Task Forces throughout Ireland.

#### **Maynooth University**

AAI, through its Silent Voices initiative, has worked closely with colleagues in the School of Education in developing a website of resources for trauma informed education. A student from the School of Law and Criminology had a three-month placement with AAI carrying out work relating to the Sale of Alcohol Bill and examining lobbying returns.

#### **Men's Health Forum Planning Group – Men's Health Week 2024**

AAI sits on the Men's Health Forum planning group that organises this annual All-Island awareness event. Men's Health Week ran from 10-16 June. One day of the week was dedicated to alcohol issues and AAI led a social media campaign exploring the impact of alcohol on men's health and well-being.



### **Mental Health Reform**

AAI is a member of Mental Health Reform, a coalition of organisations working to drive reform of mental health services. AAI has contributed to activities and statements particularly around the need for trauma informed services and action on the issue of dual diagnosis to ensure that those who have both a mental health concern and an alcohol problem receive appropriate care. AAI's CEO is a member the Board of Mental Health Reform and AAI's head of policy and advocacy is a member of MHR's policy advisory group. In 2024 AAI was pleased to take part in MHR's general election campaign.

### **Prevention and Early Intervention Network**

AAI is a member of this network of organisations which carry out research and advocate for policy solutions around early childhood interventions. This is in support of the Silent Voices initiative and the AAI goal of a childhood free from alcohol harm.

### **Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland**

AAI invited to give a talk on alcohol issues to pharmacy students.

### **Trinity College Dublin**

AAI was invited to contribute to a TCD course re ethics in sport and media. AAI also participated in a number of meetings with TCD academic staff on issues around the commercial determinants of health and the AAI CEO was invited to join a panel at a TCD event with Grant Ennis, author Dark PR: How Corporate Disinformation Harms our Health, on 21 March 2024.

### **University College Cork**

AAI is part of a three-year, UCC led project, funded by the Health Research Board, to examine improving public health through better implementation of alcohol policy: A multimethod study examining and addressing the factors influencing successful implementation.

### **University of Galway**

AAI provided input to a health promotion advocacy session for MA students in Nov 2024.

### **University of Limerick**

AAI's CEO was invited to give a presentation to students taking the Diploma in Drug & Alcohol Studies, University of Limerick, which is organised by HSE Addiction Services in February.

## Communications

An essential element of AAI's work is to bring our messages to a wide variety of audiences from the general public to policy makers and to our stakeholders. During 2024 we significantly redesigned our website giving it a fresh new look and enhancing its search engine optimisation. The site now includes multiple tools for visitors to engage with our campaigns.

We developed our production of podcasts, short videos and graphics for use on social media alongside our detailed reports on alcohol issues and press releases on multiple alcohol issues.

AAI has a podcast series 'Alcohol Uncovered, 30-minute episodes which gives the listener a comprehensive, independent analysis, both national and international, of the many complex issues related to alcohol use. In 2024 the series was extended to include episodes on:

- Alcohol in Sport
- Protecting children from alcohol advertising online
- Alcohol availability amplifies abuse
- Silent Voices - parental problem alcohol use



### Media releases

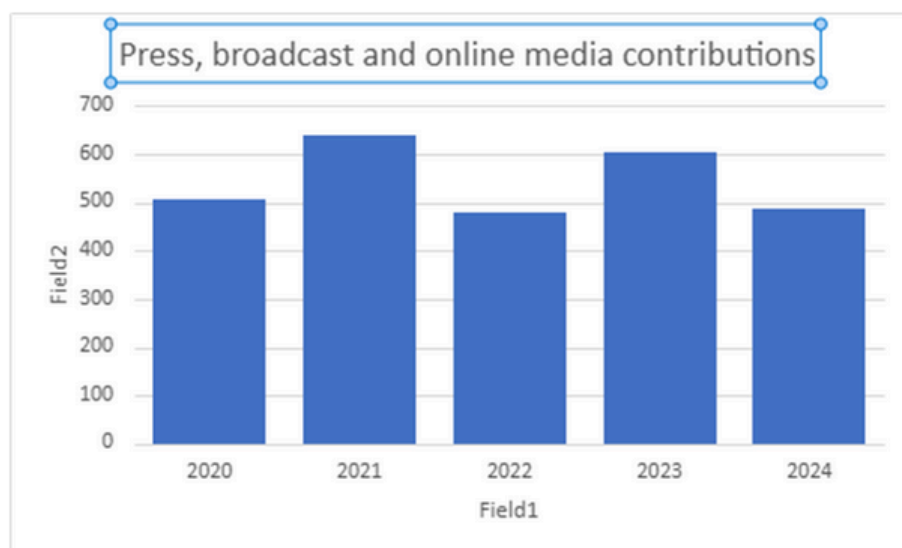
Throughout the year AAI issued 27 media releases on a variety of topics including the Sale of Alcohol Bill, road safety, alcohol treatment services, alcohol marketing, excise duties and parental problem alcohol use. Regular newsletters were also sent to our stakeholders throughout the year.

### Traditional media presence

AAI has a strong media presence. As well as issuing press releases, we are regularly approached to provide information and comment on alcohol issues. In 2024 we had:

- **Broadcast:** 226 contributions to local and national radio and television programmes
- **Press:** 77 contributions, quotes and/or commentary to both local and national press titles.
- **Online:** 186 contributions

The earned media value of all press and online features was € 3.5 million and estimated audience reach of 113 million.

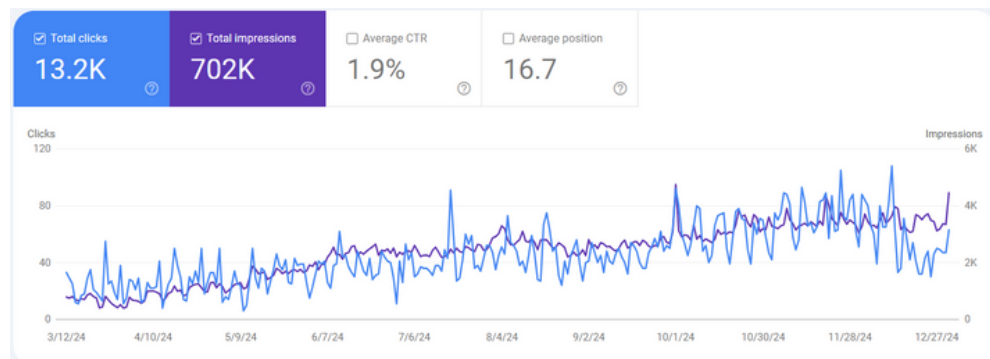


### AAI website <https://alcoholireland.ie/>

The Alcohol Action Ireland website continues to be a trusted source of independent analysis and information for a variety of stakeholders both from a media and public policy research perspective.

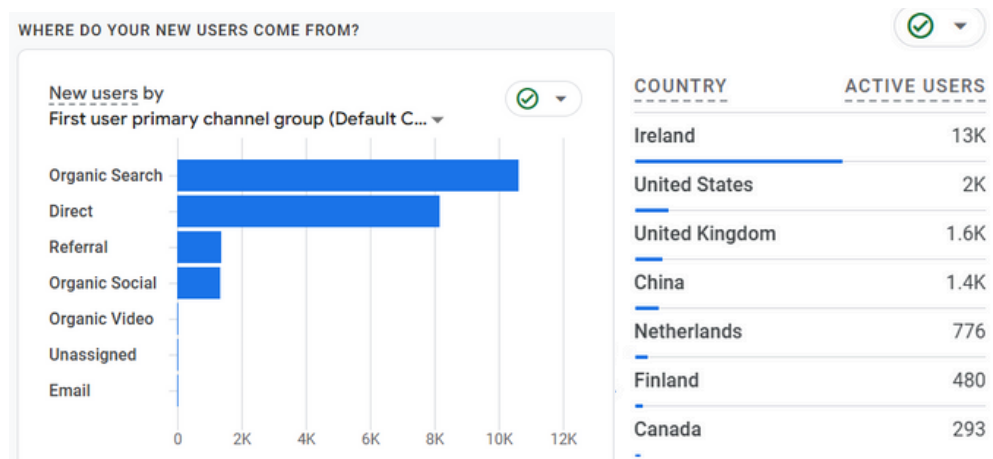
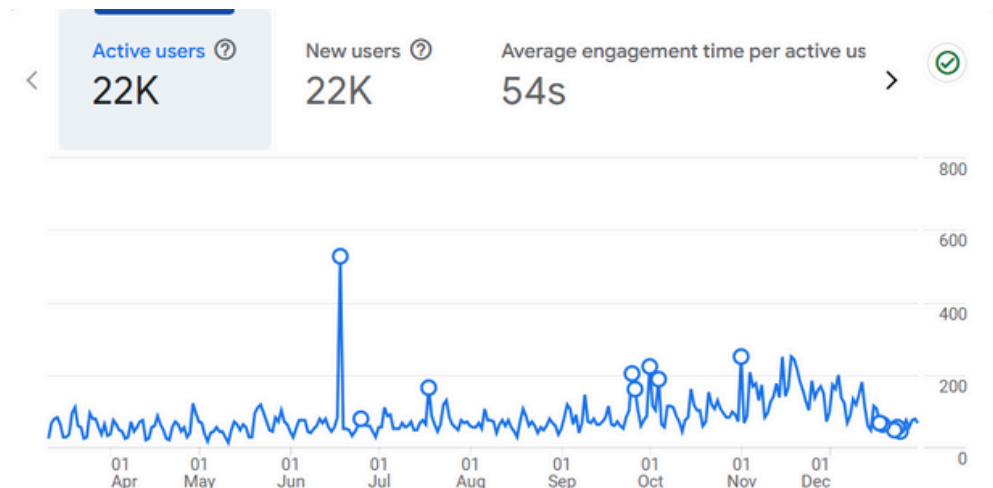
### Google Search (12-03-2024 to 31-12-2024)

NOTE: Data from Google Search Console collated since March 12, 2024



### Google Analytics (11-03-2024 to 31-12-2024)

NOTE: Data from Google Analytics collated since March 11, 2024



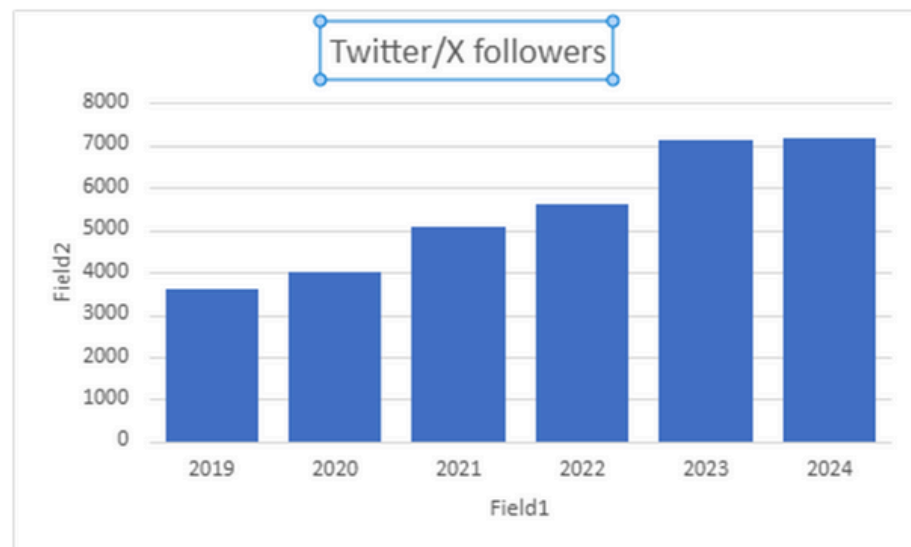


### Social Media profile

Social media is an important element in our communications, particularly for political advocacy.

Total X followers: 7,168.

AAI also maintains Facebook, LinkedIn and BlueSky profiles



## Governance

### Charities Governance Code

The Board of AAI draws expertise from across the fields of health, education, youth, finance and legal. It met regularly throughout 2024 providing oversight and specialist input to the work of AAI. Full details of its activities are outlined in AAI's Audited Accounts.

AAI is fully compliant with the Charities Governance Code.

### The way ahead

2024 was the final year of implementing our five-year plan and much has been achieved across its five goals although there is a significant threat to this progress from proposals in the Sale of Alcohol Bill. During the year AAI developed its new [strategic plan](#) which was launched in December and lays out our goals for the period 2025-2029. Our goals for the next period are:

- The establishment of a dedicated Government Office to reduce alcohol harms
- Require the alcohol industry to pay for the costs of alcohol harms in Ireland
- Protection of all our children from alcohol harms
- The provision of comprehensive services to address the harms caused by alcohol
- To be the trusted, independent voice in Ireland on alcohol policy and advocacy

Our work is specialised and needs financial support. We are very appreciative of the funding received in 2024 from the HSE, Hospital Saturday Fund and from individual donations. In 2025, we will work with our funders to secure support. We also aim to seek funding for research work as well as increasing the level of donations through philanthropy.

We look forward to a year bringing our vision of a society free from alcohol harm a step closer.



## Statement of Financial Activities at 31 December 2024

(These figures have not been audited. The full audited accounts will be published on the AAI website [alcoholireland.ie](http://alcoholireland.ie) when available)

<u>DRAFT SOFA @ 31 Dec 2024</u>	<b>DRAFT</b>		
	Unrestricted 2024 €	Restricted 2024 €	TOTAL 2024 €
Income from Charitable Activities GRANTS	282,244	5,605	287,849
Donations & Legacies DONATIONS	9,840	0	9,840
Other Income	2,287	0	2,287
Total Income	294,371	5,605	299,976
Expenditure On charitable activities	(277,276)	(6,276)	(283,552)
NET (Expenditure)/Income	17,095	(671)	16,424
Fund balances at beginning of year	138,563	13,052	151,615
Transfer of Funds	0	0	0
Fund balances at end of year	155,658	12,381	168,039

	<b>AUDITED</b>		
	Unrestricted 2023 €	Restricted 2023 €	TOTAL 2023 €
Income from Charitable Activities GRANTS	248,544	0	248,544
Donations & Legacies DONATIONS	4,617	0	4,617
Other Income	9,168	0	9,168
Total Income	262,329	0	262,329
Expenditure On charitable activities	(268,271)	(7,436)	(275,707)
NET (Expenditure)/Income	(5,942)	(7,436)	(13,378)
Fund balances at beginning of year	144,505	20,488	164,993
Transfer of Funds	0	0	0
Fund balances at end of year	138,563	13,052	151,615

## Other information

### Alcohol Action Ireland Team in 2024

CEO	Dr Sheila Gilheany
Policy	Jennifer Hough (resigned July 2024) Eoin Ryan (appointed Aug 2024)
Communications	Conor Keane
Intern student	Maegan Daniels, Feb-May 2024

### Board members of Alcohol Action Ireland

- Prof Frank Murray (current Chair), Consultant in Hepatology & Gastroenterology. M.B., B.Ch. B.A.O., M.D., F.R.C.P.I., F.R.C.P. (Ed)
- Catherine Brogan, Deputy CEO, Mental Health Ireland (resigned Sept 2024)
- Pat Cahill, company secretary, former President Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland
- Aidan Connaughton, chartered accountant, former partner and head of risk, Grant Thornton (appointed March 2024)
- Paddy Creedon, recovery advocate
- Michael Foy, Head of Finance, Commission for Communications Regulation
- Prof Jo-Hanna Ivers, Professor of Addiction, School of Medicine, Trinity College Dublin
- Dr Colin O'Driscoll, Clinical Lead, HSE Mid-West Addiction Services
- Dr Mary O'Mahony, Specialist in Public Health Medicine and Medical Officer of Health, HSE South
- Dr Bobby Smyth, Consultant Child & Adolescent Psychiatrist
- Anita Whyte, HSE Programme Manager for the National Clinical Programme for Dual Diagnosis (resigned Nov 2024)

### Silent Voices Advisory Group members

- Dr Judith Butler
- Dr Colin O'Driscoll
- Marion Rackard
- Barbara Whelan

### Voices of Recovery Working Advisory Group members

#### AAI Board members:

- Paddy Creedon
- Jo-Hanna Ivers
- Bobby Smyth

#### External members:

- Keith Cassidy
- Danielle Hughes



Company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital.

**Company No:** 378738

**CHY:** 15342

**Registered Charity Number:** 20052713

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