

Drinking it in

How alcohol sports advertising influences
child and youth consumption behaviour



About us

Alcohol Action Ireland (AAI) is the national independent advocate for reducing alcohol harm. 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 policy solutions with the potential to reduce that harm, with a particular emphasis on the implementation of the Public Health (Alcohol) Act 2018. Our overarching goal is to achieve a reduction in consumption of alcohol and the consequent health and social harms which alcohol causes in society.

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Summary

Alcohol is one of the most heavily marketed products in the world, and sport is a key strand of the industry's advertising strategies. As with the tobacco industry before it, and the gambling industry now, alcohol companies present their harmful products as all part of a good time at the sport.

The purpose of marketing is clear – it is to create a need or desire for a product. When it comes to alcohol this is interesting because alcohol is not a staple, it is not a necessary purchase, a market must be created for it – and new drinkers must be recruited to create, sustain, and expand that market – young people are an important part of this market.

Alcohol companies frequently use sports sponsorship to maintain high visibility, even in jurisdictions with advertising restrictions as they continuously come up with novel ways to circumvent legislation and sidestep the efforts of policy makers.

This report demonstrates how alcohol sports sponsorship, especially the use of 0.0 alcohol products, is exposing young people to significant levels of alcohol brand marketing. The insights in this report underscore the need for more comprehensive regulatory frameworks that address indirect marketing strategies and prioritise youth protection in sport sponsorship.

Recommendations

- Development of a coherent cross-government approach to alcohol marketing to children and teenagers, including a clearly defined goal to protect children and young people offline and online.
- Full implementation of the Public Health (Alcohol) Act 2018 – including controls on the content of alcohol advertisements.
- Closing the lacuna in the law which allows advertising of zero-alcohol products, using identical branding of the master brand alcohol product.
- A ban on sports sponsorship by alcohol companies, as originally proposed by the Steering Group Report on a National Substance Misuse Strategy in 2012.

Marketing

What is marketing?

Marketing can more be more broadly understood as the communication channel linking a product or service to targeted customers.[1] It aims to demonstrate product value, strengthen brand loyalty, and ultimately increase sales.[2] Marketers are, in essence, salespeople who communicate product value to customers. Formal marketing activity focuses on analysis, planning and control of the matching process, with special attention to the 4 Ps - product, price, promotion, and place.[3]

Therefore, we can say that marketing is how businesses connect with audiences and persuades customers to acquire and consume products and services. Or, to paraphrase the early 20th century advertising pioneer Claude Hopkins – the only purpose of advertising is to make sales.

“ The only purpose of advertising is to make sales ”

Alcohol marketing

Alcohol is one of the most heavily marketed products in the world with estimates on annual spending ranging from \$7.7bn to \$17.7bn.[4][5] In Ireland, the annual spend on marketing alcohol to the public was conservatively estimated to be €115m in 2021. The purpose of marketing is clear – it is to create a need or desire for a product. When it comes to alcohol this is most interesting because alcohol is not a staple, it is not a necessary purchase, therefore a market must be created for it – and new drinkers must be recruited to create, sustain, and expand that market.[6]

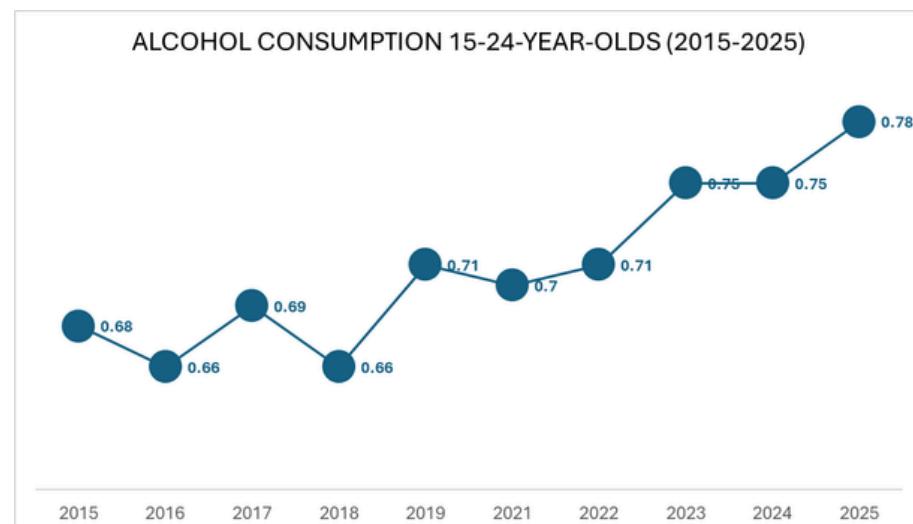
Alcohol branding is everywhere in sport - on jerseys, around and on the pitch, in the stands and in the titles of tournaments. Young people don't separate the logo from the hero. If the winning moment is wrapped in alcohol branding, it sends a powerful message: this is part of success, belonging and adulthood. When children and teenagers are repeatedly exposed to alcohol through the sports they love, it doesn't just build brand recognition, it builds expectation. It shapes attitudes early, lowers perceived harm, and links alcohol with achievement, teamwork and identity. That influence is subtle but it is real and brings with it a multitude of harms that can last a lifetime.

Kenneth Egan, Olympic silver medallist and recovery advocate

Alcohol marketing & young people

Young people are an important market for the alcohol industry. Comprehensive research clearly tells us that alcohol marketing, including advertising, sponsorship and other forms of promotion, increases the likelihood that adolescents will start to use alcohol, and to drink more if they are already using alcohol.[7] Recent research confirms that this pattern also applies to digital marketing with exposure to this type of marketing being related to starting to drink and the odds of binge drinking.[8]

It is within this context that we must view the 12% increase in youth drinking in Ireland over the past decade – including a 3% jump between 2024 and 2025.[9] Indeed, there is now a situation where young drinkers, 15-24 years, make up the largest proportion of the population consuming alcohol – 78% - significantly higher than the national average (71%).[10]



Alcohol consumption amongst 15–24-year-olds (2015–2025) as recorded by Healthy Ireland Survey's. NB. In 2019 Healthy Ireland data on alcohol was collected through the National Drug and Alcohol Survey, while in 2020 the Healthy Ireland Survey was cancelled due to Covid19. [11] [12] [13] [14] [15] [16] [17] [18] [19] [20]

Sport, alcohol marketing and young people

Alcohol companies frequently use sports sponsorship to maintain high visibility, even in jurisdictions with advertising restrictions.[21] Hence, alcohol sponsorship of sport is the cornerstone for a wide range of alcohol marketing activity in Ireland. Several marketing strategies are used to build links between alcohol, sports and elite athletes, which ultimately drives consumption of alcohol. Indeed, a systematic review of the 'Association Between Alcohol Sports Sponsorship and Consumption' reported a positive association between exposure to alcohol marketing and alcohol consumption.[22]

In particular, the research revealed a positive association between exposure to alcohol sports sponsorship and increased alcohol consumption amongst children and teenagers.[23] This tallies with recent research which found that young people demonstrate a strong recognition of alcohol brands through sports sponsorship exposure.[24] What this research is telling us is that advertising "activates" sports sponsorship to increase sales.[25]

This aligns with studies on the attraction of using celebrities in marketing because they are often seen as attractive, trustworthy and expert.[26] Indeed, this vulnerability of young people to celebrity and sporting endorsement has also been shown in the context of alcohol consumption. For example, research has shown that young people are more likely than adults to recall exposure to online alcohol advertisements and pictures including celebrities.[27]

While the alcohol industry likes to claim that there is no link between such sponsorships and alcohol consumption, the industry sponsors a wide range of sports events at home and abroad. In their annual report, Diageo states, "we are using sport to lift our brands, partnering with iconic sporting occasions giving us incomparable visibility across the globe".[28] This sponsorship includes Diageo building official partnerships with 20 different American NFL teams over the past five years and becoming the official beer of the English Premier League.

In Ireland Diageo is equally active, with Guinness being the official partner of the Six Nations Rugby Championship, and Rockshore, another Diageo product, the official beer of the League of Ireland.

“ In their annual report, Diageo states, 'we are using sport to lift our brands, partnering with iconic sporting occasions giving us incomparable visibility across the globe' ”

Within the League of Ireland itself there is also alcohol sponsorship. Guinness partnered with Bohemian Football Club as sponsor of the club's 2025 away jersey. Speaking about the sponsorship deal, Marketing Director of Guinness Ireland said: "The partnership celebrates the coming together of two Dublin institutions, to promote and support modern Irish football and the League of Ireland – that's something we're incredibly excited to be part of." [29] Indeed, the jersey will even be on sale at the Guinness Storehouse at St James's Gate. [30]

While at national football level, Carlsberg is advertised as the official beer sponsor of the Football Association of Ireland. [31] With such hazardous advertising of alcohol, it is little wonder that international research indicates that participation in sport can be associated with increased rates of hazardous drinking. [32][33][34]



Guinness partnered with
Bohemian Football Club as sponsor
of the club's 2025 away jersey

Image copyright Bohemian FC

Why use sport?

The purpose of marketing is to create a need or desire for a product. Alcohol is not a staple, it is not a necessary purchase, therefore a market must be created for it – and new drinkers must be recruited to create and expand that market. [35] From a commercial perspective, this makes sense for the alcohol industry because sport, especially sports such as football, have undergone rapid process of 'hypercommodification' which has resulted in increased presence and importance of sponsorship deals with alcohol producers.[36]

This process was recently writ large during the Australian Open where the tennis tournament saw eight alcohol sponsors partner with the tournament.[37] When alcohol companies spend millions to partner with major sporting events like the Australian Open, alcohol is everywhere you look, whether attending in person or watching at home. Therefore, sport is particularly attractive for commercial sponsors, as it provides positive brand associations with healthy activities and a gateway to global audiences [38] with the aim of driving sales, and thereby consumption.

“ Sport is particularly attractive for commercial sponsors, as it provides positive brand associations and a gateway to global audiences ”

Reminiscent of the tobacco industry playbook, alcohol companies present their harmful products as all part of a good time at the sport.[39] For instance, Budweiser, which has been “the World Cup beer” since the 1986 tournament will again be the official beer of the 2026 tournament in North America, after brewer AB InBev renewed with FIFA.[40] Announcing the deal the chief marketing officer of AB InBev stated “FIFA World Cup tournaments are the most popular sporting events in the world” AB InBev “are deeply connected to the fans and to football all over the world, which is why we're excited about extending the relationship with FIFA.”.[41]

Not to be outdone, Diageo provides sponsorship for football and rugby through Guinness. In 2024 Guinness engaged in its first ever global partnership in football by becoming the official beer of the English Premier League. Announcing the sponsorship a joint statement on the Premier League website exclaimed – “As the most watched football league on the planet where games are broadcast into 900 million homes in 189 countries, Guinness will bring together the beautiful game and the beautiful pint through its activation of the partnership with the Premier League”.[42]

The website for Guinness, the title partner and official beer of the Guinness Six Nations Rugby Championship, states "We'll be making sure you get the most from the game, so you can be sure of an epic match day experience whilst enjoying a great pint of the black stuff".[43] While announcing the partnership with the League of Ireland, Diageo's Head of Beer stated – "Through this partnership we are committed to investing in the passion of fans across the country. From local pubs to packed stadiums, Rockshore will be there, raising a pint to the magic of Irish football".[44]



Carlsberg, sponsor of the FAI, in its most recent annual report, said: "Brand marketing is an investment in the Group's brands... to drive the sale of branded products, sales campaigns and sponsorships."

Does sports sponsorship increase alcohol sales?

The alcohol industry often attributes sales increases directly to sports sponsorship activity. In their 2024 annual report Diageo stated: "Whilst Guinness has been the official partner of the Six Nations Rugby Championship since 2019, in 2024 the tournament helped it reach new heights. During this year's Six Nations, sales of pints of Guinness in stadiums were up 15% compared with 2022..."[45]

Meanwhile Carlsberg, sponsor of the FAI, in its most recent annual report, said: "Brand marketing is an investment in the Group's brands... to drive the sale of branded products, sales campaigns and sponsorships.". [46]

Such return on investment is not surprising given that sporting events are among the most watched programmes on television. For example, in 2025, four of the top ten most watched TV programmes in Ireland were the Guinness Six Nations matches.[47] What must also be remembered is that a significant portion of this audience are children, as Broadcasting Authority of Ireland data shows that seven out of ten of the top programmes watched by children are sporting events.[48]

The relationship between sports sponsorship and increased sales of alcohol is a specific concern for the drinking behaviour of children and young people. Research from Australia shows that children easily identify alcohol brands from sponsorship of sporting events, and this recognition influences children's behaviour. Academics have documented the techniques used by industry to appeal to children, and to ensure that children associate sport with these products such as alcohol from an early age.[49] Indeed, Diageo is currently the Number 4 broadcast advertiser to children in Ireland[50] where 50,000 children start to drink every year.

With such strong national and international evidence of the role the alcohol sports sponsorship plays in commencing and increasing sales and consumption, including amongst children and young people, we can see how such exposure is making team sports a risk factor for alcohol consumption.[51] This must change, children must be protected from such predatory marketing strategies.

“ During the 2024 Six Nations, sales of pints of Guinness in stadiums were up 15% compared with 2022 ”

How the alcohol industry exploits alcohol advertising protections

It was for the aforementioned reasons that a central aim of the Public Health (Alcohol) Act (2018) (PHAA) was to reduce the direct or indirect promotion of alcohol products, especially to children. In order to achieve this, Section 15 of the PHAA introduced a modest measure outlawing alcohol advertising on the field of play, but still allowing them on hoardings around the pitch, while Section 19 of the PHAA legislated for a daytime broadcasting ban on alcohol advertising, with no advertisements for alcohol products on television from 3am to 9pm and on radio on a weekday from 3pm to 10am the following morning.

These modest measures, which commenced in November 2021 and January 2025 respectively, aim to reduce the level of exposure of children to alcohol marketing, which is known to be a key driver of both initiating alcohol use by children and increasing use. However, alcohol sports marketing activities is significantly diminishing the effect of this modest regulation through two mechanisms.



Broadcast watershed

There are many sports events with alcohol sponsorships which are broadcast on TV before the watershed. These contain significant levels of alcohol advertising. For example, the Guinness Six Nations tournament has multiple references to the title sponsor including on hoardings around the pitch and on the pitch, on the ball and on players clothing. There are also multiple references to the brand by commentators. Research from Stirling University of a number of high-profile rugby matches has found alcohol brand references occurring at a rate of up to one every eight seconds.[52] Such research clearly shows children are being exposed to a high level of alcohol marketing during these matches in the pre-watershed time.

0.0 alcohol brand marketing

There is also the significant issue of 0.0/alcohol-free products being used to side-step alcohol advertising regulations. These have become prevalent in settings where alcohol is not allowed to be marketed e.g. on public transport and on

advertisements close to youth-oriented facilities such as schools and public parks. We are now also seeing alcohol brands broadcast on TV channels during the day and on the field of play in sports events, creating a further issue in terms of broadcasting as alcohol branding emblazoned on playing surfaces is then being carried on television. It is also of note that in the outdoor space where most of the PHAA restrictions are in place, zero alcohol ads made up 25% of the spend of the alcohol advertising category in 2022, up 31% from 2021,[53] even though these products only make up around 1% of the market.

The increase of 0.0/zero alcohol ads, especially during sports events, using the same logos and branding of full-strength products, is exposing children to alcohol brand marketing and the normalisation of alcohol-like products in new settings. Zero alcohol ads are not being pushed because the alcohol industry wants people to drink less but because of the aforementioned restrictions on where they can advertise their products.

Brand sharing means that children and young people who see people drinking what appears to them to be alcohol – because of the same branding – will at a young age be conditioned to think differently about when and where it is appropriate to drink alcohol.

Strong brand recognition, whether driven by advertising the brand through zero-alcohol or alcohol products, can result in higher sales and profit margins. Indeed, the marketers of Heineken 0.0 have admitted as much in their submission to a marketing awards ceremony in 2021, where their analysis of the marketing campaign stated that advertising the non-alcoholic product had a beneficial effect on Heineken main brand and compounded growth for the brand overall.[54]



0.0 alcohol advertising – what do children see?

With advertisers admitting that 0.0 product marketing is effective in increasing sales of core alcohol brands, it is little wonder that children interviewed as part of comprehensive research into young people's views of no- and low-alcohol product sponsorship stated "... I just saw the alcohol brand, I never really thought of the zeros".[55] While others as young as 14 were able to identify Guinness as the sponsor of the Six Nations rugby championship. Indeed, children in the same research mentioned that Guinness was highly visible during rugby union matches and that they had seen advertising around the stadium and on the pitch.[56]

- **Interviewer:** *Yeah, and what kind of sponsors do you see at rugby?... can you think of anything else?*
- **R2:** *Guinness.*
- **Interviewer:** *Guinness, yeah*
- **R2:** *Six Nations, yeah*

(Group 6, 14–15, Male).[57]

“ Research revealed that the use of 0.0 products, alibi marketing, and brand sharing tactics are used to sustain alcohol brand presence in sport, potentially normalising alcohol use and undermining policy efforts to reduce alcohol-related harm ”

Recent sports events in Ireland have revealed these practices first hand as big alcohol have sought to put their brand at the centre stage of important sporting events. Despite the PHAA restricting alcohol advertising on sports surfaces – be it a pitch, court, ring, course, etcetera – the alcohol industry has used 0.0 advertising to circumvent the law.

Last year Guinness displayed their logo and name with an additional, barely visible 0.0, onto the pitch during Six Nations matches, and are again doing the same in 2026. Similarly, during the recent World Cup qualifying games, Carlsberg displayed their logo behind both goal end lines, again, with a barely visible 0.0 tagged on. Meanwhile there was a particularly egregious example of a zero-alcohol product being advertised on the sports surface which is not even available on the market.[58] Forged Irish Stout 0.0 was prominently displayed on the boxing ring during a high-profile Katie Taylor fight in May 2023. The manufacturer claimed that the product was in development. This product is still not available (Feb 2026).

All these tactics by the alcohol industry are having serious impacts on children

and young people. Recent research revealed that the use of 0.0 products, alibi marketing, and brand sharing tactics are used to sustain alcohol brand presence in sport, potentially normalising alcohol use and undermining policy efforts to reduce alcohol-related harm.[59]

The findings, which revealed children and young people, as young as eleven years old, exhibit a high level of brand awareness in relation to alcohol, are a particular cause for concern. As one child put it – “I think I’ve noticed whether they say low or not or have the zeros. But I don’t think I’ve ever really, I’m not sure, I just saw the alcohol brand, I never really thought of the zeros”.[60]

The capacity of children and young people to recognise alcohol brands at such young ages underscores the pervasive nature of marketing in their environments. Research from Britain has again shown that sports sponsorship is a major source of exposure to alcohol marketing with many children and young people surveyed stating that they see alcohol marketing most of the time when they watch live televised sports events.[61] Indeed, this tallies with Australian research which found that exposure to 0.0 alcohol advertising prompts adolescents to think of alcohol in a similar manner to when they are exposed to alcoholic drinks.[62]

“ The capacity of children and young people to recognise alcohol brands at such young ages underscores the pervasive nature of marketing in their environment ”

The approach of the three major Irish sporting bodies to alcohol sponsorship poses questions in relation to the protection of children. The GAA is the most progressive in this regard given the longstanding existence of an Alcohol and Substance Abuse Prevention (ASAP) programme with the Health Service Executive and a move away from accepting alcohol companies as title sponsors. [63] However, while the organisation has prohibited alcohol sponsorship for underage teams,[64] alcohol sponsorship is still allowed at the adult level and there is a partnership arrangement at Croke Park with Diageo. Therefore alcohol brands are regularly witnessed by children and young people attending games.

The FAI and the IRFU have alcohol sponsorship deals with Carlsberg and Guinness respectively. Given the evidence of the links between alcohol sports sponsorship and child and adolescent drinking, it begs the question of how accepting alcohol sponsorship fits within sporting organisations child safeguarding policies. The FAI have a dedicated ‘drug and alcohol use’ section in their safeguarding policy,[65] while the GAA and IRFU make little mention of alcohol beyond coaches should not consume drink immediately prior to or while underage players are in a coach’s care.[66][67]

15.1 Drug & Alcohol use

- 15.1.1 Children can become affected by drugs and alcohol in many ways, someone within their families being a user or the children themselves become vulnerable to use
- 15.1.2 If an adult becomes concerned about either of these, they should try to discuss directly with the child's parent/guardian in the first instance.
- 15.1.3 If this is not possible, or the concerns remain, then the adult should report to TULSA as a child welfare concern. Please refer to section 5 on reporting.
- 15.1.4 There are also links to other agencies which may be able to provide more assistance on this area outlined within the appendices of the policy.

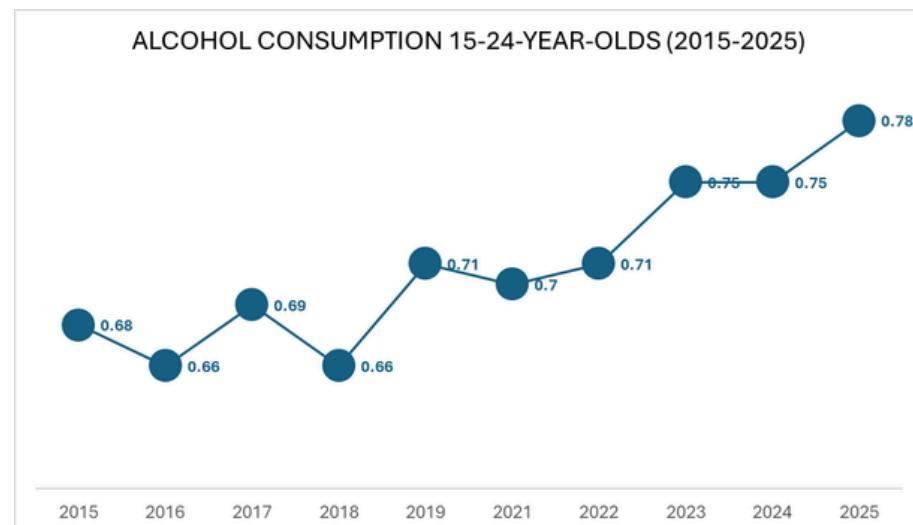
If these organisations are to stay true to the principles of protecting the welfare of children, then they would not accept alcohol sponsorship at any level given what we know about how sponsorship increases the likelihood that children and adolescents will start to drink, and drink more if already drinking, thereby increasing harm to children.

As has been stated throughout this paper – the purpose of marketing is to create a need or desire for a product, and the alcohol industry uses sport to drive increased sales and thereby increased alcohol consumption, and as previously stated, research and systematic reviews have reported a positive association between exposure to alcohol marketing and alcohol consumption – especially in relation to children and young people.

A decade of excess – increases in youth drinking

When we look at the data on youth drinking, we can get an appreciation for the seriousness of the situation. Alcohol is the most commonly used substance among young people in Europe and is most commonly the first substance used by children.[68] Alcohol is so deeply entrenched in our lives that it is easy to discount the health and social damage caused or exacerbated by drinking alcohol.[69] However, alcohol consumption among young people is a particular public health concern for government and policy makers as it carries significant health risks.[70]

While drinking among young people declined from the mid-2000s to the mid-2010s, since 2015, that downward trend has reversed with consumption by 15-24-year-olds increasing from 66% in 2018 to 78% in 2025.[71] Worryingly, this makes young people the largest alcohol consuming age group in the State. Even more concerning is that when drinking is initiated by young people it is accompanied by high levels of particularly risky and hazardous consumption - 64% regularly binge drink and one in three young drinkers has an Alcohol Use Disorder.[72] With such high levels of hazardous and binge drinking come associated harms across a range of areas, such as physical and mental health, criminal justice, road safety, economic productivity, amongst others.



Alcohol consumption amongst 15–24-year-olds (2015–2025) as recorded by Healthy Ireland Survey's. NB. In 2019 Healthy Ireland data on alcohol was collected through the National Drug and Alcohol Survey, while in 2020 the Healthy Ireland Survey was cancelled due to Covid19. [73] [74] [75] [76] [77] [78] [79] [80] [81] [82]

Young people and alcohol – what's the harm?

Alcohol is no ordinary commodity; it is a depressant drug with significant health implications for those who use it, and it is a significant risk factor for suicide, as recognised by the World Health Organization.[83] Young people classified as problem or hazardous drinkers are most likely to be in the severe category for depression and more likely to have engaged in deliberate self-harm or have attempted suicide. In almost three-quarters of suicide cases among young people, there was a history of alcohol and/or drug use.[84]

Research from the Netherlands found indications that alcohol consumption can have a negative effect on brain development in adolescents and young adults and entails a risk of later Alcohol Use Disorder.[85] There is also extensive evidence that drinking alcohol as a child, which is the norm rather than the exception in Ireland, is more likely to lead to heavy episodic drinking and is a known risk factor for later alcohol dependency.[86]

Little wonder, therefore, that the 2019–20 National Drug and Alcohol Survey[87] indicated that 70% of young male drinkers (15-24) met the criteria for hazardous drinking, with 38% of all drinkers aged 15–24 classified as having an alcohol use disorder (AUD). The same survey also found that 8% were considered to have possible alcohol dependence .

Globally, in 2019, alcohol use ranked second for attributable disability-adjusted life-years (DALYs) among adolescents and young adults aged 10-24 years.[89] Alcohol contributes to all the leading causes of death for young people: suicide, road traffic collisions, poisoning, and assaults, while long-term use is linked to at least seven different types of cancer, cardiovascular disease, and liver disease. [90]

“ The 2019–20 National Drug and Alcohol Survey indicated that 70% of young male drinkers (15-24) met the criteria for hazardous drinking, with 38% of all drinkers aged 15–24 classified as having an alcohol use disorder (AUD). The same survey also found that 8% were considered to have possible alcohol dependence .”

Furthermore, acute alcohol related conditions tend to be more common among younger people.[91] Alcohol-related hospitalisations among young people increased by 12% between 2015 and 2018 while the number of discharges with a diagnosis of alcoholic liver disease increased by 221% since 1995, to 90.8 per 100,000 persons, with the increase most pronounced among those aged 15–34 years (and those aged 65+). [92] Of all discharges with a diagnosis of alcoholic liver disease, 8.4% died while in hospital.

Harm also extends into the criminal justice system. In 2022 the Health Research Board analysed alcohol and other drug use among children and young people in Ireland. The HRB overview also examined Garda PULSE data and found that 14% of drink-driving arrests, 30% of drug-driving arrests, and 43% of controlled-drug-offences arrests were of young people aged 18-24 years. [93] While data from the Road Safety Authority indicated that one-half (49%) of young driver fatalities during 2013–2017, with a toxicology result available, were positive for alcohol.[94]

These are the harms which public policy measures try to mitigate and protect against – and limited advertising protections are one such measure. That is why this issue is so serious.

How to protect children and young people

This document has laid out much of the national and international research on the marketing of alcohol to children and young people through sport. While many of the techniques discussed are relevant to other products, the reason they are so dangerous when applied to alcohol is because it is no ordinary product – it is a depressant drug with significant health implications for those who use it, especially children and young people.[95]

Alcohol use is a risk factor contributing to child and adolescent drinking and leading to various harms such as illness, injury, crime, and accidents, amongst others; however, this can be averted through interventions and policies that reduce alcohol consumption.

The WHO has identified the following priority actions for alcohol policy in its so called – Best Buys [96] – as the foremost measures to reduce alcohol harm.

These are:

- Pricing to help regulate demand for alcoholic beverages
- Restrictions or bans on alcohol advertising
- Restrictions on the availability of alcoholic beverages

Essentially, the WHO contends that interventions on affordability, advertising, and availability are the most effective public policy measures that governments can take to offset at least some of the harm caused by alcohol.

In Ireland, the PHAA began the state's journey in implementing some of the WHO's best buys. It was this approach which underpinned some modest controls on advertising to protect children from exposure to alcohol marketing. However, as we have seen, these protections are being circumvented, and other parts of the legislation are still not fully implemented with important measures such as controls on the content of alcohol advertisements not yet introduced.

In addition, there is a clear need for a coherent approach to address alcohol marketing to children and teenagers, including a clearly defined goal to protect children and young people offline and online. This includes protecting children at, and watching, sport through a complete ban on sports sponsorship by alcohol companies. This policy objective was originally proposed in the Steering Group Report on a National Substance Misuse Strategy which laid the foundations for the PHAA.[97] Due to intense lobbying, a ban on sports sponsorship was dropped – the only recommendation of the steering group not to make it into the 2018 legislation.[98] That mistake must be rectified.

Finally, through strong regulation and enforcement, as well as tackling the manufactured relationship linking alcohol and sport by tackling the mechanisms deployed by the alcohol industry to create and sustain this link, we can keep children and young people safe from the malign impact of alcohol advertising.



Increase excise taxes on alcoholic beverages

PRICE



Enact and enforce bans or comprehensive restrictions on alcohol advertising

MARKETING



Enact and enforce restrictions on the physical availability of alcohol

AVAILABILITY

World Health Organisation's 'Best Buys' are policy solutions that are highly cost-effective, evidence-based, and yield a significant return on investment for governments to adopt

Conclusion

On the basis of national and international evidence, it is clear that alcohol sports sponsorship is exposing young people to significant levels of alcohol brand marketing.

0.0 alcohol ads are not being pushed because the alcohol industry wants people to drink less, but to circumvent the restrictions on where they can advertise their products. Brand sharing means alcohol brands are being marketed to the public outside of the legal parameters, and this is especially problematic in terms of its impact on children and young people given what we know about the intersection of alcohol advertising, the use of sport and celebrity endorsement, and increased consumption amongst children and young people.

These insights underscore the need for more comprehensive regulatory frameworks that address indirect marketing strategies and prioritise youth protection in sport sponsorship.[99] It is clear that alcohol brands will do everything they can to get around even the most modest of restrictions, therefore it is imperative that Government, the Minister for Health, the Health Service Executive, and Coimisiún na Meán ensure that the law and broadcasting rules protect against this.

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