

# Scotland drinking trends analysis

## Top stats to know

- 77% of adults in Scotland either do not drink or stick within the CMO guidelines. ([Scottish Health Survey](#), November 2022)
- 86% of young adults (16-24 year olds) either do not drink or stick within the CMO guidelines. ([Scottish Health Survey](#), November 2022)
- In Scotland the average weekly alcohol unit intake is 11.3 units. ([Scottish Health Survey](#), November 2022)
- In Scotland, the proportion of 15-year olds who drank in the last week has fallen by 27% since 1990, however, concerningly, there has been a 14% rise between 2015 and 2018. ([Scottish Government](#), November 2019)
- In Scotland, the estimated number alcohol-related violent crime incidents have fallen by around half in the last decade. ([Scottish Government](#), March 2021)
- Public Health Scotland has observed “a longer-term downward trend in the rate of alcohol-related hospital admissions to general acute hospitals...since 2007/08”.

## Consumption

- 77% of adults in Scotland either do not drink or stick within the CMO guidelines. ([Scottish Health Survey](#), November 2022)
- In all adults (16+), between 2011 and 2021, the proportion of:
  - Non-drinkers increased by 14%, from 14% to 16%.
  - Moderate/'lower-risk' drinkers (0-14 units a week) increased by 5%, from 58% to 61%. Women - declined from 65% to 67%; Men – increased from 51% to 54%.
  - Non or within CMO limits – Increased by 7% from 72% to 77%.
  - 'Hazardous' / 'Harmful' drinkers (over 14 units) decreased by 18%, from 28% to 23%. Women – declined by 11% (18-16%); Men – declined by 18% (38-31%).
  - Mean units per week intake declined from 13.1 to 11.3 units (well within NHS guidelines and lowest on record). Women – 8; Men – 14.8. ([Scottish Health Survey](#), November 2022)
- In terms of AUDIT scores – 86% of Scottish adults are defined as 'low risk'; 12% drinking at 'hazardous levels' and 1% are 'harmful levels'. ([Scottish Health Survey](#), November 2022)
- 9% of adults report 'ever having a problem with alcohol' and 91% never having a problem; whilst 1% report 'currently having a problem with alcohol' and 99% do not. ([Scottish Health Survey](#), November 2022)
- In all adults (16+), between 2010 and 2020, evidence between the standard Scottish Health Survey and 2020 Snapshot suggests:
  - The mean number of units consumed on the heaviest day of drinking is now 5.9, compared to 7.4. ([Scottish Health Survey](#), January 2021)

## Youth drinking

- In 2021, the proportion of Scottish 16-24-year olds who are:
  - Non-drinkers is 21% (up from 14% in 2011).
  - Drink 'moderately' is 65%, up from 54% in 2011.
  - Non / within CMO: 86%
  - Drink above 14 units is 14%, down from 27% in 2011 – lower than all other age groups.
  - Mean units per week are 8.4 units (down from 15.4 in 2011)). ([Scottish Health Survey](#), November 2022)

## Underage drinking

- In Scotland, the proportion of 13-15-year olds who drank in the last week has been in overall decline over the past 15 years, falling from 31.5% in 2004 to 13.25% in 2018 – a fall of 58%. ([Scottish Government](#), November 2019)
- The proportion of 13-15 year olds who have ever had a drink has declined from 78% in 2004 to 53.75% in 2018 – a fall of almost a third (31%). ([Scottish Government](#), November 2019)
- Since 1990, the proportion of Scottish 15-year olds to have ever had a drink has fallen by 15%, from 84% to 71.5% in 2018. For 13-year-olds, the proportion fell by 27% from 49.5% to 36%. ([Scottish Schools Adolescent Lifestyle and Substance Use Survey](#), November 2019)
- Between 2015 and 2018, the proportion of Scottish 15-year olds to have ever had a drink rose by 9%, from 65.5% to 71.5%. For 13-year-olds, the proportion rose by 31% from 27.5% to 36%. ([Scottish Schools Adolescent Lifestyle and Substance Use Survey](#), November 2019)
- Since 1990, the proportion of Scottish 15-year olds who drank in the last week has fallen by 27%, from 27.5% to 20%. For 13-year olds, the proportion fell by 35% from 10% to 6.5%. ([Scottish Schools Adolescent Lifestyle and Substance Use Survey](#), November 2019)
- Between 2015 and 2018, the proportion of Scottish 15-year olds who drank in the last week rose by 14%, from 17.5% to 20%. For 13-year olds, the proportion rose by 62.5% from 4% to 6.5%. ([Scottish Schools Adolescent Lifestyle and Substance Use Survey](#))
- Since 2006, amongst all 15-year olds, the proportion who believe it is acceptable to try alcohol to see what it's like has declined by 3%, from 81% to 78.5%. For 13-year olds, the proportion declined by 12%, from 58% to 51%. ([Scottish Schools Adolescent Lifestyle and Substance Use Survey](#), November 2019)
- Between 2015 and 2018, amongst all 15-year olds, the proportion who believe it is acceptable to try alcohol to see what it's like has increased by 7.5%, from 73% to 78.5%. For 13-year olds, the proportion increased by 27.5%, from 40% to 51%. ([Scottish Schools Adolescent Lifestyle and Substance Use Survey](#), November 2019)
- Since 2006, amongst all 15-year olds, the proportion who believe it is acceptable to try getting drunk to see what it's like has increased by 10%, from 44.5% to 49%. For 13-year olds, the proportion increased by 3%, from 16.5% to 16%. ([Scottish Schools Adolescent Lifestyle and Substance Use Survey](#), November 2019)
- Since 2008/09, the number of all-alcohol related hospital stays for 15-19-year olds has fallen by 34%, from 499.4 (European Age-sex Standardised Rates – per 100,000) to 330.4 (EASR – per 100,000) in 2018/19. ([ISD Scotland](#), November 2019)

## Crime

- The proportion of violent crime perpetrators believed to be under the influence of alcohol has fallen from 63% in 2008/09 to 44% in 2019/20. ([Scottish Crime and Justice Survey](#), March 2021)
- If we apply the estimated proportion of alcohol-related violent crime to overall estimated violent crime numbers, we see a 57% fall from the start of the data series in 2008/09, a 48% fall over the last decade from 2009/10 and a 12% fall compared to 2018/19 – though actual incidence numbers may be lower. ([Scottish Crime and Justice Survey](#), March 2021)

- There has been a continual fall in drunkenness and disorderly conduct over the past decade, with an 84% fall in the number of recorded offences, from 37,451 in 2010-11 to 5,961 in 2020-21. ([Scottish Government](#), September 2021)

### Drink driving

- Since 2010, drink driving accidents have fallen in Scotland by 64%, from 530 to 190. ([UK Department for Transport](#), August 2022)
- The total number of fatal accidents has fallen from 20 to 10 fatal accidents, though have fluctuated throughout the period. ([UK Department for Transport](#), August 2022)
- The total number of deaths has remained stable at 20 deaths, though has fluctuated throughout the period. ([UK Department for Transport](#), August 2022)
- The number of those killed or seriously injured has fallen from 230 to 80 (-65%). ([UK Department for Transport](#), August 2022)
- The number of total casualties has fallen from 750 to 250 (-66.6%). ([UK Department for Transport](#), August 2022)

### Hospital admissions

- In 2020/21, there were 35,124 alcohol-related hospital admissions (stays) in Scotland. ([Public Health Scotland](#), February 2022)
- In 2020/21, the rate of alcohol-related hospital admissions to general acute hospitals was 614 per 100,000 populations and was 10% lower than the rate recorded during 2019/20 (681 per 100,000). ([Public Health Scotland](#), February 2022)
- Public Health Scotland suggest that "The COVID-19 pandemic and measures put in place to respond to the pandemic are likely to have contributed to the decrease observed in 2020/21". ([Public Health Scotland](#), February 2022)
- However, PHS also observe that "a longer-term downward trend in the rate of alcohol-related hospital admissions to general acute hospitals has been observed since 2007/08 when the rate peaked at 855 per 100,000 population." ([Public Health Scotland](#), February 2022)
- Alcohol-related hospital admissions have fallen from 38,970 in 2010/11 to 33,015 in 2020/21 (-15%) and 23% from a high point in 2007/08 (43,038). ([Public Health Scotland](#), February 2022)
- The number of Scottish Ambulance Service callouts involving alcohol fell from 31,009 in 2018 to 28,451 in 2019 (-2,558). ([Scottish Parliament](#), March 2020)

### Deaths

- There were 1,245 alcohol-specific deaths registered in Scotland in 2021, a further 4% increase on the previous year (1,190 alcohol-specific deaths) which itself was the lowest figure since 2013 (1,002) was recorded. The 2021 figure represents the highest total since 2008 (1,316). ([National Records of Scotland](#), August 2022)
- Prior to the pandemic, alcohol deaths have generally fallen since their peak of 1,417 registered in 2006. ([National Records of Scotland](#), August 2022)
- The death rate was 22.3 per 100,000 in 2020, which was an increase compared to 21.5 in 2019 and 18.6 in 2019 (lowest since 1996), though still marginally lower compared to 2010 (22.8). ([National Records of Scotland](#), August 2022)
- The rates of male alcohol-specific deaths (31.4 deaths per 100,000) were more than double the rates for females (14.71 deaths per 100,000). ([National Records of Scotland](#), August 2022)
- Males accounted for over two-thirds (67%) of alcohol-specific deaths. ([National Records of Scotland](#), August 2022)

- The mortality rates for the age 45-64 and age 65-74 age groups are the highest, and have been the highest since the data was first available. For age 25-44, the rate of mortality has generally fallen since 2006. ([National Records of Scotland](#), August 2022)

### COVID-19 consumption

[Public Health Scotland Report](#), February 2022:

- “Population-level alcohol consumption in Scotland was lower following the start of the COVID-19 pandemic than in 2017–19. The pandemic and related restrictions, particularly to on-trade premises, are likely to have contributed to this decrease.”
- “Increased rates of alcohol specific death for some groups may support existing evidence that drinking at hazardous and harmful levels may have increased for some groups, despite consumption reducing at the population level. Of concern is the potential that groups with high levels of alcohol consumption before the pandemic may have increased their alcohol consumption, had reduced access to hospital treatment for alcohol related conditions, and potentially experienced higher rates of mortality as a consequence.”