

Fact sheet on a SAFER WHO European Region: developments in alcohol control policies, 2010-2019

This fact sheet provides a brief overview of the current status of the alcohol-attributable burden of disease in the WHO European Region and of the changes in alcohol consumption between 2010 and 2016. It also highlights the state of implementation of the five high-impact strategies of the WHO-led SAFER initiative in 2016 and 2019. The five letters of the SAFER initiative stand for: (1) **S**trengthen restrictions on alcohol availability; (2) **A**dvance and enforce drink-driving countermeasures; (3) **F**acilitate access to screening, brief interventions and treatment; (4) **E**nforce bans or comprehensive restrictions on alcohol advertising, sponsorship and promotion; and (5) **R**aise prices on alcohol through excise taxes and pricing policies.

Figure 1: Total alcohol per capita consumption (15+) in litres of pure alcohol among current drinkers (2016)

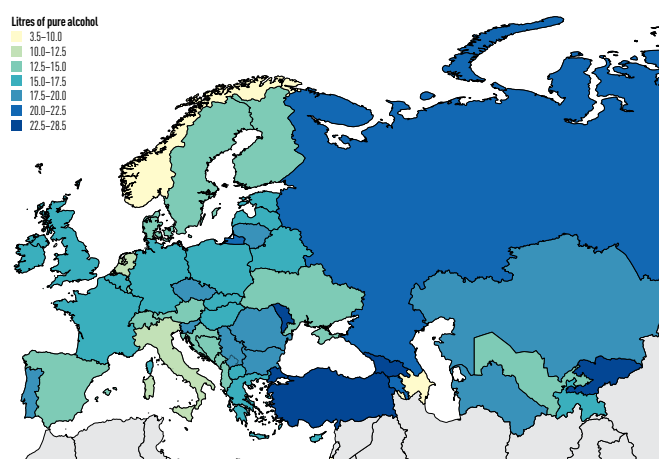


Table 1: Relative change in total APC (15+ years) at country level between 2010 and 2016 (%)

	Total APC 2010 (litres of pure alcohol)	Total APC 2016 (litres of pure alcohol)	Relative change 2010-2016 (%)
WHO European Region	11.2	9.8	-12.5
Albania	7.9	7.5	-5.6
Andorra	11.4	11.3	-0.7
Armenia	5.6	5.5	-2.1
Austria	12	11.6	-3.0
Azerbaijan	2.9	0.8	-72.2
Belarus	17.5	11.2	-36.1
Belgium	11.4	12.1	6.8
Bosnia and Herzegovina	7.3	6.4	-12.4
Bulgaria	12	12.7	5.6
Croatia	11.2	8.9	-20.5
Cyprus	11.3	10.8	-4.5
Czechia	14	14.4	2.9
Denmark	10.9	10.4	-4.4
Estonia	12.4	11.6	-6.8
Finland	12.6	10.7	-14.9
France	12.2	12.4	3.0
Georgia	10.4	9.8	-5.5
Germany	12.9	13.4	3.3
Greece	10.4	10.4	-0.1
Hungary	12.1	11.4	-5.7
Iceland	7.4	9.1	22.9
Ireland	12.3	13	5.4
Israel	2.9	3.8	30.2
Italy	7	7.5	7.0
Kazakhstan	9.3	7.7	-17.2
Kyrgyzstan	10.1	6.2	-38.7
Latvia	11.6	12.9	11.2
Lithuania	15.1	15	-0.9
Luxembourg	12.6	13	3.2
Malta	7	8.1	16.2
Montenegro	11	8	-27.3
Netherlands	10.4	8.7	-16.6
North Macedonia	6.3	8.1	28.1
Norway	9	7.5	-17.0
Poland	11.4	11.6	2.3
Portugal	13.5	12.3	-8.8
Republic of Moldova	17.9	15.2	-15.4
Romania	15	12.6	-15.9
Russian Federation	15.8	11.7	-26.1
Serbia	11.7	11.1	-5.2
Slovakia	11.9	11.5	-3.5
Slovenia	11.5	12.4	10.1
Spain	10.5	10	-5.0
Sweden	9.5	9.2	-3.4
Switzerland	11.4	11.5	1.2
Tajikistan	2.4	3.3	35.9
Turkey	2.2	2	-10.3
Turkmenistan	6	5.4	-9.0
Ukraine	14.3	8.6	-40.2
United Kingdom	12.3	11.4	-7.0
Uzbekistan	3.2	2.7	-16.2

Alcohol use in the WHO European Region in 2016

- The WHO European Region has the world's highest alcohol consumption levels and the highest proportion of current drinkers in the population.
- In 2016 60% of adults (age 15+ years) were current drinkers, with 69% of men and 51% of women having consumed alcohol in the past 12 months.
- The average total alcohol per capita consumption (15+) was 4.2 litres of pure alcohol for women and 16.0 litres for men.
- On average, women drank the equivalent of 84 litres of beer – the most frequently consumed alcoholic beverage in the Region – and men drank the equivalent of 320 litres of beer, meaning that the men's drinking level was four times higher.
- 13% of women and 40% of men were engaging in heavy episodic drinking, defined as an intake of 60 g or more of pure alcohol on at least one occasion over the previous 30 days, putting them at risk of short- and long-term health and social problems.
- When considering current drinkers only (and excluding lifetime abstainers and former drinkers), the average consumption was 8.2 litres of pure alcohol in women and 23.1 litres in men, the equivalent of 164 litres and 462 litres of beer, respectively.

AVERAGE CONSUMPTION (DRINKERS ONLY)



Changes in alcohol consumption in the Region

- On average, alcohol per capita consumption (15+) in the WHO European Region declined by 12.5% from 11.2 litres in 2010 to 9.8 litres in 2016.
- Between 2010 and 2016, alcohol consumption increased in 17 and decreased in 34 out of 51 Member States that reported data.
- A total of 16 countries, most of which are located in the eastern part of the Region, showed a relative reduction of at least 10%, thereby meeting the global noncommunicable disease target.
- Heavy episodic drinking declined by 16% between 2010 and 2016 – from 17% to 13% in women and from 47% to 40% in men.

On average across the WHO European Region, alcohol per capita consumption (15+ years) fell by 12.4%, from 11.2 litres to 9.8 litres, between 2010 and 2016. However, differences between countries were large and levels of consumption remained higher than in any other WHO region

Alcohol-attributable burden of disease in the WHO European Region

Alcohol consumption has a causal impact on more than 200 health conditions (diseases and injuries) and affects nearly every organ system of the body. Overall, cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) make up the largest mortality category and are the leading cause of death globally and in the WHO European Region. Assessed conservatively, 10.5% of all deaths from CVDs in the WHO European Region in 2016 were caused by alcohol. However, alcohol has also a huge impact on other leading mortality causes: 29.6% of all deaths due to unintentional injury and 38.8% of those due to intentional injury are attributable to alcohol as well as 30.5% of deaths due to digestive diseases and 6.2% of cancer deaths.

Figure 2: Age-standardized mortality rate per 100 000 attributable to alcohol use in the WHO European Region (2016)

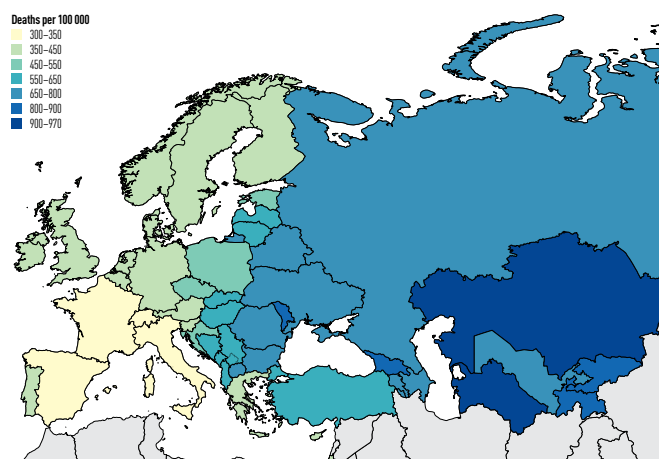
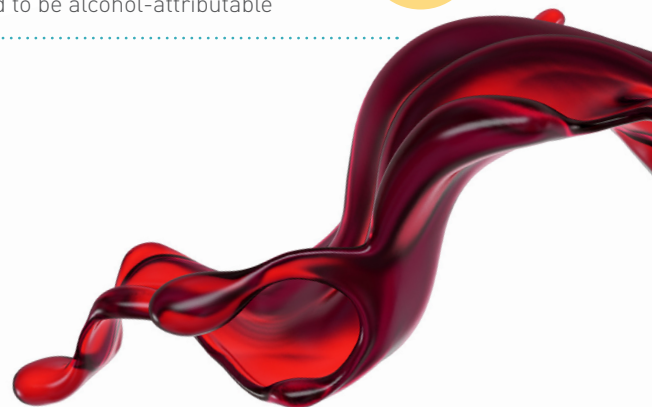


Table 2: Alcohol-attributable fractions of all-cause deaths, by country and sex (2010 and 2016)

Country	Alcohol-attributable fraction (%)						Proportional change (%)		
	2010			2016			2010-2016		
	Females	Males	Total	Females	Males	Total	Females	Males	Total
WHO European Region	9.8	14.5	12.2	7.8	12.3	10.1	-2.0	-2.2	-2.1
Albania	3.9	8.7	6.6	3.7	8.5	6.4	-0.2	-0.2	-0.2
Armenia	3.2	8.7	6.1	3.3	8.7	6.0	0.0	0.0	-0.1
Austria	2.6	9.3	5.8	2.3	8.6	5.3	-0.2	-0.8	-0.4
Azerbaijan	4.2	9.5	7.0	3.7	7.8	5.9	-0.4	-1.6	-1.0
Belarus	29.6	28.9	29.3	24.2	23.8	24.0	-5.4	-5.1	-5.2
Belgium	2.8	7.7	5.2	2.8	8.0	5.4	0.0	0.4	0.2
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1.2	7.8	4.5	1.5	7.7	4.6	0.3	-0.1	0.0
Bulgaria	2.6	7.9	5.4	2.9	8.7	5.9	0.3	0.8	0.6
Croatia	3.1	11.3	7.1	2.4	10.0	6.1	-0.8	-1.2	-1.0
Cyprus	1.6	6.2	4.0	1.4	5.6	3.6	-0.2	-0.6	-0.4
Czechia	3.2	10.1	6.7	2.9	9.4	6.2	-0.2	-0.7	-0.5
Denmark	3.1	9.6	6.2	2.6	8.6	5.6	-0.5	-1.0	-0.01
Estonia	21.3	22.4	21.8	19.7	20.7	20.2	-1.5	-1.7	-0.02
Finland	2.9	10.4	6.7	2.5	9.1	5.8	-0.4	-1.3	-0.01
France	3.0	9.9	6.5	2.7	8.9	5.8	-0.3	-1.0	-0.01
Georgia	4.5	12.1	8.3	4.2	12.0	8.1	-0.3	-0.1	0.00
Germany	2.8	8.5	5.5	2.7	7.9	5.2	-0.1	-0.5	0.00
Greece	1.9	5.6	3.8	2.0	6.0	4.0	0.1	0.4	0.00
Hungary	3.5	12.4	7.9	3.2	10.8	6.9	-0.3	-1.6	-0.01
Iceland	1.5	5.0	3.3	2.0	5.6	3.8	0.5	0.6	0.01
Ireland	3.2	7.7	5.5	2.8	7.3	5.1	-0.4	-0.3	0.00
Israel	0.9	4.2	2.5	0.8	4.2	2.5	-0.1	0.1	0.00
Italy	2.0	6.0	3.9	1.7	5.7	3.6	-0.3	-0.3	0.00
Kazakhstan	5.4	15.2	10.8	5.5	14.6	10.3	0.0	-0.6	0.00
Kyrgyzstan	6.3	16.8	12.2	5.6	15.1	10.9	-0.7	-1.7	-0.01
Latvia	19.8	22.5	21.1	20.7	22.4	21.5	0.9	-0.1	0.00
Lithuania	26.8	25.3	26.1	25.4	23.6	24.5	-1.4	-1.7	-0.02
Luxembourg	3.6	8.8	6.2	3.0	8.7	5.8	-0.6	-0.1	0.00
Malta	1.3	5.3	3.4	1.5	5.4	3.5	0.2	0.1	0.00
Montenegro	4.8	9.5	7.2	3.8	8.6	6.2	-1.0	-0.8	-0.01
Netherlands	1.8	5.8	3.8	1.7	5.7	3.6	-0.1	-0.1	0.00
North Macedonia	1.3	6.3	3.9	1.4	6.9	4.3	0.1	0.6	0.00
Norway	1.5	5.6	3.5	1.4	5.4	3.4	0.0	-0.2	0.00
Poland	2.8	11.4	7.4	2.9	10.6	6.9	0.0	-0.8	0.00
Portugal	2.3	10.3	6.4	2.2	9.6	5.9	-0.1	-0.7	0.00
Republic of Moldova	31.0	29.3	30.1	25.3	26.9	26.1	-5.7	-2.4	-0.04
Romania	6.1	13.7	10.1	4.7	12.0	8.6	-1.3	-1.6	-0.02
Russian Federation	23.2	26.9	25.1	19.9	23.1	21.6	-3.3	-3.7	-0.04
Serbia	1.5	8.4	5.0	1.6	7.3	4.5	0.1	-1.1	0.00
Slovakia	3.2	12.1	7.8	3.2	12.9	8.3	0.0	0.9	0.00
Slovenia	3.8	14.1	9.0	3.5	12.7	8.0	-0.4	-1.4	-0.01
Spain	2.0	7.2	4.7	1.8	6.7	4.3	-0.2	-0.5	0.00
Sweden	1.3	5.5	3.4	1.5	5.8	3.6	0.2	0.3	0.00
Switzerland	2.3	7.1	4.6	2.2	7.0	4.5	-0.1	-0.1	0.00
Tajikistan	2.5	6.4	4.7	2.9	7.3	5.3	0.3	0.9	0.01
Turkey	0.5	2.2	1.5	0.5	2.1	1.4	0.0	-0.1	0.00
Turkmenistan	4.9	12.4	9.1	5.0	12.6	9.3	0.1	0.2	0.00
Ukraine	25.8	25.5	25.6	19.8	21.2	20.5	-6.0	-4.3	-0.05
United Kingdom	2.7	7.1	4.8	2.5	6.9	4.6	-0.2	-0.2	0.00
Uzbekistan	3.6	8.9	6.5	3.6	8.9	6.5	0.0	0.0	0.00

- Globally, the WHO European Region has the highest proportion all of deaths and disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) that are caused by alcohol.
- When considering all causes of death in 2016, 928 841 deaths in the WHO European Region were estimated to be alcohol-attributable. Every day around 2545 people died from alcohol-attributable causes.
- Every 10th death within the Region was alcohol-attributable – in the age group of 20–24-year-olds this was nearly one in every fourth death, highlighting the damaging impact of alcohol that starts early in the life course.
- More than 30 million DALYs in the Region were alcohol-attributable – i.e. more than 30 million healthy years of life were lost to alcohol consumption.
- The proportions of alcohol-attributable deaths and DALYs have decreased between 2010 and 2016.
- Rates of age-standardized mortality and DALYs varied strongly across the WHO European Region, with the highest values observed in eastern Europe.
- However, these were also the countries which have reduced their alcohol-attributable burden the most between 2010 and 2016.

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The stark regional differences indicate a clear “harm per litre” gradient in the WHO European Region, with eastern European countries experiencing greater harm despite similar or lower levels of drinking.

Implementation of alcohol policies in the WHO European Region: focus on the five SAFER areas

When measured with the WHO alcohol policy scoring tool and its composite policy indicators for the 10 action areas of the European Action Plan to Reduce the Harmful Use of Alcohol 2012–2020 (EAPA), the average implementation rate for all 10 areas across the whole WHO European Region was only 55%.

Figure 3: Average policy scores for the 10 EAPA action areas, by country (2016)

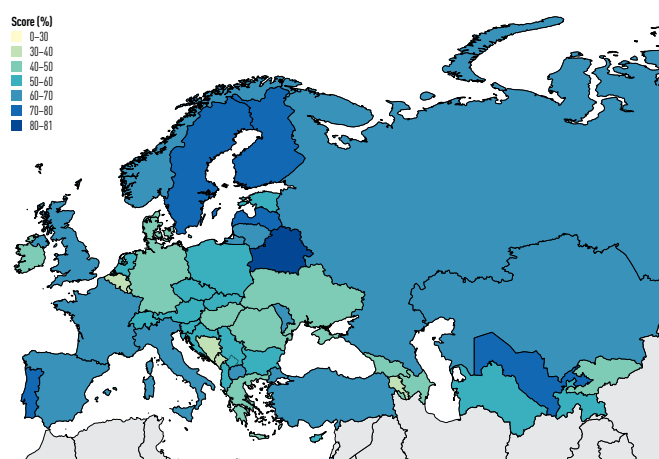
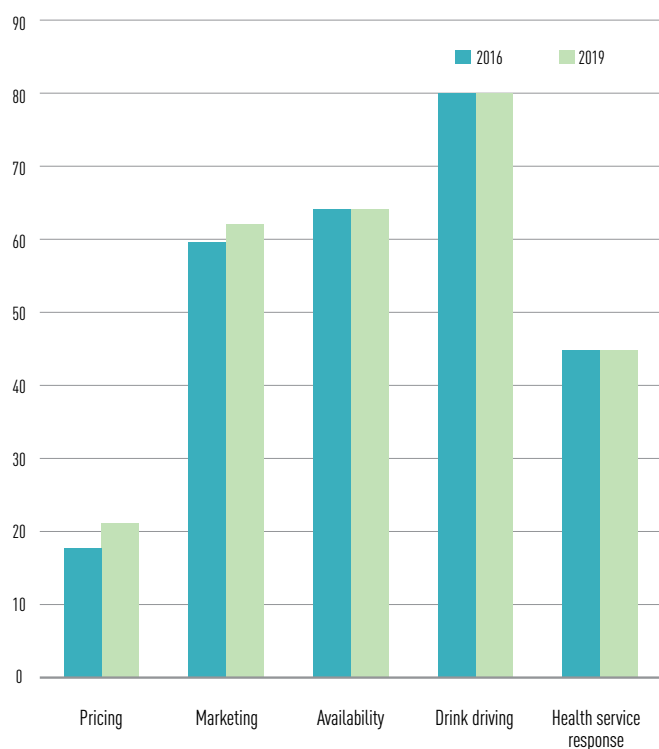


Figure 4: Implementation of the five SAFER areas in the WHO European Region



- In 2016 the mean score for all 10 areas across the entire Region was 54, with a median of 59.
- There are clear differences in alcohol policy implementation across countries, although regional patterns are not easy to identify.
- Overall, 35 of the 53 countries reported average EAPA scores of at least 50%, but only two – Belarus and Portugal – reported scores of at least 75%.

Implementation of the five SAFER areas in the WHO European Region

- In 2016 of the five SAFER areas, only drink-driving countermeasures were sufficiently implemented across the Region (80%), while health service responses (provision of screening and brief interventions) (45%) and pricing measures (17%) were poorly implemented.
- Between 2016 and 2019, almost no progress was made in the WHO European Region on implementation of evidence-based control measures and specifically the five SAFER high-impact interventions.
- Pricing policies – despite being the most cost-effective type of policy, recognized as a “best buy” measure to reduce the disease burden – were the worst-performing policy area in the Region in 2016 and 2019. Even worse, the available data suggest that alcohol had become more affordable in the Region as a whole because of Member States’ failure to adjust alcohol taxes for inflation.
- Overall, higher policy implementation rates were observed in northern and eastern countries of the Region, corroborating emerging evidence of the progress made by eastern European countries in implementing alcohol control policies and reducing the alcohol-attributable burden of disease.

Reference: WHO (2021). Making the WHO European Region SAFER. Developments in alcohol control policies, 2010–2019. (<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/340727>, accessed 13 April 2021).