Observatoire français des drogues et des tendances addictives

TUS

July 2025

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CIPPAL-ADAM

AUDIOVISUAL AND DIGITAL ALCOHOL MARKETING: REGULATION AND YOUTH EXPOSURE IN IRELAND



CREDITS

The comparison of International Alcohol Control Policies with a focus on Audiovisual and Digital Alcohol Marketing (CIPPAL-ADAM) was carried out by a wide partnership of research-oriented organisations. The interpretations, analyses, and conclusions presented in this report are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the OFDT. The OFDT assumes no responsibility for the opinions expressed or for any errors or omissions contained herein.

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Implementation support

Eric Janssen (OFDT) for his support for quantitative analysis and the company Efficience 3 (France) for implementing the web survey.

Acknowledgement

From OFDT, Frédérique Million for layout and graphic design; Anne de l'Eprevier for editing.

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IN A FEW POINTS

- This report details the findings of a mixed-method six-nation study (including France, Italy, Finland, Lithuania, Switzerland, Finland & Ireland) examining experiences of, attitudes to, and opinions about alcohol advertising via audiovisual and digital alcohol means in Ireland. This report also details the legislative and regulatory frameworks relevant to alcohol advertising and marketing in Ireland.
- Examination of the regulatory framework for alcohol advertising in Ireland identified that historically, Ireland has introduced little legislative regulation, preferring instead to allow industry self-regulation.
- At the time of this study, only minimal legislation had been enacted to regulate alcohol advertising in Ireland. In addition, the alcohol industry had already developed strategies to effectively evade much of this regulation.
- This study involved survey data collected via a data collection company from 436 people in Ireland aged 15 to 21, as well as 20 interviews with 16-19 year olds conducted by the authors.
- Participants in both the interviews & surveys reported very high levels of alcohol advertising exposure in audiovisual and digital environments.
- Most exposure to alcohol advertising occurred while simply browsing online social media sites. Tik-Tok and sports related events were noted as two particularly common avenues of exposure to alcohol advertising, with influencer posts also being noted as important in this regard.
- Most respondents were not particularly concerned about their own level of exposure to pro-alcohol content in audiovisual and digital environments. However, they were concerned about the impact of such exposure on younger viewers.
- Similarly, most respondents were not overly disapproving of the alcohol industry engaging in such advertising. Respondents appeared to assume such industry advertising was simply to be expected, even if inappropriate.
- Interview respondents were generally accepting of alcohol consumption by peers, as long as it was in moderation.
- Most respondents felt that they personally were not impacted by alcohol industry advertising. Despite this, there is clear evidence from both datasets that such advertising does work. In the survey, 26% of respondents stated that they had seen an ad that made them want to try an alcohol brand, and that 21% of them had since done so.
- Experimentation following viewing pro-alcohol content on audiovisual and digital media had a distinct social element. Pro-alcohol information was shared, and decisions to experiment with alcohol were made in tandem with friends.
- Alcohol as an integral element of Irish culture was noted as a potential driver of alcohol.
- Respondents were able to identify a range of risk factors associated with alcohol, including drink-driving, liver damage, alcohol poisoning, low mood, addiction, and aggression/ unruly behaviour. Respondents did not mention other impacts such as cancer, FASD, heart disease, and domestic violence/ sexual assault/ rape.
- Respondents had little knowledge of the alcohol advertising regulatory frameworks in Ireland. However, they were supportive of current legislation, such as the minimum age to purchase alcohol, and felt the Government had a responsibility to protect the public.
- Despite their high level of support for alcohol control, respondents felt enforcement was problematic and relatively easy to evade.

INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organisation (WHO) and its Member States regard strategies to regulate the commercial availability of alcohol as essential public health measures. (WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2021). At the global level, the ban on the sale of alcohol to minors (generally aged under 18) and restrictions on alcohol advertising are essential levers, and the rigour with which these provisions are applied is a crucial issue. The health authorities recommend regulating marketing practices to protect minors, in particular limiting the use of certain media and the subjects that can be exploited through advertising (PAHO, 2017 ; WHO, 2018, 2019). In Europe, these measures can vary from country to country, as can the types of alcohol to which they apply. As self-regulation by alcohol producers and advertisers is contrary to their economic interests and therefore unlikely to be effective in protecting minors from advertising (Pierce et al., 2019), bodies independent of the alcohol industry should be entrusted with the task of monitoring compliance with the law in this area.

Given the multifactorial complexity of the responses implemented, it is essential for states to better distinguish what can be learned from specific national experiences and trajectories in the implementation of alcohol control policies. Thus, in November 2024, with the financial support of the *Fonds de lutte contre les addictions (FLCA, French Fund for combating addiction)*, the French Monitoring Centre on Drugs and Addictions (OFDT) launched a comparison of International of Alcohol Control Policies (CIPPAL), with a focus on Audiovisual and Digital Alcohol Marketing (ADAM). This study is referred to here by the acronym 'CIPPAL-ADAM, and aimed to describe and compare the factors and patterns of young people's exposure to audiovisual and digital alcohol marketing in six European countries: Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania and Switzerland. The CIPPAL-ADAM study was carried out over 2024 and 2025, by six European organisations with an expertise in mixed methods (universities, advocacy or research bodies), following a common methodology under OFDT coordination.

This monograph summarises the study results for Ireland. It thus includes contextual data on the Irish system of regulation and control regarding audiovisual and digital alcohol advertising, as well as results on young people's attitudes towards this type of advertising and their exposure to advertising.

Box 1. Alcohol consumption among Irish teenagers

In Ireland, alcohol remains widely used among adolescents and adults, with 73% of individuals aged 15 or over reporting consuming alcohol during the past 12 months (Healthy Ireland, 2024). In 2024, more than a third (38%) of people aged 15 or over reported drinking alcohol at least once a week, with 22% drinking alcohol multiple times per week. Among 15-24 year olds, the figure is lower at 11% of females and 15% of males. Binge drinking (i.e. drinking 6 or more standard drinks [each containing 10g of pure alcohol] in a session) remains common. In the general population aged 15 and over 28% binge drink on a typical drinking occasion. However, among the 15-24 year old cohort this figure is 38%, with men being notably higher at 50%, compared to women at 26% (Healthy Ireland, 2024).

Results from the Health Behaviour In School-aged Children (HBSC) report show decreases in alcohol consumption in recent years amongst young people in Ireland. In 1998, 33.0% of HBSC respondents aged 15-17 reported that they had ever been really drunk. By 2022, this figure had fallen to 17.8%. There was also a decrease in the proportion of young people aged 15-17 who had ever drunk alcohol who reported having had their first alcoholic drink at age 13 or younger. This figure declined from 42.1% in 1998 to 24.8% in 2022.

METHOD

The general objective of CIPPAL-Alcohol Marketing is to show how young people in the six countries compare in their way of identifying and being exposed to audiovisual and digital marketing techniques. In other words, the study assesses the empowering capacity (marketing awareness) and the protective nature (less exposure) of different control systems, from a comprehensive statutory system (Lithuania) to less restrictive statutory systems (Finland, France) or more liberal systems appealing to self-regulation by economic players (Ireland, Italy, Switzerland). To this end, investigators have pursued four operational objectives to be declined in each country case:

- Describe the national regulations – legal/statutory restrictions and/or industry self-regulation –- on alcohol marketing (AM) via audio-visual and digital media and the related control and enforcement framework.
- Assess the knowledge, acceptability and attitudes of minors and young adults regarding the national AM regulation and how they perceived its efficacy/role in reducing incentives to purchase and consumption, peer or family pressure to drink alcohol, etc.
- Analyse how minors and young adults perceive their exposure to AM via the audiovisual media and the Internet, considering various explanatory variables (age, gender, drinking status.
- Investigators have implemented a mixed method based on a documentary analysis on the regulations, sociological interviews on norms and perceptions and a web survey on ADAM exposure and related factors. The recruiting and data collection methods were submitted to the internal ethical procedure of each partner.

The review of the national regulation system of alcohol marketing was based on agreed guidelines with regards to types of sources, bibliographic databases, keyword sets and search strategies. The selection of references followed the PRISMA rules for traceability.

Data collection has targeted young people aged between 16 and 19 for semi-structured interviews. Selection criteria based on age (minors and adults), gender, alcohol consumption and socio-economic background (parents' profession) were applied when recruiting interviewees, in order to achieve a diversity of profiles. Multi-channel recruiting was used (via social media, by direct soliciting or via a poll firm) and prior parental consent was required for minor respondents. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed and anonymised. Data was processed with Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (Atlas or Nvivo 14-15).

For the websurvey, samples varied in number between countries, with three larger samples for Finland, France and Italy. Sampling was based on common quotas applied to respondents belonging to access panels, with a minimum target of 30% minors in each national sample and an age range extending from 15 to 21, for reasons of feasibility. Common quotas referred to gender (men, women) cross-referenced with age (minors, adults), activity (schooling vs employment). For the three larger samples, additional quotas related to more detailed categories of schooling, the size of urban unit, region, and the parents' occupation were applied. Final data were weighted on the basis of these quota criteria.

Incentives worth 15 euros on average were awarded to young interviewees and panel respondents to the web survey. The final samples of the set of interviews and web survey are respectively detailed in Tables 1 and 2, for [country]."

Table 1. Sampling for interviews-Ireland

		N
Total sample		20
Age	16-17	10
	18-19	10
Average age	/	17.6
Gender	Male	10
	Female	10
	Non binary	0
Area	Rural	9
	Urban	11
Last month use	Never	9
	1-2 times	6
	Once a week or so	5
	Everyday or so	0
Lifetime non drinker	/	1
First drink	With relatives	9
	With friends	10
	Never	1
	Alone	0
Average age (first drink)	/	15.4
Drunkenness	Yes	14
	Not	6
Economic situation	Not well-off	2
	Fairly well-off	15
	Very well-off	3

Table 2. Sampling for the websurvey-Ireland

		N	%
Total sample		436	100
Age	15-17	132	30.3
	18-21	204	69.7
Average age	/		18.4
Gender	Male	209	47.9
	Female	222	50.9
	Non binary and other	5	1.1
Male	15-17	64	14.7
	18-21	145	33.3
Female	15-17	67	15.4
	18-21	155	35.6
Non binary and other	15-17	1	0.2
	18-21	4	0.9
Drinking status	Non drinkers	108	24.8
	Drinkers	328	75.2
	Occasional drinkers	54	12.4
	Regular drinkers	274	62.8
Socio-economic categories	Superior category	200	45.9
	Intermediate category	215	49.3
	Lower category	21	4.8
Education	Higher education	145	33.3
	General secondary school	146	33.5
	Other secondary school	17	3.9
Activity	At school, univesity	308	70.6
	Employed	103	23.6
	Inactive	25	5.7

THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF ALCOHOL ADVERTISING REGULATION IN IRELAND

Foundation and rationale of alcohol advertising regulations

The opening lines of the first document by the Irish State to mention the words alcohol and policy in the title reads: 'The drinking of alcohol is an integral part of Irish social life and is accepted as such by most people. It plays an important role in our social, cultural and sporting activities' (Department of Health, 1996; Barry and Lyne, 2023). This approach to alcohol sets the scene for the State response, or more accurately its lack of response, to alcohol from its formation in the early 1920s to the height of the economic boom, the so-called 'Celtic Tiger', and subsequent economic crash in 2008.

Until relatively recently, Ireland had traditionally operated a laissez-faire approach to alcohol (Lesch & McCambridge, 2022a). It has been suggested that it was incompatible in the political culture of an independent and post-colonial Ireland for the state to mandate alcohol control policies (Butler, 2009). This inability to dictate policy is in direct contrast to policies implemented in, for example, the Nordic countries. The Irish Government's neo-liberal policy climate mitigated against government action on alcohol policy for many years (Butler, 2009). Neo-liberalism is based on an ethos of individualism and minimal state intervention, rather than more welfare-oriented communitarian approaches. Butler (2009) suggests that much of Ireland's economic success in the late 1990s and early 2000s was often attributed to a social partnership model of governance, which created what he describes as an *'atmosphere of consensualism*'. In this environment, Butler (2009) suggests, the state, as mediator between the public health lobby and the drinks industry, was unwilling to seriously challenge the drinks industry.

It must be acknowledged that alcohol policy is extremely complex as it impacts multiple dimensions of policy (Baggott, 1990). For example, 11 different government departments in Ireland have a stake in alcohol related policy (Hope, 2006). Evidence of this acknowledgement can be seen as far back as 1984 in Ireland when a mental health policy report advocated unsuccessfully for an 'interdepartmental' approach to alcohol policy (Study Group on the Development of the Psychiatric Services, 1984).

Ireland's long history of minimal leadership on alcohol control is not surprising given the ample evidence that exists detailing close links between the alcohol industry and Government in Ireland (Hope, 2006; Lesch & McCambridge, 2021; 2022b; Leung et al., 2024; Houghton, 2012). Alcohol advertising is one area in which such minimal regulation is evident. Although the impact of alcohol advertising on teenagers in Ireland has been noted in several reports (Dring & Hope, 2001; Hope, 2009), until very recently, the Irish Government largely accepted the alcohol industry's self-regulation of alcohol advertising (ASAI, 2016; BAI, 2017; Department of Health & Children, 2008).

Implementation story

Alcohol consumption in Ireland increased dramatically in the 20 years leading up to the collapse of the 'Celtic Tiger'. From 1987 to 2006 adult per capita consumption increased from 9.8 litres of pure alcohol per year to 13.4 litres (Hope, 2008). Consumption peaked at 14.3 litres per annum in 2001 (Butler & Hope, 2015). This figure was three times the per capita consumption recorded in 1960 (Lesch & McCambridge, 2021). Alcohol controls in Ireland were loosened as the economy boomed (Butler & Hope, 2009), despite a number of reports highlighting alcohol misuse issues (Department of Health, 2002; 2004). For example, the relaxation of regulations meant that between 1998 and 2007, in Ireland, the number of wine off-licences increased from 483 to 3691 (Barry and Lyne, 2023).

This dramatic increase in alcohol consumption meant that alcohol-related harms were becoming increasingly obvious in both health statistics and in communities (Hope & Butler, 2010; Lesch & McCambridge, 2021). Alcohol was finally acknowledged as a drug in official Irish policy in 2008 (Department of Justice, 2008). Using terminology introduced by Babor *et al*. (2003), this report also acknowledged that alcohol was 'no ordinary commodity'. In 2012, the Department of Health launched a Steering Group Report on a National Substance Misuse Strategy (Department of Health, 2012). Crucially, this report acknowledged alcohol as a societal problem in Ireland and adopted a public health approach, looking at environmental determinants of health. This report represented such a serious break with prior government positions that alcohol industry representatives refused to endorse it and launched two minority reports in protest (Lesch & McCambridge, 2021; Alcohol Beveridge Federation of Ireland, 2011; Mature Enjoyment of Alcohol in Society Limited, 2011).

Although this Report represented a notable break with previous Government positions, in real terms, very little changed. As one commentator remarked, this episode represented '*A Perfect Demonstration of the Absence of Leadership*':

The launch of this important report was notable by the lack of energetic and vocal support that it immediately received from Government. Opposition from the alcohol industry and their representative organisations was inevitable. Of greater concern though was the lack of endorsement of the report, combined with immediate efforts by four Government Ministers to undermine it. The Minister for State with responsibility for primary care only appeared briefly at the beginning of the launch before leaving, while the Minister for Health did not even attend the launch to offer support. The inclusion of numerous Government Departments on the Steering Group makes the distancing of the Government from the report all the more bizarre. (Houghton, 2012: 145)

Ireland's 'uneasy' and 'problematic' relationship with alcohol continued without major legislative intervention over the next few years (Lesch & McCambridge, 2021; Houghton & Houghton, 2013). However, as Lesch & McCambridge (2021) note there was a '*growing political sophistication and effectiveness of public health advocates in Ireland*'. They suggest this is evident in their coalition building, reframing of the alcohol issue to 'alcohol-related harm', and political learning. Research continued to focus on alcohol harms, notably framing the issue as alcohol's harm to others, known as H2O (Hope & Barry, 2018; Barry & Lyne, 2023).

Efforts then began in earnest on what would be the first piece of alcohol-related legislation that would also start to tackle the issue of alcohol advertising and marketing in Ireland. Although led initially by others, the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill eventually came to the fore while Leo Varadkar was Ireland's Minister for Health. Although initially reluctant to progress this Bill, it has been noted that Varadkar's perspective changed towards adopting a more public health and prevention-oriented perspective (Lesch & McCambridge, 2021). His support of the Bill became crucial when he subsequently became Taoiseach (Prime Minister) and made it one of his priorities.

The Public Health (Alcohol) Bill was fought at every stage by the alcohol industry. Protracted negotiations went on for several years, while the alcohol industry worked hard to defeat and delay it. Some insight into the extraordinary level of such lobbying was subsequently revealed after examination of Ireland's Lobbying Register. This examination revealed that in the year before the passing of the Public Health (Alcohol) Act, 2018 alcohol industry representatives met government officials 361 times (O'Halloran, 2020). It is instructive to examine industry opposition and the arguments they invoke to deny, delay and defer legislation.

Lacy-Nichols *et al*. (2022) have outlined the 'corporate playbook' tactics routinely used by industries such as Big Tobacco and Big Alcohol. These are outlined in Box 2.

Box 2. Methods employed by the corporate playbook

Tactic	Definition
Intimidate and vilify critics	Use smear tactics, intimidation, and lawsuits (or threats of) against industry critics, such as scientists, academics, health practitioners, advocates, and civil society groups
Attack and undermine legitimate science	Fund counter-studies, sponsor conferences, recruit corporate scientists, skew data, distort evidence, claim manipulation, exaggerate uncertainty, plant doubt, minimise the severity of the issue, insist the problem is very complex, and demand balance for both sides
Frame and reframe discussion and debate	Promote narratives of personal or individual responsibility, moderation, consumer freedoms, free markets, the nanny state, government intrusion, and businesses as part of the solution
Camouflage actions	Leverage front groups and pseudo civil-society groups to act as a mouthpiece for the industry, create the appearance of independence, and avoid bad publicity
Influence the political process	Lobby, make political donations, recruit former politicians, and participate in policy development to influence, block, weaken, and delay policy and regulatory outcomes
Develop corporate alternatives to policies	Create voluntary self-regulation, codes, and commitments to delay or pre-empt public health interventions
Deploy corporate social responsibility and partnership	Donate to community groups, sports, entertainment, and non-governmental organisations, and develop public–private partnerships with governments and credible organisations to foster corporate goodwill and distract and deflect from harmful products or behaviour
Regulation and policy avoidance and evasion	Impede the implementation of policies through legal challenges in national and international courts, alongside use of legal loopholes, tax avoidance, corporate restructuring, and violation of laws, treaties, and codes

The WHO Regional Office for Europe (2024) has recently released a similar document, the *Alcohol Policy Playbook* (WHO, 2024). Extensive lobbying and use of pseudo-civil society organisations such as MEAS has already been noted above.

Not surprisingly, an Irish media industry-sponsored report described the advertising restrictions included in Ireland's Public Health (Alcohol) Bill as 'draconian'. Using standard industry tactics, they also questioned the efficacy of the Bill:

> *International research does not provide conclusive evidence that a ban or severe restrictions on advertising of alcohol would achieve the desired effect of reducing the consumption of alcohol and particularly consumption amongst young people. It is far from certain that an evidence base exists to justify a ban or significant restrictions on advertising as contained in the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill 2015. Hence, it is very questionable if the benefits to be derived from a ban on advertising would outweigh the costs.* (Power, 2017:2)

In classic style, this report also questioned whether the proposed legislation was necessary at all.

> *The latest data on alcohol consumption from the WHO report (WHO, 2024) show clearly that alcohol consumption in Ireland is on a declining trend. In 2005, Ireland had the 9th highest level of alcohol consumption per capita in the EU at 14.41 litres of pure alcohol per capita. In 2016, Irish consumption had reduced to 10.9 litres per capita, a decline of 24.4%, placing the country 18th in the EU. The ESPAD report shows that for students in Ireland aged 15 to 16 years old, the lifetime use of alcohol declined by 15% between 1995 and 2015. In Ireland 35% of students in 2015 had consumed alcohol in the previous 30 days, which compares to an EU average of 48%; and 28% had engaged in heavy episodic drinking in the previous 30 days, which compares to an EU average of 35%... These declines have occurred in the absence of the draconian advertising measures contained in the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill 2015.* (Power, 2017: 3)

Of more relevance in this examination are the arguments put forward in attempts to curtail alcohol industry marketing. For example, the report employed economic arguments against the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill, arguing that alcohol restrictions would adversely impact the Irish media industry:

> *The benefits of such restrictions might be to reduce consumption of alcohol; the costs would mainly be seen through the reduction in revenues for media and the accompanying consequences…By imposing the proposed new regulatory regime, the revenue tap for media will be turned off and media will suffer as result. The proposed changes will most likely lead to fewer advertisements, which will result in less finance for professional Irish media content, and the result is likely to be job losses and less consumer choice. It is estimated that the proposed measures would cost the out of home media industry around €11 million per annum; broadcasting media €7 million and print media €2 million per annum.* (Power, 2017: 2-3)

Unsurprisingly, the industry-funded report also argued that Ireland's self-regulatory framework for alcohol advertising was adequate:

> *Ireland already has a strong regime in place to restrict the advertising and marketing of alcohol, and the voluntary code of conduct is very rigid and is supported by all relevant media bodies.* (Power, 2017: 3)

Regulations on alcohol advertising in force in 2024

Legal provisions

The Public Health (Alcohol) Act was eventually passed in 2018 and represents the first time that Ireland legislated for alcohol as a public health issue (Lesch & McCambridge, 2021a; 2021b). The roll-out of the Act has subsequently been slow, and this has been criticised in many quarters (Critchlow et al., 2022; Critchlow & Houghton, 2024). The legislative landscape controlling alcohol marketing in Ireland, therefore, is dynamic and evolving. Many of the provisions of the landmark Public Health (Alcohol) Act, 2018, are still being implemented. Prior to administering the survey and conducting the interviews for this research, only a small number of the Act's provisions concerning alcohol advertising had been implemented.

Those implemented before this research include Section 17, which prohibits the sale, manufacture, or import into Ireland of alcohol branded children's clothing or children's clothing that promotes alcohol consumption. This Section of the Act was enacted in the first tranche of legislation in 2018. Also of relevance and enacted in 2018 was Section 22 of the Act, which restricted alcohol products and advertising in supermarkets and shops to specified, and often gated, areas. Other relevant sections enacted before this research include Sections 14 and 20, which were enacted in 2019, and Sections 15 and 16, which followed in 2021. Section 14 of the Act introduced a prohibition on alcohol advertising in certain places. The legislation is quite specific and prohibits alcohol advertising on: state-owned land;

public services vehicles; trains and light rail; bus stops and bus, light rail and train stations. Section 14 also prohibited alcohol advertising in or within 200 metres of schools, creches, or local authority playgrounds. Section 20 of the Act bans alcohol advertising in general areas of cinemas, excluding licensed premises within them, as well as prohibiting onscreen alcohol adverts unless the film has an age rating of 18.

Section 15 of the Act prohibits the advertisement of alcohol products on or in sports areas. This section also prohibits alcohol advertising at child-oriented events. Section 16 prohibits alcohol industry sponsorship of children-oriented events and motor vehicle racing, such as Formula 1.

Regulations on alcohol advertising in force since 2024

Shortly after this research was conducted Section 19 of the Act came into force. This piece of legislation prohibits alcohol advertising on television on any day between 03:00 hrs and 21:00 hrs. This legislation also bans alcohol advertising on weekdays (Monday-Friday) on radio between 15:00 hrs and 10:00 hrs, thus effectively banning it during the working week to within school hours.

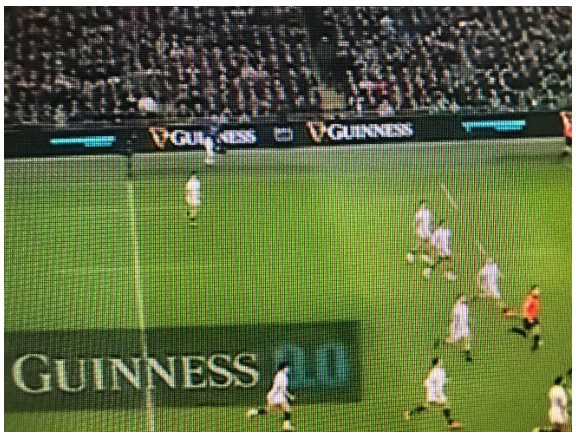
It should be noted that Section 18 of the Public Health (Alcohol) Act, 2018, has not been implemented to date, and there is currently no date set for its enactment. This Section of the Act will police advertising in publications. As well as prohibiting alcohol advertising in child-oriented publications on the front and back covers of publications, it will limit alcohol advertisements to a maximum of 20% of total advertising space within a publication.

Limitations in legal provisions

Having outlined the advertising restrictions incorporated into the Act it is important to highlight their limitations (Houghton & McInerney, 2020). The Act has been strongly criticised for its minimal distance exclusion zone for alcohol advertising around schools, creches, and playgrounds of just 200m, as well as the specificity of this ban (Houghton & McInerney, 2019). It has also been critiqued for the lack of similar alcohol advertising exclusion zones around other premises that may also be used by vulnerable populations, including youth clubs, hospitals, rehabilitation centres, and libraries (Houghton & McInerney, 2020). However, one of the most obvious limitations of the Act, as it is currently enforced, relates to the very limited restrictions in advertising in sporting venues. Section 15 of the Public Health (Alcohol) Act, 2018 states:

During a sports event a person shall not advertise, or cause to be advertised, an alcohol product in or on a sports area… “sports area” means an area, whether indoors or outdoors, where participants participate in sporting activities, or competitors compete in sporting competitions, and includes a playing pitch or area, a swimming pool, an athletics track, a dog or horse racing track or a motor racing track.

Figure 1. Variations in Prohibitions on Advertising Alcohol Under the Public Health (Alcohol) Act, 2018



As can be seen from Figure 1, this legislation only prohibits actual alcohol adverts on the pitch itself. It is still legal to advertise alcohol on the hoardings around the edge of the pitch. Equally problematic is the alcohol industry's substitution of advertising full-strength alcoholic drinks for zero and low alcohol brands. Although the alcohol industry may claim that it is promoting a healthier product, the question must be asked: What do consumers take away from such advertising (Dumbili *et al*., 2025)? As can be seen from Figures 2 and 3, the zero-alcohol products use almost identical brand livery as the well-established full-strength alcohol versions. Critchlow *et al*. (2023) have discussed the challenge posed by this tactic. However, Section 2 of the Public Health (Alcohol) Act, 2018 states:

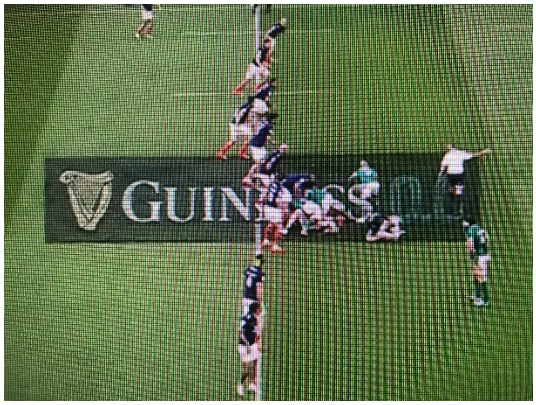
"advertising" means any form of commercial communication with the aim or direct or indirect effect of promoting an alcohol product and includes, in relation to an alcohol product, every form of recommendation of the product to the public including—

(a) (i) a statement of the name of a manufacturer or importer of an alcohol product, or the name of any brand of alcohol product, or

(ii) a statement of any trade description or designation, or a display or other publication of a trademark, emblem, marketing image or logo, by reference to which the product is marketed or sold

Therefore, the use of the iconic logos such as the Guinness harp clearly contravenes this prohibition, and yet the Irish state has not acted to censor or prosecute such advertising.

Figure 2. No-Alcohol Advertising at Irish Rugby Matches





The issue of the lack of enforcement of public health related advertising prohibitions raises another important issue in Ireland. Ireland has a long history of minimal compliance of public health related legislation. This is already evident in relation to enforcement of the Public Health (Alcohol) Act, 2018 (Houghton & Lombard, 2024; Houghton, 2023), as well as in the cognate field of tobacco control (Houghton et al., 2020; Houghton & Lombard, 2025). Evidence of this deficit can also be seen in relation to both road traffic laws (Disclosures Tribunal. (2017a; 2017b; 2022), and environmental protection legislation (Lynch *et al*., 2019). It has been argued that the enforcement of alcohol-control legislation in Ireland is inhibited by issues such as legal complexity and concerns over a lack of judicial enforcement (Purves *et al*., 2022). This can result in a preference for soft mandates rather than prosecution.

As noted above legislation concerning alcohol marketing is an evolving landscape. It should be noted, therefore that on the 21st October 2024 Coimisiún na Meán (2024) produced Ireland's first Online Safety Code, as per the Online Safety and Media Regulation Act, 2022 (Government of Ireland, 2022). Some elements of this code came into effect in late 2024, with a delay in other sections. This Code covered audiovisual commercial communications harmful to children and specifically mentioned '*audiovisual commercial communications for alcohol aimed specifically at children…'.* This Code also covered audiovisual commercial communications harmful to the general public and prohibits '*audiovisual commercial communications which encourage immoderate consumption of alcoholic beverages'.*

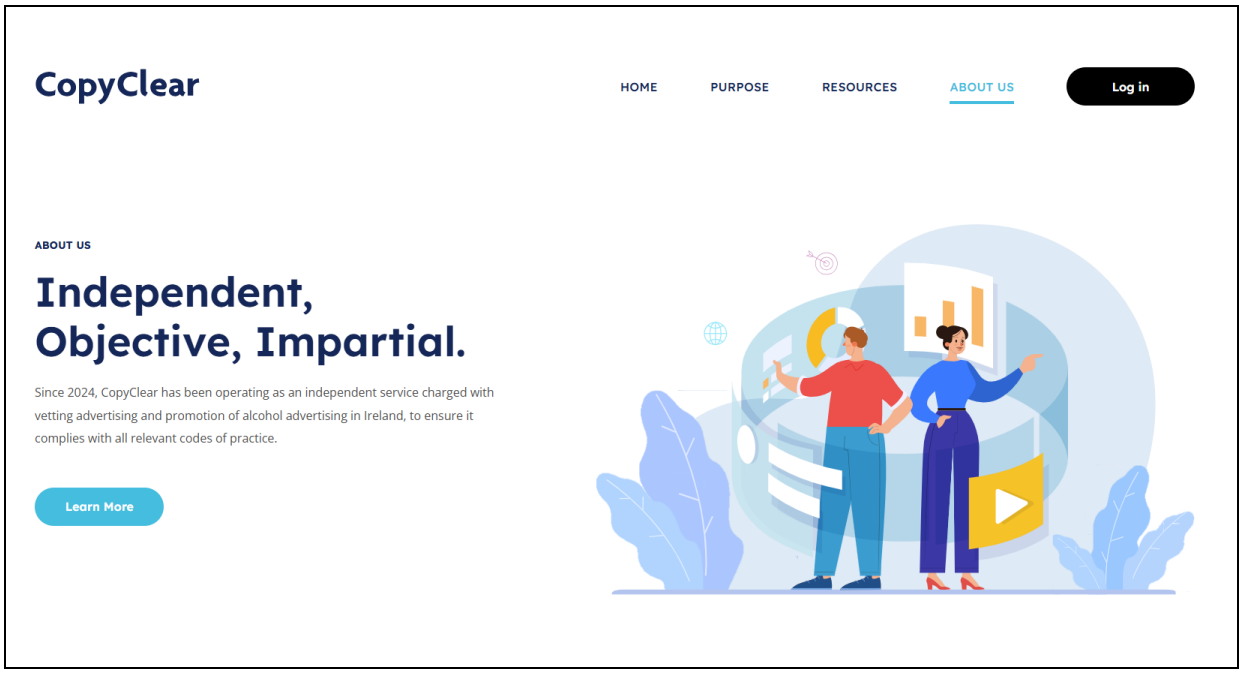
Self-regulation by economic stakeholders

Ireland has a long history of ignoring the issue of alcohol. This is particularly evident in terms of advertising and alcohol. The alcohol industry used its economic power to exert pressure over a series of governments, many of which, given their neo-liberal ideologies, were happy to opt for industry self-regulation rather than meaningful reform. However, as the Irish economy boomed in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the negative impacts of widespread heavy alcohol consumption became increasingly obvious. This resulted in a number of Government reports, most of which had little, if any, impact. During this period, various codes of self-regulation of alcohol advertising were adopted. However, alcohol advertising remained pervasive. It was only with the Public Health (Alcohol) Act of 2018 that any real attempt to regulate alcohol was implemented. However, the roll-out of this Act has been painfully slow and its provisions are very dated and fail to respond to an agile industry. Social media is not mentioned in the legislation, and the Government is currently unwilling to tackle the alcohol industry over its circumvention of advertising restrictions through ostensibly pivoting to advertise zero alcohol products.

Self-regulation guidelines for the Irish media are outlined across a range of documents, and several of the relevant sections are included in Appendices 1 & 2 (ASAI, 2016; BAI, 2017; Department of Health & Children, 2008). However, it is important to note that compliance with such self-regulation is voluntary. Although a monitoring group to evaluate compliance was established, the Alcohol Marketing Communications Monitoring Body (ACCMB), it should be noted that this body has no enforcement capacity (ACCMB, 2018).

Since 2024, Ireland has also seen the operation of CopyClear, which is described on their company website as an 'independent service charged with vetting advertising and promotion of alcohol advertising in Ireland, to ensure it complies with all relevant codes of practice'. As can be seen in Figure 3, this company claims to be independent, objective and impartial.

Figure 3. CopyClear Web Page



However, although the CopyClear company website states that it operates independently of Drinks Industry Ireland (DII), this site also acknowledges that '*it is funded by Drinks Industry Ireland (DII)*'.

A recent review of alcohol marketing restrictions in seven European countries was conducted for Public Health Scotland (Scobie et al., 2022). According to this report, it might appear that alcohol marketing is well policed both formally and informally in Ireland.

Figure 4. Examination of Alcohol Marketing Restrictions in Ireland by Scobie et al. (2022)

Country	Monitoring and enforcement bodies	Statutory control	What sanctions are possible?
Ireland	Statutory: Environmental Health Service Non-statutory: Advertising Standards Authority for Ireland (ASAI) (funded by advertising industry)	Mixed	Environmental Health Service: fines or imprisonment. ASAI: issue fines; suspend or expel member organisations

(Scobie et al., 2022: 14)

However, it should be noted that a recent examination of prosecutions under the Public Health (Alcohol) Act, 2018 by Ireland's Environmental Health Service noted that since it was introduced, there had been no attempts at convictions or fines issued, despite over 2600 instances of noncompliance identified (Houghton & Lombard, 2024). As such, this paper referred to the legislative threat as a '*Paper Tiger*'. It should also be noted that although Scobie *et al.*'s (2022) examination suggested that the ASAI could issue fines and suspend or expel member organisations, this is erroneous. Contact with the Advertising Standards Authority confirmed that they had no such powers. This is highly unfortunate, given some of the complaints they receive. Box 3 details advertising by Four Loko, which was the subject of a complaint and subsequent ASAI investigation.

Box 3. Extract from the ASAI Process in Relation to a Complaint Received

The advertising was seen on the advertisers' Instagram and consisted of three separate posts, each featuring an image with onscreen text and a caption beneath.

Post 1:
At the top of the first image, onscreen text stated, "when somebody asks who wants to go get a Four Loko Pink Melon?". Beneath this, a baby in a nappy was depicted with their hand raised. The caption below the photograph said, "Meeeeee 🙋".

Post 2:
The second image was a period painting depicting a woman holding a baby over a crib while displaying the baby to two other young children. Onscreen text read, "Goodnight, Pink Melon Four Loko The Third". The caption beneath photograph said, "It's not easy carrying the alcohol industry, but we do it well 😌. Pink Melon is COMING SOON 🍉".

Post 3:
Onscreen text at the top of the third image said, "How I sleep knowing I get to drink Four Loko all weekend". Beneath this was a photograph of the character, Squidward from the children's animated television series, 'Spongebob Squarepants', tucked up in bed asleep with a teddy bear beside him. The caption beneath this photograph stated, "Thursday has us thinking about one thing and one thing only…"

(Alcohol Standards Authority, 2025)

The use of the cartoon character Squidward, which has obvious appeal to children, in this Instagram advertisement was particularly egregious. What makes such advertising particularly concerning is the highly colourful packaging used by Squidward, which has obvious appeal to children (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Four Loko Packaging



The outcome of this investigation by this self-regulatory body simply stated: “The Complaints Committee considered the detail of the complaint and the advertisers’ response. The Committee noted that the Instagram posts had been removed, as well as the undertaking that similar posts would not be published in future”. Despite the use of child-oriented marketing this oversight body did not even issue a strongly worded censure of the adverts.

Synopsis of the regulation on alcohol marketing in 2024

synopsis of alcohol regulations in force in Ireland during the study period in 2024 is outlined in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Alcohol regulations in force in Ireland in 2024



Strengths and Weaknesses

Detailed below is Figure 7, which includes a SWOT analysis of alcohol marketing control in Ireland.

Figure 7. SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) of alcohol marketing control in Ireland



YOUTH'S PERCEPTIONS ON ADAM AND ITS ROLE IN ALCOHOL DRINKING

Digital culture and attitudes towards digital advertising

All of the respondents were active on social media, although they tended to be passive viewers, rather than content creators.

> *I wouldn't really like, comment very often either. I tend to just like watch.* (IE_01_F_16_non-drinker)
>
> *I'd be more passive watching and yeah.* (IE_06_ M_16_ non-drinker)
>
> *No, I wouldn't, I wouldn't post a lot.* (IE_15_M_19_weekly drinker)
>
> *I very rarely post or comment on things. I'd say 99% of the time it would be that I'm passive on the Internet.* (IE_14_F_18_monthly drinker)

The respondents were mixed in terms of their responses to advertising on social media, and alcohol advertising in particular. Some respondents were opposed to such marketing, many reported being indifferent to it, while a small number of respondents actually welcomed it.

> *I'm, to be honest, I think it's not great like the morals, there probably wouldn't be the best because they're really trying to push it on to young people, so that then when they turn the age that they can drink in their country, they immediately already know what they want to go go for because they've seen from such a young age.* (IE_11_F_18_monthly drinker)
>
> *I suppose when you're scrolling you kind of just scroll past this. You might look at it for a second. I don't really mind it, you know, but…* (IE_20_M_19_weekly drinker)
>
> *Not really. I actually like, I actually find it quite informative and in a weird way like as in "Oh, I've never tried that, I might try that the next time I have a dinner or the next time I go on a night out".* (IE_18 M_19_ Weekly drinker)

Advertising and marketing: what comes most to mind?

The most remembered

- Participants were likely to be able to recall some form of alcohol marketing on social media and on television. Physical adverts were far less likely to be mentioned. Many respondents reported seeing alcohol advertising on television.

> *Umm, I suppose on TV like I mean, you see ads all the time like I suppose, like Coors and stuff, like refreshing and light I suppose. Yeah, on TV ads mostly.* (IE_04_F_17_non-drinker)
>
> *I do. I often see alcohol ads on the television, rather than on social media like.* (IE_14_F_18_monthly drinker)
>
> *Yeah, I do see a good few ads on TV. I don't watch TV that much, but I mean, I was watching it, I think 2 weeks ago, maybe, something like that, and there was ads for, I think, rock, Rockshore Light or something like that?* (IE_05_F_17_non-drinker)

However, many respondents also noted having seen alcohol ads on social media. As can be seen from the following extracts, this phenomenon was observed across a range of platforms.

> *Yeah, I was just watching a video on YouTube and like just there, boom!* (IE_10_M_17_monthly drinker)

> *Sometimes you get these kind of adverts for the Nitrosurge Guinness cans on my Instagram. So the idea is you can pour your own pint and it should be better than say a normal pint out of a can.* (IE_16_M_19_weekly drinker)
>
> *I think there was a Spotify ad for Heineken.* (IE_07_M_16_non-drinker)

Brands and types of beverages advertised

Respondents remembered a range of types of alcohol, including beers, spirits, and cider. It was notable that wines were not mentioned by the participants. The particular brands which were most commonly noted included Heineken, Guinness and Smirnoff:

> *I think Heineken, I would see Heineken more often than anything else, I think.* (IE_17_F_18_weekly drinker)
>
> *Umm, a lot of Guinness, kind of. They've good ads.* (IE_08_M_17_monthly drinker)
>
> *I've seen a lot of, I've seen marketing for the, the, you know, the like Smirnoff cans, like the mix, the small little Smirnoff mixed cans.* (IE_17_F_18_weekly drinker)

However, it should be noted that Coors, Carlsberg, Gordon's Gin, Baileys, Rockshore, Bulmers, Jack Daniels, Tia Maria, Sidemen's Vodka, and Four Loko were all mentioned. Respondents also routinely mentioned NoLo alcohol brands, i.e. brands for beverages with a low or zero alcohol content. These also tended to be for the most discussed brands:

> *like there's the Guinness Zero one and the Heineken Zero one, which is just being flooded on the telly at the moment.* (IE_11_F_18_monthly drinker)
>
> *The last one I saw it on TikTok, it was Heineken Zero. Yeah, I think it was the Max Verstappen one.* (IE_12_F_19_monthly drinker)
>
> *I've, I I've, I've seen a lot of marketing for the 00 stuff.* (IE_17_F_18_weekly drinker)

Main features and motives for remembering

Although many respondents had some difficulty in remembering alcohol ads in detail a number of elements were identified that did appear to help them remember particular adverts. These elements included aspects such as a catchy song and appealing imagery.

> *I remember a Bud ad it was like I, I think it was Western-themed themed and there was a horse in it and stuff and it was nice. And then there's another ad, it's for, it's for a cider Rockshore I think. I'm not sure if it's Rockshore, and there's just a really catchy song with it. And I just remember I always watch it when it's on, just cause of the song…Like when I think of those ads, I think of the song, or I think of the horse and carriage in the Budweiser one.* (IE_14_F_18_monthly drinker)
>
> *I seen an ad last night at about 6:00 or 7:00 o'clock for Four Loko…on Instagram. It was just it was just a photo of a can of Four Loko, but it was really colourful.* (IE_14_F_18_monthly drinker)

Other ads remembered appeared to utilise both humour and belonging.

> *It's just a very… It's a very catchy ad. That's why I remembered it…I think it's like this, like a series of embarrassing events. Like your man comes in with teeth that are too white, and there's a woman who shows up in like horse riding gear and stuff like that, like. And then the friends are kind of, are all making fun of them, but then I suppose the Rockshore ambassador shows up and he's like – "it's OK we don't care where you are, who you're like, where you're from, who you are" something like that. It's like a song.* (IE_05_F_17_non-drinker)

ADAM exposure: perceived effects and attitudes

Perceived level of alcohol marketing exposure via Digital or other channels

Respondents reported a relatively high level of exposure to alcohol marketing via digital channels.

> *I think there was a period where I used to get them a lot and you know Spotify would be three ads in a row, sometimes would be two of them about alcohol and was like, oh, this is really weird, but yeah.* (IE_03_F_17_non-drinker)
>
> *I think I'm in, I'm possibly the age bracket that they want to shove it on to as well because I'm fresh like I'm, I'm 18 so I've just turned like the legal the legal age, and their like OK, great, another person to [excuse me] to push our products onto who have never, who's never had any experience before.* (IE_11_F_18_monthly drinker)
>
> *I'd say once a day anyway, probably.* (IE_16_M_19_weekly drinker)
>
> *Really often, because even if it's not am say an advertisement. On TikTok, you could see people going out drinking* (IE_14_F_18_monthly drinker)

Although the vast majority of respondents reported their exposure to alcohol marketing was social media, this was not universal.

> *Heineken. Had a big well, they're always on the TV. They have big kind of ads on the TV. Now I don't know if they do social media as much, but they're always on the TV with ads, just kind of promoting their new products* (IE_20_M_19_weekly drinker)

Attitudes towards alcohol advertising exposure

Although a minority of respondents objected to seeing alcohol advertising the majority of respondents were relatively unconcerned by such exposure. Most felt that they themselves were unaffected by such advertising.

> *No, I don't really mind, like seeing like advertising alcohol or like people drinking it or anything like that because like, it doesn't like really like affect me. Like I don't think I'd, I, I wouldn't really like, I wouldn't really think too much of it like I wouldn't get emotionally like, you know, I would, I wouldn't. I wouldn't feel bad or good about it.* (IE_19_M_19_non-drinker)
>
> *No, I just wouldn't really think anything of it.I'd probably just like, scroll passed it.* (IE_02_F_16_non-drinker)
>
> *I suppose when you're scrolling you kind of just scroll past this. You might look at it for a second. I don't really mind it, you know,* (IE_20_M_19_weekly drinker)

In fact, it must be acknowledged that although some respondents were disapproving of such alcohol marketing attempts by alcohol companies. It was generally accepted that such behaviour on their part was perfectly normal.

> *I, I think they're probably right to do it. I suppose they can try like.* (IE_06_M_16_non-drinker)
>
> *I think alcohol marketing, it's good for brands as a way to make money obviously everything's a business.* (IE_13_F_18_monthly drinker)
>
> *Uh, like, I wouldn't really find it out of the ordinary. It'd be kinda, just the normal thing really that I see. Like, it wouldn't really make too much of a difference to me, like I'll kind of just, scroll past it.* (IE_08_M_17_monthly drinker)
>
> *So I think it would probably like, annoy me a bit but you know, I can always just go past it. I… Like I understand why they do it. It's so that like they can, you know, entice the like incoming*

> *generation of people who are going to buy their product but it's kind of scummy.* (IE_01_F_16_non-drinker)

Perceived impact of advertising and the channels with the greatest impact

It is interesting to note that, as mentioned briefly above one theme to emerge was the denial of any impact of alcohol advertising on themselves by respondents.

> *Personally, it wouldn't bother me too much because I wouldn't be easily influenced I guess, but I can see how it would be dangerous for some people. Like, if you were a recovering alcoholic or something* (IE_16_M_19_weekly drinker)
>
> *Uhh, well, personally it just goes out of my head like, after I see it.* (IE_10_M_17_monthly drinker)
>
> *No, I don't really mind, like seeing like advertising alcohol or like people drinking it or anything like that because like, it doesn't like really like affect me.* (IE_19_M_19_non-drinker)

Instead of feeling influenced themselves a theme identified was concern over the impact of such advertising on other, usually younger youths.

> *Because I think there's a lot of people who would be possibly my age or younger who would see these influencers that that talk about, Oh they went out this night and all this happened and it was the best thing ever. And then you're sitting there like oh, Maybe if I drink what they're drinking, or if I do what they're doing, I will have the same amount of fun as they did.* (IE_11_F_18_monthly drinker)
>
> *if there are advertisements targeted at like under 18-year-olds, then that kind of it's not really like I don't really think it's right like. I think it's, it's fine if you advertise it for anyone of, of drinking age but like, on the like the people on the younger side, they can be I suppose like too easily influenced, depending on, on the person, so it's just, you know, bad things like can happen because of that, you know* (IE_19_M_19_non-drinker)
>
> *I was in a pub once and I saw like this like, like mixed drink being advertised like on a poster and… I guess cause like it looked nice. It was like kind of like, like bright colours. Like I think it was like pink or like, orangey and it was kind of like a tropical one it was and it was like the summertime, so I was like, would that would be nice for the summer? I think like the bright colours and stuff. Like, especially like young children that they'd see that like, oh, like all their toys would be bright colours and they'd see something that's bright colour and they'd want to play with it, you know.* (IE_12_F_19_monthly drinker)

Despite a general theme identified among respondents of believing that they were not influenced by online ads, it was clear that the various forms of alcohol related material on social media, be they formal ads or not, did have an impact on respondents.

> *Uh, there's lots of umm, there was this do you know Smirnoff Vodka? There was an advert for it there not so long ago it was a new flavour they brought out it was like raspberry or something, and I was. I did watch the ad now and I was like, oh, I'd like. I'd actually like to try that. I think, I, yeah, I think I definitely have. I think one of my friends on Instagram, she has sent me a couple of ads there because you know the way they just pop up on Instagram and you just send it to your friend like "oh we need to try this" or "this looks nice".* (IE_11_F_18_monthly drinker)
>
> *Yeah, because, so well, I'll give you an example for myself when that popped up for me, I went straight into the lads group chat and I said lads, look at, look at this, take a screenshot, this is you know a great advertisement, great offer. Why don't we do it?* (IE_20_M_19_weekly drinker)

> *Yeah, there's kind of, there are videos on TikTok of people like kind of like making up their own cocktails on, like, I don't know, their friends or their exes or whatever. Yeah… but me and one of my friends who go, we like we always go drinking together, the two of us, like we would send each other like videos and stuff like that on TikTok back and forth so.* (IE_17_F_18_weekly drinker)

As these quotes indicate, an important element of these online materials in promoting alcohol consumption is the social element of the experience, whereby friends agree to taste or experiment with alcohol together. The impact of friendship groups and peer alcohol experimentation cannot be under-estimated.

There was a feeling in many respondents that traditional TV, radio and billboard ads were no longer particularly relevant to young people. It was argued that they were much more likely to be active on social media or streaming channels, such as Netflix.

> *Well, yeah, because I think the best, it's the only real way to get the attention of younger people now because, they're not really watching a lot of TV. It's all series, Netflix, all that kind of stuff. There isn't a lot of people actually watching daytime television anyway, and they're either on their phone or on Netflix, or any, any of that if they are looking at advertisement.* (IE_15_M_19_weekly drinker)
>
> *from social media people and choosing the right platform as well I suppose. Like, people don't really, young people don't see billboards and TV ads as much, or radio ads as they would, like, on TikTok and stuff like that. So it's a different type of media, I suppose. And like videos, are definitely a lot more popular.* (IE_05_F_17 non-drinker)

TikTok usage was particularly high among respondents, albeit as consumers, rather than producers of content. However, the impact of social media apps such as TikTok in promoting alcohol should not be underestimated.

> *Well, going back to the Guinness like, I wouldn't have really drank Guinness before, and then kind of like, I would have seen your man on TikTok, the Guinness Guru again drinking it and that kind of, between that and my friends it would have gotten me into it. I would have been more into kind of cider or larger, but after seeing him drinking and rating his Guinness, I would have been more enticed to drink it, I guess.* (IE_16_M_19_weekly drinker)
>
> *I had been watching a video and I think this is only maybe last week, maybe a few weeks ago and it was basically, I don't know if they were an actual influencer, it just popped up on my TikTok feed of someone making a cocktail, and I sent it to my friend and I said, "oh, we should try this. It looks nice". So…* (IE_14_F_18_monthly drinker)
>
> *Yeah, there's, like, there'll be TikToks, especially where it's kind of like, they would show like a paradise background and it would say you know, "life when you've just had your fourth Guinness" or your fourth Coors and it's kind of saying how good life is I guess. That's quite popular at the minute.* (IE_16_M_19_weekly drinker)

Experiences and attitudes towards different types of advertising

In addition to the points raised above, respondents also noted the effectiveness of advertising in which there was a form of promotional gift. This can be seen in the statement below, which mentions a free Bulmers (cider) bottle opener, and a free pint of Guinness:

> *So I actually worked for a period in an off licence and done, and I know at the time there was kind of a promotion advertisement campaign and they had bottle openers. And it was by Bulmer's, and the deal was if you buy a certain amount of their products, you get a free bottle opener and they*

> *were cool bottle openers. They were lovely. They were really nice. So everyone, I noticed that day especially everyone was buying that one product because they wanted to get the freebie with us. …I did see something recently and it was on Instagram and it was basically a thing where I think there was a certain company running an advertisement and there was basically an opportunity for a free pint of Guinness in selected pubs or something, which was like what I can think of.* (IE_20_M_19_weekly drinker)

The connection between alcohol and sport was noted by a number of participants. Sporting event sponsorship by well-known alcohol brands was mentioned repeatedly by respondents.

> *like amm rugby for example. You might have a Guinness banner. That's about it. When I think of events or concerts that might have am Heineken sponsored or like when I work in the race course every now and again they might have a deal with Heineken or with Guinness. So they only sell Heineken or Guinness and they might have, they have like, you know Guinness advertising or something on the, the bar that kind of way but very little online to be honest with you.* (IE_18_M_19_weekly drinker)
>
> *Well you have like rugby with the Heineken Cup. And you have like, Carlsberg with soccer. You'd have like, old jerseys that would have brands on them as well.* (IE_09_M_17_non-drinker)
>
> *I could name physical events like the Guinness 6 Nations rugby you know.* (IE_02_F_16_non-drinker)
>
> *I only ever see alcohol advertised like the 00 (Zero Zero) stuff advertised on like rugby matches and stuff. I'd watch rugby because my family's into that so I don't really see much of it online, but very much so like rugby matches and like kind of outside pubs and stuff.* (IE_17_F_18_weekly drinker)

The last extract is particularly interesting, as it suggests that even if parents and family were to try and promote an interest in sport for health reasons, it could unintentionally lead to increased exposure to alcohol brands and their marketing.

Knowledge and attitudes towards alcohol regulation

Acceptability of alcohol marketing regulation and alcohol control policies

Participants were generally unclear as to the specifics of alcohol marketing regulation. Many respondents assumed there was a degree of regulation, but were often unclear as to what was actually included in legislation. People were equally unclear as to what was law, and what was self-regulation.

> *Well, I know that they exist first of all, but I don't know the, I wouldn't know the specifics. Like I do know that you can't really. I'm I'm fairly sure you can't advertise alcohol. To like Umm. Yeah. There's, there's. There's definitely certain places where you can't advertise it. Like I guess, for example, an obvious one is just like cartoons, you know, children's like TV channels. But that's. Yeah, I don't. There's definitely some sort of law. I don't. I don't really know the exact law.* (IE_19_M_19_non-drinker)
>
> *I don't know if it's a law or there's some restrictions against it or something, I'm not sure.* (IE_17_F_18_weekly drinker)
>
> *I think, obviously, I know it's illegal to advertise cigarettes but I think the alcohol… got a few, umm, restrictions placed on it. I think maybe like something like oh after 7:00 p.m. or something, or I could be talking nonsense. But I think that, that's, that's all my recollection of… things like that.* (IE_18_M_19_weekly drinker)

> *Hmm. I don't know actually, I assume so.* (IE_01_F_16_non-drinker)

Interestingly, the recent pivoting by the alcohol industry to circumvent restrictions by advertising zero alcohol was noted by respondents.

> *I'm not sure on this, but I don't think that you can advertise, I'm not sure if this is in Ireland or the UK, but I don't think you can advertise like alcohol that isn't 00 at like sports matches and things like that. I think you're only supposed to advertise 00.* (IE_17_F_18_weekly drinker)

The following quotation again demonstrates the knowledge of zero alcohol advertising, leading to an assumption that full-strength alcohol advertising was no longer permitted:

> *Umm. Actually, I think, I think they stopped allowing people to like, advertise like alcohol with actual alcohol in it. Like I've been seeing a lot more Zero Zero ads and I have not seen any for like, actual alcohol content in them. So maybe that changed or something.* (IE_12_F_19_monthly drinker)

Respondents were very supportive of alcohol control legislation. It was felt to right and appropriate that the Government and its agencies attempted to regulate the alcohol sector.

> *It is the government's job to keep the young people safe from not endangering themselves* (IE_10_M_17_monthly drinker)
>
> *Definitely, definitely should be controlled somebody should be watching everything and be over it, whether that is the case and someone is kind of, they are enforcing it is a whole other story, but definitely it's a good thing that there should be laws, legislation in place, yeah.* (IE_20_F_19_weekly drinker)
>
> *I do because I think it's for the good of, like, public health and young people's health.* (IE_07_M_16_non-drinker)
>
> *I think so because, yeah, I think young people shouldn't, shouldn't be seeing too much alcohol, especially because it's not good.* (IE_03_F_17_non-drinker)

Perceived effectiveness of regulations

Although alcohol regulation was broadly seen as an important role of government, respondents generally had only limited faith in its impact. Alcohol was still seen as accessible to young people below the legal age of alcohol consumption (18) who really wanted to access it.

> *I would say, I mean it's not, definitely I know with people among my own age, they're, it's not very strictly stuck to* (IE_05_F_17_non-drinker)
>
> *I think it's a good thing, as in that they're trying to protect the kids, but I also think it they haven't done enough because it doesn't work.* (IE_11_F_18_monthly drinker)
>
> *I presume it's not because they advertise 00…Umm, I presume not, but it'll be hard to monitor like. They'd do the same 00 trick.* (IE_09_M_17_non-drinker)
>
> *Yes, but I don't know how they would enforce them.* (IE_07_M_16_non-drinker)

The last two quotes are particularly interesting as they reveal an assumption that the alcohol industry will strive to evade regulation and legislation and that alcohol control agencies may be relatively impotent in combatting such evasion. The potential danger of over-regulation was also noted. It was argued that too much regulation could lead to increased unregulated alcohol consumption with additional dangers from unsupervised drinking.

> *I know that underage people can get alcohol if they want to like from people over the age buying it for them, whether it's like friends, parents like siblings like they have quite good access to it still. If they want to like, if they put their mind to it they can. It does restrict, it does restrict it to a certain extent, but then having that ban like it, it leads to those people drinking irresponsibly and in like bad places and under where there's like no control or like guard over how much they drink or where they drink like, what kind of stuff they drink.* (IE_13_F_18_monthly drinker)

Suggestions to improve alcohol prevention

It was interesting to note that respondents were generally very supportive of the current alcohol regulation measures enacted in Ireland. However, very few suggestions as to improves alcohol prevention measures were identified. For example, there was almost universal agreement that the legal age to purchase alcohol should be 18 years old. This can be seen in the following quotes that suggest it should be neither younger, nor older than 18:

> *Yeah, I think that's the perfect age, to be honest.* (IE_08_M_17_monthly drinker)
>
> *I do think it's good that it's like set at a certain age. I think 18 is better than 21 because like I know it's still young. It's very young, whatever, but you can go to 18, then into your more like adult years, you can kind of have more control over it. But like, let's say setting at 21, it's like you go on this big boosh sometimes and then people kind of stay in that more in a way like cause they can go loose they can have the power over that.* (IE_13_F_18_monthly drinker)

However, two suggestions were made about warnings, although one was relatively generic:

> *I think that people view it as harmless. But I have seen first-hand that it can ruin lives as well when overly consumed, and I think there should be more awareness around that.* (IE_14_F_18_monthly drinker)
>
> *Well, they'd probably want to warn people about like liver damage I guess. I know it probably wouldn't go down very well with a lot of people, but yeah.* (IE_16_M_19_weekly drinker)

It is interesting to note that, in line with the suggestion in the last quotation, Ireland is set to introduce mandatory alcohol warning labels in May 2026 that will include a warning about the impacts of alcohol in causing liver disease, as well as a warning about cancer, and a pictogram warning pregnant women not to drink alcohol.

Attitudes towards drinking and main drivers of drinking

Personal attitudes to alcohol and perceived risks

As noted earlier, social media was an important route for respondents to see alcohol related material, which on occasion provoked a desire to try and experiment with a form of alcohol.

One theme identified was that alcohol was not necessary for young people to have fun. For many respondents it was not seen as an integral element of a good social life. Evidence of this mindset can be seen in the following quotations and it is interesting to note how the last respondent was aware enough of the addictive nature of alcohol that if it became a requirement, they would stop drinking alcohol completely.

> *I don't see a need for me to have it* (IE_07_M_16 non-drinker)
>
> *Yeah, because it's not just like… you need to have the drink to have fun when realistically you don't.* (IE_11_F_18_monthly drinker)

> *Umm well, I think it's fun, but like in moderation like I'd like. I like I, I, I can still have it, but then like I can have it but also I can still go out without having it and still have fun. I feel like if I went out and I needed alcohol to enjoy myself, I would probably stop drinking it at all because I feel like I'd have gone too far.* (IE_12_F_19_monthly drinker)

Although many respondents stated that alcohol was not a requirement for a good social life attitudes towards alcohol were generally quite liberal and at least mildly supportive. However, it is important to note that this generally supportive attitude towards alcohol consumption only related to mild or moderate alcohol consumption. There was an absence of unconditionally positive statements about alcohol and its consumption in this dataset. Attitudes appeared positive as long as the level of alcohol intake was strictly regulated.

> *But on the other side, I think as long as you don't obviously drink a lot or like every day, or if you if you limit your consumption, I suppose if you have like, you know, just a few drinks, like when you're out instead of like going "I'm having like too much to drink" every, every time you go out, you know, as long as you like, monitor how much you drink I think it, it can be just like a fun part of a, a night out, you know.* (IE_19_M_19_non-drinker)
>
> *Umm, I think that it's like, I guess I'd say that it's fine in moderation. Like, it's fine to get drunk every now and then but like I wouldn't… Me personally like, I wouldn't go out and get drunk every night.* (IE_01_F_16_non-drinker)
>
> *I think that it is safe and good in moderation, especially in Ireland. It's very important, as bad as it does sound, once again for socialising, you know it's a lot of what young people do really. But it's definitely good but in moderation is definitely very important, so it's not something really you want to be doing every night by any, by any sort of means.* (IE_20_M_19_weekly drinker)
>
> *Umm, I'm all for having a few drinks, but I definitely don't go out to get drunk every night. I think it is for, like for, not for me, personally, but for a lot of people it can be a real kind of confidence booster and you know, get them to come out of themselves and talk a lot more. So it's definitely positive that way. Just so long as you kind of moderate how much you drink, and it can be really good like for just, you know like to have something to look forward to at the end of the week or in the evening time after work, or whatever school. But yeah, I definitely understand the negative aspects and kind of dangers with it as well.* (IE_16_M_19_weekly drinker)

Respondents identified a wide range of health risks to drinkers and others associated with alcohol consumption. As anticipated respondents were aware of the potentially negative impact of alcohol on the liver.

> *Liver disease, I think.* (IE_12_F_19_monthly drinker)
>
> *There's definitely risks. I know that there's, there was a study there about your liver, how it can affect your liver.* (IE_20_M_19_weekly drinker)
>
> *Umm, and I, I think we have like the highest like one of the highest rates of liver disease or liver failure in Europe.* (IE_17_F_18_weekly drinker)
>
> *Umm you can like oversaturate your liver and your kidneys, I think. Like, I'm not an expert obviously, but I know that much.* (IE_01_F_16_non-drinker)

Respondents were also clearly aware of the impact of alcohol as an impairment to driving.

> *Well, I suppose drink-driving is one of them.* (IE_05_F_17_non-drinker)
>
> *Uh, I do think it has risks and I would associate like, umm, car crashes due to drinking and driving* (IE_07_M_16_non-drinker)

> *And yeah, if you're driving, of course it's, it's, you know, there's driving accidents in relation to drinking, so.* (IE_03_F_17_non-drinker)

Participants in the interviews were very clear on the link between alcohol consumption and interpersonal violence.

> *You know people's, people can become like out of control. Some can like start fights and like be abusive* (IE_13_F_18_monthly drinker)
>
> *Umm, it could lead to fights, maybe someone getting hurt. So yeah, I think there is, there's a lot of issues around it.* (IE_06_M_16_non-drinker)
>
> *They could hurt someone else.* (IE_14_F_18_monthly drinker)
>
> *Yeah. Antisocial behaviour.* (IE_15_M_19_weekly drinker)

Responses did not address potentially related issues such as homicide, domestic violence, rape, or sexual assault. Neither did they address issues such self-harm and suicide, although the issue of the impact of alcohol on mood was noted:

> *It definitely affects your mood. Mood would probably be the main one, I'd say.* (IE_20_M_19_weekly drinker)
>
> *I guess like it'll affect your… mental health. Like I know that it kind of it's, it is a depressor. Yeah, that's kind of all I know.* (IE_12_F_19_monthly drinker)

Another potential negative health impact of alcohol included alcohol poisoning.

> *Umm, I suppose maybe alcohol poisoning* (IE_06_M_16_non-drinker)
>
> *Like getting alcohol poisoning* (IE_02_F_16_non-drinker)
>
> *Yeah. Yeah, you would like obviously, if you drink too much, you could end up having to go to the hospital to get your stomach pumped.* (IE_15_M_19_weekly drinker)

The young people's knowledge of alcohol poisoning may reflect cultural norms in Ireland, which often still include activities such as heavy episodic (binge) drinking.

The final adverse health impact theme to emerge was that of the addictive nature of alcohol.

> *Well, it's really addictive.* (IE_02_F_16_non-drinker)
>
> *If you really go on it… then you've long-term risks like alcoholism* (IE_18_M_19_weekly drinker)
>
> *I think so, yeah, definitely. Like, people would be interested to see what that tastes like, so they go out and try it, and that could lead to getting addiction, I suppose, and getting fondness of alcohol.* (IE_05_F_17_non-drinker)

It should be noted that although the participants in the interviews generally consumed a relatively low level of alcohol, its negative impacts had still been felt, even within this small sample. For example, when discussing the risks posed by alcohol one respondent stated starkly:

> *Death. I know someone that's died because they had been drinking and they got sick in their sleep* (IE_14_F_18_monthly drinker)

It is noteworthy that alcohol was not identified as a cause of cancer by the participants in these interviews. In addition, alcohol related health issues such as FASD and fertility impairments were not identified. Given the young age of the sample and the high average age of first time mothers in Ireland this absence is not surprising.

It is interesting to note that attitudes towards alcohol consumption were very similar between those who had consumed alcohol in the last 30 days and those who had not. Both groups were generally tolerant towards it, as long as it was consumed in moderation. Similarly, regular and non-regular drinkers were broadly similar in their awareness about the risks posed by alcohol. One slight exception may be that non-regular drinkers were more likely to note the dangers inherent in drink-driving.

Role of peers and social environment

Respondents were broadly in agreement that many people of their age were generally accepting of alcohol consumption.

> *Well, yeah, I'd say, like most people my age would be into it, yeah.* (IE_02_F_16_non-drinker)
>
> *Umm, I'm not entirely sure what some of my friends think of it, but I assume they think it's a good… Yeah.* (IE_07_M_16_non-drinker)
>
> *They think it's fun and that you can't go out and have a good time unless you drink alcohol.* (IE_14_F_18_monthly drinker)
>
> *(With) proper pacing, they believe that it is OK for underage people to be drinking.* (IE_10_M_17_monthly drinker)

Respondents were generally non-judgemental about alcohol consumption of their peers.

> *I'd say they've similar views to me, like, that they don't want to, like I know my friends don't drink anything and some friends, I suppose, they enjoy drinking and going out and that whole scene, I suppose.* (IE_05_F_17_non-drinker)

Minimal differences were observed between regular and non-regular drinkers in terms of peer attitudes to alcohol. Most respondents reported peers being generally pro-alcohol, with little or no censure as long as it was consumed in moderation.

Role of family and cultural traditions

A number of respondents reported that they were simply told that they could not consume alcohol until they were at least 18 years of age:

> *It was just kind of like just, you know, "don't drink till your 18, and then when you're 18, you can kind of you can drink if you want or you don't have to, but do not do it before 18"* (IE_11_F_18_monthly drinker)
>
> *Told me not to!* (IE_09_M_17_non-drinker)
>
> *I was not allowed to drink until I was 18. Now, that's not to say I didn't drink before I was 18, but I'd have to like, it would only be the rare occasion because they were on my arse if I did.* (IE_16_M_19_weekly drinker)

Some respondents reported their parents introduced them to alcohol slowly and in moderation as they approached the legal age of consumption:

> *It was kind of a general consensus, I suppose, across all families where it was 16/17, that kind of age, where you were kind of… It was more just an introduction to slowly get you into the flow of things so that you're not starting at 14 or 13, but you're also not just being hit with it once you turn 18, kind of a thing.* (IE_15_M_19_weekly drinker)
>
> *It was only kind of when I got to like 17 ish that they kind of started like easing off with that and they're OK with it now.* (IE_17_F_18_weekly drinker)

The vast majority of respondents reported that parents tended to give rather unspecific and nebulous advice.

> *Every night before I go out it's "take it handy and be careful", but I don't know if that's great advice when you're going out the door, but anyway.* (IE_15_M_19_weekly drinker)

Advice, when given tended to focus on limiting and pacing alcohol consumption. This theme emerged much more strongly in relation to female than male respondents.

> *Yeah, just to mind myself. If I'm gonna go out my friends and I not to overdo it and don't get very, very drunk.* (IE_05_F_17_non-drinker)
>
> *she told me not to drink spirits because they'll get you drunker faster and stuff like that, she told me just to drink like beers or ciders. And she just told me other stuff about, like, don't go, go home with people or like, drink as much as you can handle and stuff and that you're able to control yourself, remember everything.* (IE_12_F_19_monthly drinker)
>
> *advice, it would just kind of be like, like know your limit and don't overstep it because no one wants to be in that state really.* (IE_11_F_18_monthly drinker)

Other than pacing and volume of alcohol warnings, parents also gave general advice addressing issues such as the potential for drinks to be spiked, not drinking alcohol on an empty stomach, sticking with fiends, and avoiding having potentially embarrassing videos taken of them while under the influence of alcohol:

> *don't be like peer pressured or influenced when like others are drinking. Like, let's say, like doing rounds. Then, to be safe with like what I drink and like, like getting spiked and stuff. I've been, like warned about that.* (IE_13_F_18_monthly drinker)
>
> *My parents amm, always, they kind of they give me advice, they're like, you know, "don't mix your alcohols", "don't drink on an empty stomach" "don't drink too much".* (IE_07_M_16_non-drinker)
>
> *Uh, well, they say if like, you ever drink too much to not go off by yourself or always, or call them or something like that… Always be with someone.* (IE_08_M_17_monthly drinker)
>
> *this sounds just kind of random, but my mam always says like, just never to… If, if I was like, never to make sure like someone's videoing me [laughs].* (IE_02_F_16_non-drinker)

There was little discernible difference between regular and non-regular drinkers in relation to family impacts on alcohol consumption.

Accessibility of alcohol

Peers were not generally identified as a source of alcohol in the interviews. They were, however, identified as a potential facilitator of alcohol consumption.

> *And then in terms of my friends, umm… They, you know, we ,we do like go out every now and then to like to a pub, you know, just for a few drinks like we just have, you know, enjoy like we just have a good time and then you know drink like a few just a couple of drinks you know.* (IE_19_M_19_non-drinker)
>
> *Umm, I'd say like whether or not people I know in real life are doing it. Like, I can kind of ignore what I see on social media and stuff, I'd be more interested in what my friends and stuff are doing, I guess.* (IE_01_F_16_non-drinker)

Although a small minority of parents were simply against alcohol it is evident that most respondents were exposed to a generally low-level of alcohol consumption at home.

> *At Christmas umm, I suppose and… My brother's graduation [laugh], there was a bit of champagne…my parents would have the odd glass of wine but that would be it.* (IE_05_F_17_non-drinker)
>
> *Umm, no. I would say at occasions, maybe birthdays, Christmas, that kind of thing.* (IE_06_M_16_non-drinker)
>
> *Well, neither of my parents are very heavy drinkers. They very rarely drink around the house, and my dad goes to the pub once a week and has a few drinks, a small amount of alcohol.* (IE_16_M_19_weekly drinker)

The majority of respondents reported drinking little or no alcohol at home, even if they were drinkers. The following extracts are typical of the responses, which indicated a very low level of alcohol consumption in the presence of parents:

> *Again, it would only be Christmas or Saint Stephens Day.* (IE_17_F_18_weekly drinker)
>
> *Maybe if there was a big match on I might have one bottle or two bottles with my dad. That was about it.* (IE_16_M_19_weekly drinker)
>
> *I had like a half of a glass of cider at New Years, but that's about it.* (IE_01_F_16_non-drinker)

(NB The role of points of sale- not really discussed)

Other drivers

Another potential driver of alcohol consumption in Ireland was what is seen by participants as its drinking culture. Although acknowledged as problematic, there is a link between alcohol drinking and the Irish identity.

> *I feel like it is kind of like the alcohol culture in Ireland is kind of an issue.* (IE_17_F_18_weekly drinker)
>
> *I think like obviously like I, I wouldn't be able to stop people advertising alcohol because it is like, kind of a major part of Irish culture.* (IE_01_F_16_non-drinker)
>
> *You know, people are set in college and it is as bad as sounds, it is a lot of socialising in Ireland, it's the drinking culture, you know.* (IE_20_M_19_weekly drinker)

Thus, participants appeared to be aware of and accept the stereotype of the Irish as heavy alcohol consumers.

EXPOSURE TO ADAM

Digital and TV exposure to positive portrayal of alcohol

Positive portrayals of alcohol in the media are extremely common. 82% of participants stated that they had seen a positive portrayal of alcohol in any media in the previous 30 days (see Table 1). This figure was higher for those aged 18 and over, males, more affluent, and amongst those who consumed alcohol. People who were higher ISN users and accepting of the ban were more likely to report having seen a positive portrayal of alcohol in the previous 30 days. The primary source of such portrayals was online; 74% of respondents reported having seen such a positive portrayal online (see Table 1).

Table 3. Effective exposure to positive portrayal in in Ireland (N=436)

Have seen a **positive portray of alcohol**, in the last 30 days		On line			On TV or at cinema			On any media		
		n	%total	%cat.	n	%total	%cat.	n	%total	%cat.
In the whole country sample		321	74%	74%	239	55%	55%	358	82%	82%
Age	Under 18	86*	20%	66%	75	17%	57%	97**	22%	75%
	18 & over	235*	54%	77%	164	38%	54%	261**	60%	85%
Gender	Male	158	36%	73%	126	29%	58%	183	42%	85%
	Female	159	37%	74%	110	25%	51%	171	39%	80%
	Non-binary	4	1%	71%	3	1%	60%	4	1%	80%
	Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Drinking status	Drinkers	253	58%	75%	184	42%	55%	284*	65%	85%
	Non drinkers	68	16%	68%	55	13%	55%	75	17%	74%
Economic category	Superior	144*	33%	79%	108	25%	60%	155	36%	85%
	Lower to intermediate	177	41%	70%	131	30%	51%	203	47%	80%
Knowledge of the ban to advertise alcohol to minors	Yes	223*	51%	71%	173	40%	55%	252*	58%	81%
	No	98	23%	80%	66	15%	53%	106	24%	86%
Acceptance of ban on advertising to minors	Fully or somewhat agree	260*	60%	78%	190	44%	57%	286**	66%	86%
	Fully or somewhat disagree or don't know	61	14%	60%	49	11%	48%	72	17%	71%
Internet or social network (ISN) use	Heavy to intensive use	106	24%	72%	88	20%	60%	124	28%	85%
	Low to moderate use	216	49%	74%	151	35%	52%	234	54%	81%

* Statistically significant difference at the 5% (*), 1% (**), 1‰ (***) level (χ^2 test).

Vectors of online of exposure to positive portrayal

Positive portrayals of alcohol were most commonly observed in posts by influencers. 41% (180) of respondents in the survey reported this. This finding was more evident in posts of those aged 18 and over compared to the younger cohort (45% vs 33%), and in heavier ISN users compared to lighter ISN users (45% vs 39%).

Table 4. Digital contents conveying alcohol positive portray in Ireland (N=436)

Digital channels of positive portrayal of alcohol	In the whole country sample		Under 18		18 & over		Heavy to intensive ISN user		Moderate to low ISN user	
	n	%total	n	%cat.	n	%cat.	n	%cat.	n	%cat.
In an influencer's post	180	41%	42	33%	137	45%	66	45%	113	39%
In a celebrity's post	115	26%	29	22%	86	28%	40	28%	75	26%
In a post created by a friend or an ordinary person	139	32%	33	25%	106	35%	50	34%	89	31%
In a post created by an association, an event organiser	65	15%	15	12%	50	16%	27	18%	38	13%
In a post created by an alcohol brand	151	35%	36	27%	115	38%	55	38%	95	33%
In other kinds of posts	66	15%	15	11%	51	17%	18	12%	47	16%
I'm not sure/ I don't remember	6	1%	3	2%	3	1%	1	1%	4	1%

Over a third of respondents (35%) identified posts by an alcohol brands. Once again this was higher in the older age group (38% vs 27%) and in heavier ISN users compared to lighter users (38% vs 33%).

Vectors of TV exposure to positive portrayal

Participants were most likely to report having seen a positive portrayal of alcohol on TV in a movie or episode (27%). There was minimal difference between older and younger respondents (see Table 5). The next most common source of positive portrayals on TV was in advertising spots/ commercials (22%).

Table 5. TV contents conveying alcohol positive portray in Ireland (N=436)

TV channels of positive portrayal of alcohol	In the whole country sample		Under 18		18 & over		Heavy to intensive ISN user		Moderate to low ISN user	
	n	%total	n	%cat.	n	%cat.	n	%cat.	n	%cat.
In advertising spots/commercials	97	22%	31	24%	66	22%	39	26%	58	20%
In a prevention campaign warning of the risks of alcohol use	30	7%	6	5%	23	8%	15	10%	15	5%
In a documentary report	13	3%	3	2%	11	4%	8	5%	5	2%
In a movie or a series episode	116	27%	32	25%	83	27%	41	28%	74	26%

TV channels of positive portrayal of alcohol	In the whole country sample		Under 18		18 & over		Heavy to intensive ISN user		Moderate to low ISN user	
	n	%total	n	%cat.	n	%cat.	n	%cat.	n	%cat.
In another TV show	75	17%	28	21%	47	15%	25	17%	50	17%
In a music video clip	75	17%	21	16%	54	18%	28	19%	47	16%
In another kind of TV broadcast	22	5%	4	3%	17	6%	10	7%	12	4%
I'm not sure/ I don't remember	6	1%	2	2%	4	1%	2	1%	5	2%

Digital and TV exposure to alcohol advertising

Positive answers to be cross-referenced with age, gender, drinking status, acceptability of ACP, ISN status.

As can be seen from Table 6, there was a very high level of respondent exposure to audiovisual/ digital alcohol advertising in the last 30 days. 92% reported such exposure. Males, older respondents, and drinkers were more likely to report such exposure; however, the differences observed were slight. Participants were less likely to have observed such exposure on national TV, with only 65% of the overall sample reporting this as the source.

Table 6. Effective exposure to audiovisual or digital alcohol advertising in Ireland (N=436)

Have seen **alcohol advertising**, in the last 30 days		On Internet			On social networks			On national TV			On either digital or audiovisual media		
		n	%total	%cat.	n	%total	%cat.	n	%total	%cat.	n	%total	%cat.
In the whole country sample		317	73%	73%	339	78%	78%	285	65%	65%	401	92%	92%
Age	Under 18	95	22%	73%	95	22%	73%	80	18%	62%	116	27%	89%
	18 & over	222	51%	73%	244	56%	80%	204	47%	67%	284	65%	93%
Gender	Male	163	37%	76%	169	39%	78%	146	33%	68%	202	46%	94%
	Female	150	34%	70%	168	38%	78%	136	31%	63%	193	44%	90%
	Non-binary	4	1%	80%	3	1%	51%	3	1%	60%	5	1%	100%
	Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Drinking status	Drinkers	244	56%	73%	269*	62%	80%	228*	52%	68%	314*	72%	93%
	Non drinkers	73	17%	73%	71	16%	70%	57	13%	57%	87	20%	87%
Economic category	Superior	136	31%	75%	144	33%	79%	121	28%	67%	168	39%	93%
	Lower to intermediate	181	42%	71%	195	45%	77%	164	38%	64%	232	53%	91%
Knowledge of the ban to advertise alcohol to minors	Yes	241*	55%	77%	243	56%	78%	201	46%	64%	288	66%	92%
	No	76	17%	62%	96	22%	78%	84	19%	68%	112	26%	91%
Acceptance of ban on advertising to minors	Fully or somewhat agree	251*	57%	75%	268	61%	80%	223	51%	67%	312	72%	93%
	Fully or somewhat disagree or don't know	66	15%	65%	71	16%	70%	62	14%	61%	89	20%	87%
Internet or social network (ISN) use	Heavy to intensive use	110	25%	75%	119	27%	81%	101	23%	69%	136	31%	93%
	Low to moderate use	207	47%	71%	220	50%	76%	184	42%	64%	265	61%	91%

** Statistically significant difference at the 5% (*), 1% (**), 1‰ (***) level (χ^2 test).*

Vectors of online of exposure to alcohol advertising

Most respondents encountered alcohol advertising on the internet when simply browsing stories on social networks (62%). Although this figure was higher for those in the older age group compared to younger participants (65% vs 55%), no difference between those with higher and lower ISN use was noted (62% & 62%).

Table 7. Digital activities conveying alcohol advertising in Ireland (N=436)

Internet channels of alcohol advertising	In the whole country sample		Under 18		18 & over		Heavy to intensive ISN user		Moderate to low ISN user	
	n	%total	n	%cat.	n	%cat.	n	%cat.	n	%cat.
When browsing stories on social networks	269	62%	71	55%	198	65%	90	62%	179	62%
When posting on your account	27	6%	5	4%	22	7%	18	12%	9	3%
When accessing music or videos	155	35%	43	33%	112	37%	46	32%	108	37%
When playing games online or via an App	59	13%	15	12%	43	14%	28	19%	31	11%
When searching for information or news	96	22%	23	18%	73	24%	34	23%	62	21%
When making purchases (clothes, books, games, sporting equipment etc.)	58	13%	16	12%	42	14%	23	16%	34	12%

Attitudes towards digital alcohol advertising

When an alcohol advert is seen, over two-thirds of respondents (67.7%, 256) who answered this question reported they swipe/skip it and do not pay it any attention. Only 8.7% (33) of respondents to this question stated that they watched the whole advert. Approximately one third of respondents (34.1%, 129) to this question reported that they watch the first few seconds and then skip the advert.

Impact of the last remembered alcohol advertising

The internet and social networks were the most common source of respondents' last remembered piece of alcohol advertising (40.8%, 178). A quarter of respondents reported television being the source of their last alcohol advert (25.0%, 109). 14.4% (63) identified streaming services (such as Netflix, Disney+ or YouTube) as the source of their last remembered alcohol ad, while 1.8% (8) identified the source as a cinema. 8.7% (38) of respondents reported that they did not remember the source, while 9.2% (40) stated it was seen elsewhere.

Memorising advertised alcohol brand

Approximately half of respondents (47.9%, n=209) could remember the name of the alcohol brand that they last saw advertised. The most common responses were Heineken (54), Guinness (42), Coors (24), Smirnov (11), and Corona (10).

Almost half (45.6%, n=199) of respondents reported that they had not previously tried the last brand they saw advertised. A further 20.2% (88) were unsure, while 25.5% (111) reported that they had tried the brand they last saw advertised.

Desire to drink generated

Positive answers to be cross-referenced with age, gender, drinking status

Exposure to alcohol advertising does appear to have an impact on respondents. As can be seen in Table 8, 26% of respondents reported wanting to sample the alcohol featured in their last remembered alcohol ad. This figure was statistically significantly higher among those aged 18 and over compared to the younger cohort (29% vs 18%). A notable percentage of respondents reported having since tried the alcohol they last saw advertised (21%). Males were significantly more likely to have tried the advertised alcohol.

Table 8. Reaction prompted by the last remembered alcohol advertising in Ireland (N=436)

What the last advert **triggered** in you?		Wanted to try this specific type of alcohol			Tried the advertised alcohol brand since then		
		n	%total	%cat.	n	%total	%cat.
In the whole country sample		112	26%	26%	90	21%	21%
Age	Under 18	23	5%	18%	14	3%	11%
	18 & over	89*	20%	29%	76***	17%	25%
Gender	Male	64	15%	30%	64***	15%	30%
	Female	47	11%	22%	26	6%	12%
	Non-binary	1	0%	22%	0	0%	0%
	Other	-	-	-	-	-	-
Drinking status	Drinkers	103	24%	31%	85	19%	25%
	Non drinkers	10	2%	10%	5	1%	5%

* Statistically significant difference at the 5% (*), 1% (**), 1‰ (***) level (χ^2 test).

In response to the question 'Why did you generally choose to drink alcohol?', 2.8% (12) of respondents stated that it was because they liked the alcohol advert, with 1.8% (8) stating they did so because a celebrity or influencer endorsed the alcohol brand they like.

Perceived impact of alcohol advertising on young people

Approximately one-third (37%) of survey respondents felt that internet-based alcohol advertising works on young people. As can be seen from Table 9, older participants, males, and drinkers were more likely to feel that such advertising works.

Table 9. General opinion on the impact of alcohol advertising in Ireland (N=436)

Do you think alcohol advertising on the Internet **works** on young people?		it works			it does not work		
		n	% total	%line	n	% total	%line
All		162	37%	37%	274	63%	63%
Age	Under 18	42	10%	32%	88	20%	68%
	18 & over	120	27%	39%	186	43%	61%
Gender	Male	86	20%	40%	118	27%	55%
	Female	72	17%	34%	143	33%	66%
	Non-binary	3	1%	58%	2	1%	42%
	Other	-	-	-	-	-	-

Do you think alcohol advertising on the Internet **works** on young people?		it works			it does not work		
		n	% total	%line	n	% total	%line
Drinking status	Drinkers	135	31%	40%	200	46%	60%
	Non drinkers	26	6%	26%	74	17%	74%
Economic category	Superior	65	15%	36%	117	27%	64%
	Lower and Intermediate	97	22%	38%	157	36%	62%
Knowledge of the ban to advertise alcohol TO MINORS	Yes	122	28%	39%	191	44%	61%
	No	40	9%	32%	84	19%	68%
Acceptance of ban on advertising to minors	Fully or somewhat agree	124	28%	37%	210	48%	63%
	Fully or somewhat disagree or don't know	38	9%	37%	64	15%	63%
Internet or social network (ISN) use [ISN use PROFILE]	Heavy to intensive use	56	13%	38%	91	21%	62%
	Low to moderate use	106	24%	37%	183	42%	63%

* Statistically significant difference at the 5% (*), 1% (**), 1‰ (***) level (χ^2 test).

Acceptance of advertising and alcohol control policies

Acceptance of advertising

The vast majority of respondents were of mixed or no opinion in their opinion towards alcohol marketing. As can be seen from Table 10, 61% of respondents fell into this category. Older respondents, males, and drinkers were more likely to disapprove of alcohol marketing, as were those with heavier ISN use and those in agreement with bans on alcohol advertising to minors.

Table 10. General opinion on alcohol advertising in Ireland (N=436)

How would you summarize your **opinion** on alcohol marketing?		Full disapproval			Full approval			Mixed or no opinion		
		n	% total	%cat.	n	% total	%cat.	n	% total	%cat.
In the whole country sample		118	27%	27%	52	12%	12%	267	61%	61%
Age	Under 18	25*	6%	19%	12	3%	9%	94**	21%	72%
	18 & over	93	21%	30%	40	9%	13%	173	40%	57%
Gender	Male	62	14%	29%	29	7%	14%	125	29%	58%
	Female	53	12%	25%	23	5%	11%	139	32%	65%
	Non-binary	3	1%	52%	0	0%	0%	3	1%	48%
	Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Drinking status	Drinkers	93	21%	28%	43	10%	13%	200	46%	59%
	Non drinkers	25	6%	25%	9	2%	9%	67	15%	67%

How would you summarize your **opinion** on alcohol marketing?		Full disapproval			Full approval			Mixed or no opinion		
		n	% total	%cat.	n	% total	%cat.	n	% total	%cat.
Economic category	Superior	48	11%	26%	27	6%	15%	107	25%	59%
	Lower and Intermediate	70	16%	28%	25	6%	10%	159	37%	63%
Knowledge of the ban to advertise alcohol to minors	Yes	88**	20%	28%	39	9%	13%	185*	42%	59%
	No	29	7%	24%	12	3%	10%	81	19%	66%
Acceptance of ban on advertising to minors	Fully or somewhat agree	102***	23%	30%	34	8%	10%	199***	46%	60%
	Fully or somewhat disagree or don't know	16	4%	16%	18	4%	18%	68	16%	66%
Internet or social network (ISN) use	Heavy to intensive use	47	11%	32%	19	4%	13%	81	18%	55%
	Low to moderate use	71	16%	24%	33	8%	11%	186	43%	64%

** Statistically significant difference at the 5% (*), 1% (**), 1‰ (***) level (χ^2 test).

Acceptance of advertising regulation

Almost three-quarters (73.4%, n=320) of respondents were aware of the law regulating alcohol advertising to young people in Ireland. As can be seen from Table 11, respondents were highly supportive of restrictions related to alcohol advertising near schools, those targeted at minors, and a watershed for alcohol advertising. However, respondents were less supportive of bans on alcohol advertising on TV or in videos.

Table 11. General opinions on alcohol advertising regulation in Ireland (N=436)

In the whole country sample	Fully/ Somewhat disapprove		Fully/ Somewhat approve		No opinion	
	n	% total	n	% total	n	% total
Ban on alcohol ads on public transport	118	27%	271	62%	47	11%
Ban alcohol ads on the Internet	210	48%	182	42%	44	10%
Ban alcohol ads on TV	225	52%	170	39%	41	9%
Ban alcohol brands in videos, etc.	225	52%	164	38%	47	11%
Ban on endorsement by celebrities	177	41%	213	51%	46	1%
Ban on advertising near schools, etc.	59	14%	348	80%	29	7%
Ban on advertising to minors	65	15%	342	78%	29	2%
Time restrictions for alcohol ads	83	19%	298	68%	55	13%

CONCLUSION FROM THE MIXED ANALYSIS

Awareness of the exposure to alcohol advertising

Respondents in both elements of the survey were routinely exposed to alcohol advertising via audiovisual and digital networks. Interestingly although some respondents objected to this and disapproved of such marketing, the majority did not. There was a feeling in some respondents that such marketing by the alcohol industry was normal. Respondents were familiar with alcohol advertising and pro-alcohol themes running across a wide range of media. Most exposure to alcohol advertising occurred while respondents were simply browsing online social media sites. Three fields of exposure to alcohol advertising that are particularly noteworthy are sporting events, influencer posts and via Tik-Tok.

The role of ADAM in motivations to drink alcohol

It is interesting to note that most survey respondents did not feel that alcohol advertising had an impact on their alcohol consumption. This was similarly reflected in the survey responses, where approximately two-thirds did not feel it had an impact. However, despite such protestations, there is clear evidence to suggest that such advertising did impact participants. In the survey data over a quarter (26%) of respondents reported that their last remembered alcohol advert did make them wish to consume the advertised brand and that more than one in five (21%) had since done so. Similarly, in the interviews participants reported seeing some form of pro-alcohol content in the digital media and contacting friends and suggesting that they similarly experiment. An important element in this process appeared to be the social element. Interview respondents did not tend to say that they saw an alcohol advert and decide to experiment with the alcohol; instead it was suggested to friends on the basis of a willingness to engage in a shared experience.

Impact of regulations in the national framework

Participants were largely unfamiliar with alcohol control legislation and regulations. It was interesting to note that although respondents were very supportive of such alcohol regulation, particularly for younger people, they tended to have little real clarity on the nature and extent of such regulations. It is also interesting to note that although supportive of alcohol control regulations, respondents often felt that they were poorly implemented and relatively easy to evade. However, despite such evasion by underage drinkers or the alcohol industry, respondents felt it was the Government's role to seek to protect the public, and young people in particular, from the harms of alcohol.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX 1. ASAI (2016) Code of Standards for Advertising and Marketing Communications in Ireland

Section 9: Alcoholic Drinks

The rules in this Section are designed to ensure that the content of alcohol advertising and promotion is consistent with the need for demonstrating responsibility and moderation in consumption, and that it does not encourage consumption by children.

The rules in this Section apply to marketing communications for alcoholic drinks and to marketing communications that feature, or refer to, alcoholic drinks.

Alcoholic drinks are defined as those that exceed 1.2% alcohol by volume. They include products that are classified as foodstuffs rather than drinks for the purposes of licensing or customs and excise legislation, or even if they appear to be gaseous, solid or heavily textured (or can be made to be, for example by freezing or shaking), rather than liquid.

Where stated, exceptions are made for low-alcohol drinks (those that contain 2.8% alcohol by volume or less). But, if a marketing communication for a low-alcohol drink could be considered to promote a stronger alcoholic drink, or if the drink's low-alcohol content is not stated clearly in the marketing communications, all the rules in this Section apply.

If a soft drink is promoted as a mixer, the rules in this Section apply in full.

These rules are not intended to inhibit responsible marketing communications that are intended to counter problem drinking or inform consumers about alcohol related health or safety themes. Marketing communications of that type should not, however, be likely to promote an alcohol product or brand.

9.1 Marketing communications for alcoholic drinks (i.e. those that exceed 1.2% alcohol by volume) should be socially responsible and should not exploit the young or the immature. They should neither encourage excessive drinking nor present abstinence or moderation in a negative way.

9.2 Marketing communications which depict or refer to alcohol, or to a specific alcohol brand or company, may be considered under the rules of this Section, whether or not alcohol is the main product being marketed.

9.3 Advertisers should be aware that there are other requirements that alcohol marketing communications should comply with and their attention is drawn to the list under Other Requirements at 9.12.

9.4 Marketing communications for alcohol should include a responsibility message to drink alcohol responsibly.

Social Dimension

9.5 Marketing communications may refer to the social dimension or refreshing attributes of a drink, but:

(a) Should not state, depict or imply that the presence or consumption of alcohol can improve physical performance or personal qualities or capabilities.
(b) Should not state, depict or imply that the presence or consumption of alcohol can contribute to social, sporting or business success or distinction or that those who do not drink are less likely to be acceptable or successful than those who do.
(c) Should not state, depict or suggest, by word or allusion that the presence or consumption of alcohol can contribute towards sexual success make the drinker more attractive. Advertisers should take account of public sensitivities regarding coarseness and sexual innuendo in marketing communications for alcohol.

(d) Should not portray drinking alcohol as a challenge and should not state, depict or suggest that those who drink are brave, daring or tough.
(e) Should not link in any way the presence or consumption of alcohol to aggressive, unruly, irresponsible or anti-social behaviour.

9.6 Marketing communications should not suggest that a product can mask the effects of alcohol in tests on drivers; marketing communications for breath-testing devices should include a prominent warning on the dangers of drinking and driving.

Children

9.7 Marketing communications should not be directed at children or in any way encourage them to start drinking.

(a) Anyone depicted in an alcohol marketing communication should be aged over 25 and should appear to be over 25.

(i) The preceding rule may not apply if the marketing communication shows an image of people attending an over 18s ticketed event which appears either on the advertiser's owned media (such as, for example, an advertiser's own website) or on an advertiser's social media page provided such media are accessed through a secure and appropriate Age Verification System and provided the person depicted:

- appears to be clearly over 18 years of age
- is not playing a significant role
- cannot be seen consuming alcohol
- does not appear to be under the influence of, or have consumed, alcohol prior to the events depicted in the marketing communication.

(b) Aspects of youth culture and treatments that are likely to appeal to children should not be used. Treatments should not portray adolescent, juvenile, childish or immature behaviour.
(c) Marketing communications should not use or refer to identifiable heroes or heroines of the young. See Guidance Note on Alcohol Marketing Communications at www.asai.ie.
(d) Marketing communications should not feature personalities or characters (real or fictitious) that would have a particular appeal to children.
(e) Alcohol marketing communications should not be placed in media primarily intended for children. Advertisers should take account of the audience's age profile so that marketing communications are communicated, so far as is possible, to adults. In this context the ASAI will have regard to the Alcohol Marketing, Communication and Sponsorship Codes of Practice, agreed by the Department of Health, the drinks industry, and the media as detailed under Other Requirements at 9.12.
(f) Digital media, including apps, that primarily promote an alcohol brand should be age gated through a secure and appropriate Age Verification System. See Guidance Note on Alcohol Marketing Communications at www.asai.ie.

Health and Safety

9.8 In the interests of health and safety:

(a) Marketing communications should only depict or imply the responsible and moderate consumption of alcoholic drinks.
(b) Marketing communications should not show, imply or encourage immoderate or irresponsible drinking or regular solitary drinking. This applies to the amount of alcohol, the numbers drinking or the way drinking is portrayed. The buying of a large round of drinks should not be depicted or implied.
(c) Marketing communications for alcohol should not portray drinking games or sessions, or show or imply pub or club crawls.
(d) Abstinence or moderation should not be presented in a negative light.
(e) Marketing communications should not attempt to influence non- drinkers of any age to drink or to purchase alcoholic drinks.

(f) Marketing communications may not suggest, or commend, or make fun of over-indulgence in respect of alcohol or its after-effects.

(g) Marketing communications should not claim that alcohol has therapeutic qualities or that it is a stimulant, a mood-changer or a sedative, or that it is or can be transformative of an individual or a situation or that it is a means of boosting confidence or resolving personal conflict.
(h) Marketing communications should not depict any direct association with the consumption of alcoholic drinks and activities or locations where drinking alcohol would be unsafe, unwise or unacceptable. Where consumption is shown or implied it should not be represented as having taken place before or during engagement of the activity in question.
(i) Marketing communications should not associate the consumption of alcohol with operating machinery, driving, any activity relating to water or heights, or any other occupation that requires concentration in order to be done safely.
(j) Factual information can be given about the alcoholic strength of a particular drink. However, with the exception of low-alcohol drinks (i.e. those that contain 2.8% alcohol by volume or less) it should not be the principal theme of any marketing communication. Drinks should not be promoted as being more intoxicating or presented as preferable because of their higher alcohol content.
(k) Advertisers should ensure that low-alcohol drinks (i.e. those that contain 2.8% alcohol by volume or less) are not promoted in a way that encourages inappropriate consumption.

Promotions

9.9 Terms and conditions for promotions involving alcohol should make it clear:

(a) That entry is restricted to those 18 years of age and older.
(b) That prizes and/or gifts will only be awarded to those 18 years of age or older.

9.10 Marketing communications or promotions should not combine alcohol with a gift that has particular appeal to under-18s.

9.11 Promotions involving alcohol that require multiple purchases should not promote excessive consumption. Other Requirements

9.12 Attention is drawn to a number of other requirements, in addition to those in this Code, which apply to the marketing of alcohol in Ireland:

- All campaigns by drinks manufacturers solely or mainly for alcohol carried in Irish media should carry Copy Clear approval.
- The voluntary codes agreed between the Department of Health, the drinks industry and the media in relation to television, radio, cinema and outdoor/ambient media.
- Codes of standards, practices and prohibitions in advertising, sponsorship, and other forms of commercial promotion in broadcasting service, regulated by the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland.
- Code for Sponsorships by Alcohol Drinks Companies.
- Intoxicating Liquor Acts, 1988 – 2008.
- Responsible Retailing of Alcohol in Ireland Code.

APPENDIX 2. Broadcasting Authority of Ireland's (2017) General Commercial Communications Code

11. Alcohol

11.1 Commercial communications for alcoholic beverages shall comply with all relevant Irish and European legislation and with rules, regulations and codes of practice issued from time to time by a relevant competent authority, in particular any relevant codes of practice published or recognised by the Department of Health.

11.2 Commercial communications for alcoholic beverages shall be cast towards brand selling and identification and shall not
a. Depict or feature children consuming these beverages or encourage children or non-drinkers to begin drinking;
b. Link the consumption of alcohol to enhanced physical performance or to driving;
c. Create the impression that the consumption of alcohol contributes toward sexual attraction and success or social success;
d. Claim that alcohol has therapeutic qualities or that it is a stimulant, a sedative, tranquilizer or a means of resolving personal conflicts;
e. Encourage immoderate consumption of alcohol or present abstinence or moderation in a negative light;
f. Place emphasis on high alcohol content as being a positive quality of the beverages; or,
g. Bear health claims or nutrition claims for beverages containing more than 1.2% AbV, other than those which refer to a reduction in the alcohol or energy content.

11.3 Commercial communications are not permitted for the following:
a. Beverages containing alcohol content of 25% AbV and above e.g. vodka, whiskey, tequila, rum, gin, brandy, etc.; or
b. Alco-pops, pre-mixed spirit drinks and products of a similar nature.

This rule does not prohibit commercial communications for liqueurs containing alcohol content of less than 25% AbV.

11.4 Commercial communications are permitted for events or activities that have alcohol sponsorship. The sponsor of the event or activity and the sponsor's product(s) may be referenced in the commercial communication but shall not be more prominent than the event or activity being promoted.

11.5 Alcohol sponsorship of sports programmes and sports bulletins, including competitions within sports programmes, is not permitted. Solus/whistle breaks advertising spots for alcohol brands are not permitted during sports programmes. These are understood as isolated or individual advertising spots before the normal advertising breaks at half-time or full-time in programme coverage of a sports event.

11.6 Commercial communications for alcoholic beverages shall comply with the following:
a. They shall not be placed in children's programmes;
b. They shall not be broadcast in or around children's programmes;
c. They shall be broadcast only in or around programmes with an adult audience profile of 75% or greater; and
d. They shall not be broadcast between 6am and 10am.

11.7 Where alcohol advertising is permissible, it is limited to a maximum of 25% of sold advertising time and only one in four advertisements for alcoholic beverages is permissible across the broadcast day, excluding the period from 6am to 10am. No more than two advertisements for alcoholic beverages can appear in any one advertising break.

11.8 Each broadcaster shall identify the programmes in their schedules that do not carry commercial communications for alcoholic beverages, in particular, children's programmes, and shall publish this list on a website maintained by the broadcaster and make a copy of the list generally available.

11.9 Broadcasters shall enforce a Code of Conduct for their presenters ensuring that speech content that glamorises or encourages over-consumption or misuse of alcohol is prevented. Each broadcaster will publish this Code on a website maintained by the broadcasters and make a copy of the Code generally available.