

# Awareness of alcohol marketing and the association with higher-risk drinking among adults in Ireland: The first steps in evaluating an important development in marketing control

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Helen McAvoy and Suzanne Costello (IPH Ireland)

# Disclosures

## Project funded by:



## Conflict of interest:

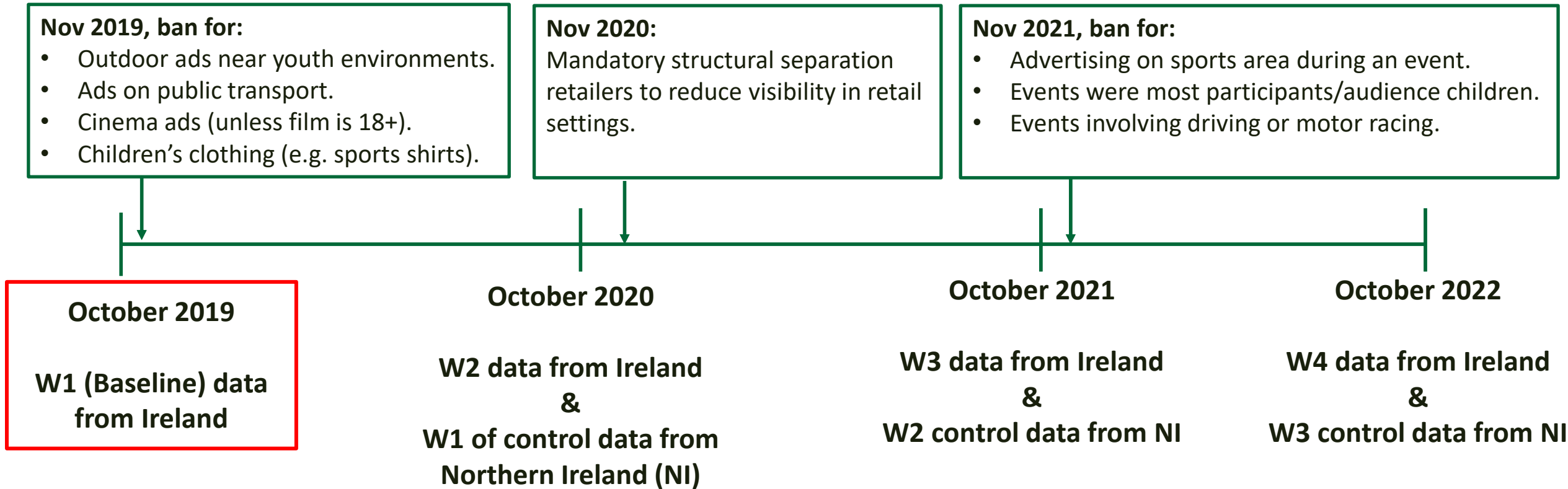
Nathan Critchlow is on the Board of Trustees at Alcohol Focus Scotland.

Helen McAvoy and Suzanne Costello are employed by IPH Ireland, who part-fund this research.

Niamh Fitzgerald, Martine Stead, Anne Marie MacKintosh and Richard Purves report no conflict of interest.

No funding from alcohol industry or industry representative bodies to report.

# Evaluating Ireland's Public Health (Alcohol) Act



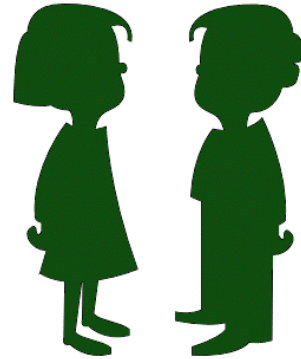
Anticipated that restrictions without a fixed implementation date will be implemented during the study; for example broadcast watershed or print advert restrictions.

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# Baseline: Design and sample



1,007  
adults



50% Female  
50% Male



Range:  
18-24 years (11%)  
to >55+ years (32%)

Province / Region	%
Dublin	28
Rest of Leinster	27
Munster	27
Connaught / Part of Ulster	18

Fieldwork conducted by YouGov through their RealTime Omnibus services  
Participants recruited from their non-probabilistic online market research panel

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# Baseline: Alcohol consumption



90% of sample were current drinkers

What does 6 standard drinks look like?



44% engaged in Heavy Episodic Drinking (HED; binge drinking) at least monthly <sup>[1]</sup>



55% of current drinkers classed as higher risk <sup>[2]</sup>

Variables derived from the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test – Consumption (AUDIT-C)

[1] HED defined as 6 or more standard drinks in a typical occasion (60g of alcohol)

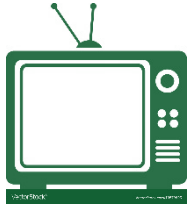
[2] Defined as a score of ≥5 on the AUDIT-C

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# Where did adults in Ireland recall seeing alcohol marketed *in the past month*?



Price offers  
80%



TV  
79%



Sponsorship  
76%



Celeb endorsement  
69%



Outdoor  
67%



Merchandise  
63%



Print press  
61%



Public transport  
53%



Social media  
48%



Radio  
47%



Competitions  
45%



Catch-up  
40%



Cinema  
29%

94% of adults recalled seeing at least one marketing activity in the past month

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# Calculating how much alcohol marketing adults see each month: The method

We take the original measurement scale....

## Original scale in survey

Every day
5-6 times per week
3-4 times per week
1-2 per week
Less than one a week
Not in the past month
Not sure



...create an estimate of how many times seen in the past month...

## Instances in last month

28 instances
22 instances
14 instances
6 instances
2 instances
0 instances
Excluded



...add estimates up across all marketing activities...

## All marketing activities

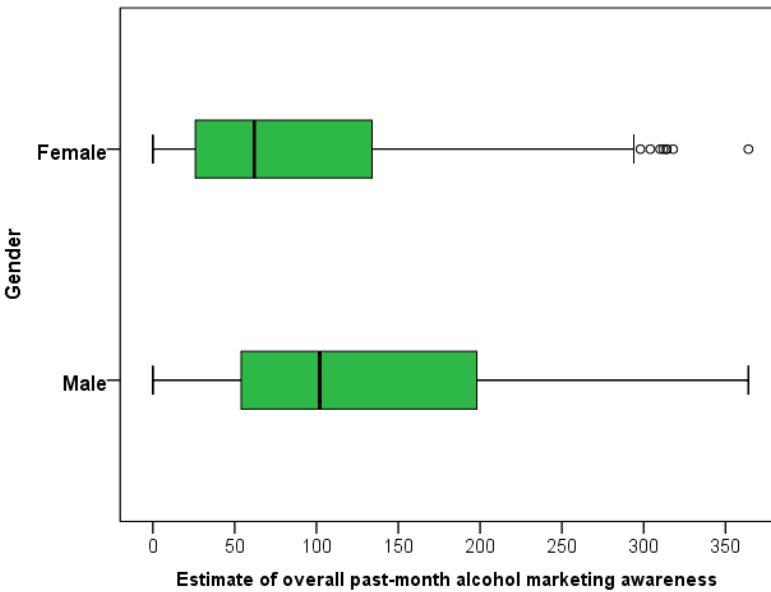
Print
TV
Public transport
Catch/streamlining
Billboard
Cinema
Radio
Social media
etc.....

=

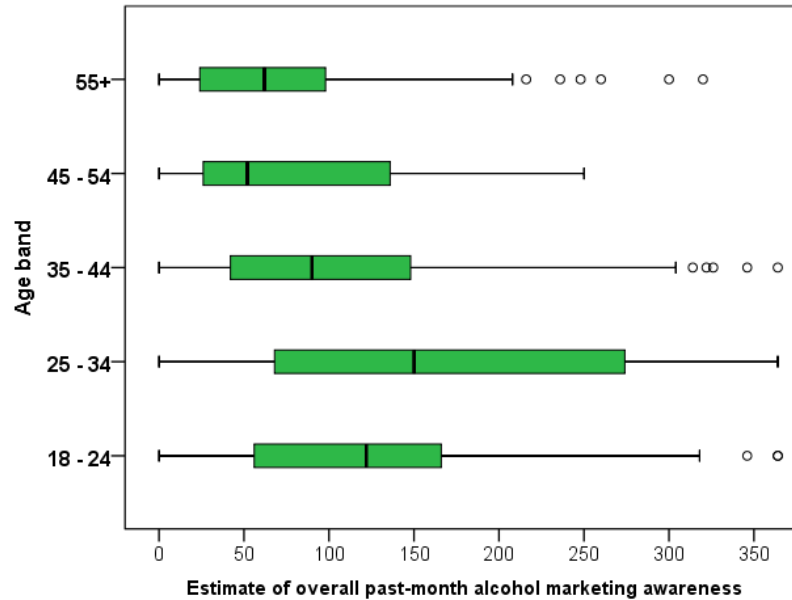
...and hey presto, we have a total score!

**Total estimate of marketing awareness in the past month**

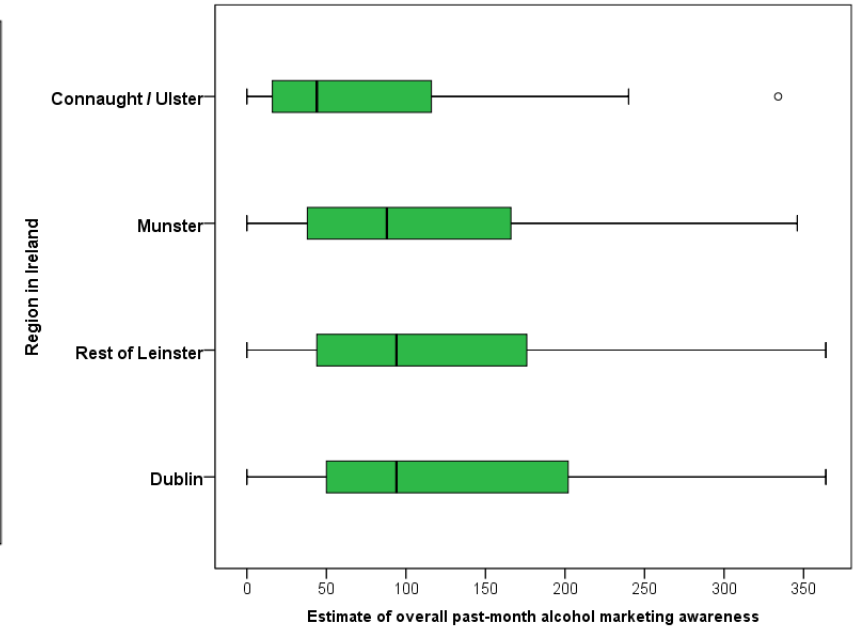
# Does alcohol marketing awareness vary by demography?



Mann Whitney ( $Z=-4.26, p<0.001$ )



Kruskal-Wallis ( $k=34.40, p<0.001$ )



Kruskal-Wallis ( $k=25.70, p<0.001$ )

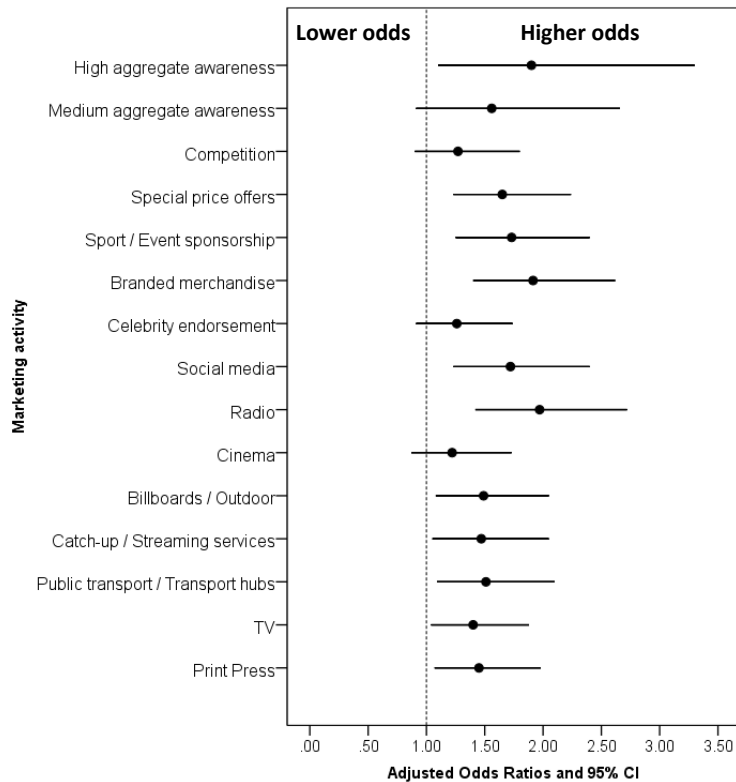
Half of adults in Ireland recall seeing 87 or more instances in the past month; equivalent to around three times a day

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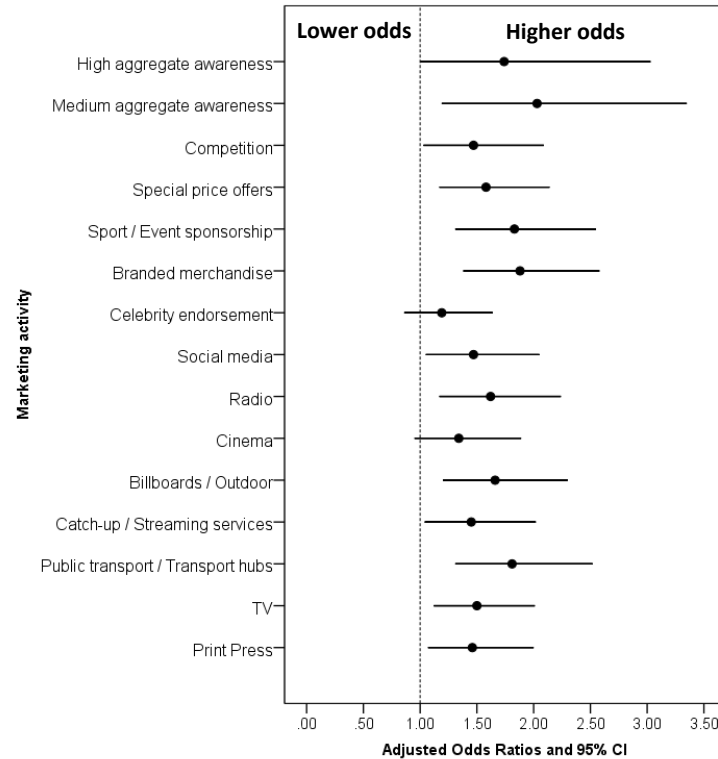


# Is awareness of alcohol marketing associated with HED and higher-risk drinking?

Associations with monthly HED



Associations with higher-risk drinking



- For 10/13 activities, higher past month awareness was associated with both monthly HED and higher-risk drinking.
- Across all activities, those reporting high past month awareness (vs. low) were 1.9x more likely to report monthly HED (OR<sub>Adj</sub>=1.90) [1]
- Across all activities, those reporting medium past month awareness (vs. low) were 2x more likely to be higher-risk drinkers (OR<sub>Adj</sub>=2.03) [1]

[1] All models control for age, gender, and region; each marketing activity examined in separate models, top two lines show OR<sub>Ad</sub> for aggregate past-month marketing awareness (vs. low awareness); all OR<sub>Adj</sub> for individual marketing activities, based on Higher past-month awareness vs. lower awareness (median splits).

## Summary: Before the Public Health (Alcohol) Act was implemented...

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- Adults in Ireland were aware of a variety of alcohol marketing activities, with awareness particularly high for activities included in the legislation.
- At least half of adults recalled seeing 87 instances of alcohol marketing in the past month; equivalent to three times a day. Awareness was particularly high among males and younger adults.
- Increased awareness of alcohol marketing – for many individual activities and overall – was associated with at least monthly binge drinking and being a higher-risk drinker.
- Vitally important that this baseline data is robustly evaluated to determine changes over time.

# Evaluating the marketing elements of the Act

## Nov 2019, ban for:

- Outdoor ads near youth environn
- Ads on public transport.
- Cinema ads (unless film is 18+).
- Children's clothing (e.g. sports sh

October 2019

W1 (Baseline) data  
from Ireland



## Nov 2021, ban for:

- Advertising on sports area during an event.
- Events were most participants/audience children.
- Events involving driving or motor racing.

October 2021

W2 data from Ireland  
&  
W3 control data from NI

October 2022

W4 data from Ireland  
&  
W3 control data from NI

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# Brief acknowledgement of limitations

- Data comes from a non-probabilistic online market research panel; unknown external generalisability
- Cross-sectional data cannot demonstrate a causal relationship between marketing awareness and monthly HED and higher-risk drinking <sup>[1]</sup>.
- Self-reported data, so likely underestimates both awareness and consumption, and data only collected at a single time-point (so far) <sup>[2]</sup>.
- Analyses only controlled for demography, not other intrapersonal, interpersonal, social and environmental determinants of consumption <sup>[3]</sup>.
- Only measured *awareness* of marketing, but not participation or engagement <sup>[4]</sup>.

[1] There is already a lot of evidence which supports a causal relationship.

[2] Both marketing awareness and consumption may have seasonal variations, both up and down.

[3] For example perceived norms around peer consumption or availability

[4] Participation with marketing (particularly digital) has a stronger association with consumption.

# Thanks

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With thanks to: