Alcohol duty and alcohol harm

Key points

- On Monday 17 October the Chancellor announced plans to allow alcohol duty to rise in line with inflation, at a benefit to the public purse of £600 million annually.
- The World Health Organization has identified alcohol duty as being one of the most effective ways of tackling alcohol-related harm.
- In Scotland, there was an increase from 1,020 alcohol-specific deaths in 2020 to 1,245 in 2021 (alcohol harm is increasing at an alarming rate: in 2020, deaths from alcohol increased by 19% across the UK).
- During the cost-of-living crisis, alcohol duty helps raise much needed funds while also helping to reduce alcohol harm and protect public health.
- Alcohol duty cuts and freezes disproportionately benefit the off trade, rather than the hospitality sector.
- The decision to increase alcohol duty rates would result in the avoidance of a significant further increase in alcohol-related harms and, by reducing these harms, would alleviate pressures on our over-stretched health service.

Alcohol harm in Scotland

Alcohol harm has enormous health, social and economic costs and is one of Scotland's most pervasive public health issues – as evidenced by the latest alcohol death figures from the National Records for Scotland (NRS). The figures show an increase from 1,020 alcohol-specific deaths in 2020 to 1,245 in 2021, with death rates 5.6 times higher among those living in the most deprived areas of Scotland, compared to the least.[1] In 2020/21, there were 35,124 alcohol-related hospital stays in Scotland (at a rate of 641 per 100,000).[2]

Currently, the overall UK revenue from alcohol duty (£10.5-12.1 billion) is less than half of the costs of alcohol to society (£27 billion).[3,4]

Alcohol affordability and the economy

The level of alcohol harm is directly linked to its affordability: the cheaper alcohol is, the more is consumed, and therefore the more harm caused. Alcohol duty has been cut or frozen in most years since 2013. As a result, alcohol has become 14% more affordable since 2010.[5]

Cuts to alcohol duty since 2012 have cost a total of £8.6bn.[6] Following the Autumn 2021 Budget, it was estimated that beer duty would be 28% lower, and cider and spirit duty 21% lower in real terms compared to 2012/13. Scotch whisky faced the lowest real-term tax rate since 1918.[6]

Evidence indicates that previous freezes have increased the affordability of alcohol and have resulted in increased alcohol-related harms. The University of Sheffield has estimated that cuts and freezes to alcohol duty from 2012-2019 have led to over 250 additional deaths and 4,500 hospital admissions in Scotland (and almost 2,000 additional deaths and over 61,000 hospital admissions in England).[7]

Increasing alcohol duty has been highlighted by the World Health Organization as one of the most cost-effective measures to tackle alcohol harm, reduce alcohol-attributed cancers, and death rates, as well as providing other public health benefits such as reducing obesity.[8,9]

The Treasury has estimated that reversing the freeze on alcohol duty will gain the public purse £600 million annually.[10]

With the cost of most goods rising, it is crucial that alcohol – a harmful and non-essential product that has enjoyed real-term tax reductions for a decade – pays for the damage it causes and contributes crucial funds to the public purse.

Alcohol duty, hospitality and jobs

It is often believed – and the alcohol industry has argued – that reversing the planned freeze on alcohol duty will harm the hospitality industry. However, in reality, duty cuts are mainly helping supermarkets maintain the low prices that continue to undermine pubs and restaurants.

There had been a shift from drinking in pubs to drinking at home in Scotland and the rest of the UK, already prior to the pandemic.[11] This shift has at least partly been driven by the widening price differential between the on-trade (pubs and restaurants) and the off-trade (shops and supermarkets). Alcohol duty represents just 12% of the on-trade retail price of beer, compared to 36% of the off-trade price.[12]

There is evidence that the on-trade does not benefit from duty cuts like the off-trade does: between 2012-2019, beer duty was cut in real terms, yet beer sales in pubs fell by 17% while supermarket sales increased by 11%.[13] Similarly, the net decline in the number of pubs was around the same rate in both periods of duty increases (2008-2013) as well as duty freezes (2013-2017).[14]

Arguments around income, employment and trade are regularly used by the alcohol industry to resist measures which target alcohol consumption and harm. However, a report from the Institute of Alcohol Studies found that there are only seven local authorities in Scotland where the alcohol producers account for more than 1% of jobs.[15] The report found “no systematic relationship between an area’s prosperity and its dependence on alcohol industry employment”.[15] Even in Moray, where alcohol producers account for 3.3% of all jobs, and distilleries a total of 1,000 jobs (2.9%), this is far from the dominant industry - as schools in Moray employ 2,500 people (7.1%), hospitals 2,000 (6.0%) and grocery stores 1,900 people (5.5%).[15]

There are better alternative measures to support pubs and the hospitality sector, such as reducing business rates or reducing VAT on food in pubs. The new alcohol duty system will also introduce a new draught relief with a reduced rate for draught beer, cider and made-wines, which will benefit the sector.

SHAAP urges MSPs to support the UK Government in doing the right thing for public health and public finances. We urge MSPs to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer in recognition of the role of alcohol duty in reducing alcohol-related harms – which are disproportionately high in Scotland.

References

[1] National Records of Scotland. Alcohol Specific Deaths 2021 [Internet]. NRS. 2022. Available from: https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files//statistics/alcohol-deaths/2021/alcohol-specific-deaths-21-report.pdf
[2] Public Health Scotland. Alcohol related hospital statistics - Scotland financial year 2020 to 2021 [Internet]. PHS. 2022. Available from: https://publichealthscotland.scot/publications/alcohol-related-hospital-statistics/alcohol-related-hospital-statistics-scotland-financial-year-2020-to-2021/
[3] HM Revenue and Customs (2020). UK alcohol duty statistics.
[4] Burton R, Henn C, Lavoie D, O’Connor R, Perkins C, Sweeney K, et al. A rapid evidence review of the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of alcohol control policies: an English perspective. *The Lancet*. 2017 Apr;389(10078):1558–80.
[5] NHS. Statistics on Alcohol, England 2021 [Internet]. NHS Digital. 2022. Available from: https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/statistics-on-alcohol/2021
[6] Institute of Alcohol Studies (2021). October 2021 Budget Analysis.

[7] University of Sheffield report: Angus, C. & Henney, M. (2019). Modelling the impact of alcohol duty policies since 2012 in England and Scotland. The University of Sheffield and IAS.

[8] Kilian C, Rovira P, Neufeld M, Ferreira-Borges C, Rumgay H, Soerjomataram I, et al. Modelling the impact of increased alcohol taxation on alcohol-attributable cancers in the WHO European Region. The Lancet Regional Health - Europe. 2021 Sep;100225.

[9]Ananthapavan J, Sacks G, Brown V, Moodie M, Nguyen P, Veerman L, et al. Priority-setting for obesity prevention—The Assessing Cost-Effectiveness of obesity prevention policies in Australia (ACE-Obesity Policy) study. Lhachimi SK, editor. *PLOS ONE*. 2020 Jun 19;15(6):e0234804.

[10] UK Government. Chancellor brings forward further Medium-Term Fiscal Plan measures [Internet]. GOV.UK. 2022 [Accessed 2022]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/chancellor-brings-forward-further-medium-term-fiscal-plan-measures#:~:text=Cutting%20dividends%20tax%20by%201.25

[11] Institute of Alcohol Studies (Accessed 2021). Consumption

[12] Ponce Hardy V, Giles L. Monitoring and Evaluating Scotland's Alcohol Strategy: Monitoring Report 2022. Edinburgh: Public Health Scotland; 2022.

[13] Angus C. Why the Chancellor's freeze on alcohol duties is bad news for pubs [Internet]. Alcohol Change UK. 2021. Available from: https://alcoholchange.org.uk/blog/2021/why-the-chancellors-freeze-on-alcohol-duties-is-bad-news-for-pubs#:~:text=This%20is%20because%20cutting%20duties

[14] British Beer and Pub Association (2018). Statistical Handbook 2018.

[15] Institute of Alcohol Studies report: IAS (2017). Splitting the Bill – Alcohol's Impact on the Economy. Institute of Alcohol Studies.

SHAAP comment in response to SNP MSP Emma Roddick's letter to the Chancellor

SHAAP Director, Elinor Jayne, commented:

"It is disappointing that Emma Roddick MSP has asked for a freeze on alcohol duty to be reinstated.

Previous freezes have increased the affordability of alcohol and have resulted in increased alcohol-related harms. The University of Sheffield has estimated that cuts and freezes to alcohol duty from 2012-2019 have led to over 250 additional deaths and 4,500 hospital admissions in Scotland.

Alcohol harm is currently one of Scotland's most pervasive public health issues – with 1,245 alcohol-specific deaths in 2021 and 35,124 alcohol-related hospital stays in 2020/21. The decision to increase alcohol duty would result in the avoidance of a significant further increase in these alcohol-related harms and, by reducing these harms, would alleviate pressures on our over-stretched health service.

Emma Roddick MSP raises concerns that an increase in duty could impact on jobs and the economy. Arguments around income, employment and trade are regularly used by the alcohol industry to resist measures which target alcohol consumption and harm. However, there are only seven local authorities where the alcohol producers account for more than 1% of jobs. Even in Moray (which Emma Roddick MSP represents in her region), where alcohol producers account for 3% of all jobs, and distilleries 3% (a total of 1,000 jobs), this is far from the dominant industry - as schools in Moray employ 2,500 people (7%), hospitals 2,000 (6%) and grocery stores 1,900 people (6%).

The World Health Organization has identified alcohol duty as being one of the most effective ways of tackling alcohol-related harm and SNP MSP Emma Roddick's call to reinstate plans to freeze the duty goes against this entirely. Emma Roddick MSP's call for a duty freeze not only runs counter to the Scottish Government's policy on Minimum Unit Pricing, it puts the alcohol industry's concerns ahead of those of the Scottish population which experiences disproportionately high harms because of alcohol."

Ends.

For further information or comment contact Jane Gordon, Policy & Public Affairs Officer at SHAAP on j.gordon@rcpe.ac.uk or 0131 247 3667.

Notes to Editors:

Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems (SHAAP) is a partnership of the Medical Royal Colleges in Scotland and the Faculty of Public Health and is based at the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh (RCPE). SHAAP provides the authoritative medical and clinical voice on the need to reduce the impact of alcohol-related harm on the health and wellbeing of people in Scotland and the evidence-based approaches to achieve this.

- The letter from Emma Roddick MSP to the Chancellor can be found here
- University of Sheffield report: Angus, C. & Henney, M. (2019). Modelling the impact of alcohol duty policies since 2012 in England and Scotland. The University of Sheffield and IAS.
- Institute of Alcohol Studies report: IAS (2017). Splitting the Bill – Alcohol's Impact on the Economy. Institute of Alcohol Studies. (For stats on jobs)

Alcohol sponsorship of football

Examining the nature of sponsorship relations for professional football teams across countries with varied restrictions on alcohol marketing

Dr. Richard I. Purves, Amber Morgan,
Dr. Nathan Critchlow

SHAAP
SCOTTISH HEALTH ACTION
ON ALCOHOL PROBLEMS
www.shaap.org.uk

UNIVERSITY of
STIRLING

Foreword

Foreword from Rt Hon. Henry McLeish, former First Minister of Scotland

One of my greatest passions and interests is Scottish sport, and football in particular. It has now been 12 years since I conducted my review into Scottish football, but I am as interested and involved in the sport as ever.

Football is a source of great pride, health, fitness, and cultural importance for Scotland. No other country in Europe has such a large percentage of its population attending weekly football games. This is the case across the whole country, with leagues, teams and fans spanning the entirety of Scotland. Huge numbers of people enjoy a shared experience of attending games and coming together to celebrate, commiserate and hopefully dream, time and time again.

There is something very special and unique about the dedication of our Scottish football fans and their emotional connection to their clubs and the game. Football provides a sense of community for many; a place where folks catch up with friends and family; making memories.

Scottish football should inspire positive relationships, good health, and team spirit. However, club sponsorship has allowed the promotion of harmful products such as alcohol to take part in our beloved game and for the alcohol industry to capitalise on our unique relationship with football - the beautiful game.

Sport sponsorship provides alcohol companies with a prominent and highly attractive method of reaching a large audience, influencing how much and how often they consume alcohol. It is well established that exposure to alcohol marketing is associated with the initiation of drinking, an increase in alcohol consumption, and has been reported to increase risk of relapse (for those in recovery). Sponsorship allows brands to form attractive associations and to capitalise on fans' emotional connections with sport and sports teams.

As former First Minister, I have seen the devastating harms caused by alcohol in Scotland in recent decades. Tragically, alcohol continues to be one of Scotland's most serious public health issues - as evidenced by the latest alcohol death figures from the National Records for Scotland. These figures show an increase from 1,020 alcohol-specific deaths in 2020 to 1,245 in 2021, with death rates 5.6 times higher among those living in the most deprived areas of Scotland, compared to the least.

However, these figures reflect only those deaths where alcohol was solely responsible. If you include those where alcohol has played a part, the true alcohol death toll is at least 3 times higher. While a fatal outcome is the most tragic demonstration of alcohol harm, the adverse impact on society is much wider, affecting not only those suffering alcohol problems, but also those around them. Everyone in Scotland knows someone whose life has been damaged by alcohol.

This report makes valuable findings which I welcome. The report highlights that Scottish football has a comparatively lower number of sponsors than our European counterparts, and within this we have a higher proportion of alcohol sponsors. We must find a better way to finance Scottish football, finding sponsors with values that align with sports and community, and who are not damaging our Scottish population by marketing harmful products. I have no doubt that this aim could be easily achieved. Even in tough times Scottish football could do much better.

This form of avoidable harm has no place in sport, and the Scottish Government must show leadership in implementing decisive, effective approaches to tackle this. Sport should no longer be a forum for alcohol to be promoted.

Scotland needs to **call time on alcohol sports sponsorship.**

A report prepared for Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems by the Institute for Social Marketing and Health, Faculty of Health Sciences and Sport, University of Stirling.

Published November 2022

Contents

Summary

Background and aims: Alcohol sports sponsorship provides a highly effective, high-profile, and high-reach platform for alcohol companies to promote their products and allows brands to capitalise on existing emotional connections that consumers have with their favourite teams, players, or events. Controls on alcohol marketing, including alcohol sponsorship, are recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) as one of their three 'best buy' policies to reduce harmful use of alcohol. Most countries in the WHO European region have some form of controls in place for alcohol marketing, ranging from self-regulation to statutory restrictions. However, there is limited evidence on the extent of alcohol sports sponsorship in various European countries and whether this is impacted by different approaches towards regulating alcohol sports sponsorship. This report therefore examines the extent of alcohol sport sponsorship in the top tier of professional football across various European nations.

Methods: An open-source audit of the main sponsors (and/or partners) of 'top flight' male professional football teams (n=178) and leagues in 10 European countries. The main sponsors/partners for each team and league were captured from official websites.

Findings: Across the 178 teams audited, 7,807 main sponsors / partners were identified. Of these main sponsors / partners, 2.6% (n=200) were judged to be alcohol related (range: 0.6% in Sweden to 7.4% in Belgium). Most were for producers/distributors/brands of alcoholic drinks (93.5%). A smaller proportion were for brand variants with no (zero) or low alcohol content (4.0%) or licensed premises that primarily sold alcohol (2.5%). Of the 178 teams audited, 72.5% (n=129) were judged to have at least one alcohol related sponsor/partner. Across the 10 leagues, 110 main sponsors / partners were identified. Of these, four were judged to be alcohol related (3.6%, all individual leagues), all of which were for producers/distributors/brands of alcoholic drinks.

Conclusion: The extent of alcohol sponsorship across European countries with varying approaches to alcohol marketing is complex. Although alcohol sponsors made up a small percentage of all main sponsors / partners identified, three quarters of teams were judged to have at least one alcohol related sponsor/partner. While the data supports that countries with statutory controls do appear to have comparatively less alcohol sponsorship, the differences observed between other countries - particularly where no statutory controls exist - suggests that wider cultural and commercial factors are also important determinants.

1. Introduction

1.1 Alcohol Sponsorship

Marketing is the main source of communication between a brand and consumers. There is evidence from multiple systematic reviews and primary studies that awareness of, and engagement with, alcohol marketing is associated with increased likelihood of alcohol consumption amongst young people (Smith & Foxcroft, 2009; Booth et al., 2008; Jernigan et al., 2017; Sargent & Babor, 2020). There is also increasing awareness of the impact of marketing on other vulnerable groups, for example dependent drinkers or those in recovery (Alcohol Focus Scotland, 2022).

One form of alcohol marketing is sponsorship, which provides a highly effective, high-profile, and high-reach platform for alcohol companies to promote their products and brands. Sponsorship of sporting teams and events allows brands to capitalise on the existing emotional connections that consumers have with their favourite teams, players, or events (Purves, 2017). Sponsorship is an umbrella term that encompasses a range of marketing practices including, but not limited to: shirt sponsorship; advertising across stadiums (e.g., hoardings around the pitch or electronic screens); exclusive ‘pourage rights’ within the stadiums and fan zones; limited edition products that feature the names of teams and/or their achievements; a presence on official social media channels; and players and/or managers featuring in advertisements (Purves & Critchlow, 2020). Research has found an association between exposure to alcohol sport sponsorship and increased consumption, including among young people and adult sportspersons (Brown, 2016). The World Health Organization (WHO) describes alcohol sponsorship as a key strategy used by transnational alcohol companies to increase awareness of their products and reach new audiences in different parts of the world (World Health Organization, 2022).

1.2. Restricting Alcohol Sponsorship

Controls on alcohol marketing, including sponsorship, are listed by the WHO as one of their three ‘best buy’ policies to reduce the harmful use of alcohol (World Health Organization, 2017). Most countries in the WHO European region have some controls in place for alcohol marketing, ranging from self-regulatory codes overseen by the alcohol and/or marketing industries to statutory controls imposed by governments (World Health Organization, 2020). In the United Kingdom (UK), for example, sponsorship is largely self-regulated by a representative body of alcohol producers (Portman Group, 2014). Reviews of the literature, however, have concluded that such self-regulatory approaches for alcohol marketing are subject to several limitations which may, in turn, limit any protective effect for consumers (Noel et al., 2017, Noel et al., 2017). Conversely, countries such as France and Norway have statutory controls on alcohol marketing, including prohibitions on sports sponsorship (Purves et al., 2022). There is, however, evidence that the alcohol industry may circumvent these statutory controls, for example by using alibi marketing in France during the UEFA Euro 2016 football tournament and rugby union Six Nations Championship (Barker et al., 2021; Murray et al., 2018; Purves et al., 2017; Purves & Critchlow, 2021).

1.3 Research Objectives

There is limited evidence on the extent of alcohol sports sponsorship in various European countries and to what extent different approaches to restricting alcohol sports sponsorship impacts on the sponsorship arrangements of football clubs in these countries. In response, this report had two research objectives (RO):

RO1: To examine the extent of alcohol sport sponsorship in the top tier of professional football across various European nations.

RO2: To explore to what extent different approaches to restricting alcohol sports sponsorship impacts on the sponsorship arrangements of football clubs in these countries.

2. Methods

2.1. Design

The data come from an open-source audit of the main sponsors (and/or partners) of professional football teams and leagues in 10 European countries. This builds on research examining sponsor relationships for professional football and rugby union teams in Scotland (Purves & Critchlow, 2020) and elsewhere (Belt et al., 2014; Macniven et al., 2015; Maher et al., 2006; Sartori et al., 2018).

2.2. Sample

We chose a purposive sample of 10 European countries to represent varied league size and profile, geographical distribution, and regulatory approaches for alcohol sponsorship (Table 1). From each country, we sampled all teams who competed in the 'top-flight' of male football (n=178), as well as sponsors of the leagues themselves. Data for most leagues relates to the 2021/2022 season, except for the Swedish Allsvenskan and Norwegian Eliteserien, which are played over the summer rather than winter months. For this analysis, we only focused on the sponsors associated with the men's first team (i.e., not women's teams, affiliate teams, or youth teams). Information on the alcohol marketing regulations in each country was sourced from the website of the European Centre for Monitoring Alcohol Marketing (EUCAM, 2022) and from previous work (Purves et al., 2022).

2.3. Data collection

All data was captured between April and May 2022. Clubs were reviewed in chronological order of league end date to limit any potential confounding influence of sponsors / partners being changed or delisted at the end of the season. The main sponsors / partners for each team and league were captured from official websites using the screenshot function on an iPhone, which enabled capture of a large amount of data within and across leagues in a time and resource efficient manner. We did consider that mobile optimised websites may differ from those designed for browsers on computers. In cases where it appeared that mobile optimisation may have led to key changes in website format/design, such as the number of sponsors / partners displayed prominently on the homepage, the website was checked using a laptop web browser. Most websites were captured in the country's native language, using search engines to translate key terms as necessary. Some websites offered the option of switching to a purpose-built English version. These translated sites, however, sometimes contained less information and fewer sponsors than the native language version. As such, where translations were available, these were cross-checked against the native language version.

2.4. Identifying main sponsors or partners

Consistent with a previous study examining sponsorship among professional sports teams in Scotland (Purves & Critchlow, 2020), we sought to identify companies or organisations presented as the 'main sponsors' or 'official partners' of each club or league (hereafter 'main sponsors / partners'). We did not seek to identify 'minor' relationships, such as sponsoring individual players or match-days or purchasing corporate hospitality packages.

Table 1. Countries and professional football leagues sampled

Country	League	Teams	Is alcohol sport sponsorship allowed?*
Belgium	First Division A	18	Yes
England	Premier League	20	Yes
France	Ligue 1	20	No
Germany	Bundesliga	18	Yes
Italy	Serie A	20	Yes
Netherlands	Eredivisie	18	Yes
Norway	Eliteserien	16	No
Scotland	Scottish Premiership	12	Yes
Spain	La Liga	20	Yes
Sweden	Allsvenskan	16	Yes

Notes: *As per the restrictions listed in the country profiles on the European Centre for Monitoring Alcohol Marketing (EUCAM, 2022).

In practice, the main sponsors/partners were defined in myriad ways across the 10 countries. This included, but is not restricted to, main/premium/principal partners, shirt/kit sponsors, stadium partners, official partners/suppliers (including variations such as official beer partner/official wine supplier), tiered levels of sponsorship (platinum, gold, silver, bronze), business partners, and network/media partners. To standardise the information collected within and between countries, we principally searched for pages and/or sections on websites that detailed each club or league's official sponsors / partners. In addition, or where no specific sponsor/partner page could be identified, we also captured the organisations or companies who were displayed prominently on the official websites, for example those clearly reported across the header or footer.

Identification of main sponsors and partners was carried out by AM. To ensure consistency, RP and NC also independently extracted data from a team that had already been extracted and coded by AM. The three researchers then met to discuss their rationale for extraction and resolve any discrepancies, thus ensuring a consistent and coherent approach for the main coding. Any other ambiguities that arose during the main coding were discussed among the research team. For all leagues and teams, a detailed narrative log was kept to document where data on the main sponsors / partners was extracted from (e.g., rotating widget at the bottom of the website) and the rationale for any data excluded.

2.5. Information recorded about each sponsor or partner

For each main sponsor / partner identified, we coded: (1) which country, league, and team it was associated with; (2) the sponsor name; (3) a link to their website [where available or found through search engines]; (4) notes on where the sponsor information was identified and extracted on the website (e.g., rotating widget at the base of homepage); and (5) whether the sponsor/partner was related to alcohol (using information from the sponsor website as required – such as unfamiliar brands). For the purposes of this analysis, an alcohol sponsor was defined as any company and/or organisation which produced or distributed an alcoholic product/brand. We also captured licensed premises with a clear focus on selling alcohol (e.g., pubs or bars) and sponsorship related to no (zero) or low-strength alcoholic drinks.

3. Results

3.1. Sample overview

Across the 10 leagues, we observed 110 main sponsors / partners. Of these main sponsors / partners, four were judged to be alcohol related, all of which related to separate leagues and were for producers/distributors/brands of alcoholic drinks.

Across the 178 teams audited in the leagues, 7,807 main sponsors / partners were identified (range: 5 to 386) (Table 2). Of these main sponsors / partners, 2.6% (n=200) were judged to be alcohol related. This ranged from 0.6% of the main sponsors / partners observed for teams in Sweden's Allsvenskan to 7.4% for teams in Belgium First Division A. Of the 178 teams audited, 72.5% (n=129) had at least one main sponsor / partner related to alcohol.

Of the 200 main sponsors / partners judged to be alcohol related, most for producers/distributors/brands of alcoholic drinks (93.5%; n=187). A smaller proportion were for brand variants with no (zero) or low alcohol content (4.0%; n=8) or licensed premises that primarily focused on the sale of alcohol (2.5%, n=5; e.g., pubs or bars).

3.2. Belgium

Belgium has some statutory legislation in place to restrict alcohol marketing. These, however, do not seem to extend to sports sponsorship. Instead, sponsorship is covered by self-regulation for youth protection policy and content restrictions (Covenant on practice and advertising for alcoholic beverages) (EUCAM, 2022).

The top men's football league in Belgium is the First Division A. There were six main sponsors / partners identified for the league, one of which was an alcohol producer. This producer was also the league's title sponsor, which was re-branded as the Jupiler Pro League under this arrangement. Across the 18 teams, we identified 460 main sponsors / partners (range: 8-68). Of these main sponsors / partners, 7.4% (n=34) were judged to be alcohol related. All of these were for producers/distributors/brands of alcoholic drinks, apart from one relationship for a zero-alcohol brand variant. Of the 18 teams, 17 were observed to have at least one main sponsor / partner that was related to alcohol.

3.3. Scotland

Scotland is part of the United Kingdom which has a self-regulatory system covering alcohol marketing. In Scotland, there are currently no known legislative restrictions on alcohol sport sponsorship (EUCAM, 2022). Sponsorship activities are instead self-regulated by the advertising and alcohol industry, with the most recent guidance published in 2014 (Portman Group, 2014).

The top men's football league in Scotland is the Scottish Premiership, also known as the Cinch Premiership for sponsorship purposes. Of the 19 main sponsors / partners identified for the league, one was judged to be a producer/distributor/brand of alcoholic drinks. Across the 12 teams, we identified 236 main sponsors / partners (range: 7-42). Of these main sponsors / partners, 6.4% (n=15) were judged to be alcohol related, all of which were alcohol producers/distributors/brands of alcoholic drinks. Of the 12 teams, six were observed to have at least one main sponsor / partner that was related to alcohol.

3.4. England

England is part of the UK which, as discussed for Scotland, has a self-regulatory approach to alcohol marketing. In England, there are currently no statutory restrictions on alcohol sport sponsorship. Sponsorship activities are instead self-regulated by the advertising and alcohol industry, with the most recent guidance published in 2014 (Portman Group, 2014).

The top level of the men's English football is the Premier League. Of the 15 main sponsors / partners observed for the league, one was producer/distributor/brand of alcoholic drinks. Across the 20 teams in the league, we observed 526 sponsorship relations (range: 11-52). Of these main sponsors / partners, 5.5% (n=29) were judged to be alcohol related, all of which were for producers/distributors/brands of alcoholic drinks. Of the 20 teams, 18 were observed to have at least one main sponsor / partner that was related to alcohol.

3.5. Spain

There is no state-level legislation in Spain covering alcohol marketing. The advertising of alcoholic beverages in various media (press, radio, cinema, outdoor and TV) is regulated at the regional level. Advertising during sporting events is covered by the content restrictions in Article 5.5 General Law of Advertising. There are no known statutory restrictions on sports sponsorship (EUCAM, 2022).

The top men's football league in Spain is LaLiga, also known as LaLiga Santander for sponsorship purposes. Of the 22 main sponsors / partners identified for the league, one was judged to be a producer/distributor/brand of alcoholic drinks. Across the 20 teams, we identified 472 main sponsors / partners (range: 5-68). Of these main sponsors / partners, 4.7% (n=22) were judged to be alcohol related, all of which were producers/distributors/brands of alcoholic drinks. Of the 20 teams in this league, 19 were observed to have at least one alcohol related sponsor / partner.

3.6. Netherlands

There are statutory regulations in the Netherlands which cover the availability, placement, and price promotions of alcohol products. However, there are no known statutory restrictions on sports sponsorship (EUCAM, 2022).

The top men's football league in the Netherlands is the Eredivisie. Of the 11 main sponsors / partners observed for the league, none were judged to be alcohol related. Across the 18 teams, we identified 589 main sponsors / partners (range: 9-235). Of these main sponsors / partners, 3.1% (n=18) were judged to be alcohol related. Within the alcohol related sponsors / partners, 13 were for producers/distributors/brands of alcoholic drinks and five were for no (zero) alcohol brands. Of the 18 teams, 16 were observed to have at least one main sponsor / partner that was related to alcohol.

Table 2. Sponsor relationships and proportion alcohol related, by league / country

League (Country)	*N sponsors / partners for teams*	Per cent (%) alcohol related	Is alcohol sport sponsorship allowed?*
First Division A (Belgium)	460	7.4%	Yes
Premiership (Scotland)	236	6.4%	Yes
Premier League (England)	526	5.5%	Yes
LaLiga (Spain)	472	4.7%	Yes
Eredivisie (Netherlands)	589	3.1%	Yes
Bundesliga (Germany)	1,148	2.5%	Yes
Serie A (Italy)	1,016	2.5%	Yes
Ligue 1 (France)	412	1.9%	No
Eliteserien (Norway)	1,586	0.8%	No
Allsvenskan (Sweden)	1,362	0.6%	Yes
Total	**7,807**	**2.6%**	

Notes: *As per the restrictions listed in the country profiles on the European Centre for Monitoring Alcohol Marketing (EUCAM, 2022).

OF THE 12 SCOTTISH PREMIERSHIP TEAMS, SIX WERE OBSERVED TO HAVE AT LEAST ONE MAIN ALCOHOL SPONSOR OR PARTNER

3.7. Germany

In Germany three different regulations exist that specifically refer to alcohol marketing and advertising. However, these regulations do not extend to sports sponsorship. In practice, the self-regulatory ‘Code of Conduct’, designed by the alcohol and advertising industries, is the main regulatory system in place in Germany (EUCAM, 2022).

The top men’s football league in Germany is the Bundesliga. Of the six main sponsors / partners observed for the league, none were judged to be alcohol related. Across the 18 teams, we identified 1148 main sponsors or partners (range: 9-386). Of these main sponsors / partners, 2.5% (n=29) were judged to be alcohol-related, all of which were for producers/distributors/brands of alcoholic drinks. Of the 18 teams, 17 were observed to have at least one main sponsor / partner that was related to alcohol.

3.8. Italy

In Italy six different regulations (statutory and non-statutory) exist that specifically refer to alcohol marketing and advertising. Application of these rules appears very complicated. In practice, the ‘Advertising self-regulation code” is the main regulatory system in place in Italy. There are no known statutory restrictions on sports sponsorship (EUCAM, 2022).

The top men’s football league in Italy is the Serie A, also known as the Serie A TIM for sponsorship purposes. Of the nine main league sponsors / partners, none were judged to be alcohol related. Across the 20 teams, we identified 1016 main sponsors / partners (range: 16-117). Of these main sponsors / partners, 2.5% (n=25) were judged to be alcohol related, all of which were for producers/distributors/brands of alcoholic drinks. Of the 20 teams, 15 were observed to have at least one main sponsor / partner related to alcohol.

3.9. France

France has statutory legislation which restricts the marketing of alcohol products over 1.2% alcohol by volume. The aims of the Évin law are: (1) to limit where advertising appears; (2) to ban the use of aspirational imagery in alcohol advertising and only allow informative data; (3) and to ensure that all alcohol advertising includes warnings about alcohol harm. Any sponsorship operation is prohibited when its purpose or effect is the direct or indirect propaganda or advertising of alcoholic beverages (L3323-2 Code de la Santé publique). (Purves et al., 2022). Sponsorship of sporting events is prohibited.

The top men’s football league in France is Ligue 1, also known as the Ligue 1 Uber Eats for sponsorship purposes. Of the nine main sponsors / partners observed for the league, none were judged to be alcohol related. Across the 20 teams, we identified 412 main sponsors / partners (range: 7-49). Of these main sponsors / partners, 1.9% (n=8) were observed to be alcohol related, all of which were for producers/distributors/brands of alcoholic drinks. Of the 20 teams in the league, six were observed to have at least one main sponsor / partner that was related to alcohol.

3.10. Norway

Norway has extensive statutory restrictions on alcohol marketing. The ban applies to all commercial communication (including traditional advertising channels and social media) targeting the Norwegian market, regardless of channel or medium. The ‘Alcohol Act’ includes a ban on advertising for all alcoholic beverages during sporting events (Chapter 9, the Alcohol Act) (EUCAM, 2022; Purves et al., 2022).

The top men’s football league in Norway is the Eliteserien. Of the six main sponsors / partners observed for the league, none were judged to be alcohol related. Across the 16 teams, we identified 1,586 main sponsors / partners (range: 56-216). Of these main sponsors / partners, 0.8% (n=12) were judged to be alcohol related. Within the alcohol related sponsors / partners, seven were producers/distributors/brands of alcoholic drinks, four related to licensed premises with a primary purpose of selling alcohol (e.g., pubs or bars), and one was for a no (zero) alcohol variant. Of the 16 teams, eight were observed to have at least one main sponsor / partner that was related to alcohol.

3.11. Sweden

There is statutory legislation partially banning alcohol advertising in Sweden. The advertising of beverages of over 2.25% ABV (alcohol by volume) is restricted, and low and no-alcoholic beverages must not be advertised in a way that may cause them to be confused with stronger alcoholic beverages. In general, restrictions relate to media, content, and location of advertising, with the aim being to protect children and young people from exposure. However, there are no statutory restrictions on sports sponsorship (EUCAM, 2022; Purves et al., 2022).

The top men’s football league in Sweden is the Allsvenskan. Of the seven main sponsors / partners observed for the league, none were judged to be alcohol related. Across the 16 teams, we identified 1,362 main sponsors / partners (range: 12-136). Of these main sponsors / partners, 0.6% (n=8) were judged to be alcohol related. Six of these were for producers/distributors/brands of alcoholic drinks, one was a no (zero) alcohol brand, and one for a licensed premises which primarily focused on selling alcohol. Of the 16 teams in this league, seven were observed to have at least one alcohol related sponsor / partner.

4. Discussion

4.1. What is the extent of alcohol sport sponsorship in the top tier of professional football across European nations?

The findings are mixed. Of 178 teams audited, only 2.6% of the main sponsors / partners identified were judged to be alcohol related. Conversely, however, three quarters of teams had at least one sponsor judged to be alcohol related. The findings for the leagues were similarly mixed. Specifically, of the 10 leagues audited, only four main sponsors / partners were judged to be alcohol related (out of 110), yet four of the ten leagues had an alcohol related sponsor. For the most part, the main sponsors judged to be alcohol related (for both teams and leagues) were producers/distributors/brands of alcoholic drinks, with only a smaller proportion for no-or-low alcohol brands or licensed premises.

4.2. Do different approaches to restricting alcohol sports sponsorship influence the sponsorship arrangements of football clubs in these countries?

The data provides some evidence about the impact of differing approaches to regulating alcohol sport sponsorship. Specifically, teams from countries identified as having no statutory restrictions on alcohol sponsorship appeared to have a higher proportion of alcohol related sponsors versus non-alcohol sponsors. In Belgium's First Division A, for example, 7.4% of all the main sponsors / partners identified were judged to be alcohol related, almost all teams were judged to have at least one alcohol related sponsor/partner, and the title sponsor of the league was an alcohol producer/distributor. Conversely, in Norway and France, both of which already have statutory controls, only a smaller proportion of the main sponsors / partners of the teams audited were judged to be alcohol related (0.8% and 1.9%, respectively) and neither league was observed to have a main sponsor/partner that was alcohol related.

The data also provide some evidence that wider controls on alcohol marketing may also have an indirect effect on sport sponsorship. Specifically, in Sweden, there are no known statutory restrictions on alcohol sport sponsorship, yet only 0.6% of the main sponsors / partners identified for teams in the Allsvenskan were judged to be alcohol related, less than half of teams had at least one alcohol related sponsor/partner, and the league itself did not have an alcohol related sponsor. Sweden does, however, have some statutory restrictions on wider alcohol advertising (EUCAM, 2022; Purves et al., 2022). Thus, the lower number of alcohol related sponsors may be an indirect consequence of these broader restrictions limiting how any sponsorship relation could be promoted (e.g., on television or billboards).

There are, however, important caveats. The first is that the presence or absence of statutory controls does not appear to be the sole determinant of alcohol related sponsorship. For example, neither Germany nor England have statutory controls on alcohol sponsorship. Despite this, the proportion of main sponsors / partners for the teams in Germany's Bundesliga that were judged to be alcohol related (2.5%) was half of those judged to be alcohol related in England's Premier League (5.5%). Moreover, while the Premier League itself had a main sponsor / partner judged to be alcohol related, the Bundesliga did not. The same is also true for Netherlands versus Scotland. Both countries employ a self-regulatory approach to alcohol sponsorship and neither have significant statutory controls on wider alcohol advertising activity. Nevertheless, the proportion of main sponsors / partners for teams in the Netherland's Eredivisie that were judged to be alcohol related (3.1%) was half of those for teams in the Scottish Premiership (6.4%). The Scottish league also had a main sponsor / partner that was judged to be alcohol related, but the Netherlands league did not. As such, it appears that other cultural and commercial factors also determine the degree of alcohol sponsorship.

The second caveat is that a small degree of alcohol sponsorship was still observed in countries with statutory controls, namely Norway and France. For both countries, most of these main sponsors / partners related to producers/distributors/brands of alcoholic drinks. This report, however, is not intended to suggest that these relationships are in breach of either countries alcohol marketing controls. This is a matter to be determined by their own respective monitoring and enforcement bodies. This finding is, however, consistent with previous studies which have reported that alcohol brand cues do appear during sport even in countries that have statutory controls. For example, previous research has reported that alibi marketing has been used to circumvent the Évin law during both UEFA Euro 2016 finals (Murray et al., 2018; Purves et al., 2017) and rugby union Six Nations Championship (Barker et al., 2020; Purves et al., 2021).

4.3 Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. The first relates to how information was captured. The format, design, and contents of the websites varied greatly within and between countries and, although we attempted to gather sponsorship information in a consistent and systematic manner (e.g., specific pages/sections and sponsor logos displayed prominently on the website), some margin of error is possible. Moreover, except for the English and Scottish leagues, data from all other websites was captured in languages not native to the research team. While attempts were made to mitigate this, for example

COUNTRIES WITH STATUTORY CONTROLS APPEAR TO HAVE COMPARATIVELY LESS ALCOHOL SPONSORSHIP

using options to display websites in English or translate terms using online search engines, this may have led to some margin of error for the information captured. We also only captured information from the official websites of each league and club. The format and detail about each sponsor may vary on other marketing platforms, for example their social media accounts or official smartphone applications.

The second limitation relates to determining what companies and/or organisations were considered main sponsors / partners. Both within and across leagues, a very broad and diverse range of terms were used to describe different types of sponsor relationships (see Section 2.4 for examples). This created some challenges in differentiating between major and minor sponsors. This challenge was further complicated by how varied terms may have translated between the native language and English. In some cases, the distinction between major and minor sponsors was also unclear in the website layout, or the website did not make a distinction between the two groups. We responded to these challenges by conducting a consistency check between researchers prior to the main coding to establish mutual understanding what constituted a main sponsor, and we discussed any issues that arose during the main coding. Nevertheless, there is a degree of inherent subjectivity in categorising main sponsors within and between countries.

The final limitation is that we only captured whether a company or organisation was listed as a main sponsor / partner of a club or league. This data does not, however, provide insight into the financial importance of these relationships to the individual clubs or leagues, for example the proportion of overall revenue or the degree of in-kind support provided. Neither does it provide insight into the sponsorship activities involved in the relationship (see Purves and Critchlow, 2020). Searching for and analysing such information (e.g., through club financial reports) was beyond the scope and resource of this project. This is an important consideration for the study findings. Although most clubs were judged to have at least one sponsor/ partner related to alcohol, this does not necessarily equate to significant financial input. Equally, however, although only a small number of the main sponsors / partners identified were judged to be alcohol related, this could still equate to a substantial proportion of overall sponsorship income. Both are plausible interpretations, and it is also likely the extent of financial contribution will vary within and between leagues (e.g., by club profile).

5. Conclusion

The extent of alcohol sponsorship across European countries with varying approaches to alcohol marketing is complex. Although alcohol sponsors made up a small percentage of all main sponsors / partners identified, three quarters of teams were still observed to have at least one main sponsor/partner related to alcohol. This study, however, cannot determine the financial value of these relationships (e.g., revenue or in-kind support) or the sponsorship activity involved. While the data does broadly support the hypothesis that countries with statutory controls have comparatively less alcohol sponsorship, differences between countries (particularly where no statutory controls exist) suggests that wider cultural and commercial factors are also likely to be an important determinant. Some alcohol sponsorship was still observed in Norway and France, which have statutory restrictions, although whether this is compliant with the legislation is a matter for each country's enforcement authorities.

6. References

Alcohol Focus Scotland. (2022). *Realising Our Rights: How to protect people from alcohol marketing*. Glasgow, Scotland: Alcohol Focus Scotland. Available: **www.alcohol-focus-scotland.org.uk/media/440173/realising-our-rights-alcohol-marketing-report-summary.pdf.**

Barker, A.B., Bal, J., & Murray, R.L. (2021). *A content analysis and population exposure estimate of Guinness branded alcohol marketing during the 2018 Guinness Six Nations*. Alcohol & Alcoholism, 56(5), 617-620. **https://doi.org/10.1093/alcalc/agab039.**

Belt, O., Stamatakos, K., Ayers, A.J., Fryer, V.A., Jernigan, J., & Sigel, M. (2014). *Vested interests in addiction research and policy. Alcohol brand sponsorship of events, organizations and causes in the United States, 2010–2013*. Addiction, 109(12), 1977-1985. **https://doi.org/10.1111/add.12727.**

Booth, A., Meier, P. Stockwell, T., Sutton, A., Wilkinson, A., & Wong, R. (2008). *Independent review of the effects of alcohol pricing and promotion, Part A: Systematic Reviews*. Sheffield, United Kingdom: University of Sheffield.

Brown, K. (2016). *Association between alcohol sport sponsorship and consumption: A systematic review*. Alcohol & Alcoholism, 51(6), 747-755. **https://doi.org/10.1093/alcalc/agw006.**

EUCAM (2022) *Regulations on Alcohol Marketing*. Available at: **https://eucam.info/regulations-on-alcohol-marketing/** (last accessed 06/10/22).

Jernigan, D.H., Noel, J., Landon, J., Thornton, N., & Lobstein, T. (2017). *Alcohol marketing and youth consumption: A systematic review of longitudinal studies published since 2008*. Addiction, 112(S1), 7-20. **https://doi.org/10.1111/add.13591.**

Macniven, R., Kelly, B., & King, L. (2015). *Unhealthy product sponsorship of Australian national and state sports organisations*. Health Promotion Journal of Australia, 26(1), 52-56. **https://doi.org/10.1071/he14010**.

Maher, A., Wilson, N., Signal, L., & Thomson, G. (2006). *Patterns of sports sponsorship by gambling, alcohol, and good companies: An internet survey*. BMC Public Health, 6, 95. **https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-6-95**.

Murray, R., Breton, M.O., Britton, J., Cranwell, J., & Grant-Braham, B. (2018) *Carlsberg alibi marketing in the UEFA euro 2016 football finals: implications of Probably inappropriate alcohol advertising*. BMC Public Health, 18, 553. **https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-018-5449-y**.

Noel, J. K., Babor, T. F., & Robaina, K. (2017). *Industry self-regulation of alcohol marketing: a systematic review of content and exposure research*. Addiction, 112, 28–50. **https://doi.org/10.1111/add.13410**.

Noel, J., Lazzarini, Z., Robaina, K., & Vendrame, A. (2017). *Alcohol industry self-regulation: who is it really protecting?* Addiction, 112, 57–63. **https://doi.org/10.1111/add.13433**.

Portman Group. (2014). *Code of Practice on Alcohol Sponsorship (First Edition)*. London, United Kingdom: Portman Group. Available: **www.portmangroup.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Code-of-Practice-on-Alcohol-Sponsorship-First-Edition.pdf**.

Purves, R. I. (2017). *Creating powerful brands*. In A.C. Lyons, T. McCreanor, I. Goodwin, & H. Moewaka-Barnes (Eds.), *Youth drinking cultures in a digital world: Alcohol, social media and cultures of intoxication* (pp. 147-163). London, United Kingdom: Routledge

Purves, R.I., Critchlow, N., Stead, M., Adams, J., & Brown, K. (2017). *Alcohol Marketing during the UEFA EURO 2016 Football Tournament: A Frequency Analysis*. International Journal on Environmental Research and Public Health, 14(7), 704. **https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph14070704**.

Purves, R.I., & Critchlow, N. (2020). *The extent, nature, and frequency of alcohol sport sponsorship in professional football and rugby union in Scotland*. Stirling, United Kingdom: Institute for Social Marketing and Health, University of Stirling. Available: **www.alcohol-focus-scotland.org.uk/media/439998/the-extent-nature-and-frequency-of-alcohol-sport-sponsorship.pdf**

Purves, R.I. & Critchlow, N. (2021). *Alcohol marketing during the 2020 Six Nations Championship: A frequency analysis*. Stirling, United Kingdom: Institute for Social Marketing and Health, University of Stirling. Available: **www.ias.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Alcohol-marketing-during-the-2020-six-nations-FINAL.pdf**.

Purves. R.I., Gadsby, E.W., Howell, R., Carters-White, L., Gallopel-Morvan, K., Fitzgerald, N., Stead, M., & Critchlow, N. (2022). *Alcohol Marketing Restrictions: Learning from International Implementation*. Stirling, United Kingdom: Institute for Social Marketing and Health, University of Stirling. Available: **www.alcohol-focus-scotland.org.uk/media/440166/alcohol-marketing-restrictions-learning-from-international-implementation.pdf**.

Sargent, J.D., & Babor, T.F. (2020). *The relationship between exposure to alcohol marketing and underage drinking is causal*. Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs, S19, 11-3-124. **https://doi.org/10.15288/jsads.2020.s19.113**.

Sartori, A., Stoneham, M., & Edmunds, M. (2018). *Unhealthy sponsorship in sport: A case study of the AFL*. Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, 42(5), 474-479. **https://doi.org/10.1111/1753-6405.12820**.

Smith, L.A., & Foxcroft, D.R. (2009). *The effect of alcohol advertising, marketing and portrayal on drinking behaviour in young people: systematic review of prospective cohort studies*. BMC Public Health, 9(51). **https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-9-51**

World Health Organization. (2017). *Tackling NCDs: 'Best buys' and other recommended interventions for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases*. Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organisation. Available: **https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/259232/WHO-NMH-NVI-17.9-eng.pdf**.

World Health Organization. (2020). *Alcohol Marketing in the European Region. Update Report on the Evidence and Recommended Policy Actions*. World Health Organization. Copenhagen, Denmark: World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe. Available at: **www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/450856/Alcohol-marketing-report-on-the-evidence-and-recommended-policy-actions-eng.pdf**.

World Health Organization. (2022). *Reducing the harm from alcohol by regulating cross-border alcohol marketing, advertising and promotion*. A technical report. Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organisation. Available: **www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240046504**.

Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems (SHAAP)
11 Queen Street
Edinburgh EH2 1JQ
Tel: +44 (0) 131 247 3667
Email: shaap@rcpe.ac.uk
www.shaap.org.uk

CALLING TIME
ON ALCOHOL SPORTS SPONSORSHIP

shaap.org.uk/calling-time

SHAAP
SCOTTISH HEALTH ACTION
ON ALCOHOL PROBLEMS
www.shaap.org.uk

UNIVERSITY of STIRLING

Calling Time on alcohol sponsorship of Scottish sport

Scotland's alcohol problem

Alcohol harm is one of Scotland's most pervasive public health issues, evidenced by the latest alcohol death figures from the National Records for Scotland (NRS). The figures show an increase from 1,020 alcohol-specific deaths in 2020 to 1,245 in 2021, with death rates 5.6 times higher among those living in the most deprived areas of Scotland, compared to the least.[1] In 2020/21, there were 35,124 alcohol-related hospital stays in Scotland (at a rate of 641 per 100,000).[2] Alcohol consumption is a causal factor for more than 200 disease and injury conditions. Additionally, alcohol harm costs the Scottish Government £3.6 billion per year (equivalent to £900 per person), including £405 million in NHS services.[3]

While figures convey the scale of harm caused by alcohol in Scotland, they mask the harm and pain caused in the lives of people who are living with an alcohol problem, as well as that in the lives of their loved ones and in wider communities. This harm is immeasurable.

Alcohol sponsorship and marketing in sport

It is well established that exposure to alcohol marketing is causally associated with the initiation of drinking, an increase in alcohol consumption (including binge drinking), and also an increased risk of relapse (for those in recovery).[4,5,6,7,8,9] Alcohol companies invest billions of pounds every year in marketing, aiming to increase the consumption of their products, often through the targeting of heavy drinkers and recruitment of new drinkers.[10] A causal relationship has been established whereby alcohol sports sponsorship influences consumption rates not only amongst fans, but also in those who play sports.[11]

Sport sponsorship provides alcohol companies with a prominent and highly attractive method of reaching a large audience, influencing how much and how often they consume alcohol. Sponsorship is an especially influential communications tool - which allows brands to form attractive associations and capitalise on fans' emotional connections with sport and sports teams.

Alcohol sponsorship of sports teams can be presented in a variety of ways, including:[12]

- Alcohol brands and logos on match and training strips
- Advertising inside and outside of stadiums
- Exclusive 'pourage rights' inside and outside of stadiums
- Limited edition products featuring names of teams
- Social media activity
- Partnership activity promoting brands via visits to breweries and distilleries
- Competition tie-ins
- Players, managers, or coaches featuring in brand adverts and social media posts
- The naming of stadiums

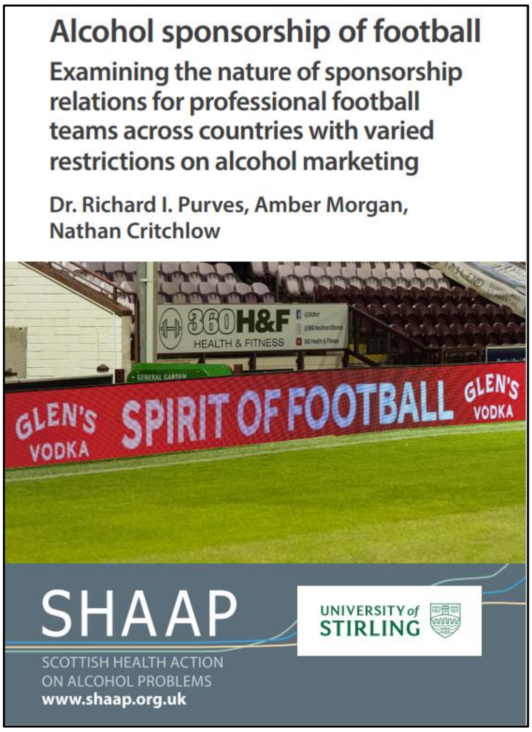
Viewers are frequently exposed to alcohol marketing during televised broadcasts of both football and rugby union (Scotland's most watched sports).[12]

Alcohol sponsorship of football

SHAAP has commissioned research from the University of Stirling Institute for Social Marketing and Health which investigates the nature of sponsorship relations for professional football teams across countries with varied restrictions on alcohol marketing.

Main findings of the report include:

- In comparison to other European leagues with varying levels of restrictions, Scotland has a higher proportion of alcohol industry sponsors (6.4% compared to 2.6%).
- Of the 12 Scottish Premier Football League (SPFL) teams, 6 have at least one alcohol industry main sponsor or partner.
- Countries with statutory controls do appear to have comparatively less alcohol sponsorship. We believe this demonstrates efficacy of such measures.



We don't know exactly how much money SPFL teams make from their sponsorship deals with the alcohol industry, but given they make up only 6.4% of sponsors, banning alcohol sponsorship should not make a significant economic difference to Scottish football and removing it would make way for more worthy sponsorship.

Scottish Women's Football have shown leadership in rejecting alcohol sponsorship, with SWF Chair, Vivienne MacLaren, stating that 'alcohol sponsorship has no place' there. SHAAP are proud sponsors of the Scottish Women's Football National Academy Programme.

Current legislation in the UK (and Scotland)

The UK currently adopts a permissive, industry-led, self-regulatory approach to the regulation of alcohol marketing and there are currently no legislative restrictions on alcohol sponsorship of sports in Scotland. The UK alcohol industry self-regulatory code (the Portman Group's Code of Practice on Alcohol Sponsorship) indicates that all sport sponsorship relations must include a recognisable commitment to promoting responsible alcohol use (although our 'Alcohol marketing during the 2020 Six Nations Championship' report found no references containing age restriction warnings and only a minority had clearly visible responsible drinking messages) and/or supporting diversionary community activities. However, this current model of self-regulation is failing to protect the Scottish nation from harmful alcohol sponsorship in sports.

SHAAP recommendations

Sport should be associated with (and inspire) good health and team spirit, and should not be used as a marketing tool for harmful products. The sophisticated, pervasive and widespread nature of alcohol sports sponsorship activity in Scotland exposes our nation to a high level of alcohol marketing which is a major public health concern.

SHAAP are calling on the Scottish Government to implement a total ban on alcohol sponsorship of sport, in order to protect the health of the Scottish nation

1. The Scottish Government should introduce legislation which prohibits alcohol sponsorship of professional sport

Alcohol sponsorship of sport increases the consumption of alcohol across all ages, including youth. Evidence indicates self-regulation is not effective in reducing exposure to alcohol marketing and therefore a legislative ban is necessary to protect Scottish citizens.

2. Restrictions must be broad and robust

Alcohol sponsorship takes many forms, and legislation to prohibit this must cover the whole spectrum of marketing and sponsorship, including alibi marketing and brand extension via no and lo alcohol products. Failure to cover all marketing activities associated with sponsorship may result in displacement of activities.

3. An independent monitoring and enforcement programme should complement the introduction of restrictions

Regulation requires enforcement, monitoring, and penalties independent from the biased alcohol industry in order to ensure compliance.

4. The introduction of legislation to prohibit alcohol sport sponsorship should be part of a wider strategy to address alcohol marketing in Scotland

Sport sponsorship is only one element of the wide spectrum of marketing activities employed by the alcohol industry. The Scottish Government should develop a comprehensive strategy to address alcohol marketing not just in sport, but across all sectors, as recommended by the Expert Network on Alcohol Marketing.[13]

About SHAAP

Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems (SHAAP) is a partnership of the Medical Royal Colleges in Scotland and the Faculty of Public Health and is based at the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh (RCPE). SHAAP provides the authoritative medical and clinical voice on the need to reduce the impact of alcohol-related harm on the health and wellbeing of people in Scotland and the evidence-based approaches to achieve this.

For more information, please contact Jane Gordon, Policy and Public Affairs Officer, SHAAP at j.gordon@rcpe.ac.uk

---

[1] National Records of Scotland. Alcohol Specific Deaths 2021 [Internet]. NRS. 2022. Available from: https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files//statistics/alcohol-deaths/2021/alcohol-specific-deaths-21-report.pdf

[2] Public Health Scotland. Alcohol related hospital statistics - Scotland financial year 2020 to 2021 [Internet]. PHS. 2022. Available from: https://publichealthscotland.scot/publications/alcohol-related-hospital-statistics/alcohol-related-hospital-statistics-scotland-financial-year-2020-to-2021/

[3] Public Health Scotland. Alcohol overview [Internet]. www.healthscotland.scot. 2021. Available from: https://www.healthscotland.scot/health-topics/alcohol/alcohol-overview

[4] Booth, A., Meier, P., Stockwell, T., Sutton, A., Wilkinson, A., Wong, R., Brennan, A., O'Reilly, R., Purhouse, R. & Taylor, K. (2008). *Independent review of the effects of alcohol pricing and promotion. Part A: systematic reviews*. Sheffield: University of Sheffield.

[5] Anderson, P., De Bruijn, A., Angus, K., Gordon, R., & Hastings, G. (2009). Impact of alcohol advertising and media exposure on adolescent alcohol use: a systematic review of longitudinal studies. *Alcohol and Alcoholism,* 44(3), 229-243.

[6] Smith, L. A., & Foxcroft, D. R. (2009). The effect of alcohol advertising, marketing and portrayal on drinking behaviour in young people: systematic review of prospective cohort studies. *BMC Public Health*, 9(1), 51.

[7] Jernigan, D., Noel, J., Landon, J., Thornton, N., & Lobstein, T. (2017). Alcohol marketing and youth alcohol consumption: a systematic review of longitudinal studies published since 2008. *Addiction*, 112, 7-20.

[8] Scott, S., Muirhead, C., Shucksmith, J., Tyrrell, R., & Kaner, E. (2017). Does industry-driven alcohol marketing influence adolescent drinking behaviour? A systematic review. *Alcohol and Alcoholism*, 52(1), 84-94.

[9] Shortt, N. K., Rhynas, S. J., & Holloway, A. (2017). Place and recovery from alcohol dependence: A journey through photovoice. *Health & Place*, 47, 147-155.

[10] Hastings, G., Brooks, O., Stead, M., Angus, K., Anker, T., & Farrell, T. (2010). *"They'll drink bucket loads of the stuff": An analysis of internal alcohol industry advertising documents.* London, UK: Alcohol Education Research Council.
Booth, A., Meier, P., Stockwell, T., Sutton, A., Wilkinson, A., Wong, R., Brennan, A., O'Reilly, R., Purhouse, R. & Taylor, K. (2008). *Independent review of the effects of alcohol pricing and promotion. Part A: systematic reviews.* Sheffield: University of Sheffield. https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ polopoly_fs/1.95617!/file/PartA.pdf
[11] Brown, K. (2016). Association between alcohol sport sponsorship and consumption: A systematic review. Alcohol and Alcoholism, 51(6), 747-755.
[12] Purves, R., & Critchlow, N. (2020). *The extent, nature, and frequency of alcohol sport sponsorship in professional football and rugby union in Scotland.* Stirling, UK: Institute for Social Marketing and Health, Faculty of Health Sciences and Sport, University of Stirling
[13] Alcohol focus Scotland (2022), Realising Our Rights: How to protect people from alcohol marketing, A report from the Expert Network on Alcohol Marketing, https://www.alcohol-focus-scotland.org.uk/media/440171/realising-our-rights-how-to-protect-people-from-alcohol-marketing.pdf

*****Embargoed until 00.01, Monday 14th November 2022*****

Press release issued on behalf of Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems (SHAAP)

Scottish Premiership own goal: new research reveals higher level of alcohol sponsorship in Scotland's top flight football teams compared to other European countries

Ahead of the Scottish Government consulting on plans to restrict alcohol marketing, calls for a ban on alcohol sponsorship of sports are being made, as it is revealed that Scotland has a higher proportion of alcohol industry sponsors in comparison to football leagues in European countries with stricter alcohol marketing restrictions.

[14th November 2022] A new study, launched today, reveals that the Scottish Premiership has a higher proportion of alcohol industry sponsors compared to most of the other European nations studied. The report, commissioned by alcohol expert body Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems (SHAAP) and carried out by the University of Stirling's Institute for Social Marketing and Health, assesses the extent of alcohol sponsorship in the top tier of men's professional football across 10 European nations. The study assessed to what extent different levels of restriction of alcohol marketing impacts on the sponsorship arrangements of football clubs in these countries.

Sponsorship is a key strategy used by transnational alcohol companies to increase awareness of their products and reach new audiences in different parts of the world, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Controls on alcohol marketing, including sponsorship, are listed by the WHO as one of their three 'best buy' policies to reduce the harmful use of alcohol.

It is well established that exposure to alcohol marketing is causally associated with the initiation of drinking, an increase in alcohol consumption including binge drinking, and has been reported to increase risk of relapse for people in recovery. Sport sponsorship provides alcohol companies with a prominent and highly attractive method of reaching a large audience, influencing how much and how often they consume alcohol by capitalising on their emotional connection to sport. However, currently alcohol marketing and sport sponsorship is self-regulated in the UK and Scotland, giving industry control of what we see on pitches, shirts and TV.

Today's new research reveals that in comparison to ten other European leagues, **Scotland had the second highest proportion of alcohol industry sponsors** after Belgium, at 6.4% in Scotland compared to 2.6% across all the countries studied. Moreover, of the 12 Scottish Premiership football teams, 6 have at least one alcohol industry main sponsor or partner. Countries with statutory restrictions on alcohol marketing and sponsorship have comparatively less alcohol sponsorship in their top flight football clubs. This is the reason behind SHAAP launching the *Calling Time* on alcohol sports sponsorship campaign today.

Dr Alastair MacGilchrist, Chair of SHAAP, said:

"Doctors and the entire healthcare team see the impact of alcohol on people's health, day in, day out. This is not surprising given how present alcohol products and alcohol marketing are in our everyday lives and the fact that the alcohol industry is allowed to sponsor our sports teams and events – which should be about health, participation and community. That is why we are being joined by others in our call to the Scottish Government to ban alcohol sponsorship in sports."

Former First Minister and football fan, Rt. Hon. Henry McLeish, commented:

"There is something very special and unique about the dedication of Scottish football fans and our emotional connection to our clubs and the game. And this commitment is being capitalised on by the alcohol industry who use sponsorship to increase sales of their products to fans. This research shows that Scottish Premiership clubs have a comparatively lower number of sponsors that our European counterparts, and within this we have a higher proportion of alcohol sponsors. We must find a better way to finance Scottish football, finding sponsors with values that align with sports and community and that's why I support today's call for a ban on alcohol sponsorship of sports."