

# 2023/24 ANNUAL REPORT



*Bringing together evidence,  
policy and practice to reduce  
alcohol harm*

**IAS** Institute of  
Alcohol Studies

## Foreword



I want to start by thanking my talented team for their dedication and enthusiasm over the past year. I particularly want to thank team members who have recently left IAS for their contributions. Dr Sadie Boniface led our research team in an exemplary fashion for five years, launching our Small Grants Scheme, a project that has led to many excellent research findings and specifically supported early career researchers. Anu Rumm's advocacy work for IAS and the AHA, as well as her support of our European partners, allowed us to continue to raise awareness of the best available research and policy ideas to decision-makers.

In 2023/24 we have seen the biggest change to alcohol policy in over a decade, with the introduction of the alcohol duty reforms. If implemented alongside annual inflationary increases in duty rates, the reforms could transform the alcohol landscape, encouraging the development and uptake of less strong and harmful products. IAS was one of several organisations that had been advocating for a move to a strength-based system for many years, so I thank my team and former colleagues for their work in this area.

As we look to the future, it is crucial that inequalities in alcohol harm are taken more seriously than they have been. Alcohol is the leading cause of death among working age people, it disproportionately kills those from deprived backgrounds, and the death rate among women has been growing faster than among men. This challenge presents an opportunity for an incoming government to implement evidence-based policies that reduce alcohol harm, improve economic stability, but far more importantly, save countless lives and prevent the unnecessary loss of friends and family members.

**Dr Katherine Severi, Chief Executive**

*K Severi*

As Chair of IAS, it was a real pleasure to speak at the charity's 40th Anniversary at the end of 2023, celebrating four decades of IAS's commitment to reducing alcohol harm across the UK. At the event I specifically highlighted the importance of maintaining an international presence and supporting partners abroad, a position and principle that I know IAS takes seriously. Congratulations to the team for continuing this work and its UK-wide collaboration too.



The UK is currently in a public health crisis regarding alcohol deaths, with a record number year-on-year since 2019. Many people argue that this is just our culture, however cultures can change. The UK didn't use to be a home drinking nation with such high consumption. But it takes political leadership and courage to introduce bold measures and make progress. I look forward to supporting IAS continuing their work with the next government and I'm hopeful that progress will be made.

**Dr Peter Rice, Chair**

*Peter M Rice*

# Our Year in Numbers

7 research publications



3 submissions to public consultations



Over 8,000 views of our Explained films



4 references to IAS briefings in parliament



46 blogs published



1,170 mentions in the media



## Small Grants Scheme: Alcohol in pregnancy and cognitive decline

### Conversations on Mumsnet

Dr Lisa Schölin and Rachel Arkell analysed discussions taking place on Mumsnet about topics relating to alcohol and pregnancy. They looked at how these topics were discussed and how the risk of exposure to alcohol during pregnancy was framed by forum users.

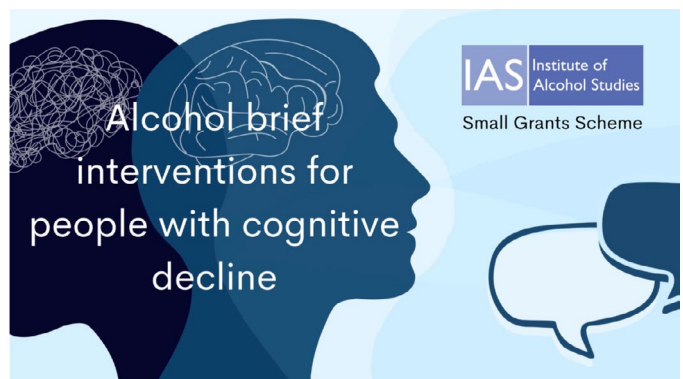
On the launch webinar, Lisa and Rachel described how people posting on Mumsnet discussed evidence of alcohol and pregnancy, the NHS guidelines, deferring to professional advice, understanding of risk, and the social norms and expectations displayed. [You can catch up on the webinar here.](#)



### Brief Interventions and cognitive decline

In March 2024, Dr Philippa Case presented her systematic review of 'Alcohol brief interventions for people with cognitive decline'.

The number of older at-risk drinkers experiencing cognitive decline is likely to increase because of an ageing population and increased prevalence of at-risk drinking among older adults. This is likely to have a significant impact on the individual, their family and community, and health and care services.



Interventions to reduce alcohol use in this population will be vital and Dr Case's systematic review is an important first step in developing such interventions. [You can catch up on the webinar here.](#)

# Alcohol Explained film series

IAS launched its film series *Explained*, which tackles some of the biggest alcohol-related topics. The first films in the series cover Big Alcohol, Alcohol Marketing, Pricing, and Cardiovascular harm, which together have over 8,000 views. The series will continue into 2024-25 and will include alcohol and cancer.

Our **Big Alcohol** film explains who the main players are in the multinational alcohol industry, what their growth and profit strategies are, how they influence health policy and shift blame of harm onto consumers, and how they damage the economy.



Our **Marketing** film looks at the link between alcohol marketing and young people's drinking, how it affects those in recovery, how alcohol marketing intersects with perceived gender and gender norms, how alcohol marketing became so prevalent in sport, and why controlling alcohol marketing is a human rights issue.



Our **Price** film explains how the cost of alcohol impacts consumption rates and subsequent harm, how alcohol duties have changed over time, how minimum unit pricing works and whether it is effective in reducing drinking, and the cost of alcohol harm to the economy.



Our **Heart** film explains which cardiovascular issues alcohol causes, why observational studies suggest alcohol is good for the heart, and how the alcohol industry tried to influence worldwide research on the topic.



# The social impacts of alcohol

## Off-trade Alcohol Availability and Violence

Closures to pubs, bars, and restaurants during the pandemic gave researchers at IAS and the University of Liverpool a unique opportunity to assess the impact of on-trade closures on the level of alcohol-related violence.

Surprisingly, [they found](#) there was only a 2.7 percentage point reduction in the proportion of violence that was alcohol-related while on-trade alcohol outlets were closed.

“These findings suggest that off-trade alcohol availability needs to be taken far more seriously when developing and implementing policies to reduce alcohol-related violence”, said co-author Dr Lucy Bryant.



Off-trade alcohol availability and violence: Assessing the impact of on-trade outlet closures

August 2023

## Alcohol and the Cost of Living – Webinar

In June 2023, [we hosted a webinar](#) with Director of Public Health Alice Wiseman on how the cost-of-living crisis was impacting public health.

Dr Philip Broadbent presented research findings on the public health implications of the cost-of-living crisis and discussed what policy approaches are needed to protect health and avoid exacerbating health inequalities.

Holly Wood shared the results from research commissioned by alcohol and mental health charity With You on how alcohol consumption habits have changed due to the rising cost-of-living, putting UK adults at greater risk of alcohol dependence.



# Government duty decisions, cannabis liberalisation, and industry myths

We also published a number of reports and briefings covering a range of topics to support our Strategy.

## Language Bank

[Our new language bank](#) is a guide for how to write and talk about alcohol in relation to inequalities. Among other characteristics, it covers socioeconomic position, age, disability, sex and gender, mental health, and ethnicity.

Language Bank:  
Talking about  
inequalities in alcohol  
use and harm



## Cannabis Liberalisation Briefing

Cannabis use is increasingly liberalised across the world. Developing an understanding of what has happened where it has been legalised can provide lessons on the impacts on alcohol use and harm. We developed [this briefing](#) from an expert roundtable on the subject.

## How Have Governments Communicated UK Alcohol Duty Policy Changes?

[Our report](#) looked at how UK governments since 2008 have communicated changes to alcohol duty. It highlighted how inconsistent and conflicting these messages often were, with health objectives not being prominent.



## Dispelling Six Industry Myths About Alcohol Taxation

January 2024

## Dispelling Six Industry Myths About Alcohol Taxation

In the run up to every Budget and Autumn Statement, alcohol trade groups lobby the government to cut or freeze duty rates. Yet many of their arguments don't stand up to scrutiny. [Our myth buster](#) analysed six of the most prevalent arguments and demonstrated why these are fallacious.

## Networks and Alliances

IAS continues to collaborate with a range of research and advocacy groups, in order to support their work, raise awareness of relevant issues, and strengthen civil society in alcohol harm reduction.





# Acknowledgements

Thank you to our team this year for their dedication in working towards reducing alcohol harm. Thank you too to our Trustees and Expert Advisors for their support and collaboration.

## **IAS Team**

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Dr Lucy Bryant - Senior Researcher

Jem Roberts - Senior External Affairs Manager

Poppy Hull - Senior Policy and Communications Officer

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Lisa Erlandsen - Policy and Advocacy Manager, Alcohol Health Alliance

## **Trustees**

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Reverend Dr Janet Tollington - Vice Chair

Michael Carr

Reverend Dr Stephen Skuce

Professor Linda Bauld OBE

Alice Wiseman

## **Expert advisors**

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