

Underage drinking declining in many countries: new analysis shows

- Underage drinking has fallen or stayed the same in three-quarters of the 65 countries where national data are available.
- It has fallen in half of these countries (since 2010), including:
 - Decreases of 40% or more in the United States, Australia, and Columbia
 - Teenage drinking levels decreased across France, with an 17% reduction among teenage girls and a 23% reduction amongst teenage boys
- However, increases have been seen in countries including Germany, the Philippines, and Uruguay.
- These figures are part of a new report by the International Alliance for Responsible Drinking (IARD) – [Actions to prevent underage drinking](#) – that calls for robust partnerships among private and public sectors and communities to further reduce underage drinking.

Accelerating progress collectively

In recent years, and in response to direct asks of our sector within the 2018 United Nations Political Declaration on noncommunicable diseases, IARD members have taken further concrete steps to accelerate and support declines in underage drinking including:

- Introducing symbols or written age-restriction reminders on their alcohol brands – including no-alcohol extensions of these brands – to send a clear message that minors should not consume alcohol.
- Putting in place five key safeguards on their online marketing channels aimed at ensuring that their marketing is only directed at those adults who can lawfully buy their products. Safeguards are being strengthened through global partnerships with the leading digital platforms including Meta and Google.
- Establishing and embedding the first ever industry-wide global standards aimed at enhancing transparency and preventing influencer marketing reaching those under the legal purchase age.
- Working alongside prominent global and regional online retailers, and e-commerce and delivery platforms to develop standards to help prevent online orders reaching those underage.

These collective actions are complemented by actions taken by companies at a local level, examples of which can be found in the new report.

Henry Ashworth, CEO of the International Alliance for Responsible Drinking, said:

“Children and those underage should not drink alcohol, or have access to it. In the last ten years, our actions, alongside our partners, have played a positive role in contributing to declines in underage drinking in many countries. We are determined to accelerate these trends by broadening and amplifying the scale, scope, and speed of our activities and partnerships, demonstrating the highest standards of responsible business practices.”

“Although it is positive to see downward trends in many countries, there is still much work to be done. Effective partnerships between our sector, the public sector, and communities play a crucial part in promoting awareness of the risks and continuing the progress that’s already underway. Together, we can ensure that the positive decline in underage drinking seen in many areas continues to spread, creating long-lasting changes in our societies across the world.”

Key stats at a glance

- In the **U.S.**, past month drinking **decreased** by 48% (from 27% to 14%) among 15–16-year-olds between 2011 and 2021 (Monitoring the Future).
- In **Australia**, past-year drinking **decreased** 42% (from 52% to 30%) among people ages 14–17 (National Drug Strategy Household Survey).
- In **France**, past-month drinking **decreased** by 23% (from 70% to 54%) among boys aged 15–16 between 2011 and 2019, and by 17% (from 64% to 52%) among girls aged 15–16 (European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs).
- In **Columbia**, past-month drinking **decreased** by 40% (from 20% to 12%) among children aged 12–17 between 2013 and 2019 (National Survey on Psychoactive Substances in the School Population).
- In **Germany**, past-month drinking has **increased** by 18% (45% to 53%) among 15-year-old boys between 2014 and 2018, and by 15% (47% to 54%) among 15-year-old girls (Health Behavior in School-Aged Children).
- In the **Philippines**, past-month drinking has **increased** by 22% (23% to 28%) among boys aged 13–15 between 2011 and 2019, and by 27% (15% to 19%) among girls aged 13–15 (Global School-Based Student Health Survey).
- In **Uruguay**, past-month drinking has **increased** by 26% (43% to 54%) among girls aged 13–15 between 2012 and 2019, and decreased by 13% (47% to 41%) among boys aged 13–15 (Global School-Based Student Health Survey).

Examples of country level actions being taken

- “Challenge 21” and “Challenge 25” in the United Kingdom are retail-based programs that encourage and facilitate retailers to ask any customer attempting to buy alcohol for proof of age, if they look under 21 or 25 years old, respectively.
- IARD members convened the first-ever global coalition to establish standards to prevent online sale and delivery of alcohol to minors in 2021. Working with prominent global and regional online retailers, and e-commerce and delivery platforms, they identified five key safeguards to help ensure robust standards are in place throughout the entire supply chain. The partnership is now active across six continents and in more than 70 countries.
- “STOP!” in Japan is a campaign aimed at making it harder for underage youths to buy alcohol. Its distinctive logo is now used in all alcohol advertisements, as well as communications targeted at manufacturers, retailers, and educational institutions. In 2021, the campaign evaluation indicated that the awareness rate for this campaign reached 69% among youth aged 19 years and below, and 74% among all ages.
- “Smashed” is a global program that empowers young people by equipping them with the knowledge, awareness, and confidence to make responsible choices around alcohol. It is delivered in schools as either a live theatre experience or an online learning experience and has been independently led by Collingwood Learning and sponsored by Diageo since its launch in 2005. Smashed is active in 36 countries and 17 languages and has reached over 1.6 million people to date.

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Notes to editors

The International Alliance for Responsible Drinking (IARD) is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to reducing harmful drinking and promoting understanding of responsible drinking. We are supported by the leading global beer, wine, and spirits producers, who have come together for a common purpose: to be part of the solution in combating harmful drinking. To advance this shared mission, IARD works and partners with public sector, civil society, and private stakeholders. www.iard.org

Link to IARD's new report, *Actions to Prevent Underage Drinking*: <https://cms.iard.org/getmedia/22ec2ef9-f7bd-41cf-8896-1a4f4f6ec015/04102023-Actions-to-prevent-underage-drinking-brochure.pdf>