

Online Alcohol Sales & Deliveries: A survey of young people in Scotland

Background Information



Alcohol today is cheap, readily available and heavily marketed.



Children and young people are growing up in a pro-alcohol society where drinking is seen as the norm, and can feel pressured to drink at a young age.

Alcohol presents risks for all age groups, and can cause short and long-term harm to health. Children and young people are more vulnerable to the negative impacts of alcohol.



Young people's bodies and brains are more vulnerable to the effects of alcohol because they are still growing and developing



The earlier a young person starts drinking, the more likely they are to drink in ways that can be harmful later in life



The majority of children and young people in Scotland report that they do not regularly drink alcohol.

It has become much less common for young people to buy alcohol directly from a shop, supermarket, or off-licence.



This suggests that measures such as mandatory age verification policies have had some success

What about online sales?

There is a distinct lack of information available about the business operations of online retailers in Scotland. We have no data on:

- their distribution areas
- the volume they sell
- the type of alcohol they sell



It is also unclear how age verification can be effectively implemented when alcohol is being purchased on-line or delivered to people's homes



About the survey



- Anonymous
- Open February to March 2022
- Promoted through:
 - Social media
 - Youth sector organisations
 - Alcohol and Drug partnerships
 - Local licensing forums

Participants



196 participants:

- Children and young people under 18
- Average age: 14.66
- Age range: 12 – 17
- 19 out of 32 Scottish local authority areas

Results

20% (40) reported that either they or a friend had bought or tried to buy alcohol online.



Types of alcohol purchased

- Spirits – Jack Daniels, Captain Morgan's
- Beer
- Cider – Strongbow
- Wine/Port
- Alcopops – WKD, Mad Dog
- Caffeinated drinks – Buckfast, Dragon Soop
- Other: test tube shots, Sourz

Why buy online?

Children and young people said they chose to purchase alcohol online:

- To avoid age verification checks
- To test the effectiveness of online restrictions
- Because they had been unable to purchase alcohol in-person
- Because it was easy and convenient
- They could get it delivered
- For lower prices and discounts
- To hide the purchase from adults

Age verification process

40 respondents (20%) said they or friends had bought or tried to buy alcohol online.



15 (38%) were not asked to confirm they were over the age of 18 when making the purchase.

8 (20%) were unsure if they had been asked to confirm their age.

37 respondents (19%) said either they or friends had tried to have alcohol delivered.



21 (57%) were not asked for proof of age when the alcohol was delivered.

A further 7 (19%) were unsure if they had been asked to prove their age.

Recommendations

Further action is needed to better understand the extent and impact of online sales on children and young people, and to develop an appropriate response.

[Read our report for the detailed recommendations.](#)

“Yer prevention system is rubbish as it has been delivered and collected by me” – Age 16

“I don't want adults to see it” – Age 16

About Alcohol Focus Scotland

Alcohol Focus Scotland (AFS) is the national charity working to prevent and reduce alcohol harm.

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