

# Alcohol and Drug Snapshot

## January 2025



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#ArriveAlive

Drugs can slow down your responses, making it more likely that you'll have a collision on the road. This can lead to severe injuries and even death.

It's illegal to drive if either:

- you're unfit to do so because you're on legal or illegal drugs
- you have certain levels of illegal drugs in your blood (even if they have not affected your driving)

Police in Scotland now carry drug testing kits and are able to carry out immediate roadside 'field impairment assessment' for any driver they suspect of drug driving. This is a series of tests, for example asking you to walk in a straight line. They can also use a roadside drug kit to screen for cannabis and cocaine.

50% of Scottish drivers failed drug tests after being stopped by police

[Source](#)

If you're caught and convicted of drug driving, here's what you can expect to face as a minimum:

- 12 months driving ban
- Points on your licence
- Up to 6 months in prison
- An unlimited fine
- A criminal record
- The maximum penalty for causing death by careless driving under the influence of drugs is life imprisonment

[Source](#)

## Campaign Information

Police Scotland have created a drug driving campaign that includes many resources that can be downloaded and shared on social channels.



## RADAR - Quarterly Report January 2025

**RADAR** Quarterly report summary January 2025

In our latest RADAR, drug-related harms in Scotland decreased compared to the previous quarter, but the drug supply remains highly variable, requiring ongoing vigilance and a heightened response.

- NALOXONE ADMINISTRATIONS | SEP - NOV 24**
  - Average weekly number of ambulance service naloxone administration incidents decreased between September (95) and November (97).
  - Total number of incidents was 700. This was 30% lower compared to the previous quarter (998), 24% lower compared to the same period in 2022 (917) and 54% lower than in 2023 (1,258).
- A&E ATTENDANCES | SEP - NOV 24**
  - Total of 977 drug-related emergency department attendances were recorded.
  - This was 10% lower than the previous quarter (1,090), 14% lower than the same period in 2022 (1,130) and 16% lower than in 2023 (1,162).
- HOSPITAL ADMISSIONS | APR - JUN 24**
  - Total of 2,271 drug-related hospital admissions were recorded.
  - This was 6% lower than the previous quarter (2,228), similar to the same period in 2022 (2,024) and 20% lower than in 2023 (2,877).
- SUSPECTED DRUG DEATHS | SEP - NOV 24**
  - Total number of suspected drug deaths was 215, averaging 18 per week.
  - This was 10% lower than the previous quarter (238), 20% lower compared to the same period in 2022 (248) and 15% lower than in 2023 (254).

**TOXICOLOGY**

Post-mortem testing Jul - Sep 24

- Most common drug types were opioids (19%) and benzos (16%).
- Most common drugs were cocaine (14%), benzodiazepines (13%), diazepam and methadone (12%).
- Bromazepam decreased by 6%.
- Ketamine was detected in 4% of deaths (23).
- Xylazine was detected in 1% (4).

Piloon testing Oct - Jul 24

- Most common drug type was synthetic cannabinoids.

Emergency department project (ASST) Sep - Nov 24

- Most common drug type was benzos (33% of all detections).
- Most common drug was cocaine, detected in 60% of samples (13% of all detections).

**SERVICES**

Opioid substitution therapy Jul - Sep 24

- Monthly average number of doses supplied was similar to the previous quarter, 7% lower than the same period in 2022 and similar to 2023.
- Methadone doses continued to decrease, while the number of injectable buprenorphine doses increased.

Treatment Aug - Nov 24

- Number of referrals (4,818) was similar to the previous quarter (4,828), 7% higher than the same period in 2022 (4,464) and 8% lower than in 2023 (4,915).

Injecting equipment provision Jul - Sep 24

- The number of transactions and the number of syringes and needles distributed was similar to the previous quarter.
- The number of transactions was similar to the same period in 2022 and 6% lower than 2023.

View report and alerts at: [www.publichealthscotland.scot/RADAR](http://www.publichealthscotland.scot/RADAR)

Public Health Scotland

The latest RADAR Quarterly Report was published on 28 January 2025. This report is to monitor drug-related harms, service usage and toxicology data, in order to provide an early warning of emerging drug trends and identify actions to reduce and prevent drug harms and deaths. The report can be accessed via the [Public Health Scotland website](#) or any of the social media channels below.



# Dry January

Dry January\* is a campaign delivered by Alcohol Change UK where people sign up to 31 alcohol free days for the month of January. The two studies below highlight both the effects of participating in Dry January (1) on wellbeing and the impact of short term abstinence (2).

1



This study examined the effects of participating in 'Dry January' on well-being and general self-efficacy (GSE) among 4232 adults.

Key findings from the study include:

- 1. Increased Well-being and GSE:** Participation in Dry January led to improvements in well-being and general self-efficacy (GSE), with larger gains for those who completed the challenge.
- 2. Role of Support:** Greater use of email support was significantly associated with successfully completing Dry January.
- 3. Physiological Benefits:** Abstaining from alcohol for a month resulted in lower liver fat, blood glucose, and cholesterol levels, as well as improved sleep quality, concentration, and work performance.
- 4. Long-term Impact:** Participation in Dry January was linked to longer-term reductions in alcohol intake and increased drink-refusal self-efficacy (DRSE).

2



This study assessed the impact of short-term alcohol abstinence on metabolic risk factors and cancer-related growth factors in moderate drinkers

Key Findings

- 1. Insulin Resistance:** Significant reduction in HOMA score by 25.9% in the abstinence group.
- 2. Blood Pressure:** Systolic and diastolic blood pressure decreased by 6.6% and 6.3%, respectively.
- 3. Weight:** Participants in the abstinence group experienced a 1.5% reduction in weight.
- 4. Cancer-related Growth Factors:** VEGF and EGF levels decreased by 41.8% and 73.9%, respectively.
- 5. Liver Function:** Improvements in liver function tests, including reductions in ALT and gamma GT levels.
- 6. Long-term Impact:** Sustained reduction in alcohol consumption and AUDIT scores at 6-8 months follow-up.

\*The term "Dry January" is a registered trademark with Alcohol Change UK and was first registered in 2014.

## Public Health Scotland Alcohol Harm Prevention Bulletin



This bulletin highlights publications and journal articles about alcohol harm prevention over the previous month.

You can also receive future issues by contacting [phs.knowledge@phs.scot](mailto:phs.knowledge@phs.scot) to be added to the distribution list.

If you have any questions about the bulletin, please contact PHS Knowledge Services on [phs.knowledge@phs.scot](mailto:phs.knowledge@phs.scot). For any other alcohol related queries please contact the PHS Preventing Alcohol Harms Team on [phs.alcoholprogramme@phs.scot](mailto:phs.alcoholprogramme@phs.scot).

## Websites and Services



Alcohol and Recovery Drug Services (ARDS) provides a range of treatment and care options for individuals who are affected by their own or someone else's alcohol and/or drug use.



NHS Inform host a directory of health and wellbeing services in Scotland. Including GP practices and support groups.