

For Immediate Release

23rd April 2024

***DRINKAWARE ENCOURAGED BY POSITIVE TRENDS IN IRISH DRINKING CULTURE,
BUT ANNUAL BAROMETER SIGNALS ONGOING CHALLENGES IN DRINKING HABITS***

***54% OF 18-24-YEAR-OLDS SAY THEY WOULD LIKE TO DRINK LESS OFTEN AND
57% OF THEM HAVE ALREADY MADE SMALL POSITIVE CHANGES***

Dublin, 23rd April 2024 — Drinkaware today releases its full Barometer Report for 2023¹, which examines the evolving landscape of alcohol consumption in Ireland and seeks to understand the future of Ireland’s drinking culture. The findings will help gauge how best to support those who wish to change their drinking behaviours and provide them with information and tools to do so. A nationally representative sample of 1,000 adults participated in the Ipsos B&A study, providing valuable insights into drinking practices, motivations, and perceptions surrounding alcohol.

Now in its eighth year, the extensive data gathered since the Drinkaware Barometer series began in 2017 offers a nuanced perspective on alcohol consumption trends and their broader societal implications. The report highlights significant shifts in drinking behaviours, particularly in binge drinking, mental well-being, and intentions around personal alcohol consumption reduction, particularly since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This year’s report found that 59% of Irish adults are now drinking alcohol on at least a weekly basis and that there has also been a notable rise in binge drinking from 20% of respondents in 2020 to 26% in 2023. **Binge drinking**² is defined as consuming six or more standard drinks in one sitting, or faster than your liver’s ability to process alcohol. With 26% of respondents reporting binge drinking as a typical pattern for them, this represents a concerning trend. Binge drinking can have short and long-term health implications, and incidents of binge drinking can be reduced by following HSE Low-Risk Weekly Guidelines for alcohol consumption.³

The report also underscores the complex relationship between alcohol consumption and low **mental well-being**. 34% of adults reported low mental well-being in 2023 versus just 30% in 2022. The prevalence of low mental well-being has remained persistent over the past number of years, particularly among 25–34-year-olds and those who have increased their alcohol consumption since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. In our pre-COVID-19 research in 2018, 11% of Irish adults indicated low mental well-being⁴, with our current data highlighting that mental well-being has not returned to pre-pandemic levels. Interestingly, 39% of adults who reported any binge drinking in the past 30 days reported low mental well-being in 2023. And 44% of adults who reported increased alcohol consumption in the past 12 months also had a low mental well-being score.

Amidst these challenges, the year-on-year research identifies **positive intentions** among Irish adults to enact positive behavioural change. Increasing numbers of individuals have expressed a desire to drink alcohol less frequently, with 36% in 2023 indicating that they would like to reduce their alcohol consumption. This compares to 24% wishing to do so in 2020 and 30% intending to do so in both 2021 and 2022. Additionally, 41% of respondents reported making small positive changes to their drinking habits in the previous 30 days.

Reflecting on the trends highlighted in the report, **Drinkaware CEO Dearbhla O'Brien** emphasises the importance of translating positive intentions into tangible actions, calling for a collaborative and holistic approach to address alcohol misuse. She comments, *"The data from this year's Drinkaware Barometer paints a compelling picture of evolving attitudes toward alcohol in Ireland. Ireland still has a high level of per capita alcohol use that remains considerably above the Department of Health's aim to reduce per capita alcohol use to 9.1 litres, but there have been positive signs in the past year.⁵ We're witnessing a notable trend toward more sober-curious drinking habits, especially amongst under-25s, driven by a growing awareness of the importance of moderation and balance. It's heartening to see individuals taking proactive steps to prioritise their health and well-being.*

However, it's crucial that we continue to foster an environment that supports and encourages positive drinking behaviours, ensuring that individuals have access to the resources and support they need to make informed choices. The Barometer findings provide a roadmap for Drinkaware in 2024 and beyond, enabling us to pursue our goal of reducing the harm caused by alcohol misuse in an ever-evolving landscape and social context."

In terms of what is next for the organisation based on the findings of the Drinkaware Barometer, **Ms O'Brien said**, *"We are working to ensure that the evidence provided in Barometer 2023 informs future discussions on alcohol prevention and interventions, leveraging Drinkaware's commitment to open access for all our research data.*

Fostering effective collaboration and partnerships with mission-aligned stakeholders is paramount in preventing and reducing alcohol misuse in Ireland. Prioritising additional research areas, such as investigating individuals who have decreased or positively changed their alcohol consumption and exploring the links between low mental well-being and risky drinking behaviours, will drive informed interventions and support services."

As Ireland navigates the post-pandemic landscape, Drinkaware remains committed to reducing the harm caused by alcohol, and promoting informed decision-making among the public.

For more information and to access the full Drinkaware Barometer 2023, visit www.drinkaware.ie/barometer

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References

1. The Drinkaware Barometer 2023 is a national population-based survey of 1,000 adults aged 18+ conducted by Ipsos B&A in July/August 2023 and included a series of internationally recognised modules relating to alcohol consumption and mental health. For more information on research projects and publications, visit www.drinkaware.ie/research

2. What is Binge Drinking? Posted on June 16, 2022. <https://www.drinkaware.ie/what-is-binge-drinking/>
3. Drinking within the HSE Low-Risk Weekly Alcohol Guidelines reduces your risk of alcohol-related health issues. The Low-Risk Weekly Guidelines for adults are:
 - Women: Less than 11 standard drinks (110g pure alcohol) spread out over the week, with at least two alcohol-free days
 - Men: Less than 17 standard drinks (170g pure alcohol) spread out over the week, with at least two alcohol-free days
 - Common standard drinks include a half pint of 4.5% lager, a 100ml glass of 12.5% wine and a pub measure of 40% spirits.
4. Drinkaware Index Series 2019. Published by Drinkaware. 2019.
<https://www.drinkaware.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Drinkaware-Index-2019-Research-Report.pdf>
5. HRB Alcohol Overview Series 13. Published by: Health Research Board, Dublin. An Bord Taighde Sláinte. Published on 17th April 2024. https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/40465/1/HRB_Alcohol_Overview_Series_13.pdf

About Drinkaware:

Drinkaware is the national independent charity working to prevent and reduce alcohol misuse in Ireland. It is governed by an independent board and regulated by the Charities Regulator. Registered Charity Number: 20204601

For information, photography or interview requests, please contact:

Laura Greer | Etch Communications | laura@etchcomms.ie | 0869605600

Andrea Woods Murphy | Etch Communications | andrea@etchcomms.ie | 0877566195

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