

## Scottish alcohol price survey 2016

### Background

In May 2016, Alcohol Focus Scotland visited supermarkets and shops in Scotland to find out how cheaply alcohol is being sold, repeating a price check we carried out five years ago.

We visited branches of leading supermarkets (Asda, Morrisons, Sainsburys, Tesco, Scotmid, Aldi and Lidl) as well as licensed convenience stores in Edinburgh and Glasgow, collecting price information for a range of alcohol products.



### Key findings

- Alcohol can be found at pocket-money prices wherever you look. Although recent sales figures show the average price of a unit of off-sales alcohol is 52p, we found an abundant supply of alcohol products selling well below that price.
- At the lowest price we found for white cider (18p per unit), you can drink the recommended weekly limit of 14 units for just £2.52.

- £7.20 is the minimum hourly wage for over 25s. After one and a half hour's work you would be able to buy a £10.50 bottle of vodka containing 28 units of alcohol. This is a far cry from fifty years ago when just the duty on a litre of spirits represented 60% of male average weekly earnings.<sup>1</sup> Spirits used to be reserved for the occasional tipple at Christmas and now they are sold to us in 'everyday value' bottles.
- In Scotland, the heaviest 10% of drinkers consume 46% of alcohol.<sup>2</sup> Heavy drinkers maintain high levels of consumption by buying the cheapest alcohol products. What our survey shows is that there's been little change in the price we pay for the cheapest alcohol over the last five years.
- If we want to be successful in reducing harmful drinking and the damage that inflicts on our society, we need to take action on the cheapest alcohol.

## Price survey results

### Cider

In terms of getting maximum alcohol for the cheapest price, our survey shows that cider is still top of the list. Cheap cider was sold by all the outlets we visited, with 2 and 3 litre plastic bottles selling at between 18-24p per unit. NHS Health Scotland figures confirm that 56% of alcohol sold below 20p per unit in Scotland in 2015 was strong cider.

Cider/Perry	Price Oct 2011	Per unit	Price May 2016	Per unit
<b>White Cider</b>				
Frosty Jacks 2L, 7.5%	£2.99	20p	-	-
Scimitar White Cider 2L, 7.5%	£2.09	14p	-	-
White Ace cider, 3L, 7.5%			£3.99 (convenience store)	18p
<b>Amber cider</b>				
Hawksridge (Asda) 4.2%, 2L	£1.48	18p	£2.00	24p
Woodgate (Lidl), 5.3%, 2L	-	-	£1.99	19p
Tesco/Morrisons own-brand cider	£3.49 (3L, 5.3%)	22p	£2.00 (2L, 5%)	20p

<sup>1</sup> House of Commons Health Committee inquiry report on alcohol, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> MESAS final report, NHS Health Scotland, 2016.

<b>Lambrini Bianco, 7.5%</b> 750ml	£1.62	29p	£1.90 (Asda)	34p
1.5L	£2.50 (on offer)	22p	£2.50 (Sainsburys)	22p

## Vodka

Vodka is the most popular drink among heavy drinkers in Scotland<sup>3</sup>. Twice as much cheap vodka (below 50p per unit) is sold in Scotland than in England and Wales. 73% of vodka sells below 50p per unit compared with 1% of malt whisky.

Vodka	Price Oct 2011	Per unit	Price May 2016	Per unit
<b>Branded vodka</b> 1L, 37.5% Smirnoff	£13 (Asda on offer, normal price £16)	35p	£19 (Asda)	51p
	£12 (Tesco on offer, normal price £16.07)	32p	£19 (Tesco)	51p
<b>Cheapest value vodka, 37.5%</b>				
Glens vodka	£12.97 (1L)	35p	£10.15 (700ml)	39p
Value own-brand vodka 700ml	£8.72	34p	£9.99 (40%)	<b>36p</b>

## Lager

We found some lager products cheaper than five years ago. Hardly surprising since beer duty has been cut by the UK chancellor in the last four budgets. Beer duty is now 14% lower than it was in 2012. The chancellor claimed cutting beer duty would help pubs, but in fact pub sales have continued to decline while the price difference between pubs and supermarkets has widened. In Scotland, sales of alcohol from supermarkets and other off-licences has now reached its highest ever level, accounting for 74% of alcohol sold.

<sup>3</sup> Gill, J et al (2015) Alcohol purchasing by ill heavy drinkers: cheap alcohol is no single commodity. Public Health Dec;129(12):1571-8. doi: 10.1016/j.puhe.2015.08.013.

Lager	Price Oct 2011	Per unit	Price May 2016	Per unit
<b>Branded lager</b> Tennents, 4%	12 x 440ml can £7	33p	15x 440ml £8	30p
<b>Own-brand lager</b> 4x440ml	£2.65 (4%)	39p	£1.60 (3.5%)	<b>26p</b>

## Wine

The average price for a unit of wine sold in off-licensed premises is 57p, but we found a huge choice of wines selling well below that price.

Wine	Price Oct 2011	Per Unit	Price May 2016	Per unit
Cheapest wine on offer, 750ml	White (12.5%) £2.99	31p	Red (La Tinta, Aldi) 13.5% £3.25	<b>32p</b>

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**Alcohol Focus Scotland** is the national charity working to prevent and reduce alcohol harm.

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