

Spiking statistics

Insights from the [2025 Drinkaware Monitor](#)

Every autumn we publish our annual Monitor, the UK's most comprehensive annual insight on alcohol consumption trends and public attitudes and behaviours. This section of the Monitor focuses on drink spiking and was developed by experts at Anglia Ruskin University, who Drinkaware have partnered with over a number of years to better understand this important topic.

A summary of key findings is provided below, with further academic analysis, including an investigation of trends over time, following in 2026.

Sample size: 7,256 (representative of the UK population)

Prevalence:

- This year, 1.8% of UK adults aged 18–85 believe they have been victim of drink spiking in the last 12 months.
- This represents a slight fall from 2.2% in 2023.
- Among younger adults aged 18 to 34, this rises to 3% – similar to the level in 2023 (3.3%).
- To put this into context, 2% equates to around one million people across the UK.*

**calculated using ONS 2023 mid-year population estimates*

Reporting:

One of the areas that really stood out was reporting. Of those who believe they were spiked, only 23% reported the incident to the police. That means around three-quarters of cases go unreported.

When we looked into why people didn't report, the top reasons were:

- Not thinking the police would take action (39%), and
- Not being able to remember what happened clearly (38%)

Setting:

Spiking was most likely to happen:

- At a bar (41%)
- At a social event (26%)

- At nightclubs (25%)

We also asked the public why they think people spike drinks:

Most people believe the intent is serious harm:

- 87% said for sexual assault or rape
- 69% said to steal from someone
- 64% said for physical assault

35% believed it was done ‘for fun’. Even though it’s the lowest reason, that’s still over a third of people.

Finally, we explored what people actually consider to be drink spiking*:

- UK adults were most likely to think of adding illegal drugs (88%) and prescription drugs (82%) to someone’s drink without their consent classes as spiking.
- Topping up someone’s drink without them noticing, and giving someone a stronger measure without their knowledge were both recognised as spiking by just under half of all UK adults (both 47%).

**Drink spiking is defined as the act of adding a substance to someone’s drink without their knowledge or consent, with the intent to cause harm or incapacitate them. This can include adding alcohol to non-alcoholic drinks, slipping illegal or pharmaceutical drugs into drinks, or using needles to inject substance.*

We know experiences and perceptions vary across age, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity:

Age

- 3% of 18–34-year-olds say they’ve been spiked in the last year, compared with just 0.8% of those aged 55 and over.
- 63% of younger adults say that adding more alcohol to a drink without someone’s consent counts as spiking, compared with 71% of older adults.

Their understanding of motivations also differs:

- Younger adults are more likely to believe spiking is done for criminal intent, such as theft (71%) or physical assault (69%).
- While older adults are more likely to think spiking is done as a joke (65%) or “for fun” (37%).

Gender

In terms of prevalence:

- Men (1.5%) and women (2%) were equally likely to report being spiked in the last year.

Gender gap in awareness:

- 85% of men recognised that adding illegal drugs to a drink without consent is spiking, compared to 90% of women.
- And across nearly all motivations listed, men were less likely to identify why someone might spike a drink.

Sexuality

When we looked at sexual orientation:

- LGB+ adults (2.3%) were just as likely as heterosexual adults (1.7%) to have been spiked.

But LGB+ respondents tended to have a stronger awareness:

- 81% recognised that adding alcohol to a non-alcoholic drink without consent is spiking, versus 75% of heterosexual adults.
- They were also more likely to believe spiking is linked to crimes, like physical assault – 73% vs. 63% of heterosexual adults.

Ethnicity

- People from ethnic minority backgrounds were slightly more likely to have been spiked – 2.8% vs. 1.6% of white individuals.

However, they were generally less likely to correctly identify most types of spiking, and less likely to believe spiking is done for serious reasons like theft, sexual assault, or even as a joke.

Focus on Scotland:

- 1.5% of adults in Scotland reported being a victim of drink spiking in the last year.
- Adults in Scotland are more likely than all UK adults to think that adding illegal drugs to alcoholic or non-alcoholic drinks without consent (91% vs. 88%), and adding alcohol to non-alcoholic drinks without consent (80% vs. 75%) are considered spiking.
- Like all UK adults, adults in Scotland are most likely to think that people spike drinks to commit sexual assault or rape (89%).