

Number of Alcohol-specific Deaths in the UK Reaches Record Levels for Fourth Consecutive Year

An unprecedented total number of alcohol-specific deaths were reached again in 2023

[Data](#) on the number of alcohol-specific deaths (where each death is a direct consequence of alcohol [that is, wholly attributable causes such as alcoholic liver disease]) in the UK registered in 2023 were released today (5th February 2025).

In total, there were 10,473 alcohol-specific deaths across the UK in 2023 – the highest number ever registered since records began in 2001, and the fourth consecutive year that the record has been broken. This number represents a 4.2% rise compared to 2022, and a 38.4% rise compared to 2019 (the last year before the COVID-19 pandemic, and before alcohol-specific deaths rose sharply across the UK).

This new UK record is largely a consequence of records unfortunately again being broken in England, which registered 8,276 alcohol-specific deaths in 2023 – 79% of the UK's total number of alcohol-specific deaths. Although a much smaller number, Wales also registered a record number of alcohol-specific deaths in 2023 (562) – a 15.6% increase compared to 2022. Elsewhere, Scotland registered 1,277 alcohol-specific deaths in 2023 (its highest number since 2008), and Northern Ireland registered 341 (its lowest number in the last four years).

However, alcohol-specific mortality fell slightly

Despite a new record in the number of alcohol-specific deaths being reached across the UK in 2023, the alcohol-specific mortality rate actually decreased slightly compared to 2022 (15.9 per 100,000 population in 2023 vs. 16.6 per 100,000 population in 2022).

This slight decrease in alcohol-specific mortality rate in 2023 may be attributed to trends among those aged between 25 and 59, who showed reduced age-specific mortality rates for the first time since 2020, whilst age-specific mortality rates for other age-groups (those aged between 20 and 24, and those aged 60 or over) remained steady compared to 2022.

Mortality trends vary across the devolved nations

Although alcohol-specific mortality decreased slightly compared to 2022, universal mortality decreases were not seen across the devolved nations.

England continued to show a marked, relatively consistent increase in alcohol-specific mortality in 2023 – the continuation of a year-on-year rise since 2019. In 2023, the alcohol-specific mortality rate in England reached its highest level since records began (15.0 per 100,000 population), representing a 3.4% increase compared to 2022, and a 39% increase compared to 2019.

Although still increasing year-on-year, this upwards trend in England is showing signs of flattening somewhat, with the 3.4% relative increase in alcohol-specific mortality between 2022 and 2023 being smaller than the relative increase seen between 2021 and 2022 (4.3%), and between 2020 and 2021 (6.9%).

Worryingly, although Wales had also shown a flattening of the upward trend in previous years, 2023 saw the highest alcohol-specific mortality rate ever recorded in the country (17.7 per 100,000

population) – an increase of 14.9% compared to 2022, and perhaps a resumption of the previously seen upwards trend in mortality.

Scotland and Northern Ireland, meanwhile, continued to show a consistent plateau in 2023, with little change seen in Scotland compared to 2022 (22.6 per 100,000 population in 2023 and 2022), and Northern Ireland actually reporting its lowest alcohol-specific mortality rate since 2018 (18.5 per 100,000 population), suggesting a reversal of the upwards trend. However, despite these more encouraging trends, relative to England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland still have the highest alcohol-specific mortality rates of the devolved nations.

These trends in alcohol-specific mortality over time can be seen in **Figure 1**.

Gap in alcohol-specific mortality between men and women persists

Historically, across all devolved nations, men show higher alcohol-specific mortality rates than women – a trend which continued in 2023. In 2023, men were around twice as likely to die from alcohol-specific causes than women, with alcohol-specific mortality rates of 21.9 and 10.3 per 100,000 population, respectively, being seen.

Alcoholic liver disease remains the biggest killer

Alcoholic liver disease (ALD), often a consequence of hazardous drinking behaviours over a prolonged period, is once again the most common cause of these alcohol-specific deaths, accounting for 75.6% of them across the UK in 2023 – the lowest proportion seen since records began in 2001.

Existing health inequities persist in 2023

Elsewhere, these data also reveal that those living in the most deprived areas of all nations are more likely to die from alcohol-specific causes compared to those living in the least deprived areas – a persistence of inequities seen across the UK for many years which are likely shaped by a complex interplay of behavioural and structural factors.

Data from England reveals that, in 2023, the alcohol-specific mortality rate among those living in the most deprived areas (most deprived IMD decile; 20.9 per 100,000 population) was 2.13 times higher than the rate among those in the least deprived areas (least deprived IMD decile; 9.8 per 100,000 population) – similar to the relative difference in 2022 (2.15). Further, [work by Drinkaware](#) has revealed that, as well as being more likely to experience poorer alcohol-specific health outcomes, those in the most deprived areas of England were also more likely than those in the least deprived areas to experience other alcohol-related harms in 2023, such as being unable to remember what happened the night before due to their drinking.

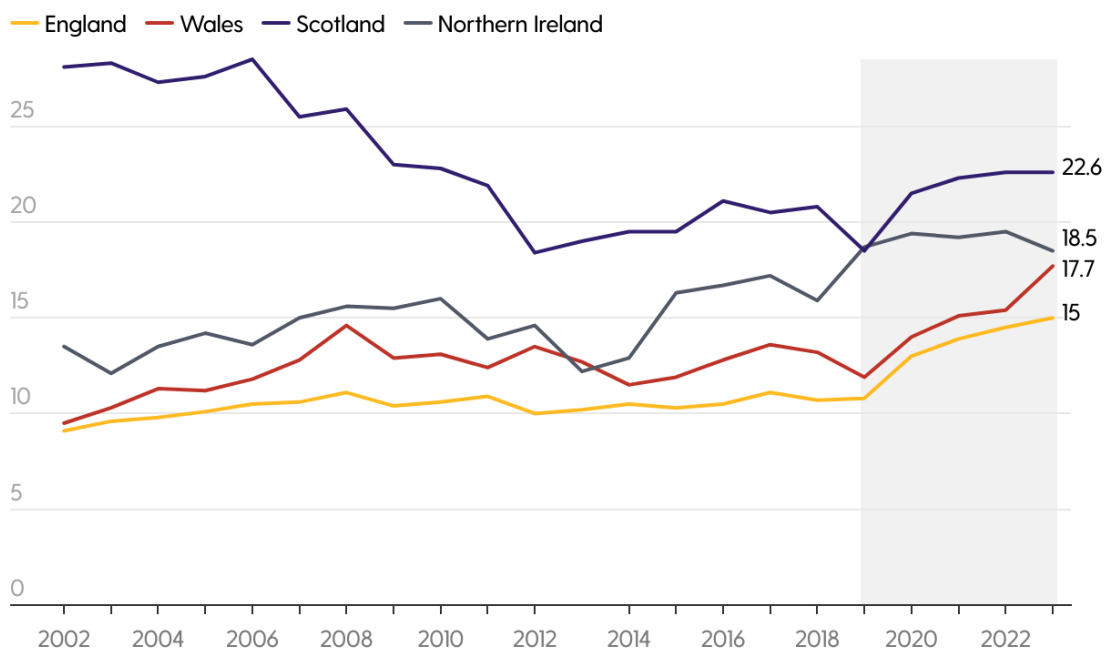
Likewise, health inequities were also again observed in Wales in 2023. Among men, those living in the most deprived areas (most deprived IMD decile; 38.1 per 100,000 population) were 4.1 times more likely to die from alcohol-specific causes than those in the least deprived areas (least deprived IMD decile; 9.3 per 100,000 population). Meanwhile, among women, those living in the most deprived areas were almost twice as likely to die from alcohol-specific causes (17.8 vs. 9.4 per 100,000 population).

Meanwhile, in Scotland, despite a pronounced overall decrease in inequities since 2001, the alcohol-specific mortality rate among those living in the most deprived areas (most deprived SIMD quintile; 47.0 per 100,000 population) were still 4.15 times higher than the rate seen among those living in the

least deprived areas (least deprived SIMD quintile; 10.5 per 100,000 population) – similar to the relative difference in 2022 (4.3).

Even in Northern Ireland, where overall trends for alcohol-specific deaths are perhaps the most encouraging, these inequities persist, with almost 40% (37.6%) of all alcohol-specific deaths in Northern Ireland between 2019 and 2023 coming from those living in the most deprived areas (Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (MDM), first quintile).

Alcohol-specific death rates have risen in since 2019, and continue to do so in England and Wales



Age-standardised alcohol-specific death rate per 100,000 population between 2002 and 2023.

Source: Office for National Statistics - Alcohol-specific deaths in the UK: registered in 2023

Figure 1: Age-standardised alcohol-specific mortality rates (per 100,000 population) reported in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland between 2013 and 2023.