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“THE ONLY WAY TO REMOVE ALCOHOL FROM YOUR SYSTEM IS TIME” SAYS DRINKAWARE CEO AS WE APPROACH THE OCTOBER BANK HOLIDAY WEEKEND

Findings from the Drinkaware Annual Barometer 2023 reveals decline in public understanding of alcohol’s impact on driving, with only 77% of young adults recognising the dangers¹

Dublin, 23rd October 2024 – Drinkaware, the national independent charity working to prevent and reduce alcohol misuse, is providing the public with valuable information and advice to help ensure a safe October Bank Holiday weekend on our roads for everyone.

As the long weekend approaches, Drinkaware is urging people to understand the risks of drinking and driving the morning after consuming alcohol, as well as the time required to process alcohol. This Bank Holiday weekend, Drinkaware aims to debunk any myths about the time it takes to sober up, reminding the public that the only way to remove alcohol from the body is time.

Data from the Drinkaware Annual Barometer 2023 shows a slight drop in the number of adults who believe that any amount of alcohol impairs driving ability, from **87% in 2022** to **86% in 2023**. Among young adults, this figure is even lower, with only **77%** of 18-24 year olds acknowledging the dangers of any amount of alcohol while driving.¹ This highlights a worrying trend among younger people, especially in light of the rising number of road collisions in Ireland.

Further research from the Road Safety Authority (RSA) has revealed an alarming trend in the growing social acceptability of drink-driving. In 2024, **73% of motorists** surveyed agreed that their acquaintances consider driving under the influence of alcohol unacceptable—down from 85% in 2019. In addition, **one in 10** Irish motorists admitted to driving after consuming alcohol in the last 12 months.² This increase in risky behaviours coincides with a rise in road collisions, serious injuries, and fatalities.

Tragically, **143 lives have been lost** on Irish roads so far this year.³ Between January and September 2024, **3,508 drivers were caught driving under the influence of alcohol**.⁴ An Garda Síochána data further reveals that **8,863 arrests** were made for driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs in 2023 (RSA 2024). To support the government’s Road Safety Strategy, which aims to reduce deaths and serious injuries by 50% over the next decade, Drinkaware is urging the public to get the facts about alcohol and never drink and drive.

Drinkaware CEO Dearbhla O’Brien commented:

“At Drinkaware, our mission is to prevent and reduce alcohol misuse in Ireland. We aim to equip adults with practical information, tips, and support to ensure their safety over the long weekend. This Bank Holiday Weekend, we are urging people to be more mindful while consuming alcohol and to understand the risks of driving the morning after drinking. We believe in empowering the Irish public to make informed choices.

The only way to remove alcohol from your system is time. Certain things might make you feel better or may make you feel safe to drive, but unless you have allowed your body one hour to process one

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standard drink, you are not safe to drive. Our [Drinks Calculator](#) and [Drink Driving in Ireland](#) pages are among the most visited sections on our website, with over 155,000 uses in 2024, showing a strong desire for knowledge and a commitment to keeping communities safe."

Know the facts about driving the morning after:

- It takes **at least one hour** to process one standard drink.
- An average pint of beer equals two standard drinks. This means it will take your body two hours to process one pint of beer.
- Alcohol levels continue to rise for hours after consuming the drink of choice.
- The **only way to remove alcohol from your system is time**; no amount of food or water will speed up the process.
- Neither will the common myths about showering, eating a large breakfast, consuming coffee or energy drinks, or exercising.
- The processing time starts from when **the last drink is finished**.

Myths:

*These things may make you feel better, but they do not get rid of the alcohol in your system. Only time will process the alcohol. It takes at least one hour to process one standard drink.

- Going for a shower
- Exercising
- Eating a large breakfast/meal
- Drinking coffee
- Drinking energy drinks

According to further RSA research, **one in four** drivers believe it is acceptable to drive short distances after having a drink. Additionally, RSA analysis of coronial data from 2015 to 2019 revealed that **37% of driver fatalities** with available toxicology results had a positive toxicology for alcohol.⁵ These troubling statistics reinforce the need for greater public awareness and stronger commitments to road safety.

Tips for a safe long weekend:

- Alternate every drink with a glass of water or a non-alcoholic option.
- Don't top up your glass; let yourself finish the drink before pouring another.
- Ask yourself, 'Do I really want this drink?'
- Before you go out, plan a safe route home. Double-check public transport, and remember that it will be a busy weekend for taxis.

Try some alcohol-free events over the long weekend:

- Take part in a free local park run.
- Check out your local area for different events (hikes, family festivals and much more).
- Organise a mocktail night.
- Plenty of alcohol-free alternatives are available; if you are heading out over the weekend, why not try non alcoholic alternatives?

For more information, or to use Drinkaware's free [Drinks Calculator](#), visit www.drinkaware.ie.

Ends

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Notes to the editor:

About Drinkaware: Drinkaware is a national 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

Between January and September 2024, 3,508 drivers were caught driving under the influence of alcohol and 2,270 were caught driving under the influence of drugs.⁴

References

1. The Drinkaware Barometer 2023 is a national population-based survey of 1,000 adults aged 18+ conducted by Behaviour and Attitudes in July/August 2023. It included a series of internationally recognised modules on alcohol consumption and mental health.
2. Public attitudes to drink-driving. RSA. 19/01/2024. https://www.rsa.ie/docs/default-source/road-safety/safe-and-sober-seminar/ms-velma-burns_road-safety-authority.pdf?sfvrsn=f78cec43_3
3. Roads Policing statistics for 2024. Figures for fatalities are current as of 10th October 2024. <https://www.garda.ie/en/roads-policing/statistics/roads-policing-statistics-for-2024/>
4. An Garda Síochána. Figures from drink and drug driving from January to September 2024.
5. RSA Launches New Campaign Aimed at Dangerous Behaviours. RSA. 11.07.2024. <https://www.rsa.ie/news-events/news/details/2024/07/11/rsa-launches-new-campaign-aimed-at-dangerous-behaviours>