

Tackle Cheap Alcohol: Minimum Unit Pricing

What is a minimum unit price?

Minimum unit pricing is about stopping alcohol being sold at pocket-money prices. It links the cost of alcohol to the strength of alcohol – so the more units of alcohol there are, the higher the price. It is important to tackle the cheap strong drinks which ruin so many lives and fuel violence, such as white cider and cheap vodka. This will protect the most vulnerable in society, such as young people and very heavy drinkers, who are more likely to drink cheap strong alcohol and suffer the consequences by pricing it out of their hands. **Minimum unit pricing won't increase the price of a pint in the pub or the average bottle of wine – this is about tackling the dirt cheap pocket money booze, only found on the bottom shelf.**

After ten years of being implemented in England, a minimum price of 50p per unit of alcohol willⁱ:

- Save **960** lives – every year
- Reduce hospital admissions by **35,100** – every year
- Save **376,600** days absent from work – every year
- Cut crimes by **50,700** – every year
- Save the economy **£5.1 billion** – every year
- Reduce overall consumption of alcohol by **2.5%**

You get what you pay for

The Government is to implement a 'below-cost sales ban'. **This will have very little impact** as it will only stop drink being sold at less than the alcohol-duty plus the VAT of the drink. Researchers at the University of Sheffield have calculated the effect of the Government's proposalⁱⁱ:

- Save **14** lives - only
- Reduce hospital admissions by **500** - only
- Save **5,700** days absent from work - only
- Cut crimes by **900** - only
- Save the economy **£77 million** - only
- Reduce overall consumption of alcohol by **0.04%**

The Governments proposed 'below-cost ban' therefore will be more than **60 times less effective** than a minimum unit price of 50p. It simply won't remove the very cheap strong drinks from sale.

What will it cost me?

Four out of five people will see very little difference in how much they pay for alcohol in the North West. It is vulnerable young and heavy drinkers who are at risk of serious health harm who will pay more. A minimum unit price of 50p will cost moderate drinkers an **average of 5 pence per week**, or £2.60 over a whole yearⁱⁱⁱ.

Some examples of how a minimum unit price of 50p would affect the price of drinks^{iv}:

				
NO INCREASE	Minimum price: £13.00	Minimum price: £6.25	Minimum price: 88p/can	NO INCREASE
Supermarket price: £4.99 (9 units, 12% abv)	Supermarket price: £9.70 (26 units, 37.5% abv)	Supermarket price: £2.99 (12.5 units, 5% abv)	Supermarket price: 67p (1.8 units, 4% abv)	Pub price: £3.03 (2.3 units, 4% abv)

Minimum unit pricing is already working in Canada^v

Studies in two Canadian provinces show that 10% increase in minimum prices resulted in:

- **Decrease of 8.4%** for all drinks
- Significant **shift away** from high to low strength beers and wines
- Immediate **drop in public violence** at weekends

Lives saved in Canada:

- **32% decrease** in wholly alcohol-caused deaths
- Chronic alcohol-related deaths **dropped by 20%** after two years
- After two years there was a **9% drop in alcohol-related hospital admissions**

A question of trust

Some global alcohol companies oppose minimum unit pricing. You will hear their arguments, in the media, through slick reports and from sponsored ‘front’ organisations. But at the end of the day it boils down to trust. A minimum unit price is supported by people who put your health and physical safety first – police and fire services, doctors and nurses, cancer charities and medical collages.

Minimum pricing is opposed by some who manage companies whose obligation is to shareholders to maximise profits. We believe **minimum unit pricing targets cheap strong booze** and will protect the most vulnerable and young in our society from pocket-money priced drinks.

The impact of alcohol on Hyndburn and Lancashire

- 38 alcohol-related deaths between 2010/2012 – 10 female; 28 male – a rate of 14.2 deaths/100,000 of the population (Lancashire: 558 deaths)^{vi}
- 2,499 alcohol-related hospital admissions 2010/2011 (Lancashire: 32,460)^{vii}
- 113 alcoholic liver disease admissions to hospital 2011/2012, an increase of 304% from 2002/2003 (Lancashire: 1,409, an increase of 77.5%)^{viii}
- 521 alcohol-related crimes recorded 2011/2012 (Lancashire: 6,858)^{ix}
- Total costs of alcohol to Hyndburn: £32.89 million; £409/head (all men, women and children) (Lancashire: £461.50 million; £394/head)^x
 - Costs to NHS in Hyndburn: £7.63 million; £95/head (Lancashire: £102.6 million; £88/head)
 - Costs through crime in Hyndburn: £10.53 million; £131/head (Lancashire: £147.27 million; £126/head)
 - Costs to the work place (e.g. sick days) in Hyndburn: £13.14 million; £163/head (Lancashire: £191.28 million; £163/head)
 - Costs to Social Services in Hyndburn: £2.09 million; £26/head (Lancashire: £27.02 million; £23/head)

ⁱ Sheffield Alcohol Research Group, 2013

ⁱⁱ Sheffield Alcohol Research Group, 2013

ⁱⁱⁱ Sheffield Alcohol Research Group, 2013

^{iv} Drink Wise, 2014

^v Stockwell et al, 2013

^{vi} Office for National Statistics, 2014

^{vii} Local Alcohol Profiles for England, 2012

^{viii} Balance North East, 2013

^{ix} Local Alcohol Profiles for England, 2012

^x Public Health England, 2013