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Booze deaths hit record

Health: 110 die last year in Grampian alone

BY JENNIFER MCKIERNAN
HOLYROOD REPORTER

Alcohol-related deaths have hit a record high in Grampian, with 110 deaths last year.

The figure has risen 10% from the previous year and is the biggest death toll since records began in 1979, with the previous highest figures being 105 in 2007 and 2009.

The British Medical Association (BMA) Scotland warned the latest figures from the National Records of Scotland mean efforts to tackle the harms of alcohol misuse must be redoubled.

BMA Scotland chairman Peter Bennie said alcohol-related deaths had also risen 10% across Scotland, from 1,150 to 1,265 - the highest annual total since 2010.

Dr Bennie added: "These latest figures, showing a worrying increase in alcohol-related deaths last year, make clear the scale of the damage caused by Scotland's relationship with alcohol.

"We need the Scottish Government's forthcoming alcohol strategy refresh to include the kind of wide-ranging measures the BMA and other alcohol campaigners recently called for, including action on marketing and availability.

> "Alcohol-related deaths also rose 10% across Scotland"

"Chief among these though is the need for minimum unit pricing"

Scottish Labour inequalities spokeswoman Monica Lennon MSP said: "My own father's alcohol-related death in 2015 makes me determined to see alcohol-harm reducing in Scotland but sadly, more and more families are suffering. This is why Scottish Labour has opposed cuts to local alcohol-harm support services."

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said: "Under this SNP government, we have seen huge cuts to Scotland's network of alcohol and drug partnerships is clearly impacting on what support is available across communities."

Public Health Minister Aileen Campbell said: "While progress has been made in tackling alcohol misuse, we want to go further. That's why we need minimum unit pricing and we are pleased it continues to be supported by such a wide range of health professionals."

An NHS Grampian spokeswoman said: "Even a single death is a cause of concern for us as a Health Board and NHS Grampian is continually working with relevant partners across the three Health and Social Care partnerships in Grampian to tackle this problem.

"NHS staff do advise people when they see their alcohol consumption is risking their health."

DEATH TOLL: Alcohol-related deaths in Grampian last year were the highest since records began in 1979

REPORT

Third of Scots bingeing on TV episodes

BY LYNSEY BEWS

More than a third of Scots are "binge-watching" episodes of TV programmes every week, a new report has suggested.

Ofcom research indicates 74% of adults north of the border have used catch-up and on-demand services to view back-to-back episodes of shows such as House Of Cards or Game Of Thrones in one sitting.

It found 38% of people are doing so at least once a week, while 57% do it at least once a month.

The findings were contained in the broadcast regulator's Communications Market Report for Scotland, and were drawn from a survey in April and May of 2,356 adults across the UK, including 202 in Scotland.

When asked about why they "binge-watch" programmes, 70% of Scots who had done so in the last month said they found the experience relaxing and enjoyable.

> "Live television still has a special draw"

However 33% admitted the temptation to watch another episode has cost them sleep and left them feeling tired.

Although watching TV on-demand has increased in popularity, the report indicates that live broadcast TV is still central to Scotland's viewing.

Just over half of Scots said if they wanted to watch TV, they would first "switch on the TV and see what's airing".

Glenn Preston, Ofcom's Scotland director said: "Technology has revolutionised the way we watch TV. Gone are the days of waiting a week for the next episode.

"But it's important to recognise live television still has a special draw, and has the power to bring the whole family together in a common experience."

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Suicide figures down in north

HEALTH

New statistics have shown Grampian has seen the biggest drop in suicides in Scotland.

There were 79 suicides in the health board area last year, a drop of 14 from a 20-year high of 93 the previous year.

The north of Scotland is bucking a national trend, showing falling suicide figures in the last year, whereas health boards in the south have seen increases, with 24 more suicides year-on-year in Lothian, 20 in Tayside and 14 in Lanarkshire.

Suicide prevention charity, Choose Life Aberdeen and Aberdenshire coordinator Iain Murray welcomed the reduction.

He said: "While it is good that the number of suicides across Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire is declining, we are acutely aware every suicide is a tragedy. We will continue to work hard to reduce this further.

"Our digital campaign which includes Facebook adverts, Google adverts, and the suicide prevention app have all contributed to reducing the number of suicides and raising awareness of mental health.

Alex Cole-Hamilton

Scottish Liberal Democrat health spokesperson Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP hit out at the Scottish Government allowing its suicide prevention strategy to expire in December last year.

He said: "Any suicide is a profound tragedy and has a devastating impact on those left behind.

"Replacing the strategy a year after the old one has expired is shambolic. The SNP Government let the mental health strategy rot for 15 months before replacing it."