

Public Attitudes Towards Alcohol Policy, South Africa

RESET opinion poll results July 2025
Vital Strategies Fact Sheet



Background

RESET Alcohol is a global initiative that brings together national governments, civil society, researchers, and leaders in public health and alcohol policy to implement the World Health Organization's SAFER best buys for alcohol policy with a focus on increasing taxation, and targeted efforts to restrict marketing and availability. The initiative is led by Vital Strategies in collaboration with country partners and global technical partners that include Johns Hopkins University Economics for Health, Global Alcohol Policy Alliance (GAPA), Movendi International and the World Health Organization (WHO).

Research Methodology

A nationally representative survey of 1,033 South African adults (18+) was conducted via telephone using random-digit dialling (RDD). Quotas were set based on age, gender, region, urban/rural residence and education. The final data was weighted to match with these parameters. Fieldwork took place between June 23 and July 7, 2025. Interviews were conducted in Afrikaans, English, Setswana, Sotho, Xhosa and Zulu. Quality control included recording all interviews and verifying 25% by audio review. The average interview length was 27 minutes. Fieldwork was led by Vital Strategies' research agency partner, Thinks Insight & Strategy, with assistance from its local research partner.

Key Survey Findings:

Alcohol availability

- 83% say alcohol is easy to buy.
- 55% consider it relatively inexpensive.

Concerns related to alcohol use

- 96% of South Africans consider alcohol consumption to be a problem in their country, while 77% see it as a major problem.
- Those who see alcohol as a problem are particularly concerned about violence (73%) and about health problems (68%).
- A clear majority associate alcohol consumption with an increased risk of a wide range of physical and mental health conditions, including:
 - Crashes and road injuries (91%)
 - Violence, including domestic violence (90%), child abuse (89%), child neglect (86%), and male-on-male violence (84%)
 - Suicide (81%)
 - Depression (79%)
 - Work-related injuries (79%)
 - Liver disease (78%)
 - Kidney disease (76%)
 - Heart disease (70%)
- Two-thirds (66%) have experienced, or know someone who has experienced, negative consequences from alcohol use, most often related to health (61%) or violence (59%).

Protecting youth

Concerns among parents and guardians

- 87% say minors should not be exposed to alcohol at points of sale.
- 82% believe exposure to alcohol advertising encourages youth to think alcohol consumption is a desirable/glamorous behavior and encourages alcohol initiation.
- 78% support raising the legal drinking age.
- 77% are extremely or highly concerned about the amount of alcohol advertising their children are exposed to.

Support for government action and alcohol taxes

- 85% support raising alcohol taxes if the money is used for programs that support the poor, such as housing.
- 82% support raising alcohol taxes if the money is used to support public school education.
- 82% would support government rules to prevent alcohol companies from influencing alcohol policy decisions.
- 80% see addressing alcohol-related harms as a government responsibility.
- 72% say they would support the government in raising taxes on alcohol to reduce alcohol harms.
- 67% support restricting alcohol advertising on media such as TV, radio and social media and restricting alcohol companies from sponsoring sporting, musical and/or cultural events.

Industry accountability

- 76% agree that alcohol companies should take responsibility for the harm caused by alcohol use.
- 74% support removing government benefits given to alcohol companies to help their business.
- 63% agree that the alcohol industry tries to convince the public that there is little or no health risk from alcohol use.
- 60% agree that alcohol companies have tried to stop the passage of laws or policies that would reduce alcohol use.

Support for health education

- 85% support educating the public about alcohol-related harms.
- 59% agree that most people in South Africa are unaware of the harms of alcohol.