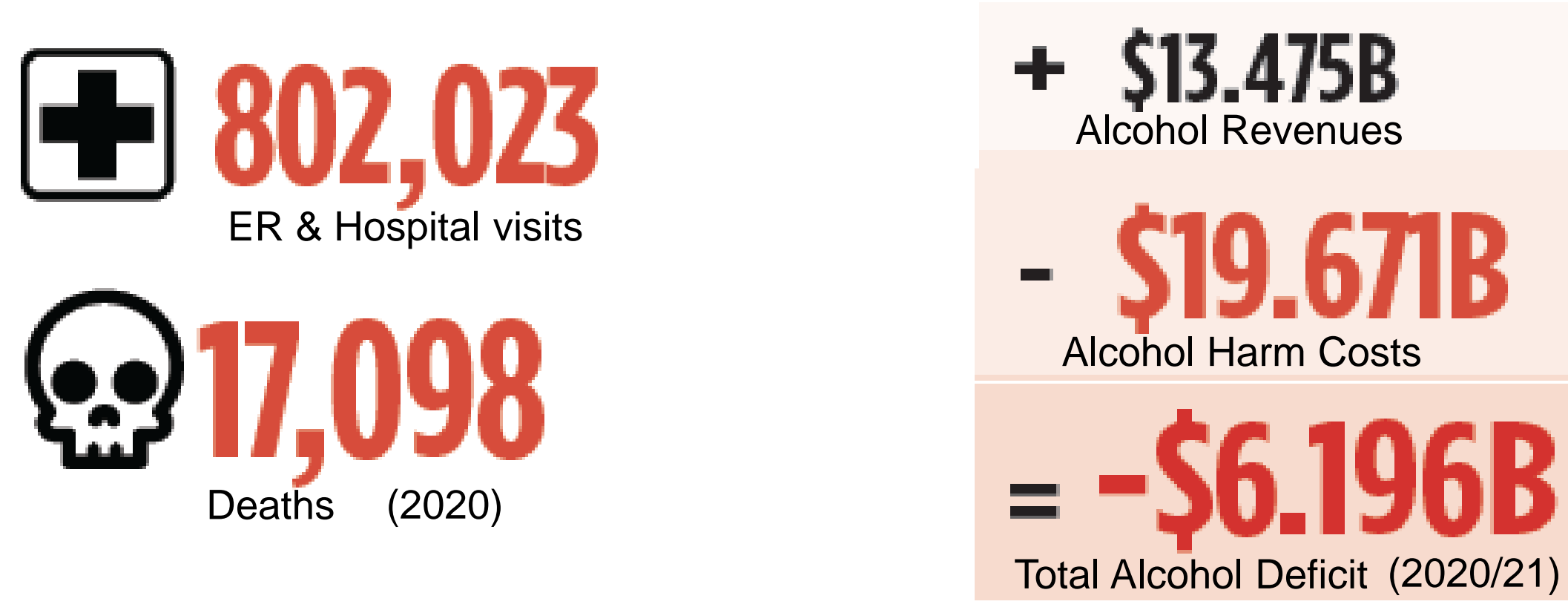


Federal Alcohol Policy in Canada: Recommendations to Reduce Alcohol-Caused Harms and Costs

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Alcohol harms and costs in Canada



Policy context

Alcohol use is causally linked to >200 health conditions and injuries (e.g., cancer, liver disease, suicide, road injuries) in addition to social harms (e.g., sexual violence, interpersonal violence, crime).

Evidence-based **alcohol control policies** are the primary modifiable means of preventing and reducing alcohol-caused harms.

In Canada, the **federal government** has legislative authority over several alcohol policy areas including excise taxes, advertising restrictions, impaired driving laws, and product labelling.

Research methods

The Canadian Alcohol Policy Evaluation (CAPE) provides a point-in-time snapshot of **existing alcohol policies** at the federal level of government.

Alcohol policies were assessed according to a set of 10 evidence-based alcohol **policy domains**.

Domains were weighted according to evidence of relative impact, including effectiveness and scope.

Policy data were collected between June-December 2022.

Data were scored using a detailed rubric of **best practices**.

Results

Compared to best practices for supporting public health goals, the Canadian federal government **scored 37%** overall.

The three **most impactful domains** - pricing and taxation, marketing and advertising controls, and impaired driving countermeasures - **received some of the lowest scores** (39%, 10%, and 40%, respectively).

Domain-specific scores varied considerably.

Results demonstrate that the Canadian federal government has **not adopted** or only **partially adopted** many evidence-based alcohol policies.

FEDERAL REPORT CARD: 37% F

DOMAIN	SCORE	GRADE
1. Pricing & Taxation	39%	F
2. Marketing & Advertising Controls	10%	F
3. Impaired Driving Countermeasures	40%	F
4. Health & Safety Messaging	10%	F
5. Physical Availability	100%	A+ *
6. Control System	12%	F
7. Minimum Legal Age	0%	F
8. Alcohol Strategy	40%	F
9. Screening & Treatment Interventions	67%	C+
10. Monitoring & Reporting	88%	A

* Note: this score was largely due to the limited scope of federal control for this domain

Recommendations

💰 Increase federal **sales taxes** on alcohol, index to inflation, base taxes on ethanol; incentivize **minimum pricing** at the provincial/territorial level.

📢 Update and expand the **CRTC code** to apply to all advertisers and media types (e.g. digital media); implement adequate health-focused surveillance for and enforcement of alcohol **marketing violations**.

⚠️ Federally **mandate labels** on all alcohol containers that provide **health warnings**, standard drink information, and health information.

🏛️ Provide incentives for provincial and territorial governments to retain **government alcohol monopolies**.

🔧 Implement a federal **Alcohol Act**, supported by an industry-independent alcohol strategy.

👤 Set federal **minimum legal drinking age**, ideally to age 21.

🏥 Formally endorse the national guidance on alcohol and health.

Further Reading and Resources

- Federal Results Summary [FR](#)
- Policy Domain Results (Federal)
- Policy Scoring Rubric (Federal)
- Project Methodology & Evidence Review [FR](#)
- Evidence-Based Recommendations for Labelling of Alcohol Products in Canada [FR](#)

[FR](#) French version available

An assessment of federal alcohol policies in Canada and priority recommendations: Results from the 3rd Canadian Alcohol Policy Evaluation Project. (Farkouh et al., 2024, Canadian Journal of Public Health)



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