

# Reducing Alcohol-Related Harms and Costs in Nova Scotia: A Policy Review

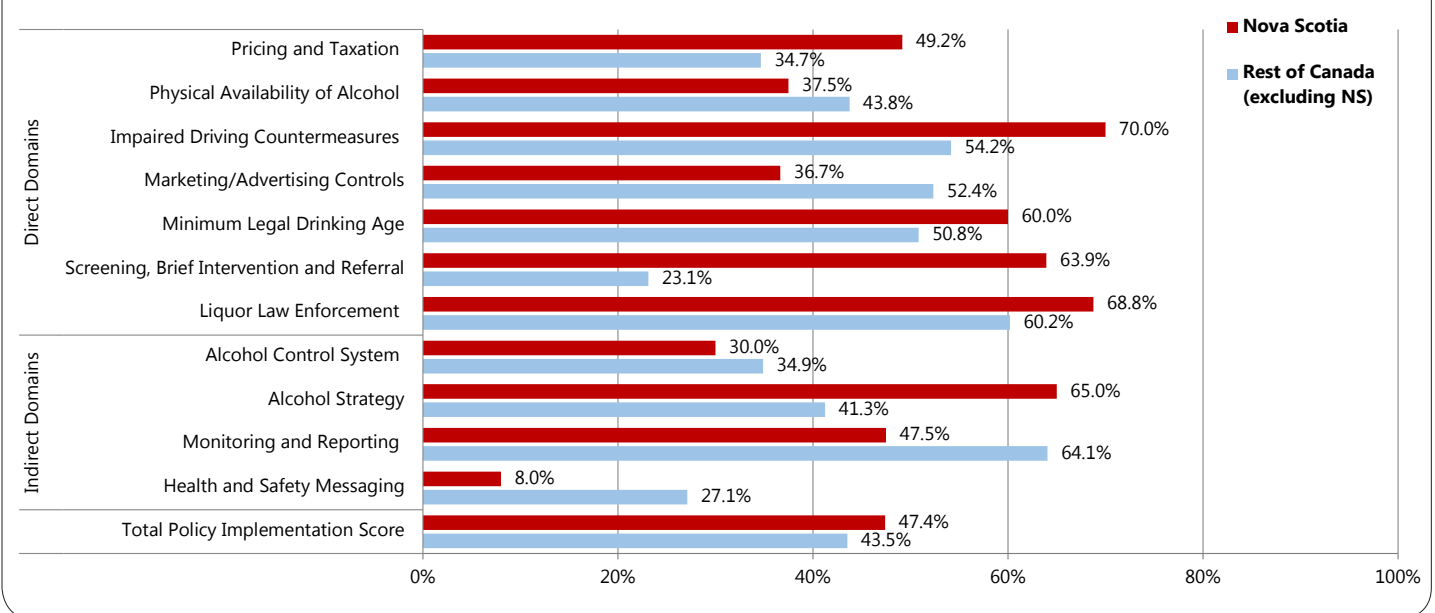
## Nova Scotia

Population (2016)	923,598
Per capita alcohol consumption age 15+*	8.5L pure ethanol**
Overall alcohol harm costs (2014)	\$427M
Net revenue from alcohol (2014)***	\$372M
Type of alcohol retail system	Mixed government/private system

The Provincial and Territorial Canadian Alcohol Policy Evaluation (CAPE) project is a rigorous assessment of whether evidence-based alcohol policies were implemented within each province and territory in 2017. A comprehensive alcohol policy framework was developed, containing gold standard best practices across 11 different policy domains. The first seven domains have evidence of effectiveness as means of *directly* reducing population level consumption of alcohol and/or related harms. The last four domains are composed of evidence-based strategies that more *indirectly* facilitate implementation of the first seven domains. See Stockwell et al, 2019<sup>a</sup> for the full methodology and findings.

The scores presented in this summary reflect the degree to which Nova Scotia has implemented these gold standard best practices captured in the alcohol policy framework. **Overall, Nova Scotia scored 47% in 2017, which is 3% above the average of 44% for the rest of Canada (excluding Nova Scotia).**

Domain scores, Nova Scotia vs rest of Canada, 2017











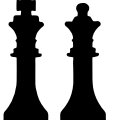


## Promising practices in Nova Scotia

- Nova Scotia has implemented some strong **impaired driving legislation** including administrative licence suspensions (ALS) periods that extend beyond the recommended minimum for first and second offenses and having a licence reinstatement fee. Introducing mandatory vehicle impoundment would further strengthen the ALS program.
- There are a number of **screening, brief intervention, and referral (SBIR)** practices in place in Nova Scotia, including the availability of SBIR tools online. A special pilot project was also conducted that offered targeted SBIR to pregnant women and new mothers.
- Nova Scotia has implemented several components of **risk-based licensing and enforcement programs** for on-premise establishments including consideration of licensees past history and increased frequency of inspections based on risk level. There are also penalties for liquor law violations for all outlet types which increase with repeat offences and which are tracked and publicly reported.
- Nova Scotia has a **standalone alcohol strategy** which was developed in 2007 and includes recommendations in multiple evidence-based policy areas including physical availability, impaired driving, marketing and advertising, and SBIR. The strategy requires dedicated funding to be updated and monitored; government-endorsement would further strengthen its effectiveness.



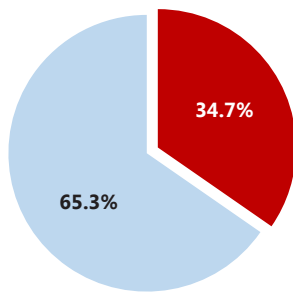
\*Adjusted to account for unrecorded alcohol consumption. \*\*Equivalent to 497 standard drinks (1 standard drink contains 17.05mL of pure alcohol and is equivalent to 341mL of 5% beer; 142mL of 12% wine; or 43mL of 40% spirits). \*\*\* Net income of liquor authorities, total taxes, and other revenue. See CAPE report for full list of data sources.<sup>a</sup>

# Strengthening alcohol policies in Nova Scotia

Policy Domain	Score	Selected recommendations
DIRECT DOMAINS	 <b>Pricing and Taxation</b>	<b>49%</b> <b>F</b> Ensure minimum prices are set at a rate per standard drink (e.g. 17.05mL of pure alcohol) of at least <b>\$1.75* per standard drink for off-premise retail stores and \$3.50* per standard drink for on-premise establishments</b> , after taxes with no exceptions (*2019 prices). Currently, minimum prices for off-premise spirits and on-premise beer, wine, and coolers fall below recommended rates. <b>Update all alcohol prices annually</b> to reflect Nova Scotia-specific inflation rates to ensure alcohol does not become less expensive relative to other goods over time. <b>Set alcohol sales taxes at a higher rate</b> than other consumer goods.
	 <b>Physical Availability</b>	<b>38%</b> <b>F</b> <b>Decrease the existing density of on-premise establishments</b> such as restaurants and bars and implement <b>stronger regulations around off-premise retail store locations</b> , taking into consideration outlet density, placement, and policies to enhance safety around the stores. Limit the availability of alcohol by <b>reducing trading hours</b> ; do not allow early morning alcohol sales (i.e. before 11:00am) or late-night sales (i.e. after 8pm for off-premise retail stores and 1am for on-premise establishments) without exceptions and consider <b>embedding hours of operation into legislation</b> to eliminate the liquor corporation's ability to temporarily extend the hours of operation at their own discretion.
	 <b>Impaired Driving Counter-measures</b>	<b>70%</b> <b>B-</b> <b>Increase the minimum duration of stage 1 of the graduated licensing program (GLP)</b> to 12 months even when driver education courses completed; <b>extend the zero tolerance BAC period</b> from 2 years beyond GLP to 3 years. Introduce <b>mandatory vehicle impoundment</b> on first occurrence of roadside administrative license sanctions (ALS). Ensure completion of a mandatory interlock program is required for all <i>Criminal Code</i> impaired driving offenders prior to relicensing and <b>increase the minimum alcohol interlock penalty</b> for second offences from 2 years to 3 years.
	 <b>Marketing and Advertising Controls</b>	<b>37%</b> <b>F</b> Ensure <b>advertising regulations apply to all advertising platforms</b> and appoint an <b>independent authority to conduct mandatory pre-screening of alcohol advertisement</b> and marketing campaigns prior to publication. Ensure that at least 50% of social media posts from the Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation have a <b>health and safety focus</b> .
	 <b>Minimum Legal Drinking Age</b>	<b>60%</b> <b>C-</b> Increase the <b>minimum legal drinking age</b> ; give consideration to <b>graduated drinking policies</b> that grant phased-in legal access to alcohol by limiting the amount and type of alcohol that can be purchased in specific settings between the ages of 19 and 21.
	 <b>Screening, Brief Intervention/ Referral</b>	<b>64%</b> <b>C</b> <b>Track implementation of screening, brief intervention and referral (SBIR) activities</b> in order to inform future SBIR activities. Work with health care providers in order to <b>increase the proportion of physicians or other clinical staff who routinely ask adults 18+ about their alcohol use</b> .
	 <b>Liquor Law Enforcement</b>	<b>69%</b> <b>C+</b> <b>Ensure licensing of off-premise stores is based on risk assessment</b> that considers outlet and license holder characteristics/past violations to match Nova Scotia's existing enforcement protocols. Take <b>outlet level data from police (such as assaults) into consideration during the licensing approval process</b> and to determine frequency of enforcement for both on-premise establishments and off-premise stores. <b>Make the Serve Right training program mandatory</b> for all staff and volunteers at all licensed events, Special Occasion Permits, venues, on-premise establishments and off-premise stores.
INDIRECT DOMAINS	 <b>Alcohol Control System</b>	<b>30%</b> <b>F</b> <b>Maintain a strong government-owned and government-run retail network</b> for off-premise outlets that reports to a ministry with a mandate to protect health and/or safety and ensure there are <b>legislated earmarked funds to support prevention initiatives and health messaging</b> . <b>Phase out online sales and liquor delivery services</b> ; prohibit ferment on premise outlets, which encourage the bulk sale of inexpensive alcohol.
	 <b>Alcohol Strategy</b>	<b>65%</b> <b>C</b> Include <b>recommendations related to pricing and minimum legal drinking age</b> in Nova Scotia's <b>stand-alone alcohol strategy</b> . Ensure the strategy has <b>dedicated funding, is endorsed by government and is kept current with updates completed at least every five years independent of industry involvement</b> ; the current alcohol strategy was developed in 2007.
	 <b>Monitoring and Reporting</b>	<b>48%</b> <b>F</b> <b>Implement systematic tracking of alcohol consumption and harm indicators</b> (e.g. alcohol consumption, alcohol-related hospitalization, mortality and crime) with annual public reporting of all indicators through a centralized system to support effective monitoring of trends in consumption and harms. Have an <b>identified leader responsible for monitoring alcohol harm</b> ; make specific funding and/or staff resources available to support these monitoring initiatives.
	 <b>Health and Safety Messaging</b>	<b>8%</b> <b>F</b> Implement <b>legislated enhanced alcohol labels as a manufacturer requirement</b> with health and safety messages, which include a variety of health-focused messages, standard drink information and national low-risk drinking guidelines; labels should have prominent rotating messages accompanied by pictorial images. Implement <b>legislated health and safety messages to be displayed in all on-premise establishments and off-premise retail stores</b> and have liquor control boards use a range of media platforms to communicate this messaging.
<b>Total Policy Implementation Score</b>	<b>47%</b> <b>F</b>	<b>A comprehensive list of gold standard best practice alcohol policies is available in Appendix C of the full CAPE report<sup>2</sup>.</b>

# Nova Scotia: selected findings, 2017

Nova Scotia alcohol retail stores, 2017



■ Government retail stores ■ Private retail stores

**Best practice is 100% government-run alcohol retail stores**

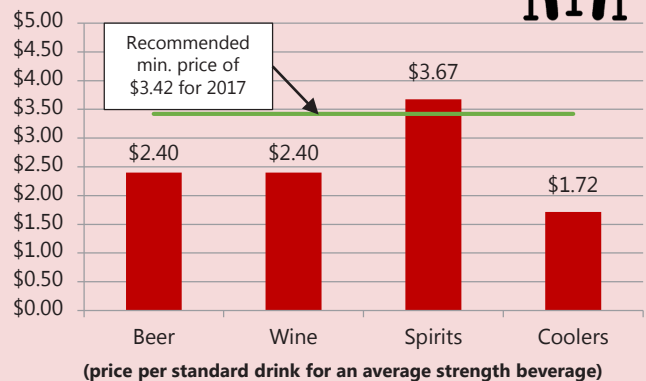
Nova Scotia minimum prices per standard drink, 2017

Off-premise alcohol retail stores



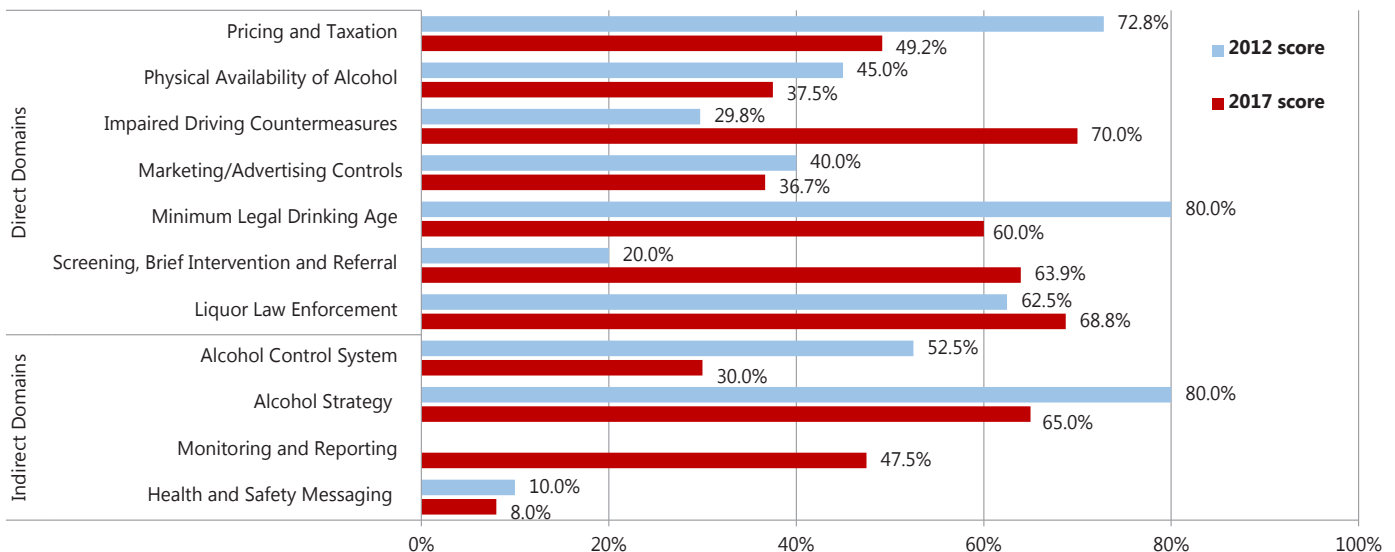
(price per standard drink for an average strength beverage)

On-premise establishments (restaurants, bars, etc.)



(price per standard drink for an average strength beverage)

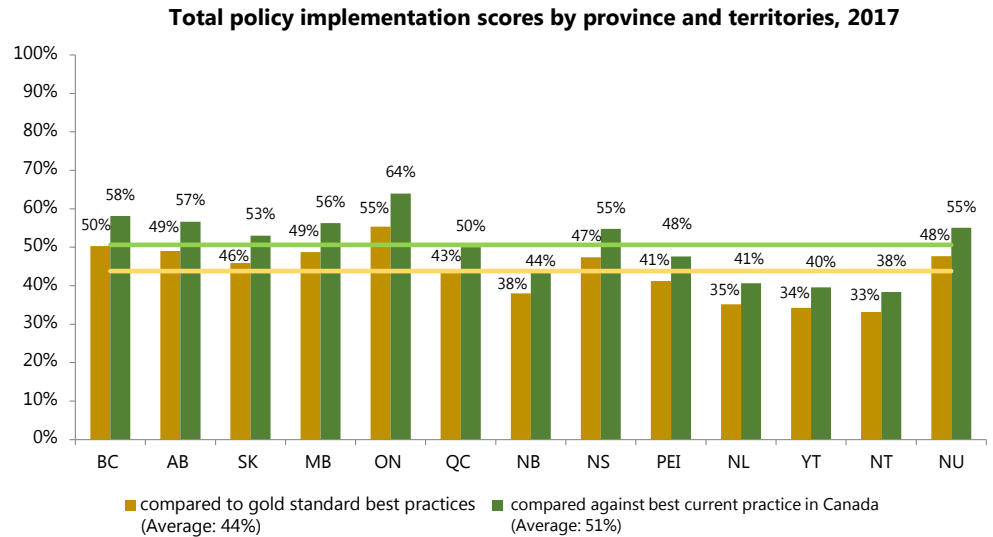
Domain scores, Nova Scotia, 2012 vs 2017



Note: policy indicators may have changed between 2012 and 2017 thus scores reflect best practices at the time of data collection.

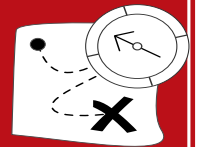
## How does Nova Scotia stack up against other provinces and territories?

Even though the provinces and territories scored poorly overall in relation to gold standard best practices, many examples of strong alcohol policy components were found across Canada. **In fact, if a province or territory chose to implement all of these best current practices that were identified they would have scored 87% (Grade A).** Based on these best current practices identified across all jurisdictions, the scores were scaled up to show how the provinces and territories measure up against best current practices in Canada (green bars).



## Next steps for reducing alcohol-related harms and costs in Nova Scotia

- Considering the substantial and increasing harm from alcohol use, the Nova Scotia government should give greater priority to funding and implementing effective alcohol policies such as those outlined in this summary and in the full reports<sup>24</sup>.
- Position liquor boards within ministries directly concerned with health and safety rather than with finance and economic development.
- Learn from other provinces' and territories' experiences with successful implementation of effective alcohol policies (see Best Practice Leaders identified on P11 of the full report<sup>24</sup>).
- Government should take concerted action with NGOs and other stakeholders to implement a combination of population level policies, prioritising the first seven policy areas identified in this summary.
- Inform the public about the risks of alcohol, including the comparative risks of alcohol and other substances, to create a more supportive climate for enacting effective policies. This can be achieved with initiatives such as mandatory warning labels on all alcohol containers and consistent public health messaging on a range of health topics.
- Carefully document policy changes and regularly monitor and evaluate alcohol-related public health and safety outcomes to better inform future policy development.



**Suggested citation:** Asbridge, M., Thompson, K., Davis-MacNevin, P., Wettlaufer, A., Vallance, K., Chow, C., Stockwell, T., Giesbrecht, N., April, N., Callaghan, R., Cukier, S., Dube, M., Hynes, G., Mann, R., Solomon, R., Thomas, G., (2019). Reducing Alcohol-Related Harms and Costs in Nova Scotia: A Policy Review. Victoria, BC: Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research, University of Victoria.

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▣ To learn more about the Canadian Alcohol Policy Evaluation Project, read other jurisdictional summaries and download the full federal and jurisdictional reports, visit [alcoholpolicy.cisur.ca](http://alcoholpolicy.cisur.ca) or email [cisur@uvic.ca](mailto:cisur@uvic.ca).