

# The Language of Lobbying :

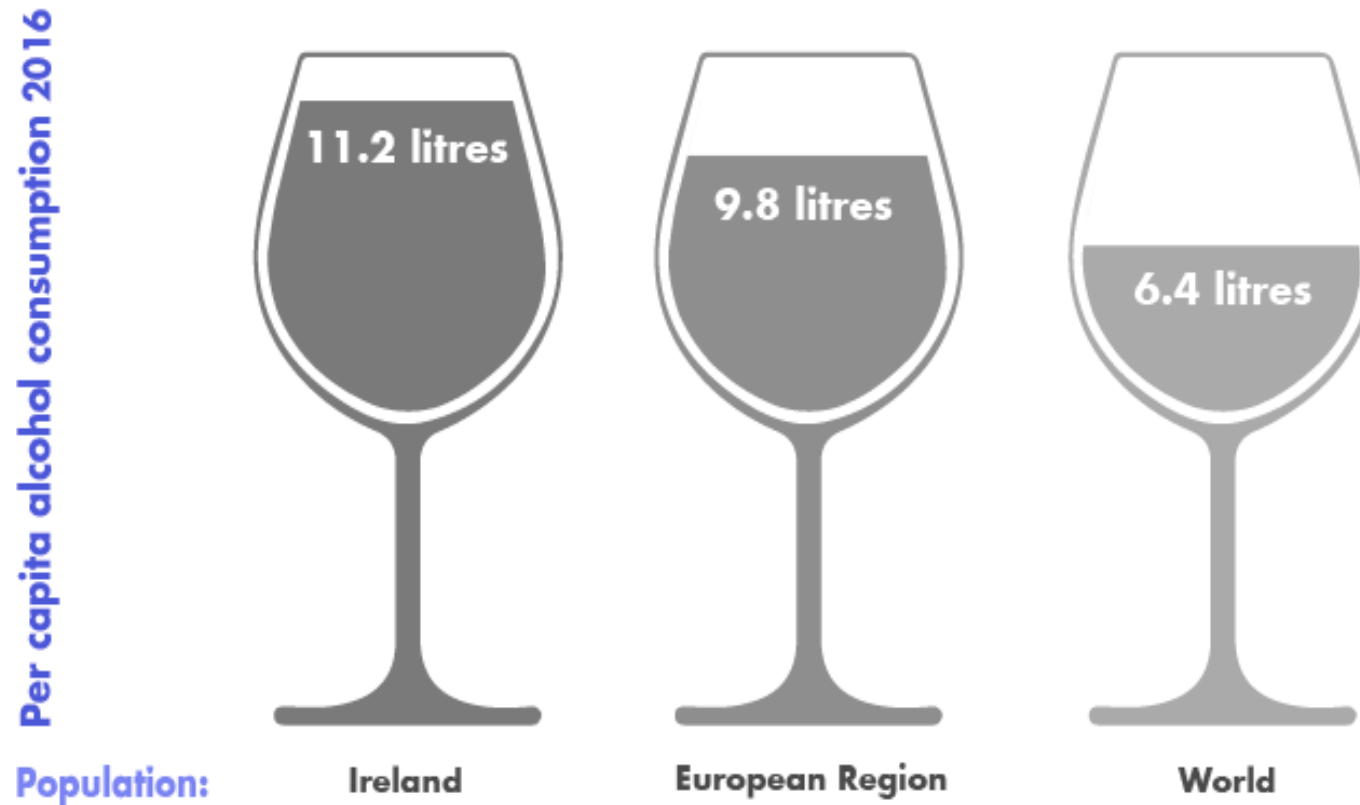
## A Critical Discourse Analysis of Ireland's Public Health (Alcohol) Bill Debate, 2017-2018

Ciara Gilmartin, Dr. Olivia Freeman, Dr. Patrick Kenny, Dr. John Hogan, Dr. Helen McAvoy



Background

Ireland has one of the highest levels of alcohol consumption in Europe (WHO, 2019).



Per Capita Alcohol Consumption in Ireland, Europe and the World in 2016. Data from WHO (2018) and O'Dwyer C, Mongan D, Doyle A and Galvin B (2021).

# The Public Health (Alcohol) Bill

was introduced in 2015.

Measures approved included:

- minimum unit pricing
- structural separation
- advertising and marketing restrictions
- health warning labels



---

**An Bille Sláinte Poiblí (Alcól), 2015**  
**Public Health (Alcohol) Bill 2015**

---

*Mar a tionscnaíodh*

*As initiated*

---



This Bill was the subject of intense lobbying,

and took over **1,000** days to pass

2015

–

2018

- to develop an in-depth understanding **of the arguments used by alcohol industry lobbyists;** in an effort to shape, support or oppose the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill.
- to examine to what extent those arguments were **translated into political debates** in the Oireachtas

# Method

# Methodology

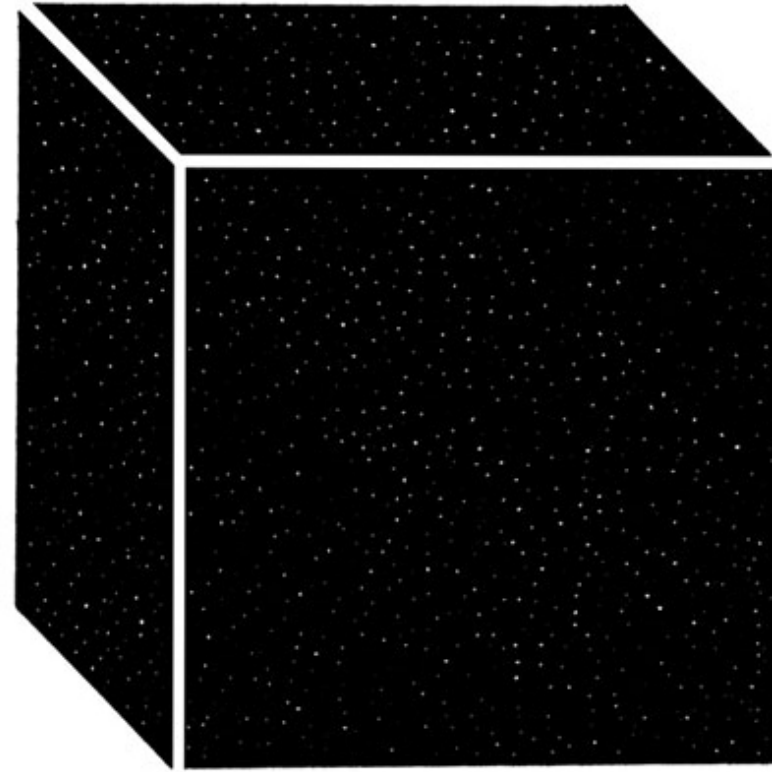
## *Research Process*

This study takes a bottom up, **qualitative and inductive approach** to theory development (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019).

**Prior studies**, examining the political debates and lobbying initiatives surrounding public health legislation, **have tended to use content or thematic analysis**, with few exceptions (e.g. (Calnan et al., 2018)).

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) provides **extra layers of insight into the power of language** to persuade and shape debates in political contexts.





# Data Collection

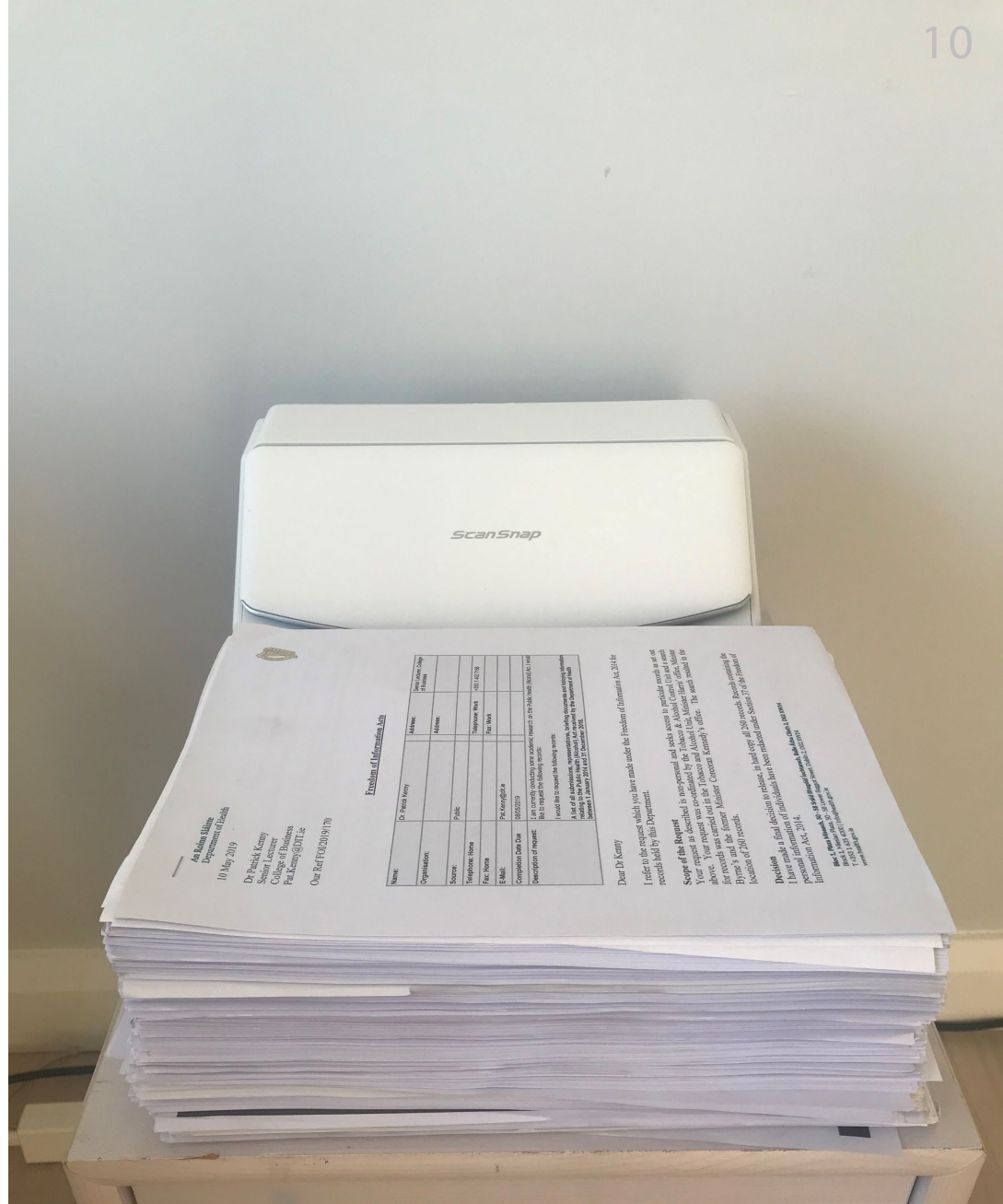
Material consists of:

## 1) Lobbying correspondence

received by Irish Government Departments, relating to the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill,

## 2) Oireachtas debates

relating to the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill, 2017-2018.



# Data Collection

## *Freedom of Information*



---

*Number 30 of 2014*

---

**Freedom of Information Act 2014**

---

Intended to encourage “openness and transparency in Government” (OIC, 2008)

The Act has been utilised as a **research tool** for journalists and researchers seeking to obtain data from Government Departments or public bodies.

In theory, **FOI makes all public records public**; a simple and effective means of gathering data.



## Search returns

### QSearch

#### Dates

##### Published after

##### Published before

##### Submit period

#### Relevant Matter

**i** The Standards Commission receives hundreds of returns for each relevant deadline. Returns submitted at the most recent deadline may take several weeks to process and verify. If we notice any omissions or errors, we will contact the registrant to revise and resubmit their return.

## 88 Returns

(93 milliseconds)

**Freetext:** public health alcohol bill act

**Return submit date:** From: 30-12-16 To: 01-01-19

**Public body:** Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation

[CSV Export](#) [RSS Feed](#)

### Ibec

[lobbying.ie/return/25967/ibec](http://lobbying.ie/return/25967/ibec)

Published 18 May, 2018

#### SPECIFIC DETAILS

Public Health (Alcohol) Bill

#### PUBLIC POLICY AREA

Economic Development and Industry

#### RELEVANT MATTER

Legislation

### Fennell Public Affairs Limited

[lobbying.ie/return/32151/fennell-public-affairs-limited](http://lobbying.ie/return/32151/fennell-public-affairs-limited)

Published 20 Sep, 2018

#### SPECIFIC DETAILS

Public policy concerning the secondary ticketing market for sports and entertainment events in Ireland

#### PUBLIC POLICY AREA

Sports and Recreation

#### RELEVANT MATTER

Public policy or programme

### Ibec

[lobbying.ie/return/19425/ibec](http://lobbying.ie/return/19425/ibec)

Published 21 Sep, 2017

#### SPECIFIC DETAILS

Public Health (Alcohol) Bill 2015

#### PUBLIC POLICY AREA

Health

#### RELEVANT MATTER

Legislation

### Chartered Accountants Ireland

[lobbying.ie/return/25136/chartered-accountants-ireland](http://lobbying.ie/return/25136/chartered-accountants-ireland)

Published 19 Jan, 2018

#### SPECIFIC DETAILS

Submission on General Scheme of Companies

#### PUBLIC POLICY AREA

Economic Development

#### RELEVANT MATTER

Legislation

# Data

## *Phase one: Alcohol Industry Lobbying correspondence received by Irish Government Departments*

Government Department	No. of records
Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Agriculture)	6
Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Business)	2
Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (Children)	5
Environment, Climate and Communications (Environment)	1
Finance	4
Foreign Affairs	1
Health	90
Justice	4
Rural and Community Development (RCD)	1
Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media (Tourism)	4
All departments	118

# Data

## *Phase two: Oireachtas Debates on the topic of the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill*

Date of debate	House	Title	Length of transcription
06/02/2018	Dáil	Public Health (Alcohol) Bill 2015 [Seanad]: Second Stage	12 pages
07/02/2018	Dáil	Public Health (Alcohol) Bill 2015 [Seanad]: Second Stage (Resumed)	27 pages
08/02/2018	Dáil	Public Health (Alcohol) Bill 2015 [Seanad]: Second Stage (Resumed)	36 pages
15/02/2018	Dáil	Public Health (Alcohol) Bill 2015 [Seanad]: Second Stage (Resumed)	12 pages
27/02/2018	Dáil	Public Health (Alcohol) Bill 2015 [Seanad]: Second Stage (Resumed)	6 pages
06/03/2018	Dáil	Public Health (Alcohol) Bill 2015 [Seanad]: Second Stage (Resumed)	7 pages
26/09/2018	Dáil	Public Health (Alcohol) Bill 2015: Report Stage	51 pages
03/10/2018	Dáil	Public Health (Alcohol) Bill 2015: Report Stage (Resumed)	2 pages
08/11/2017	Seanad	Public Health (Alcohol) Bill 2015: Committee Stage (Resumed)	101 pages
15/12/2017	Seanad	Public Health (Alcohol) Bill 2015: Report and Final Stages	58 pages
10/10/2018	Seanad	Public Health (Alcohol) Bill 2015: [Seanad Bill amended by the Dáil] Report and Final Stages	15 pages

# Methodology

## Method

This analysis draws on the methods of Fairclough, who uses a textually oriented approach. Fairclough (2010) provides a ‘three-dimensional method’ for conducting CDA (p. 132).

### 1. Textual analysis

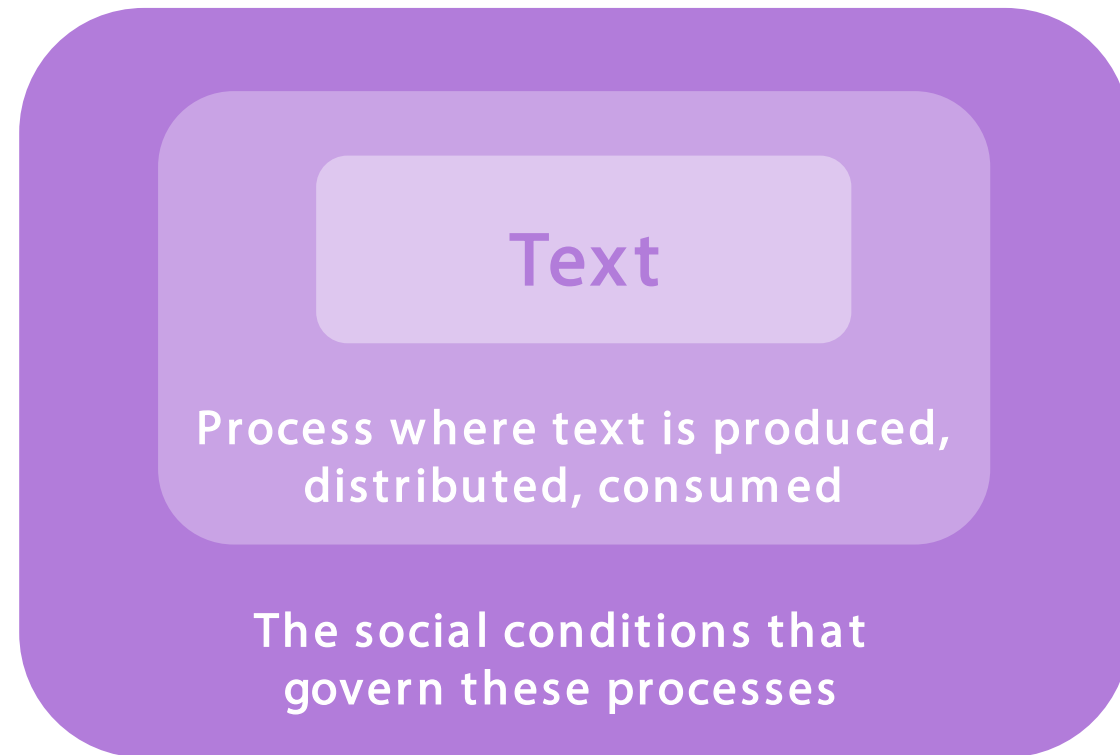
(description)

### 2. Discursive analysis

(interpretation)

### 3. Critical social analysis

(explanation)



**RQ.1**  
How did alcohol industry actors construct their positions on the Bill?

**RQ.2**  
How are these positions reflected in the Oireachtas debates on the Bill?

**RQ.3**  
How can the political debate surrounding the Bill inform future public health campaigns?

**Textual analysis**  
Lobbying correspondence surrounding PHAB

**Textual analysis**  
Oireachtas debates surrounding PHAB

**Discursive Practice**  
Reproduction/ non-reproduction of lobbying arguments in Oireachtas Debates on the Bill

**Critical social analysis**  
Ideological & political effects on/ effects of the discourses/ discourse practice



*A n a l y s i s*

# Analysis

## Stage One: Textual analysis of Alcohol Industry Lobbying Correspondence

- Objective modality

*“Ireland’s drinks industry is an international success story”*

- Categorical claims

*“...this legislation will make it impossible for me to establish and promote my products”*

- Strong obligatory claims

*“...we must stand united in our opposition to the bill in the interests of our respective sectors but ultimately for Ireland's wine drinkers”*

# Analysis

*Stage One: Textual analysis of Lobbying Correspondence*

**Fiscal**

**Nationhood**

**Urgent**

**Empirical**

Cost

Community

Time-bomb

Doubt

Barrier

Culture

Unbalanced

Stigma

Paternalism

Rural Ireland

# Analysis

## Stage One: Textual analysis of Oireachtas Debates

### Objective modality & categorical claims

“However, this simple section of the Bill **is wrong**”

“Our small shopkeepers **are the lifeblood** of small villages”

“This Bill **will not achieve** that, however”

“The Bill **will simply shift** advertising revenue away from Irish media towards international, non-Irish regulated media organisations that broadcast freely in this country”

Senator Victor Boyhan, Seanad Éireann, 08/11/2017

Senator Kieran O'Donnell, Seanad Éireann, 08/11/2017

Deputy Noel Rock, Dáil Éireann, 08/02/2018

Deputy Eamon Scanlon, Dáil Éireann, 08/02/2018

# Analysis

*Stage One: Textual analysis of Oireachtas Debates*

**Crisis**

**Feasibility**

**Sovereignty**

Evil

Evidence

Community

Irrational

Reality

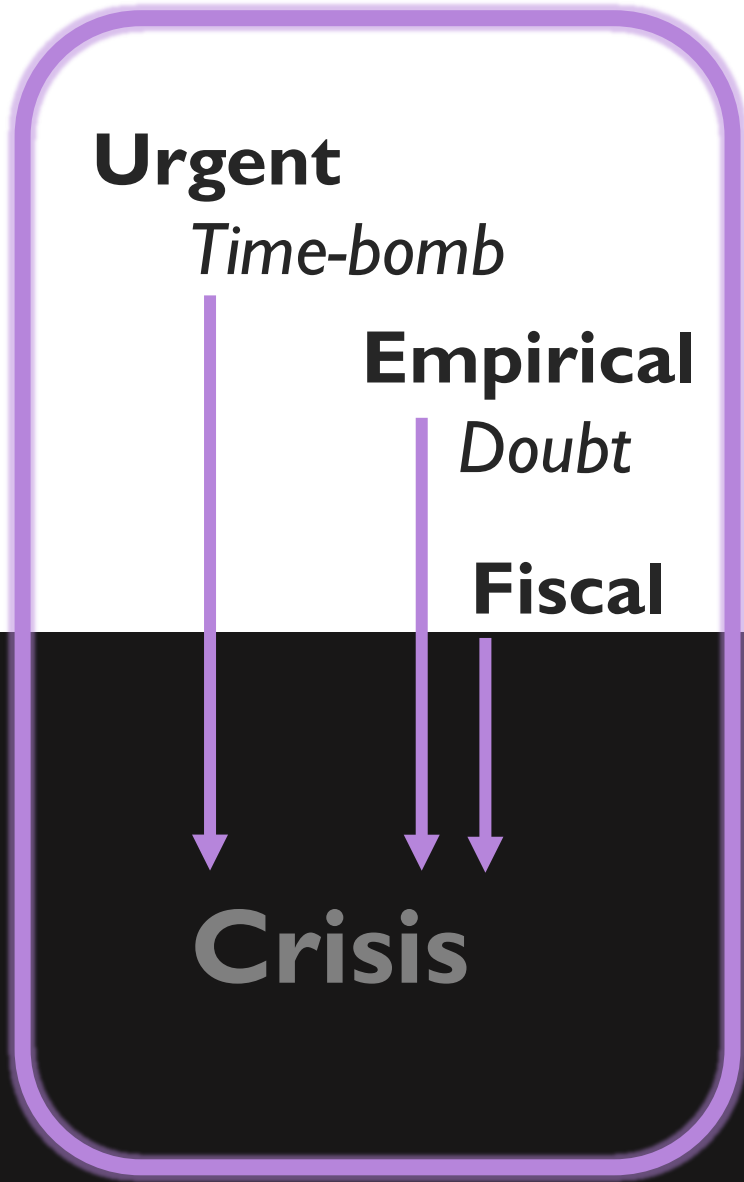
Rural  
Ireland

Catholicism

Irishness

Urgency

Alcohol  
Industry  
Lobbying  
Discourses



**Fiscal**

*Cost  
Barrier  
Rural Ireland*



**Feasibility**

**Nationalist**

*Community  
Paternalist*



**Empirical**

*Doubt*



**Fiscal**

*Rural Ireland*



**Sovereignty**

Oireachtas  
Discourses

*The cancer label proposal is a time bomb that would destroy our reputation for quality food & drinks brands...*

*Government's effort to severely restrict the promotion and advertising of the Irish whiskey via the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill could kill advertising of whiskey tourism, decimate this growing industry and lead to job losses.*

*The dual threat of Brexit and severe advertising restrictions contained in the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill may create the perfect storm, threatening jobs and jeopardising local economies.*

The Shed Distillery to Dept. Health, 2018

The Dublin Liberties Distillery to Dept. Health, 2018

ABFI to Dept. Health, 2017

*This Bill will hurt companies such as this.*

*More critically, these restrictions have the potential to decimate the rapidly growing whiskey tourism sector.*

*I do not know what kudos we are trying to get but we are doing this without a proper analysis of the damage and destruction that this is doing.*

*Are we jumping the gun with this Bill?*

*The drinks industry is the lifeblood of many communities.*

Deputy Danny Healy-Rae, Dáil Éireann, 27/02/2017

Deputy Tony McLoughlin, Dáil Éireann, 08/02/2018

Deputy Mattie McGrath, Dáil Éireann, 26/09/2018

Deputy Kevin O'Keefe, Dáil Éireann, 08/02/2018

Deputy Danny Healy-Rae, Dáil Éireann, 26/09/2018



# Provisional Implications

- FOI process needs to be more consistent across Irish Government Departments
- Alcohol Industry lobbying is successful
  - Alcohol industry lobbying is **mirrored in the Oireachtas**

*the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill could kill advertising of whiskey tourism, decimate this growing industry and lead to job losses.*



*these restrictions have the potential to decimate the rapidly growing whiskey tourism sector*

- Discourse plays an important role in framing policy debates in different ways
- Lack of hegemony in public health policy debates may contribute to delays in passing legislation (Fairclough, 2010)



# Bibliography

- Calnan, S., Davoren, M. P., Perry, I. J., & O'Donovan, O. (2018). Ireland's Public Health (Alcohol) Bill: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Industry and Public Health Perspectives on the Bill. *Contemporary Drug Problems*, 45(2), 107-126. doi:10.1177/0091450918768284
- Department of Health. (2015). *Regulatory Impact Analysis (RIA) Public Health (Alcohol) Bill*. Retrieved from <https://assets.gov.ie/19454/b1990c163eaf454f9f674355eaf4d504.pdf>
- Fairclough, N. (2010). *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.
- LoConte, N. K., Brewster, A. M., Kaur, J. S., Merrill, J. K., & Alberg, A. J. (2018). Alcohol and Cancer: A Statement of the American Society of Clinical Oncology. *J Clin Oncol*, 36(1), 83-93. doi:10.1200/jco.2017.76.1155
- McGee, H. (2017). Inside Ireland's powerful lobbying industry. *The Irish Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/inside-ireland-s-powerful-lobbying-industry-1.3240201>
- Murphy, B. (2003). Pure Genius: Guinness Consumption and Irish Identity. *New Hibernia Review*. doi:10.1353/nhr.2004.0007
- Mongan, D., & Long, J. (2016). *Overview of alcohol consumption, alcohol-related harm and alcohol policy in Ireland*.
- O'Dwyer, C., Mongan, D., Doyle, A., & Galvin, B. (2021). *Alcohol consumption, alcohol-related harm and alcohol policy in Ireland*. Retrieved from Dublin: <https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/33909>
- O'Halloran, M. (2017). Alcohol industry operating like 'big tobacco' to stall legislation. *The Irish Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/alcohol-industry-operating-like-big-tobacco-to-stall-legislation-1.3148828>
- Tembo, C., Burns, S., & Kalembo, F. (2017). The association between levels of alcohol consumption and mental health problems and academic performance among young university students. *PLoS One*, 12(6), e0178142. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0178142
- The Irish Times. (2018). The Irish Times view on the alcohol Bill: drinks lobby pulls out all the stops. Retrieved from <https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/editorial/the-irish-times-view-on-the-alcohol-bill-drinks-lobby-pulls-out-all-the-stops-1.3642455>
- Saunders, M. N. K., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2019). *Research Methods for Business Students* (8th ed.). Harlow, England: Pearson.
- Whitman, I. R., Agarwal, V., Nah, G., Dukes, J. W., Vittinghoff, E., Dewland, T. A., & Marcus, G. M. (2017). Alcohol Abuse and Cardiac Disease. *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*, 69(1), 13-24. doi:10.1016/j.jacc.2016.10.048
- WHO. (2018). *Global status report on alcohol and health 2018* (978-92-4-156563-9). Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241565639>

Thank You