ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION AND CRIME: A REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This paper examines the nexus between alcohol consumption, public disorder, and crime within the framework of the Broken Windows Theory. Wilson and Kelling's (1982) thesis is not merely a criminological proposition, but a reflection on the vulnerability of social order: when small signs of neglect appear, the symbolic fabric that binds communities can begin to weaken. Variations in drinking culture are expressions of deeper social and cultural structures, which shape how communities experience safety and cohesion. In certain contexts, alcohol becomes a marker of conviviality; in others, it serves as a visible reminder of disorder and marginalization. Public drinking, vandalism, and other alcohol-related behaviours can therefore be interpreted not only as minor infractions, but also as signals of disorder that gradually affect perceptions of belonging and security. An important dimension of this process is the normalization of alcohol use, particularly among children and adolescents. When drinking is treated as routine or socially acceptable in youth culture, it may contribute to a gradual loosening of norms and reduce the willingness of communities to respond to disruptive behaviours. Rather than advocating simple repression, this contribution emphasizes the importance of preventive and restorative strategies that strengthen shared responsibility for public order. Security cannot be sustained solely by institutions; it requires practices that reinforce people's connections to place and community. Regional resilience thus depends on creating environments where everyday practices, including drinking, support rather than weaken the social bonds that hold communities together.

Keywords: Alcohol-related Crime, Broken Windows Theory, Normalisation of Alcohol, Regional Variation, Social Cohesion

Introduction

Alcohol consumption has long been intertwined with social life, shaping rituals of celebration, leisure, and collective identity. Yet its role in the production of disorder and crime remains a subject of both scholarly debate and public concern. While criminological research has traditionally examined alcohol through the lens of individual behaviour–its effects on aggression, self-control, or victimization–such perspectives only partially capture the broader societal dynamics at play. Drinking practices are embedded in cultural patterns and local contexts, which influence not only how alcohol is consumed but also how its consequences are perceived, tolerated, or sanctioned.

In this regard, regional variation becomes crucial. The same act of public drinking may signify conviviality in one setting while symbolizing decline or marginalization in another. Understanding alcohol-related crime therefore requires moving beyond general correlations between consumption levels and criminal statistics toward an exploration of how social order is locally constructed, maintained, and disrupted.

The Broken Windows Theory (Wilson and Kelling, 1982) provides a useful lens for this inquiry. It highlights the symbolic power of visible disorder: small transgressions, if left unaddressed, can signal weakening social bonds and erode the collective willingness to uphold norms. Applied to alcohol, this perspective draws attention not only to overt acts of vandalism or violence but also to subtler shifts in community tolerance–such as the normalization of youth drinking–that may gradually alter the moral fabric of a place.

This paper situates alcohol consumption within these broader socio-spatial dynamics. By adopting a regional perspective, it examines how local cultures of drinking intersect with perceptions of safety, cohesion, and resilience. Rather than framing alcohol solely as an individual risk factor, the analysis treats it as a cultural practice with implications for the security of communities.

Theoretical Framework

Alcohol-related crime cannot be understood solely through the prism of individual behaviour. While intoxication may increase aggression or impair self-control, the broader social meanings attached to drinking often shape whether such behaviours are treated as deviance, tolerated as routine, or valorised as expressions of conviviality. Comparative criminological research highlights that patterns of alcohol use are deeply rooted in cultural traditions, social norms, and regional identities. These structural factors mediate the extent to which alcohol becomes linked to public disorder or integrates smoothly into communal life.

Equally important is the recognition that alcohol consumption functions as a social signal within local environments. Theories of disorder and control, most prominently the Broken Windows framework, draw attention to how seemingly minor acts–such as public drinking, vandalism, or loitering–can alter perceptions of safety and legitimacy. When combined with the normalization of drinking among youth, such practices risk eroding informal social control and weakening collective responsibility for order. Understanding alcohol in this theoretical context therefore requires examining it not just as a substance but as a cultural marker with consequences for social cohesion and community security.

Alcohol and Crime: Mechanisms of Connection

The relationship between alcohol consumption and crime is complex, multidimensional, and deeply embedded in wider social, institutional, and cultural contexts. While excessive drinking may act as a significant risk factor, it rarely operates in isolation. The influence of alcohol on criminal behaviour is shaped by family functioning, the availability of social services, preventive mechanisms, and broader cultural norms (Novotný and Zapletal, 2001; Zoubková, 2006). Criminological theories provide valuable lenses for understanding these links, not only explaining how alcohol contributes to crime but also guiding the development of effective preventive and intervention strategies.

Cohen and Felson's (1979) Routine Activity Theory identifies crime as the convergence of three elements: a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of capable guardianship. Alcohol functions as a catalyst within this framework by lowering inhibitions and increasing target vulnerability. Bars and clubs often act as crime "hotspots," where intoxicated patrons, limited guardianship, and attractive targets converge (Fox and Sobol, 2000). The density of alcohol outlets has been repeatedly linked to higher rates of assault and victimization (Morrison *et al.*, 2013). Case studies illustrate how gendered vulnerabilities and weak informal control heighten risks. Intoxicated women may become attractive targets, while intoxicated men act as motivated offenders in environments with minimal staff intervention. Regulatory measures, such as mandatory security personnel, improved lighting, and CCTV, have been shown to reduce violent crime in nightlife districts (Burgason *et al.*, 2017). These findings highlight the importance of "place managers" and "super-controllers" (e.g., municipal authorities) in shaping opportunities for alcohol-related crime.

Gottfredson and Hirschi's (2022) Self-Control Theory argues that individuals with low self-control are more prone to impulsive, risky behaviours, including excessive drinking and criminal activity. Alcohol exacerbates these tendencies by weakening social bonds and reducing the capacity for rational decision-making. Young people lacking parental supervision or consistent discipline are particularly vulnerable to engaging in deviant acts under the influence of alcohol (Sampson and Laub, 1993). Empirical studies confirm that binge drinking and problem behaviours are strongly associated with low self-control (Gibson *et al.*, 2004; Piquero *et al.,* 2002). Preventive strategies should therefore target early childhood interventions, strengthening parental competencies, and promoting consistent discipline. University populations, where binge drinking is highly prevalent, also represent a key focus for tailored preventive programs (Wechsler *et al.*, 1998).

Alcohol-related aggression has been explained through multiple paradigms (Graham, 1980). Disinhibition Theory posits a direct causal link, suggesting that alcohol impairs neurological mechanisms controlling antisocial impulses. However, research shows aggression emerges only in certain contexts, indicating that intoxication alone is insufficient. Indirect cause models highlight alcohol's physiological and psychological effects–such as heightened emotional plasticity–that increase sensitivity to situational cues. Motivational theories emphasize that drinking to reduce anxiety or enhance power can increase the risk of aggression (Horton, 1943; McClelland *et al.*, 1966). Domestic violence research illustrates these dynamics. Leonard and Quigley (1999) found that male drinking significantly increased the likelihood of physical aggression in marital conflicts, independent of other risk factors. Such findings underscore that alcohol acts as an amplifier of pre-existing vulnerabilities, cultural norms, and relational tensions, rather than a universal cause of violence.

From the perspective of Rational Choice Theory (Becker, 1968), offenders weigh costs and benefits of their actions. Alcohol consumption complicates this calculation by impairing risk assessment and increasing focus on immediate gratification. While raising sanctions for offences committed under the influence may deter some offenders (Cornish and Clarke, 2014), research shows that emotional and social factors often override rational cost–benefit analyses (Kahneman, 1997). Preventive strategies must therefore combine legal deterrence with psychosocial interventions aimed at strengthening emotional regulation, stress management, and social bonds.

Effective prevention requires clear goals, realistic assessment of available resources, and risk analysis. Crime prevention theories differ fundamentally from classical criminological approaches. While theories of crime focus on why deviance emerges, prevention theories emphasize how it can be effectively curtailed (Lunden, 1962). Ronald V. Clarke's (1983) Situational Crime Prevention Theory focuses on reducing opportunities for crime through targeted interventions in high-risk environments. In the context of alcohol-related crime, such measures include restricting alcohol availability, redesigning nightlife spaces, and enhancing surveillance. The central claim is that criminal events are shaped less by individual dispositions than by situational conditions. Even impulsive crimes committed under intoxication are influenced by contextual factors such as bar density, crowding, or the presence of security personnel. Preventive strategies can therefore modify environments to reduce risks: for example, substituting glassware with plastic cups, restricting alcohol sales at public events, or installing ignition interlocks for repeat drunk drivers (Clarke, 1995). Empirical research supports this approach. Violence in nightlife settings is strongly associated with poorly managed venues, inadequate staffing, and overcrowding (Graham, 1980; Graham et al., 2006; Graham and Homel, 2009). Conversely, proactive management, responsible alcohol service, and visible security measures lower risks of aggression. Situational prevention thus reframes alcohol not as a deterministic cause but as a contextual factor that can be managed through environmental and regulatory interventions (Mulák, 2021).

Taken together, these theoretical frameworks demonstrate that alcohol does not function as an isolated determinant of crime but as a dynamic factor interacting with situational, social, and psychological conditions. The interplay between intoxication, environmental risks, routine activities, and individual traits such as self-control illustrates why alcohol-related crime varies across contexts and populations. Effective prevention must integrate environmental design, regulatory measures, socialization processes, and individual-level interventions. By recognizing the multiplicity of pathways through which alcohol shapes criminal behaviour, policymakers and practitioners can design strategies that address not only drinking itself but also the wider conditions that enable disorder and violence.

Broken Windows Theory as an Interpretive Lens

The Broken Windows Theory, formulated by James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling (1982), remains one of the most influential frameworks in criminology and policing. Its central claim is that visible signs of disorder–whether vandalism, public drinking, or homelessness–undermine perceptions of safety and trigger a chain reaction of social withdrawal. As residents retreat from public spaces, informal social control weakens, leaving environments vulnerable to more serious crime. Zimbardo's well-known field experiment vividly illustrates this dynamic: once a single window was broken in an otherwise intact car, the sense of order collapsed and vandalism escalated rapidly. This symbolic fragility of social order highlights how seemingly minor transgressions can profoundly reshape the everyday security of communities.

From a regional perspective, the implications of Broken Windows Theory are significant. Alcohol-related disorder, in particular, has spatially differentiated effects. In some neighbourhoods, public drinking may still be perceived as a benign social ritual; in others, it functions as a visible marker of neglect, signalling that norms are unenforced. Research shows that stressful environments characterized by visible disorder are associated with higher substance use and related crime (O'Brien et al., 2019). In this light, alcohol-fuelled disturbances–such as vandalism, public intoxication, or drunk driving–can be read not simply as isolated acts but as indicators of a deeper erosion of order. Regions marked by such recurring behaviours often experience a spiral of declining cohesion: residents withdraw from communal life, relocate if possible, and weaken the informal bonds that underpin local resilience.

The operationalization of Broken Windows has largely occurred through policing strategies aimed at disorder reduction. Wilson and Kelling (1982) emphasized that police should focus not only on serious crime but also on maintaining public order and improving the physical condition of urban environments. Crucially, they called for alignment between police practices and community norms, with residents actively engaged in defining and addressing disorder. This has led to a range of community- and problem-oriented policing initiatives, as well as broader preventive efforts such as neighbourhood clean-ups, infrastructure repairs, and cultural or sports programs designed to reinforce attachment to place. In regional contexts, such initiatives may vary considerably: affluent municipalities often invest in aesthetic improvements and community programming, while disadvantaged areas struggle to maintain even basic urban infrastructure, thereby perpetuating visible disorder.

Empirical evidence on the effectiveness of Broken Windows strategies is mixed. Some studies (Messner et al., 2007; Rosenfeld et al., 2007; Sousa and Kelling, 2001) report significant reductions in violent crime following interventions targeting disorder, particularly in New York City. Meta-analyses also suggest that social and environmental improvements yield modest benefits, whereas aggressive enforcement of minor infractions has little long-term effect (Braga et al., 2015). Other scholars, however, have questioned the causal link between disorder and serious crime. Sampson and Raudenbush (1999), analysing data

from over 23,000 Chicago street segments, argued that once physical and structural neighbourhood characteristics are controlled for, the correlation largely disappears. Similarly, Weisburd *et al.* (2015) found limited evidence that disorder-focused policing improved public trust or significantly reduced crime. These debates underline that the effects of disorder are context-dependent and may manifest differently across regions with distinct socio-economic and cultural profiles.

Despite such controversies, a general consensus has emerged that "soft" preventive strategies–those aimed at improving the quality of public space and reinforcing community cohesion–can produce positive outcomes. For alcohol-related disorder, this means combining proportionate enforcement with visible investments in the urban and social environment. Interventions such as maintaining clean and well-lit streets, regulating nightlife venues, supporting youth programs, and engaging residents in the co-production of order help foster local ownership of public space. Regionally, the success of such measures often hinges on existing community capacity: areas with strong civic traditions may be more resilient to alcohol-related disorder, while marginalized regions require greater institutional support to stabilize public life.

In sum, Broken Windows Theory offers a valuable interpretive lens for analysing alcohol-related crime, not as a purely individual phenomenon but as a socially and spatially embedded process. The visibility of alcohol excesses in public space both reflects and reinforces broader patterns of order and disorder. Understanding these dynamics requires sensitivity to regional variation: what constitutes "disorder" in one setting may be tolerated or even normalized in another. Effective prevention, therefore, cannot rely solely on punitive policing but must integrate community-based strategies, environmental improvements, and participatory approaches that strengthen the symbolic and practical bonds holding communities together.

Normalization of Alcohol use and Cultural Tolerance

The concept of normalisation, initially formulated by Parker and colleagues in the late 1990s in relation to recreational drug use (Parker *et al.,* 1998), offers a valuable framework for understanding shifting patterns of alcohol consumption. Although originally applied to illicit substances, its core argument–that practices once perceived as deviant can become accommodated within mainstream culture–translates readily to alcohol as a legal and widely available drug. Normalisation does not imply full societal acceptance; rather, it signals a reduced stigma, increased access, and greater willingness among young people to experiment with and adopt behaviours previously confined to subcultural margins (Aldridge *et al.,* 2011; Pennay and Measham, 2016). From this perspective, alcohol use becomes less a marker of deviance and more a routine element of everyday life, particularly among youth populations.

Applied to alcohol, normalisation highlights how drinking is facilitated by cultural tolerance, weak regulatory enforcement, and high availability. Practices of heavy or risky consumption, far from being confined to marginal groups, often emerge within well-adjusted and socially integrated young people. The symbolic meaning of alcohol thus shifts: it becomes an emblem of sociability and belonging, even where patterns of use exceed medical or social recommendations. In regions with longstanding drinking traditions, the cultural embedding of alcohol intensifies these processes, normalising behaviours that might elsewhere be perceived as problematic. Conversely, in areas with stronger public health interventions or more restrictive cultural norms, normalisation may proceed more slowly, or abstinence may itself become a socially supported choice. This regional variability illustrates how local histories, policies, and social structures shape the trajectory of alcohol use.

Six dimensions of normalisation have been identified in drug research–experimentation, regular use, availability, social accommodation, cultural acceptance, and policy orientation (Measham *et al.,* 1998; Parker, 2005). When transposed to alcohol, these dimensions shed light on how regional contexts matter. For example, availability is closely linked to the density of alcohol outlets, which differs markedly between urban nightlife districts and rural communities. Social and cultural accommodation varies as well: public drinking may be accepted as convivial in some regions yet stigmatised as disorderly in others. Policy orientations, too, differ, with some municipalities enforcing strict regulations on sales and public consumption, while others tolerate or even celebrate alcohol as a marker of local identity and tradition. These contrasts underscore that normalisation is not a uniform process but a context-specific negotiation between cultural practices, regulatory frameworks, and community norms.

A particularly significant arena for alcohol normalisation lies in youth culture. Family practices, peer influence, and media representations all contribute to shaping expectations and behaviours. Parents play an ambivalent role: in some regions, supplying alcohol within the family is rationalised as a "safe introduction," despite evidence that early exposure is linked to higher risks of later misuse (Mattick *et al.,* 2018). Peer groups further reinforce acceptance, particularly during adolescence, when opportunities for unsupervised consumption expand. Where regional traditions position alcohol at the centre of social life–whether through festivals, communal rituals, or informal gatherings–youth are more likely to perceive drinking as integral to belonging. This contributes to an intergenerational cycle in which risky consumption is both reproduced and legitimised.

The implications for crime and public order are profound. The normalisation of alcohol blurs the boundary between legitimate sociability and disruptive behaviour. In some regional contexts, heavy drinking may be tolerated until it spills into vandalism, violence, or disorder, at which point it becomes a concern for law enforcement. In others, stricter informal norms may limit escalation but may also stigmatise abstainers. Preventive strategies must therefore be sensitive to regional differences: efforts to denormalise drinking among youth, or to normalise abstinence as a legitimate lifestyle, will only succeed if they resonate with local cultural logics. As Parker (2005) suggests, normalisation functions as a "barometer of change," revealing not only shifts in individual behaviour but also the broader social transformations that condition attitudes to substance use.

In sum, the normalisation framework provides a powerful interpretive lens for understanding how alcohol consumption becomes embedded in cultural and regional contexts. It reveals that the risks associated with youth drinking cannot be explained solely by individual predispositions or immediate situations. Rather, they emerge from complex social processes that make alcohol increasingly available, acceptable, and even valorised. Recognising these dynamics is crucial for developing preventive strategies that move beyond prohibitionist rhetoric and engage with the cultural and regional realities through which alcohol is woven into everyday life.

Methodology

The empirical basis of this study consists of data on criminal offences committed under the influence of alcohol, drawn from the official criminal statistics of the Police of the Czech Republic (Policie ČR, 2025). Specifically, two complementary datasets were employed:

Registered offenders – Two categories of offences were analysed: a) endangerment under the influence of an addictive substance, drunkenness (§ 274, 360 of the Criminal Code) and b) traffic offences committed under the influence of alcohol (§ 143, 147, 148, 273, 274, 277, 360). For the reference period, a total of 5,367 offenders were recorded nationwide in the first category and 2,552 in the second. These figures are available both in aggregate form for the Czech Republic and disaggregated by regions (kraje).

Registered offences – In addition to offenders, the analysis incorporates data on registered acts of endangerment under the influence (§ 274, 360), which allow for a more detailed insight into the spatial distribution of incidents. Unlike offender-based statistics, this dataset reflects the frequency of acts officially recorded, regardless of whether the same individual is responsible for multiple offences or whether a specific crime was committed by multiple perpetrators.

Both datasets originate from the Evidential Statistical System of Criminality (ESSK), managed by the Department of Substantive Competence and Statistics of the Criminal Police and Investigation Service Presidium. They provide complementary perspectives: while offender-based data capture the number of distinct individuals recorded for alcohol-related crime, offence-based data highlight the total scope of incidents officially detected.

For analytical purposes, a crime index was calculated in both datasets, expressing the number of offenders or offences per 100,000 inhabitants. This relative measure enables comparison across regions of differing population sizes. To evaluate the significance of regional variation, chi-square tests of independence were applied.

The methodological limitations of both datasets must be emphasised. The figures represent recorded crime, not the full prevalence of alcohol-related offending. Detection and recording practices vary across police departments, especially in the frequency of alcohol testing and the decision to register incidents as separate offences. As a result, under-recording is likely, and regional disparities may partly reflect institutional practices and local tolerance towards alcohol-related behaviour rather than true differences in the underlying phenomenon.

By employing both offender- and offence-based data, this study seeks to capture a more nuanced picture of alcohol-related crime, balancing individual-level and act-level perspectives while recognising the methodological constraints inherent in official statistics.

Results

Tab. I shows that, in 2024, a total of 5,367 perpetrators of alcohol-related offences were recorded in the Czech Republic under the categories of endangerment under the influence of a psychoactive substance and drunkenness (§§ 274, 360), alongside 2,552 perpetrators in connection with traffic accidents under the influence of alcohol (§§ 143, 147, 148, 273, 274, 277, 360). When adjusted for population size, the nationwide crime index amounts to 49.20 for endangerment/drunkenness and 23.39 for traffic accidents.

The distribution across regions reveals some variation, although these differences are not statistically significant. While absolute numbers of offenders generally correspond to regional population sizes (highest in the Central Bohemian, Moravian-Silesian, and South Moravian regions), population-adjusted figures

I: Offenders of alcohol-related crimes by region (absolute numbers and crime index)

Region	Region	Endangerment under the influence, drunkenness (§ 274, 360)		Traffic offences under the influence (§ 143, 147, 148, 273, 274, 277, 360)	
		Offenders	Crime Index	Offenders	Crime Index
Capital City Prague	1 397 880	418	29,90	233	16,67
Central Bohemian Region (Středočeský kraj)	1 466 214	863	58,86	435	29,67
South Bohemian Region (Jihočeský kraj)	653 227	313	47,92	168	25,72
Pilsen Region (Plzeňský kraj)	614 640	303	49,30	178	28,96
Ústí nad Labem Region (Ústecký kraj)	808 356	388	48,00	220	27,22
Hradec Králové Region (Královéhradecký kraj)	555 923	254	45,69	137	24,64
South Moravian Region (Jihomoravský kraj)	1 229 343	544	44,25	241	19,60
Moravian-Silesian Region (Moravskoslezský kraj)	1 182 613	598	50,57	211	17,84
Olomouc Region (Olomoucký kraj)	631 500	423	66,98	142	22,49
Zlín Region (Zlínský kraj)	578 998	309	53,37	115	19,86
Vysočina Region (Kraj Vysočina)	517 647	294	56,80	91	17,58
Pardubice Region (Pardubický kraj)	530 468	259	48,82	127	23,94
Liberec Region (Liberecký kraj)	449 494	235	52,28	138	30,70
Karlovy Vary Region (Karlovarský kraj)	293 195	166	56,62	116	39,56
Czech Republic	10 909 498	5367	49,20	2 552	23,39

Source: Policie ČR (2025)
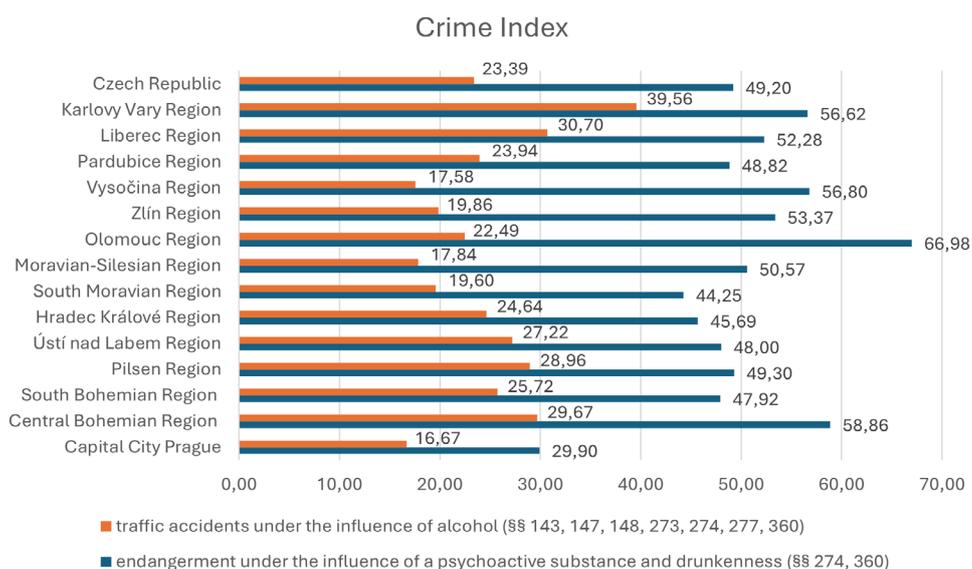
1: Regional variation in the crime index of alcohol-related offences
Source: Policie ČR (2025)

indicate that alcohol-related crime constitutes a particularly significant burden in smaller peripheral regions (Karlovy Vary, Olomouc, Liberec). High prevalence is further combined with a large population in the Central Bohemian Region. The highest crime index for endangerment/drunkenness is observed in the Olomouc Region (66.98), followed by the Central Bohemian Region (58.86) and the Vysočina Region (56.80), whereas the lowest values are recorded in the Capital City of Prague (29.90) and the South Moravian Region (44.25), likely reflecting differences in social structure and demographics.

   With regard to alcohol-related traffic accidents, the relatively highest indices are reported in the Karlovy Vary Region (39.56), followed by the Liberec Region (30.70) and the Central Bohemian Region (29.67). Conversely, the lowest indices are observed in the Vysočina Region (17.58) and the Moravian-Silesian Region (17.84), while Prague falls slightly below the national average (16.67).

   For a clearer interpretation of these results, the data were also presented graphically. Fig. 1 illustrates that, across all regions, the crime index for offences related to endangerment under the influence of a psychoactive substance and drunkenness (§§ 274, 360) consistently exceeds that for alcohol-related traffic accidents. The figure further highlights extreme values: the Olomouc Region stands out with the highest index in the endangerment/drunkenness category, while the Karlovy Vary and Liberec Regions dominate in the traffic accident category. In contrast, Prague exhibits the lowest indices in both categories.

   The inclusion of the figure enables readers to rapidly perceive spatial patterns and disparities between regions, which may be less apparent in tabular form. It also emphasises a general trend: alcohol-related crime has a dual dimension–manifested both in drunkenness and public order offences, and in traffic safety–and these dimensions vary regionally not only in intensity but also in relative proportion.

II: Endangerment under the influence (§ 274, 360) (crime index)

Region	Territorial departments	Crime Index	p
South Moravian Region (Jihomoravský kraj)	Blansko	73,70	0,6043
	Brno-město	62,82	
	Brno-venkov	63,51	
	Břeclav	70,29	
	Hodonín	74,86	
	Vyškov	60,65	
	Znojmo	53,43	
Vysočina Region (Kraj Vysočina)	Havlíčkův Brod	59,45	0,0656
	Jihlava	58,25	
	Pelhřimov	88,93	
	Třebíč	76,22	
	Žďár nad Sázavou	61,41	
Olomouc Region (Olomoucký kraj)	Jeseník	158,94	< 0.00001
	Olomouc	72,26	
	Prostějov	88,14	
	Přerov	74,64	
	Šumperk	87,10	
Zlín Region (Zlínský kraj)	Kroměříž	64,34	0,0001
	Uherské Hradiště	112,61	
	Vsetín	64,95	
	Zlín	60,93	
Moravian-Silesian Region (Moravskoslezský kraj)	Bruntál	101,94	< 0.00001
	Frýdek-Místek	72,43	
	Karviná	67,11	
	Nový Jičín	73,35	
	Opava	46,44	
	Ostrava-město	49,03	

Source: Policie ČR (2025)

The analysis of registered offences of Endangerment under the Influence (§ 274, 360) reveals notable regional differences (Tab. II), highlighting that these figures refer to incidents recorded in police statistics rather than individual offenders. This distinction is important, as the distribution of offences across territorial departments reflects not only individual behaviour but also local enforcement practices, social contexts, and reporting patterns.

In the South Moravian and Vysočina regions, the crime indices remain relatively balanced across districts, with no statistically significant variation (p = 0.6043 and p = 0.0656 respectively). Although some districts, such as Pelhřimov and Třebíč, display higher indices, the overall pattern in these regions suggests a broadly consistent prevalence of such offences.

By contrast, the Olomouc, Zlín, and Moravian-Silesian regions demonstrate statistically significant differences between territorial departments. In the Olomouc region (p < 0.00001), Jeseník stands out with an exceptionally high index (158.94), far exceeding the regional average. Similarly, in the Zlín region (p = 0.0001), Uherské Hradiště records a markedly elevated value (112.61), while neighbouring districts remain considerably lower. The most pronounced disparities are observed in the Moravian-Silesian region (p < 0.00001), where Bruntál reaches 101.94, contrasting sharply with lower figures in Opava (46.44) and Ostrava-město (49.03).

These findings underscore that the phenomenon of Endangerment under the Influence is not evenly distributed but rather concentrated in particular districts where the offence appears significantly more prevalent. The existence of such statistically significant intra-regional differences suggests that local factors–ranging from demographic composition and socio-economic conditions to enforcement intensity–may play a decisive role in shaping the frequency of registered offences.

When interpreting the data, it is crucial to acknowledge that figures on perpetrators of alcohol-related offences may be influenced by differences in recording and procedural practices across regions. Not all regions conduct alcohol testing to the same extent or with the same rigour. In some regions, testing may be routine even for minor offences, whereas in others it is applied selectively (e.g., only in traffic accidents or in clear cases of intoxication). Consequently, apparent differences between regions may partly reflect variations in police practice rather than solely the true prevalence of alcohol-related crime.

From a regional perspective, this has two implications. First, crime indices should be interpreted primarily as indicators of trends and relative burden, rather than as precise measures of prevalence. Second, this variability itself reflects differences in institutional sensitivity and tolerance towards alcohol: in regions with less frequent testing, there may be a higher degree of problem trivialisation, consistent with the concept of alcohol normalisation. In other words, the absence of recorded offences does not necessarily indicate lower alcohol consumption, but rather that such behaviour is less frequently formalised as a criminal offence.

Discussion

While acknowledging the limitations inherent in the available data–particularly the potential influence of regional differences in police testing and reporting practices–certain patterns emerge that offer insight into the relationship between alcohol consumption, public disorder, and crime. The analysis of alcohol-related offences across Czech regions reveals trends that resonate with both the Broken Windows Theory (Wilson and Kelling, 1982) and the concept of alcohol normalisation (Measham *et al.*, 1998; Parker *et al.*, 1998). Although overall differences between regions were not statistically significant, population-adjusted crime indices indicate that peripheral areas such as the Olomouc, Karlovy Vary, and Liberec regions experience comparatively higher rates of offences related to drunkenness, endangerment, and traffic accidents. Prague, by contrast, consistently exhibits lower indices across both datasets, which may reflect stronger civic engagement, higher institutional capacity, and a closer alignment between policing and community norms (Braga *et al.*, 2015; Sampson and Raudenbush, 1999). It is, however, important to emphasise that the analysis pertains exclusively to offences committed under the influence of alcohol. Given the documented increase in the use of other psychoactive substances in urban environments (Olecká *et al.*, 2023; Olecká and Pospíšil, 2023; Olecká and Přecechtěl, 2025), including Prague, it remains an open question whether similarly low indices would be observed if offences under the influence of drugs were systematically included. This underscores the need for a broader empirical scope encompassing multiple substances to capture the full spectrum of intoxication-related disorder.

While offender-based data, analysed at the regional (kraj) level, did not reveal statistically significant differences, the analysis of registered offences at lower territorial units demonstrates pronounced disparities. Statistically significant deviations were observed particularly in the Olomouc, Zlín, and Moravian-Silesian regions, suggesting that, beyond institutional procedures, structural and cultural factors exert a strong influence in shaping local manifestations of alcohol-related criminality.

From the perspective of Broken Windows Theory, visible signs of alcohol misuse in public spaces–ranging from intoxication to minor acts of vandalism–may symbolically signal weakened social control, leading residents to withdraw from community life and reducing informal regulation. High crime indices are

observed primarily in peripheral regions. Conversely, in regions with the highest living standards, such as Prague, minor alcohol-related disturbances are less likely to escalate, which may support the assumption of greater resilience of social norms and informal control (Braga *et al.*, 2015; Sampson and Raudenbush, 1999).

A critical factor shaping these dynamics is the normalisation of alcohol, particularly among youth. Early and culturally sanctioned exposure to alcohol–through family socialisation, peer groups, and regional traditions–contributes to habituation, reducing the perceived severity of risky consumption and increasing tolerance for public disorder (Aldridge *et al.*, 2011; Parker *et al.*, 1998; Pennay and Measham, 2016). In regions with strong drinking cultures, normalisation may accelerate informal desensitisation to minor offences, thereby amplifying the potential for subsequent escalation.

Blanket enforcement or purely punitive approaches often fail to address the deeper cultural and structural determinants of alcohol-related disorder. These strategies tend to focus narrowly on individual behaviours without acknowledging the broader social context in which such behaviours occur. As Wilson and Kelling (1982) argue, minor signs of neglect or disorder are not isolated phenomena but reflect vulnerabilities in the symbolic fabric that sustains community cohesion. In this sense, alcohol-related infractions can be seen as indicators of underlying social and cultural patterns–variations in drinking culture, local norms, and informal social control mechanisms–that cannot be rectified through enforcement alone.

Moreover, punitive measures can, in some cases, exacerbate tensions between authorities and communities. Heavy-handed interventions may alienate residents, reduce trust in institutions, and contribute to the perception that enforcement disproportionately targets certain groups, thereby weakening the communal bonds that underpin informal regulation. This risk is particularly acute in peripheral or marginalised regions, where structural disadvantages intersect with local patterns of alcohol consumption and social norms.

In contrast, interventions that combine environmental improvements, regulation of alcohol availability, and active community engagement are better suited to reinforcing informal social control. Measures such as improving street lighting, enhancing public space maintenance, and regulating the density and opening hours of alcohol outlets not only reduce immediate opportunities for disorder but also symbolically signal that public spaces are cared for and socially valued. Community engagement–including youth-targeted programs and initiatives that involve residents in the co-production of order–fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility, strengthening the social bonds that deter disorderly behaviours before they escalate.

Such preventive and restorative strategies are consistent with the notion that security is co-constructed: it emerges not only from formal institutions but also from the everyday practices, shared norms, and local relationships that define a community. By addressing the cultural and structural drivers of alcohol-related disorder, these approaches align with the idea of resilience articulated in the abstract: that sustainable public order depends on creating environments where everyday behaviours–including alcohol consumption–support rather than erode the social cohesion that binds communities together.

In sum, the interplay of visible disorder, cultural tolerance, and regional variation illustrates that alcohol-related crime is not merely a matter of individual pathology. Effective prevention requires understanding alcohol both as a cultural practice and as a factor shaping community cohesion. Policies attentive to local norms, institutional practices, and youth socialisation can foster resilient public spaces and sustain collective responsibility for order.

Conclusion

Understanding the regional dynamics of substance-related crime requires a comprehensive approach that integrates theoretical frameworks with empirical evidence. Alcohol, as examined in this study, exemplifies how a widely accepted and culturally embedded substance can function both as a marker of social identity and as a driver of disorder, affecting community cohesion and perceptions of safety. However, these dynamics are not unique to alcohol; other psychoactive substances–legal and illicit alike–interact with social norms, cultural practices, and regional contexts in comparable ways, contributing to visible disorder, public health risks, and challenges for informal social control. Addressing these complex relationships necessitates strategies that go beyond punitive enforcement. Preventive and restorative interventions that engage communities, reinforce resilience, and foster attachment to place are critical for mitigating the social and symbolic impacts of substance use. Such approaches must be context-specific, sensitive to local cultural norms, and adaptive to the structural characteristics of each region. For example, initiatives that combine education, youth engagement, environmental improvements, and proportionate regulation of availability have proven effective in reducing both alcohol- and drug-related harms.

Recognising substances as both cultural markers and potential sources of social erosion provides a broader lens through which policymakers can interpret crime statistics and design interventions. Integrating theoretical insights–from Broken Windows Theory to the framework of normalisation–with empirical regional data allows for a nuanced understanding of how substances influence not only individual behaviour but also collective perceptions of order, safety, and social responsibility.

Ultimately, the study highlights that fostering resilient, cohesive communities requires strategies that address the interplay of culture, substance use, and social structures. Effective interventions are those that reinforce informal social control, maintain the symbolic and practical integrity of public spaces, and promote shared responsibility, thereby enhancing both security and the quality of communal life across diverse regional contexts.

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