

Majority of people in Britain harmed by other people's drinking

July 13 2015, by Amy Pullan



A new report from the University of Sheffield Alcohol Research Group and the Institute of Alcohol Studies (IAS) has revealed more than half of Scots and three-quarters of people from North West England are harmed by another person's drinking.

The study *Alcohol's Harm to Others*, released today, examines the extent to which consuming alcohol can impact on people other than the drinker.

The report combines a review of the evidence on alcohol's harm to others and data from two surveys in which over 2,000 adults were asked about the harms experienced from others' [alcohol consumption](#).

These include being harassed or insulted on the street by someone who has been drinking, feeling unsafe in public, being kept awake at night and being sexually harassed.

The main findings show that over the past 12 months:

- 51 per cent of people in Scotland and 78 per cent of people in North West England had experienced harm from another person's drinking. Most of these people reported multiple types of harm
- There is a link between age and rates of harm, with younger age groups (16-24 and 25-34 year-olds) reporting greater rates of harm than older age groups
- One in five adults have been harassed or insulted on the street by someone who has been drinking (20 per cent Scotland; 23 per cent North West England)
- 19 per cent of people in Scotland and 36 per cent of people in North West England had felt unsafe or threatened in public
- 30 per cent of people in Scotland and almost half of those in North West England (49 per cent) reported being kept awake at night because of drunken noise
- 15 per cent of people in North West England report that someone who had been drinking gave them unwanted sexual attention or behaved in a sexually inappropriate way towards them.

The report also reviews prior evidence on and includes government figures that estimate alcohol's harm to others costs the UK economy more than £15bn each year. The report concludes that more must be done to raise awareness and address harm to others.

Lead author, Dr Lucy Gell from the School of Health and Related Research (ScHARR) at the University of Sheffield said: "Our findings indicate that a large number of people in Scotland and North West

England experience harm from other people's drinking, and in many cases multiple harms.

"This is especially true of younger adults who were far more likely to report having experienced harm in the past 12 months compared with older people.

"We need to better record alcohol's harm to others across the health and social services and provide support services for those experiencing harm from other people's drinking.

"Our team is now working to provide evidence to national and local governments about which mix of policies could best help to reduce the social harms associated with alcohol use."

Evidence from the report suggests a range of policies that could help to reduce alcohol's harm to others, including:

- Offering screening and brief advice to drinkers who are most at risk of causing harm to themselves and others
- Better regulating the density of alcohol outlets and restricting their trading times
- Raising the price of the cheapest alcohol (through taxation and minimum unit pricing)
- Lowering the legal drink-drive limit and introducing random roadside breath testing

Katherine Brown, Director of IAS said: "This [report](#) is important because it shows that the harms caused by [alcohol](#) extend far beyond individual drinkers, often affecting many people through no choice of their own.

"Alcohol harm is everybody's business – as taxpayers we are all paying the price. We hope this government will look to the evidence of what works and take action, both to ease the heavy financial burden on our health, social care and police services, and to make our communities safer."

More information: The report is available online:
www.ias.org.uk/uploads/pdf/IAS%20reports/rp18072015.pdf

Provided by University of Sheffield

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