

Why some women have real reason to fear the World Cup

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(PhysOrg.com) -- An academic at Royal Holloway, University of London is urging victims of domestic violence to have a plan in place should their partners turn violent during the World Cup, and to avoid the temptation of turning to drink themselves.

The World Cup can be a time of fear and worry for victims of domestic abuse as heightened emotions fuelled by alcohol come into play and instances of domestic violence attacks increase. Figures from the Home Office report that during the 2006 Football World Cup there was a 25% average increase in domestic violence on the five England match days in the tournament.

Professor Paula Nicolson, from the Department of Health and Social Care at Royal Holloway, who specialises in studying domestic violence, says it is now widely recognised that the inevitable [alcohol consumption](#) during large-scale sporting events increases men's violence towards their female partners.

She said, "Each case will be different but women need to be more aware that they are at risk during this period. Women who live with violent partners get used to their violent behaviour which they may not have 'labelled' domestic violence. With increased publicity about domestic abuse during the World Cup, there is likely to be an increase in people coming forward to report the violence but it is usually only after the attack has happened."

Professor Nicolson says women at risk would benefit from having a plan in place should warning signs appear: "For some women it may be a case of staying out with friends or family members on England game nights or arranging for their children to go to a friend's house for a sleepover. If that is not possible it is crucial that women have relevant phone numbers to hand, and should know where to get help. Simple things like knowing where your mobile phone and car keys are could make all the difference. Many women feel the stigma of domestic abuse so don't feel able to talk to friends or family about the situation. But if they can overcome these feelings it might be advisable to get their friends or family to call them to check up on them during or after a game."

Another worrying trend is that of alcohol consumption by the victims themselves. Professor Nicolson explains, "Many women try to learn to live with the [violent behaviour](#) and often adapt their own behaviour because they want to please their partners or avoid making them angry. People with violent partners are increasingly turning to drink themselves as a means of coping with the abuse. Alcohol serves to help numb both physical and emotional pain so we may find during the [World Cup](#) that more victims will be drinking. This in itself is not only destructive to a woman's health but may mean she is less aware of the danger she is in and so is unable to leave or call for help as easily as if she were sober."

Provided by Royal Holloway, University of London

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