

INSTITUTE OF ALCOHOL STUDIES

Majority of Brits harmed by other people's drinking

More than half of Scots and three-quarters of people from North West England are harmed by another person's drinking, according to a new report released today.

Produced by the Institute of Alcohol Studies with the University of Sheffield School of Health and Related Research (ScHARR), [Alcohol's Harm to Others](#) 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.

There is [an accompanying video](#) outlining the main findings of the report (see below), which show that:

- 51.4% of people in Scotland and 78.7% 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% Scotland; 23% North West England)
- 19% of people in Scotland and 36% of people in North West England had felt unsafe or threatened in public
- 30% of people in Scotland and almost half of those in North West England (49%) reported being kept awake at night because of drunken noise
- 15% 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. Evidence 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

Lead author Dr Lucy Gell from the School of Health and Related Research 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 are 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.”

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.”