

Alcohol and Violent Crime

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Reducing alcohol consumption is key to violence prevention, due to the strong association between alcohol consumption and an individual's risk of becoming a perpetrator or victim of violence.¹ As well as having an often devastating impact on people's lives, alcohol-related crime is estimated to cost Scotland £727 million each year.² Alcohol-related violence is not limited to the night-time economy: almost three quarters of alcohol is sold in shops and supermarkets for consumption at home³ and more violence is occurring behind closed doors.⁴

With this in mind, and the difficulties associated with policing the private sphere, primary prevention measures are vital. The best ways to reduce alcohol consumption and harm are to increase the price, reduce the availability and restrict the marketing of alcohol.¹ For example, the introduction of a minimum unit price of 50p per unit of alcohol is estimated to prevent 3,500 crimes in Scotland each year, including around 500 violent crimes.⁵

There is a strong link between alcohol and violent crime.

42% of violent crime in Scotland is alcohol-related.⁶ While there has been a decrease in the number of alcohol-related violent crimes in Scotland over the past five years or so, **dropping from 63% in 2008/09 to 42% in 2016/17**, almost **100,000 alcohol-related violent crimes** still take place in Scotland each year.⁶ In addition:

Over two fifths
of violent crimes
in Scotland are
alcohol-related¹⁰

- The Scottish Ambulance Service attended **over 1,000 emergency incidents relating to alcohol-related violence** in 2016-17.⁷
- **One third** of police, ambulance and fire service staff have been **subjected to physical abuse** while attending an incident as a result of alcohol.⁸
- **42% of all people accused of homicide** over the last ten years were under the influence of alcohol.⁹
- **Two in five (41% of) prisoners** report being drunk at the time of their offence¹⁰, rising to **60%** for young offenders.¹¹

Scotland's prison and custody populations have a high prevalence of alcohol problems:

- **1 in 5 young male offenders got drunk** daily before being imprisoned.¹⁰
- Between **18-34% of those in police custody have alcohol problems** (mostly at the dependency end of the spectrum).¹²
- Nearly **three quarters (73%) of male prisoners have an Alcohol Use Disorder** with 36% possibly dependent.¹³

Victims of violent crime are also often under the influence of alcohol:

- In 22% of violent crime, **the victim** had been drinking.⁶

More crime occurs in areas where alcohol is readily available

Alcohol availability refers to the ease or convenience of obtaining alcohol. This includes the number and capacity of alcohol outlets in an area (both on-sales such as pubs and restaurants and off-sales such as supermarkets and shops), and opening hours of premises selling alcohol.

Research has found a consistent relationship between alcohol availability and violence.¹⁴ In particular, the concentration of premises selling alcohol in an area (**'outlet density'**) has been found to be associated with higher levels of alcohol-related crime¹⁵, domestic violence and murder.¹⁶ A recent Scottish study found that **neighbourhoods with the most outlets had significantly higher crime rates** than in neighbourhoods with the least.¹⁷

The **type of premises** is also important in relation to levels of alcohol-related crime, with more violence found to be linked to off-premises than on-premises in two studies¹⁸, and bar density more strongly associated with rates of assault than restaurant density.¹⁹

The **hours during which alcohol is sold** also affects rates of alcohol-related crime, with late night trading hours associated with higher assault rates²⁰, and a reduction in assault rates resulting from cutting pub late night opening by two hours in an Australian city.²¹

¹ Babor, T. et al. (2010). *Alcohol: No Ordinary Commodity: Research and Public Policy, Second edition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

² York Health Economics Consortium, University of York (2010). *The Societal Cost of Alcohol Misuse in Scotland for 2007*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government Social Research

³ Giles, L. & Robinson, M. (2018). *Monitoring and Evaluating Scotland's Alcohol Strategy: Monitoring Report 2018*. Edinburgh: NHS Health Scotland

⁴ 2015/16 figures are given as 43% through the Violence Reduction Unit, as quoted in Adams, L. (4 May 2017) 'Violent crime 'moving into homes'', BBC Scotland <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-39791684>

⁵ Meng, Y., Hill-McManus, D., Brennan, A., & Meier, P. (2012). *Model-based appraisal of Alcohol Minimum Pricing and Off-Licensed trade discount bans in Scotland using the Sheffield Alcohol Policy Model (v 2): Second Update based on newly available data*. Sheffield: SchARR, University of Sheffield.

⁶ Scottish Government (2018), *Scottish Crime and Justice Survey 2016/17: Main Findings*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government.

⁷ Figures provided to Alcohol Focus Scotland by the Scottish Ambulance Service: Number of Emergency Incidents attended by the Scottish Ambulance Service in financial year 2016/17, Total and Where Alcohol is Recorded as an Additional Factor.

⁸ Police Scotland (24 Aug 2016), Emergency workers reveal alcohol-related abuse, accessed 28/11/17 <http://www.scotland.police.uk/whats-happening/news/2016/august/999-workers-say>

⁹ Scottish Government (2017). Homicide in Scotland 2016-17: Additional Tables. Edinburgh: Scottish Government.

¹⁰ Carnie, J. & Broderick, R. (2015). *Scottish Prison Service Prisoner Survey 2015*. Edinburgh: Scottish Prison Service

¹¹ Broderick, R. & Carnie, J. (2016). *Young People in Custody 2015*, Edinburgh: Scottish Prison Service.

¹² Graham, L., Fischbacher, C. M., Stockton, D., Fraser, A., Fleming, M., & Greig, K. (2015). Understanding extreme mortality among prisoners: a national cohort study in Scotland using data linkage. *The European Journal of Public Health*, 25(5), 879-885.

¹³ MacAskill, S. et al. (2011). Assessment of alcohol problems using AUDIT in a prison setting: more than an aye or no question, *BMC Public Health*, 11:865.

¹⁴ Popova, S., Giesbrecht, N., Bekmuradov, D., & Patra, J. (2009). Hours and days of sale and density of alcohol outlets: Impacts on alcohol consumption and damage: A systematic review. *Alcohol and Alcoholism*, 44(5): 500-516; Rossow, I., & Norström, T. (2012). The impact of small changes in bar closing hours on violence. The Norwegian experience from 18 cities. *Addiction*, 107(3): 530-7

¹⁵ Chiang, C. (2010). *Review of the Relationship between Outlet Density and Crime in NHS Greater Glasgow*.

www.glasgow.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=9201&P=0; Yu, Q., Scribner, R., Carlin, B. et al (2008). Multilevel spatio-temporal dual changepoint models for relating alcohol outlet destruction and changes in neighbourhood rates of assaultive violence. *Geospatial Health*, 2(2): 161-172; Fone, D., et al (2016).

Change in Alcohol Outlet Density and Alcohol-Related Harm to Population Health (CHALICE): A Comprehensive Record-Linked Database Study in Wales, *Public Health Res* 4(3)

¹⁶ Livingston, M. (2011). A longitudinal analysis of alcohol outlet density and domestic violence. *Addiction* 106(5): 919-925; Cunradi, C. et al (2012). Alcohol outlet density and intimate partner violence-related emergency department visits. *Alcoholism: Clinical Experimental Research* 36(5): 847-853; Snowden, A. (2016). Alcohol Outlet Density and Intimate Partner Violence in a Nonmetropolitan College Town: Accounting for Neighborhood Characteristics and Alcohol Outlet Types. *Violence and Victims* 31(1): 111-123; Cunradi, C. et al (2011). Alcohol Outlets, Neighborhood Characteristics, and Intimate Partner Violence: Ecological Analysis of a California City. *Journal of Urban Health* 88(2): 191-200

¹⁷ Alcohol Focus Scotland and the Centre for Research on Society, Environment and Health (2018). *Alcohol Outlet Availability and Harm in Scotland*.

Glasgow: Alcohol Focus Scotland. <https://www.alcohol-focus-scotland.org.uk/media/310762/alcohol-outlet-availability-and-harm-in-scotland.pdf>

¹⁸ Gorman, D., Zhu, L., & Horel, S. (2005). Drug 'hot-spots', alcohol availability and violence. *Drug & Alcohol Review* 24 (6):507-13; Gruenewald, P. et al. (2006). Ecological models of alcohol outlets and violent assaults: crime potentials and geospatial analysis. *Addiction* 101(5): 617-761

¹⁹ Lipton, R., & Gruenewald, P. (2002). Spatial dynamics of violence and alcohol outlets. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol & Drugs*, 63(2), 187-195

²⁰ Chikritzhs, T., & Stockwell, T. (2002). The impact of later trading hours for Australian public. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol & Drugs*, 63(5): 591-599;

²¹ Briscoe, S., & Donnelly, N. (2003). Problematic licensed premises for assaults in inner Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, 36(1): 18-33

²¹ Kypri, K. et al (2010). Effects of restricting pub closing times on night-time assaults in an Australian city. *Addiction* 106(2): 303-310.