
IAS Factsheet

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The World Health Organization's European Charter on Alcohol¹ states:

"All people have the right to a family, community and working life protected from accidents, violence and other negative consequences of alcohol consumption."

The WHO Charter has been signed by Member States of the European Union, including the UK.

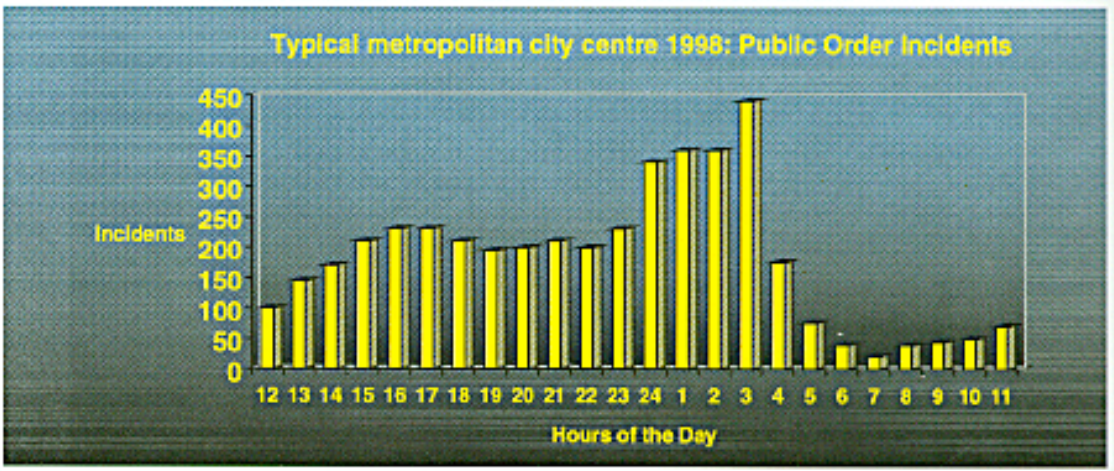
Introduction

In most town and city centres, the majority of hot-spots for violence and public disorder are located in the areas containing concentrations of licensed premises. For example, in 2001 in the City of Bath, levels of crime and disorder were far higher in Abbey Ward, which contains the night-club zone, than in any other ward of Bath and North East Somerset.²

	District Average	Abbey Ward
Violent crimes Per 1,000	6	46
Disorder/nuisance Per 1,000	33	231
Criminal damage Per km ²	6	242

Generally, increases in the number of licensed premises and in their total capacities are often accompanied by rises in assaults and public order offences.³

In town and city centres incidents of public disorder tend to start to rise as licensed outlets open, reaching a peak early in the morning.⁴ These figures were compiled before the introduction of new licensing arrangements and hours of opening by the Licensing Act 2003 (see below).



The British Crime Survey⁵ found that half the alcohol-related assaults took place in or around pubs, clubs or discos, with 70 per cent of these on weekend evenings. Most of the other remaining incidents occurred in other public places, including around entertainment venues and on transport facilities.

Estimated number of violent incidents in or around pubs, bars or clubs in 1999			
Violence in/around pubs, bars & clubs	Best estimate	Lowest estimate	Highest estimate
Stranger assault	290,000	224,000	356,000
Acquaintance assault	272,000	201,000	344,000
Domestic assault	40,000	7,000	73,000
Muggings	16,000	4,000	28,000
All violence	623,000	518,000	728,000

An MCM research report **Conflict and violence in pubs**⁶ commissioned by the drink trade through the Portman Group found the following:

- Troublesome arguments occur in 36% of pubs at least once a month.
- Fights break out in 6% of pubs every week.
- 5% of pub managers are assaulted on average every month.

A 1998 survey of casualty departments⁷ found that a quarter of facial injuries linked to alcohol consumption, with the commonest causes being falls (40 per cent) and assaults (25 per cent). Up to 1,000 young people a week suffer serious facial injuries as a result of drunken assaults - 18,000 young people are scarred for life each year.

Incidents of Violence In and Around Licensed Premises (England & Wales 2003-2004)⁸

Police force area	Violent offences committed
Avon and Somerset	2,574
Bedfordshire	762
Cambridgeshire	750
Cheshire	806
Cleveland	1,615
Cumbria	600
Derbyshire	n/a
Devon and Cornwall	3,580
Dorset	752
Durham	n/a
Dyfed-Powys	816
Essex	1,756
Gloucestershire	864
Greater Manchester	1,620
Gwent	791
Hampshire	2,417
Hertfordshire	1,005
Humberside	1,007
Kent	813
Lancashire	3,910
Leicestershire	1,323
Lincolnshire	607
London City of	151
Merseyside	n/a
Metropolitan Police	n/a
Norfolk	540
Northamptonshire	1,043
Northumbria	1,767
North Wales	967
North Yorkshire	1,124
Nottinghamshire	n/a
South Wales	2,895
South Yorkshire	1,581

Staffordshire	2,424
Suffolk	993
Surrey	794
Sussex	n/a
Thames Valley	2,146
Warwickshire	n/a
West Mercia	882
West Midlands	4,140
West Yorkshire	2,017
Wiltshire	373
Total	52,205

Alcohol and Aggression

International research findings have been summarised as follows:

- o Alcohol does not increase problems of aggression in neutral situations, but does in situations of provocation, threat or frustration, especially when heavy drinking is involved.
- o Alcohol-related aggression tends to differ from non-alcohol-related - being more likely to occur in public rather than private settings; to involve males, strangers and more than two people, for example, drink-related aggression is more common in bars with a large proportion of groups of males, versus solo males, couples or mixed groups and often involves group loyalty/rivalry.
- o Other factors linked to higher likelihood of aggression in public drinking settings include:⁹
 - crowding
 - poor bar layout and traffic flow
 - inadequate seating or inconvenient bar access
 - dim lighting, noise, poor ventilation or unclean conditions
 - discount drinks and promotions that encourage heavy drinking (eg 'happy hours')
 - lack of availability of food
 - a 'permissive' environment that turns a blind eye to anti-social behaviour
 - patrons with a history of aggression and who binge drink
 - bar workers who don't practice responsible serving
 - aggression/intimidation by doorman and bouncers.

Summary of strategies for reducing violence in and around licensed premises¹⁰

Nature of intervention	Examples
Manipulation of the physical environment of pubs/clubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o No 'hidden' alcoves that prevent the easy monitoring of behaviour o Attention to the spacing of furniture, including tables, chairs, stools and pool tables to avoid customer crowding o Raised bar-areas to permit monitoring of customer behaviour
Controlling the social atmosphere	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Attractive, well-maintained premises o Registered door-staff schemes and employment of well trained staff who discourage anti-social behaviour in a manner that does not escalate violence o The reduction of excessively loud music
Alcohol control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o No 'happy hours'/drinks promotions

Control of drinkers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Serving of hot food and soft beverages ○ Well ventilated premises with controls over the number of customers entering ○ Well trained and socially skilled door staff and bar staff experienced in dealing with aggressive or violent individuals (see also above) ○ Refusal of alcohol to already intoxicated customers ○ 'Pubwatch' schemes ○ The use of CCTV to monitor disorder and violence ○ Staggered closing times to avoid large numbers of individuals gathering in the same area together ○ Regular and reliable transportation away from pubs and clubs
Injury reduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Use of toughened glass ○ Use of plastic cups ○ The banning of bottle-served alcohol ○ Swift removal of any glassware used ○ Weapons searches on entry to public houses and clubs
Nature of intervention Criminal justice policy	Examples <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Heavier penalties for breaches of licensing laws such as serving to underage drinkers (relevant to both 'on' and 'off' licences) ○ Courts to divert alcohol-offenders to treatment and education programmes ○ Monitoring of 'problem/violent' premises ○ Alcohol education schemes

Binge Drinking, Crime and 'Pre-loading'

Currently, there is considerable concern and controversy regarding heavily discounted sales of alcohol from supermarkets and this relates to a phenomenon known as 'pre-loading' whereby patrons of the night time economy consume (cheap) alcohol at home or in other private venues prior to attending nightlife venues in town centres. There have been reports of patrons of the night time economy being well under the influence of alcohol before they even arrive at the bars and nightclubs. A recent research paper¹¹ confirms that these reports are not merely anecdotal. A survey of 18-35 year olds in a large city in the North West of England found that those who reported pre-loading reported significantly higher total alcohol consumption over a night out than those who waited to drink until reaching the bars and nightclubs. The pre-loaders were also over twice as likely to have been involved in a fight in the city's nightlife.

The researchers concluded that measures to reduce drunkenness and alcohol-related violence in the night time economy should not be restricted to premises within the nightlife environment but should also tackle disparities in regard to pricing and policing between on- and off-licensed premises.

Sport and Disorder

Alcohol has contributed to a number of crowd disturbances and other problems at sporting events including football, cricket, rugby and boxing. Because of the links between alcohol and disorder, restrictions can be placed on carrying and consuming alcohol on coaches and trains taking supporters to sporting events and at the events themselves.

Liquor Licensing Law and Crime

In the UK, reference has been made to 'alcohol flashpoints' i.e. an over-concentration of alcohol outlets in a given locality, which appear to encourage problems of crime and public disorder.

In the USA it has been estimated that eliminating the glut of alcohol outlets in inner city areas would cut the homicide rates by 10%, saving 2000 lives a year.

In the UK, problems of crime and disorder have been linked to late night opening of pubs and clubs, especially in city centres. Underage drinking has also been linked to crime and disorder. Measures to control underage drinking may therefore be expected to reduce crime.

In 1988 the (Conservative) Home Secretary announced a six-point plan to "tackle brawling by drunken youths":

- Rigorous enforcement of the provisions of the Licensing Act 1988 on under-age drinking.
- Support for the idea of local groups of licensees running their own identity card schemes for young people.
- Appropriate use of the powers under the 1988 Licensing Act for licensing judges to refuse to extend drink licences to late night discos and dances.
- Appropriate use of the powers under the Licensed Premises (Exclusion of Certain Persons) Act 1980, allowing magistrates to make an order banning people convicted of violent offences on licensed premises from specified licensed premises in the area.
- Examining with magistrates and the police whether more use should be made of the power available under section 188 of the Licensing Act 1964 allowing temporary closure of all licensed premises in an area where disorder is anticipated.
- Full use by the police and courts of powers to object to licences and revoke or refuse to renew them in the case of disorderly or otherwise badly managed premises.

Current Policies

The present (Labour) Government has put forward a range of proposals to deal with the problems of alcohol-related crime and disorder.

1. Reduce problems arising from underage drinking

- Better enforcement of law against selling to the underaged
- Provisions of the Confiscation of Alcohol (Young Persons) Act to be more widely used (allowing police to confiscate alcohol from drinkers aged under 18 in public places)
- More widespread 'proof of age' schemes
- Strengthening alcohol education for young people

2. Reduce public drunkenness

- Refusing admission to licensed premises to known troublemakers
- Refusal to sell alcohol to the already intoxicated
- Better design and management of premises (see above)
- New powers for the police to close disorderly premises

- o More legislation facilitating local byelaws on drinking on the street and confiscation of alcohol.

3. Preventing alcohol-related violence

- o Targeting hotspots associated with alcohol-related crime and disorder
- o Greater use of pub-watch schemes to keep known troublemakers from pubs and clubs
- o Ensuring the role of bar staff and door supervisors in helping to reduce disorder is properly recognised
- o More widespread use of toughened drinking glasses in pubs and clubs

The Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001

The Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001 was introduced to strengthen the response to crime and disorder. It includes specific provisions for dealing with alcohol-related disorder, which came into effect on 1st December 2001.

- Alcohol consumption in designated public places
allows local authorities to designate any public space as a non-drinking area if they are satisfied that alcohol consumption has caused nuisance, annoyance or disorder.
- Closing of unlicensed premises
primarily designed to protect tourists in the West End of London, allows police and local authorities to close rogue outlets that open late at night and attract criminal activity
- Positive duty not to sell alcohol to underage drinkers
tightens the law by requiring that before a sale of alcoholic drink is made, all reasonable steps are taken to establish the age of the purchaser
- Test purchasing
allows the use of children as agents to test purchase alcohol in order to ascertain whether premises are complying with the law on underage drinking
- The Act also introduced on-the-spot penalties for disorderly behaviour, including public drunkenness; disorderly behaviour while drunk in a public place; consumption of alcohol in a designated alcohol-free zone and buying and attempting to buy alcohol for consumption in a bar or licensed premises by a person under 18. These penalties were piloted in four police force areas. The scheme went national in April 2004; from 1 November 2004, the scheme was extended to cover:
 - selling alcohol to persons under 18
 - delivery of alcohol to a person under 18 or allowing such delivery
 - consumption of alcohol by a person under 18 or allowing such consumption
- The fine for these offences is £80.00. Fixed penalty notices can be issued to adults and 16/17 year olds.

Late Night Pub Opening

An important part of the present Government's proposals to tackle alcohol-related crime and disorder was the Licensing Act 2003 which allowed flexible opening hours and the potential for pubs and clubs to be open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The Government argued that this would "encourage a more relaxed drinking culture by avoiding the perceived necessity to binge drink in advance of closing time, and to avoid the potential problems that can arise when a number of licensed premises send all their patrons onto the streets at the same time."

However, this policy is contentious, critics regarding it as a highly simplistic solution to a complex problem and one likely to have the opposite effects of the ones intended. They argue that there is no good reason to believe that abolishing closing time will of itself transform an entrenched drinking culture, and one that common sense as well as the available evidence from other jurisdictions suggests that it will be more likely to make matters worse. In parts of Australia and New Zealand, for example, similar policies led to increases in drunkenness, violence and disorder.

Another main element in the bid to reduce alcohol-related crime and disorder is the extra powers for police to close disorderly pubs and to target known hotspots and troublesome premises. One of the problems here is that while there is evidence that targeted police interventions can lead to reductions in assault in targeted premises, they can also lead to displacement of violence into the street.¹²

The IAS response to the Government's proposals for licensing reform is available as a separate document.¹³

Impact of the Licensing Act

A Home Office study published in July 2007¹⁴ reviewed the evidence in regard to trends in violent crime, disorder and criminal damage in 30 police force areas in England and Wales since the introduction of the Licensing Act 2003. The study, the first full evaluation of the impact of the Act, paid particular attention to the timing of offences during the day and night. The main findings of the report were as follows:

The numbers of more serious violent crimes fell in the year after the introduction of the Licensing Act in November 2005 compared with the previous year, with the decreases occurring particularly in the evening hours before midnight. However, there was a non-statistically significant increase in serious crimes of violence between the hours of 3 am and 6 am.

A fall also occurred in less serious wounding offences in the year after the Act. The number of these offences had been rising prior to the Act.

There was an indication of some increase between the hours of 3am and 6am for each offence group, but the total offences in this time period account for only a very small proportion of the 24-hour total (four per cent in the year to November 2006).

The rise from 3am and up to 6am was likely to partly reflect the change to opening hours of licensed premises and the increased numbers of people in a public place at these times, including the police, with greater resources being placed on the streets to deal with disorder.

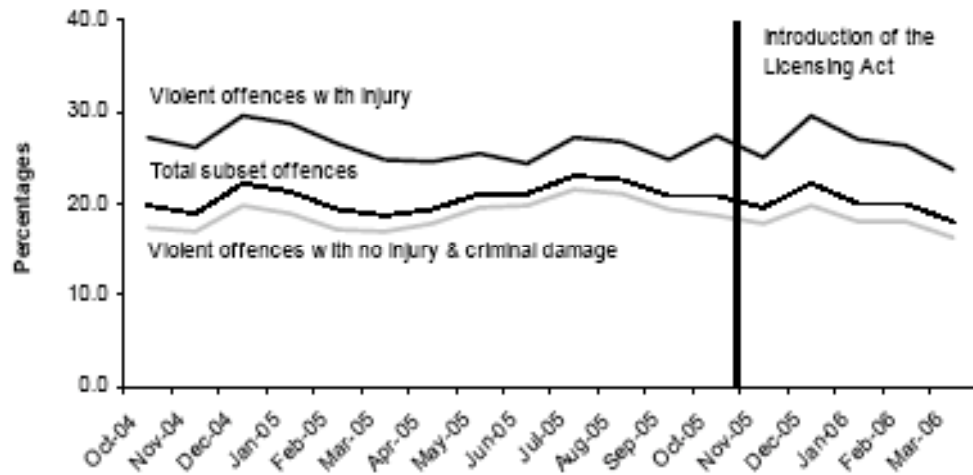
There was no overall percentage change in the number of assault without injury offences occurring in the night-time period in the year following the introduction of the Act for the 30 forces, though in this instance the overall figure for England and Wales indicated an estimated increase of five per cent. While the levels fell in the early evening, there was a rise in the early hours of the morning. This pattern of assault with no injury recording may have been influenced by the widening of the powers of arrest in January 2006.

The numbers of harassment offences showed a rise in the year preceding the introduction of the Act, in part driven by the increased use of penalty notices for disorder. The increase continued

after the Act came in and was greater for offences occurring in the night-time period than during the day.

In the police force areas covered by this study, there was a small (two per cent) increase in criminal damage offences occurring after 9pm in the year following the introduction of the Act, even though overall criminal damage fell slightly (One per cent).¹⁵

Percentage of violent offences and criminal damage occurring between 11 pm and 2 am, October 2004 to March 2006 (23 forces)¹⁶



**Institute of Alcohol Studies
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