

The Institute of Alcohol Studies has published a report highlighting the level of harm experienced from others' drinking. *Alcohol's harm to others* finds that the majority of adults surveyed in Scotland and North West England reported enduring harm caused by another person's drinking.

With alcohol harms estimated to cost the economy **more than £15bn per year**, the report's authors suggest that policies to reduce harmful drinking – such as minimum unit pricing – will help to foster a safer community environment, as well as a more productive economy.

### How does alcohol harm others and why does it matter?

The harmful effects of alcohol are often described in individual terms. For instance, the damage alcohol inflicts upon the liver, the heart and other organs of the body, and the psychological effects, such as depression, memory loss and alcohol dependence. But **alcohol impacts many people other than drinkers themselves**, including those who are **killed or injured by drunk-drivers**, **children neglected or abused**, babies born with **foetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD)**, victims of **violence, theft and damaged property**, and those working to cover for **hangover colleagues**.



The total annual cost of alcohol's harm to others in the UK is estimated at **more than £15bn**, excluding the costs to family and social networks. But there has been little research into the extent of this harm.

*Alcohol's harm to others* aimed to fill this gap by presenting all the evidence that currently exists on this issue. This includes survey data from more than 2,000 UK adults about the harms they experienced from other people's drinking.

## What does the study show?

- Researchers found that **more than half of Scots (51%)** and **three-quarters of people from North West England (78.7%)** have **experienced harm from another person's drinking**
- Many of these respondents experienced multiple types of harm, and **younger age groups** – especially 16-24 and 25-34 year-olds – were **more likely to report having experienced a number of harms 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 adults in Scotland** and **36% of adults in North West England** felt **unsafe** or threatened in public
- **30% of adults in Scotland** and almost half of those in North West England (**49%**) reported being **kept awake at night because of drunken noise**
- **15% of adults in North West England** reported that someone who had been drinking gave them **unwanted sexual attention** or behaved in a sexually inappropriate way towards them.

## What can be done to reduce alcohol harms to others?

The evidence shows that some of the most effective measures are:

- **Raising the price of the cheapest alcohol** through taxation and minimum unit pricing
- **Better regulating the density of outlets** that can serve alcohol, and **restricting the permitted hours of sale**
- Drink-driving laws, including a **lower legal blood alcohol limit** and **random roadside breath tests**
- **Screening and brief advice** for drinkers who are most at risk of causing harm to themselves and others



For more information or to set up a meeting to discuss the issues outlined in this briefing, please contact:

Habib Kadiri  
Research & Information Officer  
Institute of Alcohol Studies  
Email: [hkadiri@ias.org.uk](mailto:hkadiri@ias.org.uk)  
Tel: 0207 222 4001