

ALCOHOL INVOLVEMENT IN INCIDENCES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

15 per cent of women and 6 per cent of men have experienced severely abusive behaviour from a partner.

29 per cent of women and 26 per cent of men suffer domestic abuse when severe abuse and minor incidents are combined.

(Watson and Parsons, 2005)¹

What Does the Research Tell Us?

The association between alcohol abuse and domestic abuse has been long recognised, but there has been some dispute regarding the causal nature of the relationship. In incidents of domestic abuse, it appears that the role of alcohol is one of a facilitative nature, a contributing cause (Leonard, 1999)². A survey with 9,746 children (12-18 yrs) on the effects of parental alcohol use on their lives (ISPCC, 2010)³ showed that one in eleven young people said that parental alcohol use affected them in a negative way. The negative effects included emotional impacts, abuse and violence, family relations, changes in parental behaviour and neglect. Recent survey research confirms that alcohol is causing significant damage to survey participants from other people drinking across the general population (over one in four of respondents), in the workplace (one in ten of respondents) and to children in families (one in ten of respondents) and carries a burden to all in Irish society (Hope 2014)⁴.

Of participants in the national study on domestic abuse...

- *In one third (34 per cent) of cases of domestic violence, alcohol was identified as a potential trigger for abusive behaviour.*
- *In one quarter of severe domestic abuse cases, alcohol was 'always' involved.*
- *44 per cent of cases of domestic abuse involved alcohol 'some of the time'. In 27 per cent of cases there was 'always' alcohol involved and in 29 per cent of cases alcohol was 'never' involved.*

(Watson and Parsons, 2005)

Watson and Parsons' (2005) national study on domestic violence examined whether domestic abuse appeared to be triggered by any specific types of events. In about one third of cases, abuse was associated with the consumption of alcohol. Alcohol was involved in about three quarters of cases, however, in only one quarter of cases was alcohol consumption always involved. The significance of alcohol should not be dismissed, however, since alcohol use may be linked to more severe physical abuse. (Watson and Parsons, 2005; p 68).

Warning Signs of Domestic Abuse

- *One of the partners has been in a violent relationship before. If they have been abusive before it is likely they will be abusive again, even with a new partner.*
- *Fear of the partner. Where the partner loses their temper easily and over minor things.*
- *Where one partner criticises the friends or family of the other and/or makes it difficult for the partner to see them or talk to them on their own.*
- *Where one partner regularly criticises or undermines the other - about the way they look, the way they dress, their abilities as a homemaker/parent.*
- *Where one partner's needs are not considered important or are ignored resulting in their being unable to make any decisions in the relationship.*
- *Where one partner finds it hard to get time away from the other - even when they ask for it. When they spend time away from their partner, they want to know who they were with and where.*
- *Where one partner controls the other's access to basic essentials such as the telephone, car, food or money.*

See overleaf for where to get help if you or somebody you know has experienced domestic abuse.

¹ Watson, D. & Parsons, S. (2005), Domestic Abuse of Women and Men in Ireland: Report on the National Study of Domestic Abuse. Dublin: National Crime Council in association with the Economic and Social Research Institute. www.crimecouncil.ie

² Leonard, K. E., (1999), "Alcohol Use and Husband Marital Aggression Among Newlywed Couples", in X. B. Ariaga and S. Oskamp (eds.), Violence in Intimate Relationships. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc.

³ ISPCC, (2010), If they're getting loaded, why can't I?. Dublin: Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

⁴ Hope, A. (2014), Alcohol Harm to Others in Ireland. Dublin: Health Service Executive.

ALCOHOL INVOLVEMENT IN INCIDENCES OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

42 per cent of women and 28 per cent of men experienced some form of sexual abuse or assault in their lifetime.

(McGee et al., 2002)⁵

What Does the Research Tell Us?

In 2009, the role of alcohol in sexual assault (rape cases) was examined in Ireland using interviews with victims, analysis of files considered for prosecution and analysis of criminal court cases. The report showed that alcohol consumption, in particular drinking to intoxication, was a feature in a high proportion of rapes committed in Ireland, both among perpetrators and victims (Hanly et al., 2009)⁶. Alcohol was understood to have a critical role in non-consensual sex, where lowered inhibition is transformed into loss of control. Researchers reported that young people who participated in a study undertaken by the Rape Crisis Network of Ireland⁷ were “unprepared to negotiate sexual consent safely when challenging alcohol-driven situations arose, leaving them vulnerable to sexual violence.” (pg.1) **Victims of sexual assault are never to blame for their attack regardless of whether or not they had been drinking at the time.**

Of the cases researched for the Rape and Justice in Ireland (RAJI) study ...

- 76 per cent of all rape defendants had been drinking at the time of the alleged rape.
- 70 per cent of women reported drinking at the time they were raped.
- 4 out of 15 women who did not report to the Gardaí took this decision largely because of the alcohol/drugs they had consumed.

(Hanly et al., 2009)

Ireland’s Sexual Assault Treatment Unit 2014 Annual Report states that 366 (54%) patients who presented to their service had consumed more than 4 units of alcohol in the 12 hours prior to the incident of sexual assault. 73 (11%) patients were concerned that drugs had been used to facilitate sexual assault.

The Sexual Abuse and Violence in Ireland (SAVI) report found that...

- Alcohol was involved in almost half of the cases of sexual assault that occurred as an adult.
- Of those that reported that alcohol was involved, both parties were drinking in 57 per cent of cases concerning abuse of women, and in 63 per cent of cases concerning abuse of men.
- Where only one party was drinking, the perpetrator was the one drinking in the majority of cases (84 per cent of female and 70 per cent of male abuse cases).

(McGee et al., 2002)

In 2013, the Union of Students of Ireland’s “SAY SOMETHING” survey⁸ on students’ experiences of unwanted sexual behaviour found that...

- In over six in ten cases (61 per cent for women, 68 per cent for men) the perpetrator was believed to be under the influence of alcohol.
- In over six in ten cases (64 per cent for women, 62 per cent for men) the victim themselves were under the influence of alcohol at the time.
- 5 per cent of those who had reported unwanted sexual experiences recorded that they had been given drugs or alcohol against their will before the incident.

Research respondent: “I think ninety-nine percent of the time that I’ve been with a boy it’s usually been because of drink involved.”

(Rape Crisis Network Ireland, 2014, Young People, Alcohol and Sex: What’s Consent Got To Do With It?)

Where to Get Help:

- *In an emergency always call 112 or 999*
- *National Domestic Violence Helpline (for women): 1800 341 900 or go to www.womensaid.ie*
- *Amen (for men experiencing domestic violence): 046 902 3718 or go to www.amen.ie*
- *National Sexual Violence Helpline (for men and women): 1800 77 88 88 or go to www.drcc.ie*
- *If your concern is related to a current incident of sexual abuse of a child please contact Children at Risk Ireland Foundation Helpline: 1890 924 567 or go to www.cari.ie*
- *ISPCC Childline: 1800 66 66 66 or go to www.childline.ie*

⁵ McGee, H.R., Garavan, R., de Barra, G.M., Byrne, J. and Conroy, R., (2002), The SAVI Report: A National Study of Irish Experiences, Beliefs and Attitudes Concerning Sexual Violence, The Liffey Press, Dublin.

⁶ Hanly, C. Healy, D. & Scriver, S., (2009), *Rape and justice in Ireland: a national study of survivor, prosecutor and court responses to rape*. Dublin: The Liffey Press.

⁷ Rape Crisis Network Ireland, (2014), *Young People, Alcohol and Sex: What’s Consent Got To Do With It?*

⁸ Union of Students in Ireland (2013), *SAY SOMETHING – A Study of Students’ Experiences of Harassment, Stalking, Violence and Sexual Assault*