

Alcohol and domestic abuse

Briefing for Westminster Hall Debate 3 March 2020, 4.30pm

- In more than 3 in 10 incidents of domestic violence the perpetrator was under the influence of alcohol.
- Domestic violence may contribute to problems with alcohol amongst those who are abused.
- Co-occurrence of harmful drinking and being a victim of domestic violence can exclude women from accessing support for both violence and alcohol services.
- Minimum unit pricing is an evidenced-based and targeted measure to tackle cheap alcohol and reduce alcohol related harm.

Alcohol is inextricably linked to domestic abuse

“Alcohol consumption, especially at harmful and hazardous levels, is a major contributor to the occurrence of intimate partner violence and links between the two are manifold.”
The World Health Organisation¹

The relationship between alcohol and domestic violence is complex. While it is difficult to gather data on alcohol and domestic abuse, research finds that between 25-50% of perpetrators of domestic abuse have been drinking at the time of the assault.² In England and Wales, a national survey found that approximately 3 in 10 victims of domestic violence reported that the perpetrator was under the influence of alcohol.³ Moreover, if one partner has a problem with alcohol or drugs, domestic abuse is more likely than not to occur.⁴

In addition to alcohol being associated with abusers, victims may themselves turn to alcohol when they are assaulted. A study found that women who suffer from domestic abuse drank substantially more following an episode of abuse.⁵

Problems with alcohol have specific implications in these circumstances: the fear that alcohol abuse may be used against them in dispute over the custody of their children may hamper some women from accessing services for domestic violence. Moreover, a survey of London refugees in 2014 found that only a quarter of refugees often or always accept women who use alcohol or drugs, and 13% reported that they rarely or never accept them.⁶

The negative relationship holds in reverse as well: women who have experience of violent male partners may be reluctant to engage in mixed-gender services. However, women-only provisions for substance misuse are available in less than half of local authorities in England and Wales.⁷ Thus a negative bidirectional effect exists whereby alcohol may actively preclude women from receiving the support they need for domestic abuse, and domestic abuse may restrict their ability to engage in substance misuse services.

¹ WHO (2006), [Intimate partner violence and alcohol](#).

² The Institute of Alcohol Studies (2014). [Alcohol, domestic abuse and sexual assault](#).

³ 31% in England and Wales from ONS (2018), [the Nature of Violent crime in England and Wales: year ending March](#).

⁴ Galvani, S. et al. (2010), [Supporting families affected by substance use and domestic violence](#). The Tilda Goldberg Centre for Social Work and Social Care, University of Bedfordshire. (Page 5)

⁵ Barnett OW and Fagan RW (1993) Alcohol use in male spouse abusers and their female partners. *Journal of Family Violence*.

⁶ Harvey et al (2014), [Case by Case: Refuge provision in London for survivors of domestic violence who use alcohol and other drugs or have mental health problems](#) (page 17).

⁷ Agenda and AVA (2017). [Mapping the Maze: services for women experiencing multiple disadvantage in England and Wales Executive Summary](#).

Minimum Unit Pricing

Impact of MUP

Minimum unit pricing (MUP) is a highly targeted policy to reduce alcohol harm. It sets a floor price below which alcohol cannot be sold. This has the most dramatic impact upon the particularly harmful high-strength drinks (see figure).

MUP has been introduced in Scotland and will be introduced in Wales on 2 March 2020. The official NHS Health Scotland evaluation of off-trades sales for the full year following MUP's implementation in Scotland found that the volume of pure alcohol sold per adult had fallen by 3.6%, whereas in England and Wales (without MUP) sales rose by 3.2% over the same time period.⁸

In England, a 50p MUP is predicted to save 525 lives every year due to health benefits alone.⁹ Most of these are likely to come from those in poverty.¹⁰

Support for MUP

Minimum unit pricing has the widespread support of medical and police organisations, charities and the majority of the general public.¹¹ Publicans support the introduction of MUP by a rate of two to one, seeing it as good for business.¹²



For more information, please contact the AHA's Policy and Advocacy Manager Sarah Schoenberger, on sarah.schoenberger@ahauk.org.

⁸ Giles L, Robinson M and Beeston C. (2019) [Minimum Unit Pricing \(MUP\) Evaluation. Sales-based consumption: a descriptive analysis of one year post-MUP off-trade alcohol sales data](#). NHS Health Scotland.

⁹ Angus, C. et al. (2016) [Alcohol and cancer trends: intervention scenarios](#). University of Sheffield and Cancer Research UK. (Page 27)

¹⁰ Angus, C. et al. [Model-based appraisal of the comparative impact of minimum unit pricing and taxation policies in Scotland](#). (Page 61)

¹¹ Alcohol Health Alliance (2018). [How we drink, what we think](#).

¹² Institute of Alcohol Studies. 2017. [Pubs Quizzed: what publicans think about policy, public health and the changing trade](#).