



Uned Atal Trais
Violence Prevention Unit

VAWDASV and Drink Spiking in Wales

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Introduction

- VAWDASV
- VAWDASV in the night time economy
- Drink Spiking

Violence against Women, Domestic abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) is Prevalent, Serious, & Preventable

- Violence against women domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV) is a major **public health problem**, a **criminal justice issue**, and a **violation of human rights**.
- VAWDASV **impacts severely** on individuals and families, and harms the health of communities, societies and economies. The NIHR (NICE, 2014) state that: *"The cost, in both human and economic terms, is so significant that even marginally effective interventions are **cost effective**"*.
- The Home Office estimate the annual cost of domestic abuse alone, is **£66 billion** (Oliver et al., 2019), suggesting that the costs of all forms of VAWDASV are considerably higher.
- VAWDASV is rooted in gender inequality. Preventing VAWDASV requires an appreciation that it is part of a social pattern of predominantly **male violence** towards women (Hester and Lilley, 2014). Tackling violence and its root causes can improve the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities and have a **wider positive impact for the economy and society**.

VAWDASV in Wales

- **1/3 women** will experience VAWDASV in their lifetime (ONS; FRA; WHO*). In Wales that equates to **539,441** women.
- In the past year, the Wales VPU have recorded a **sharp increase in the number of young people** (24 and under) attending A&E* for assault relating to **intimate partner violence**. Victims under 25 account for a quarter of IPV-related assault attendances to A&E (Wales VPU, 2021).
- In 2020/21 there was a **42% increase in calls to the Live Fear Free Helpline**. In addition, the number of calls requiring **emergency service attendance increased by 48%** and the number of referrals to **refuge increased by 73%** (Welsh Women's Aid 2021)
- In England and Wales, In the year ending November 2020, there were 758,941 police recorded domestic abuse related crimes, **a 9% increase from the previous year** (ONS, 2020b).
- Overall, Wales saw an average of **2,506 rape offences a year** between 30/05/2019 and the same period in 2021. South Wales has a substantial amount more rape offences reported than any other police force*.
- In Wales, an average of **94 so called honour based abuse offences** a year occur (2018-2021). Offences were largely reported to South Wales police ($M = 72$) (24,30).

VAWDASV in Public Spaces

- **71% of women of all ages in the UK have experienced some form of sexual harassment in a public space, and 97% of 18-24 year olds reported having experienced some form of harassment** (All Party Parliamentary Group for UN Women, 2021)
- Research from South Wales PCC (2017) indicates that **46% of 18-24 year olds had personally experienced inappropriate sexual comments or touching while in the night time economy.**
- Figure 1 highlights how misogynistic **attitudes and beliefs underpin violent behaviours**, which can escalate when left unchallenged. Sexual violence behaviour occurs on a continuum, which includes micro-aggressions, through to unwanted sexual attention or harassment, rape and homicide.
- This continuum of abuse also represents the social acceptability of the behaviour. The higher up the pyramid the behaviour, the less acceptable, and more unlawful, it is. It is well-evidenced that women in the NTE commonly experience the lower level “microaggression” forms of sexual violence (Figure 1) (Anitha et al., 2020; Graham et al., 2017; Kavanaugh, 2013).

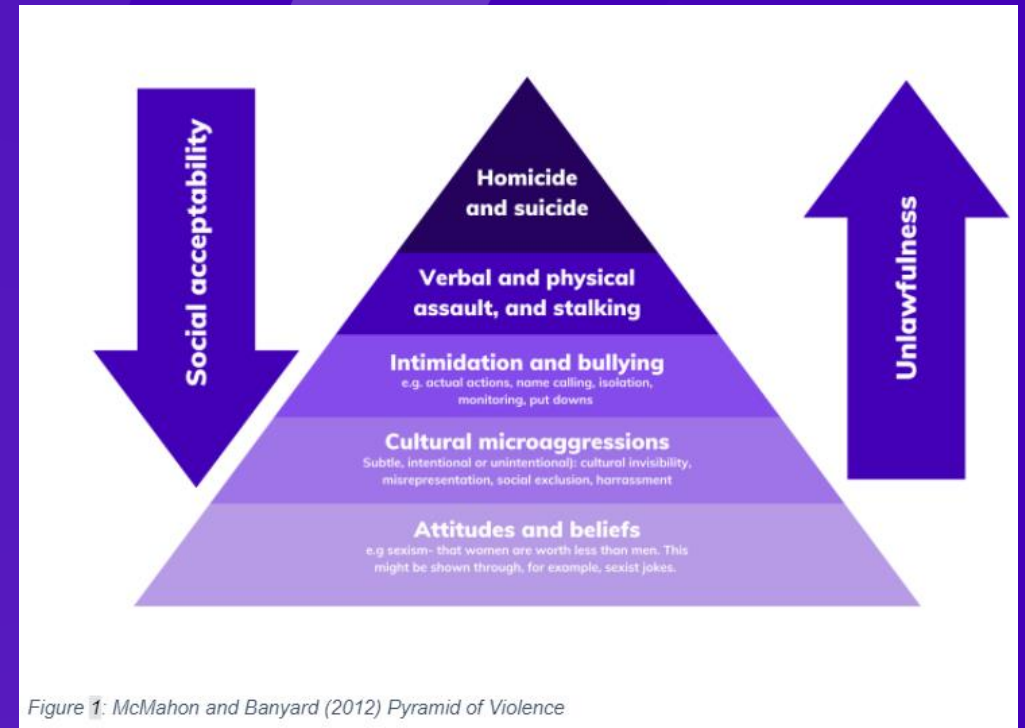


Figure 1: McMahon and Banyard (2012) Pyramid of Violence

Drink Spiking

- Drink spiking is a deliberate act. Public perception is that it is limited to slipping drugs into an alcoholic drink, however, drink spiking can include:
 - Putting alcohol into a non-alcoholic drink (such as water, soft drink, non-alcoholic punch or fruit juice).
 - Adding extra alcohol to an alcoholic drink.
 - Slipping prescription drugs (e.g. stimulants, tranquilisers, sedatives, opiates);
 - Or illegal drugs (such as [benzodiazepines](#), [amphetamines](#)) or 'date rape' drugs (Rohypnol and Gamma Hydroxybutyrate (GHB) into an alcoholic or non-alcoholic drink.
- These substances tend to be easy to obtain (often online) can be activated at low doses to go unnoticed, short and fast-acting to facilitate control over the victim and avoid his/her suspicion.

Drink spiking

- They also produce confused symptoms, which can induce health personnel to a confusion between victim's symptom and alcoholic intoxication/ substance use - causing a delay/ inability for clinical diagnosis.
- Drink spiking is a form of gender based violence. Young women and non-binary people are more likely to have their drinks spiked than men. Men are most likely to be the perpetrators.
- Rooted in inequality – desire for power and control over the victim. Spiking a drink with the intention of making someone more vulnerable to assault, rape or robbery.
- Very dangerous consequences for the health of the person whose drink is spiked. The effects can be unpredictable but are likely to be more serious if someone who's had their drink spiked has also consumed more alcohol, or other drugs. This is because of the combination of effects from the different drugs working at the same time.

DFAS and Chemical Submission

- The practice of sexual crimes associated with drug use is called Drug-Facilitated Sexual Assault (DFSA), while 'Chemical Submission' (CS) is used to include all type of crimes related to this activity.
- Epidemiological studies from other countries indicate that up to 17% of sexual assault cases could be classified as CS cases by involuntary exposure of the victim to a psychoactive substance, although a high percentage of victims admit a voluntary previous consumption of a substance (Cruz-Landeira et al., 2008).
- Because there are no official statistics it's difficult to know the true extent of the crime. Often people don't report drink spiking, because they don't remember details of the night, or they feel embarrassed.

Spiking and substance-assisted sexual assault

- Data from Policing, Health and 3rd sector organisations is currently being collated and evaluated
- 'Spiking' not readily identifiable from Health Board data + caveats re data generally
- 'Spiking' terminology misleading. One force identify 50% reports relate to drink, 19% needle, 31% N/K
- No single offence of 'spiking' and so more difficult to identify the true extent of reports to policing, at least 5 common classifications
- Very low availability of sample testing, meaning identifying actual prevalence compared to level of concern is not possible
- Majority of concerns relate to pubs/clubs
- Media awareness
- Finding/feeling puncture mark and/or adverse reactions when low volume of drinks



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