

A Brief analysis of Alcohol Related Problems across the New Forest, 1/9/06-1/9/07

Introduction: Assault, Criminal Damage, then Rowdy and Nuisance, hot spot maps for 1/9/06-1/9/07 are presented, then the same are shown for offenders definitely under the influence of alcohol.

Methodology: Using Business Objects and reported date between 1/9/06 and 1/09/07, all offences were obtained for the New Forest. All records that are recorded as involving substance misuse drink were used. Then keyword searches were done using “in drink”, “Drunk”, “beer”, “lager”, “vodka”, “cider”, “alcohol”, “drinking”, and “whisky”.

Methodological Criticisms: It is important to bear in mind that the Substance Used indicator is rarely used, so is not a very good measure. Secondly this doesn't show how many incidents in these areas were alcohol induced, e.g. damage to cars/ play areas later on. Further it doesn't include the list of C12s – which is where police have stopped at a park and probably confiscated alcohol.

Effect of Alcohol

The Australian government estimates that ‘40% of violent crime; 78% of assaults and 88% of criminal damage cases are committed while the offender is under the influence of alcohol’. (http://www.alcoholinfo.nsw.gov.au/alcohol_summit_03/links/public_safety)

It is not just researchers who draw the link between drinking and offending. Offenders themselves draw the same link, between one third and 46% felt that alcohol use and criminal behaviour were linked, with the vast majority falling into the category “alcohol use causes crime” (<http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk/toolkits/ar020204.htm>)

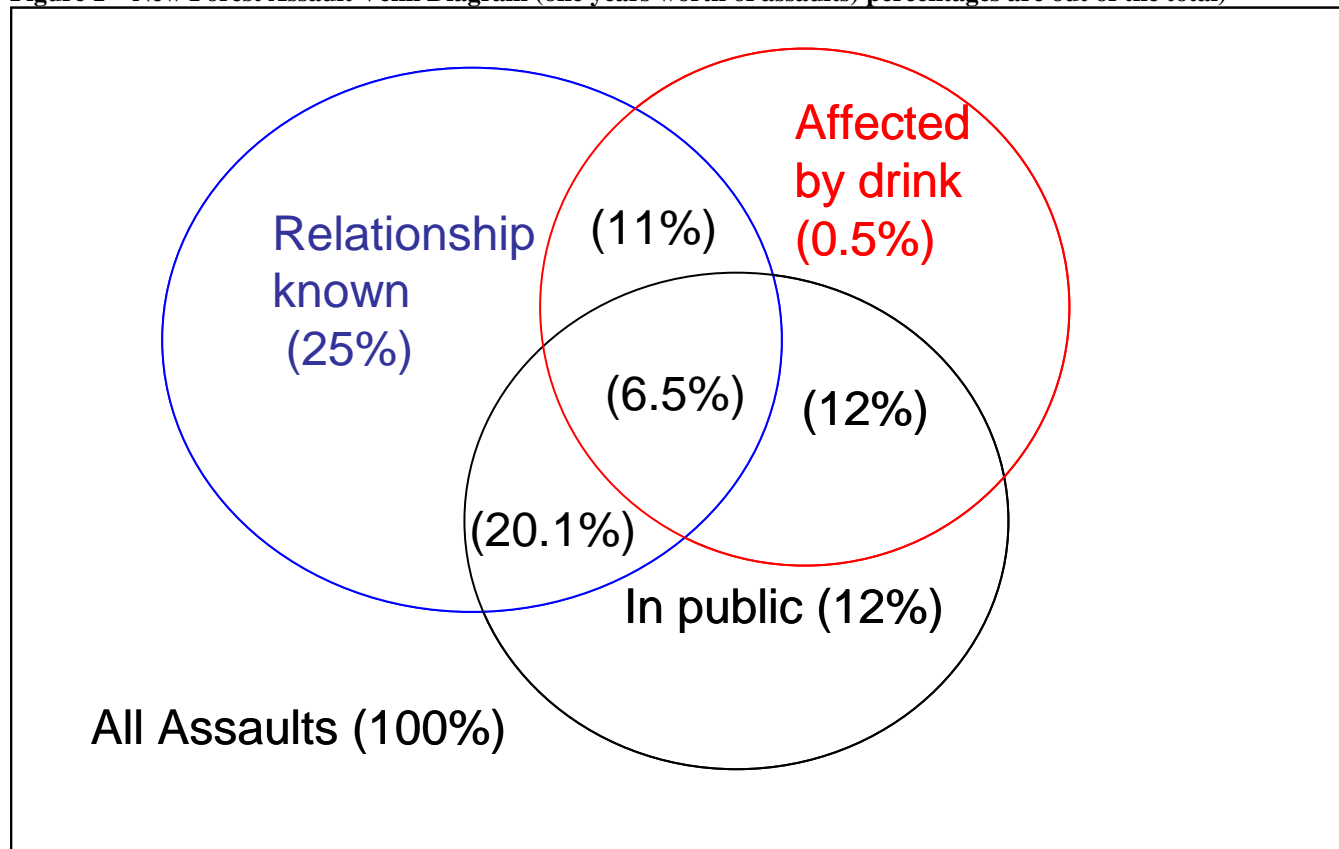
Assaults:

Firstly the substance used box in RMS police system is sparsely filled in, so it is best taken as a dip sample measure rather than an overview. However it is evident that generally the alcohol data shows the same patterns as the non-alcohol data. This combined with the research above showing the strong effect of alcohol on assaults, suggests the impact of alcohol on our crime figures.

Domestic incidents have been removed, but it is still evident from our maps, that our assaults are happening all over towns, although with more in the town centres. Yes many do happen in the town centres, but so do they happen elsewhere in public, on streets, in parks, in school grounds after school, and during school as the maps illustrate.

Using the Assault Venn below, and the fact that at least 9% of assaults were definitely in licensed premises it is clear that many assaults happen in public places. Excluding pubs I estimate 35-40% of assaults occur elsewhere. Using previous dip sample work I found about 27% of assaults occurred in streets, parks etc and 6% in shops. Given that 30% of our assaults are definitely alcohol related, and removing the licensed premises assaults (9%), suggests it is possible to have an impact on at least 21% of our assaults. Further given how poor RMS is at recorded alcohol related incidents, and the Australian research suggests 78% of assaults are alcohol related, it implies that alcohol controlling measures may be effective. However this is not to suggest that a DPPO would strongly curtail these, because it may well be that some of the drinking etc. happens legitimately at home and in pubs, but it is likely to have a positive impact.

Figure 1 – New Forest Assault Venn Diagram (one years worth of assaults) percentages are out of the total)



Criminal Damage:

The key points to note from the subsequent maps are as follows. Firstly the substance used box in RMS police system is sparsely filled in, so it is best taken as a dip sample measure rather than an overview. The alcohol data shows similar patterns to the non-alcohol data, however it is often too sparse, this combined with the research above showing the strong effect of alcohol on criminal damage, suggests the impact of alcohol on our crime figures.

The data is so sparse because of the nature of the offences. Usually a wing mirror is reported smashed the next day, or tyres slashed or a wall kicked in, so we are often unable to associate an offender and therefore a state of inebriation with an incident.

Domestic incidents have been removed, but it still evident that many of our criminal damages are happening all over out towns. Yes many do happen in the town centres, but they also happen elsewhere in public, on streets, in parks, in school grounds after school etc. Now this is not to suggest that a DPPO would strongly curtail these, because it may well be that some of the drinking etc. happens legitimately at home and in pubs, but it is likely to have a positive impact.

The following table indicates the fraction of offences for which offenders who were caught were tested and found positive (in the UK).

Percentage positive tests among arrestees held for common offence types

| | Alcohol | Any Drug (excl. alcohol) |
|-----------------|----------------|-----------------------------|
| Assault | 32% | 61% |
| Robbery | 75% | 100 % |
| Criminal damage | 29% | 58% |

Notes: Includes only those arrestees who provided a specimen and were held for the offences shown. Arrestees held for more than one offence have been coded in terms of the most serious offence using the scale published by Phillips and Brown (1998). (<http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk/toolkits/ar020204.htm>)

This shows that nationally 29% of criminal damage offenders were under the influence of alcohol and 58% were under the influence of drugs. This again indicates the potential crime reduction impact of confiscation of alcohol from offenders. Also for criminal damage:

- ‘Offenders are predominantly aged 21 or under and gave reasons for committing the crime that include alcohol; for the buzz or being bored; and revenge / annoyance with the victim’ (*Tackling vandalism and other criminal damage*, Home Office - Let’s Keep Crime Down guides).

Rowdy and Inconsiderate:

Again the maps show similar trends to the Assaults and the Criminal Damage. It is important to remember that a Rowdy and Inconsiderate call is not actually necessarily an offence, and is often a question of tolerance of locals. The Rowdy and Nuisance hot spots tend (but don't always) to correspond with the Criminal Damage ones. This also suggests that many of our Rowdy and nuisance calls are alcohol related. Our method indicates that 23% are drink related. However this is an underestimate, given that if you have been drinking, and are then being noisy, the caller may well not know that you have been drinking and report "a noisy group walking by/ loitering". A dip sample of 70 of our alcohol related calls, showed the following results:

Figure 2 – Dip sample of Rowdy and Inconsiderate calls, with age of person/ persons being complained about vis a vis alcohol

| Age | 18 | Over18 | Under18 | youths | Grand Total |
|-------|----|--------|---------|--------|-------------|
| Total | 9 | 23 | 16 | 22 | 70 |

This shows that of our definitely alcohol related incidents (23%), 32/70 (46%) involved drinking by at least one person over the age of 18. These are situations where the DPPO is potentially granting new (discriminatory) powers. It was unable to age the generic term "youths", it is suggested these are Under 18, however the term youth as a descriptor probably covers 12-21, so may also include over age drinkers. The DPPO however would have no impact on the underage alcohol consumption (54%), since the police already have confiscation powers for that. However it does help confiscation of alcohol from groups with one member over 18 and the rest under 18.

Conclusions:

Assaults, criminal damage, public order offences and many of our rowdy and nuisance calls are affected by alcohol. This often happens in public places (parks, school grounds, streets, play areas etc.), for example currently around Carvers rec with overage drinkers.

However part of the problem of drinking is also the litter found afterwards – ie the broken glass in the play parks, and fields. It is hoped that this would be alleviated by confiscation of the alcohol.

The DPPO enables the officer/warden to make a judgement and distinguish between the quiet picnicker, the drunk and anti-social youths, and the drunk and anti-social adults. Further it is less discriminatory than current powers which only allow confiscation of alcohol from underage drinkers, rather than based on anti-social criteria (which is the logic of confiscating it). It also allows confiscation of alcohol from a group where one member is over 18 and the rest under (again if it is believed they will behave anti-socially). Currently with one member overage officers know that the group shares the alcohol, but cannot prove it. In a dip sample (70) of our alcohol related Rowdy and Inconsiderate calls, 46% were found to involve groups over the age of 18 (or containing one member over 18).

Given the problems with overage drinking in Ringwood, it is recommended that we go for a DPPO this area. Looking at the evidence on the preceding pages, there is a strong case to be made for DPPO designation of Totton, Hythe, Holbury, Hardley, Fawley, Blackfield, New Milton, Lymington, Brockenhurst, Marchwood and Fordingbridge.

Lyndhurst has a weaker case, but owing to the relatively large number of alcohol related assaults, should also be considered. Ashurst should then be considered. There is a weaker absolute case to be made for Bransgore (8 rowdy and inconsiderate def involving alcohol). However it is worth considering proportionality, relative to population, the problems in Ashurst, Bransgore etc. are probably as bad as in many other areas e.g. Hythe, Lymington. I have also looked at Calshot and their simply isn't the evidence to justify it, however it is a uniquely isolated area, so is unlikely to ever provide the same sort of evidence threshold as other areas in the forest.

The DPPO is not a cureall. It simply gives officers/wardens another tool to use to combat anti-social behaviour; which is often drink related (23% of our rowdy and inconsiderate calls, 30% of our assaults, 7% of our criminal damage). Criminal damage is so low (compared to research) because it is usually reported as a result (e.g. wing mirror broken), and so it is not known who the offender was, and their state of sobriety. It is plausible to believe it will have a positive impact. However Southampton city centre found the DPPO was very effective in terms of public reassurance and had little noticeable impact on their crime figures. They have only rolled it out citywide since May 1st, so have not conducted an evaluation of that yet.