

Fact sheet // Alcohol and violence

Violence causes great suffering for individuals and high costs for society. There are many different factors causing violence – alcohol consumption is one of them.

Alcohol is a contributing factor to many cases of violence worldwide, both at home and in public places. One billion children globally (more than half of all children between 2 and 17 years old) are estimated to have experienced mental, physical or sexual violence in the last year.¹

According to the WHO, 35 percent of all women in the world have at some point experienced physical or sexual violence. The large majority of violence against women occurs in close relationships. Almost a third of all women have been in a relationship where they have been subjected to violence by their partner.²

Causal or contributing factor?

Alcohol is a common factor in various types of violence, including violence in close relationships, child abuse and sexual violence. Estimates of the proportion of partner violence that is alcohol-related vary between countries, from 48 to 87 percent.³ A similar estimate of sexual violence shows that alcohol is part of the picture in between one third and three quarters of the cases.⁴

In a survey conducted in northern Tanzania, 40 percent of women reported being subjected to violence by a partner who did not drink alcohol, while over 65 percent of women whose partner drank alcohol had been subjected to violence.⁷

I korthet:

// Det finns en stor mängd studier som visar ett samband mellan alkoholkonsumtion och förekomsten av våld. Detta gäller såväl i nära relationer som sexuellt våld och våld mot barn. På befolkningsnivå kan man se ett tydligt samband mellan den totala alkoholkonsumtionen och mängden våld i samhället.

// Alkoholpolitiska åtgärder på lokal eller nationell nivå bidrar till att minska risken för förekomsten av våld, bland annat genom att reglera pris och tillgänglighet.

Many factors contribute to violence, among them patriarchal structures and norms. A variety of studies (laboratory environment and different types of epidemiological studies) point to a causal link between alcohol and violence: Higher doses of alcohol increase the likelihood of aggressive behavior.⁵

On population level, there is for example in Sweden a strong connection between total alcohol consumption and the number of cases of murder, manslaughter and assault. The authors of a historical analysis even find that changes in alcohol policy are the only factor that historically seems to have influenced the prevalence of violence. There is no clear connection to other major societal changes.⁶

Alcohol policy matter

That alcohol is a cause of violence is st-

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renghened by studies showing that changes in alcohol policy measures result in changes in the incidence of violence. WHO's reports on violence prevention^{8,9,10} show that measures which reduce overall alcohol consumption in a population also reduce violence. Other studies show that measures that instead increase consumption, such as lower prices, increased opening hours and more sales outlets, are followed by an increase in violence.⁵

A US study has found that an increase in the price of alcohol by 1 percent reduces the likelihood of partner violence against women by 5.3 percent.¹¹ Another study from the same country shows that a ten-percent more restrictive alcohol policy (as one of a total of 29 possible policy measures) is associated with a nine percent reduction of alcohol-related murders.¹²

Several of the Agenda 2030 goals address violence, including 16.2; ending all forms of violence against children, and 5.2; ending violence against women. Effective action against alcohol-related violence is essential for these goals to be realized.

References

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Recommendations

// Strive for policy measures that have been proven to protect against violence.

Examples of such measures are increased alcohol prices, limited number of sales outlets, limited opening hours and age limits.

// Any development programs aimed at reducing violence should carefully analyze the role of alcohol in a given context.

// A global framework convention on alcohol control, similar to that which applies to tobacco, would contribute to a much more effective alcohol policy in many low- and middle income countries, thereby reducing violence against, among others, women and children.

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About us

The international work of the IOGT-NTO Movement takes place in 14 countries in East Africa, Southeast Asia, Sri Lanka and the Balkans. Our focus is on alcohol as an obstacle to development.

Read more at www.iogntororelsen.se/internationellt/ or contact us at info@iogntororelsen.se.

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