



GLOBAL CAMPAIGN FOR VIOLENCE PREVENTION  
CAMPAGNE MONDIALE POUR LA PREVENTION DE LA VIOLENCE

# Youth ViOlenCe, Alcohol and Nightlife

Violence Prevention Alliance Working Group on Youth Violence, Alcohol and Nightlife

## fact sheet 3

### Late night transport

#### Introduction

In towns and cities across the world, transport options are often limited late at night when nightlife areas are at their busiest. Where late night transport facilities are inadequate, crowds of intoxicated individuals congregate in the streets around bars and nightclubs, increasing the potential for violent encounters. Thus, in many nightlife areas, violence and other forms of disorder peak towards the end of the night as individuals leave drinking venues to return home. Further, the long waits, frustration and competition focused around limited transport facilities mean taxi ranks and bus stops can be hotspots for violence. Poor late night transport services and fear of violence at transport points can also cause people to adopt risky methods of getting home, including accepting lifts from strangers, driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or walking through unfamiliar areas. Often those opting to walk home or searching for transport pass through areas that are poorly lit and have limited security measures, increasing their vulnerability to assaults, rape and road traffic crashes, especially when intoxicated. Thus the availability and management of late night transport facilities in nightlife areas can have

a large impact on youth violence and injury. This relationship has been recognised in many countries, where interventions have been put into place to increase the availability of safe late night transport, reduce crowding in the streets after bars and nightclubs close, and prevent young people adopting dangerous methods of getting home after a night out. This fact sheet outlines some of the key issues concerning late night transport and nightlife violence, and discusses measures put in place in different countries to prevent violence and injuries related to transport issues.

#### Relationships between nightlife transport, violence and injury

- A range of studies in different countries has shown levels of alcohol-related violence to be at their highest late at night, corresponding with bar and nightclub closing times (e.g. Australia [1], Norway [2], England and Wales [3]).
- In England, taxi ranks and bus stops are often key hotspots for violence, linked to long waiting times and competition for scarce resources (4,5).

- Transport workers, particularly taxi drivers, have been identified as being at high risk of violence in several countries including the US (6), Australia (7) and Finland (8).
- In London, England, ten women are raped or sexually assaulted each month after getting into cars with men posing as taxi drivers (9).
- Research in Queensland, Australia, identified the availability of late night transport as a key factor in reducing physical violence in nightlife areas (10).
- Research in nine European cities found that almost half of young people who attend nightclubs have driven under the influence of alcohol and almost a third under the influence of drugs (11).
- In a study in Bangkok, Thailand, 40% of riders in motorcycle crashes were under the influence of alcohol and 71% of alcohol-related motorcycle crashes occurred in nightlife hours (22.00 to 03.00). Across Thailand, 11% of motorcycle crashes that involved alcohol resulted in rider fatality compared with 2% of those with no alcohol involvement (12).
- In northern Sweden, half of pedestrian deaths occurring at night (21.00 to 05.00) tested positive for alcohol (13). In Great Britain, four in five pedestrian fatalities at peak weekend nightlife hours (22.00 to 04.00) had blood alcohol levels above 80mg/100ml (the legal drink drive limit) (14).

The high levels of violence associated with nightlife transport shortages, and the potentially devastating consequences of using unsafe forms of transport, have meant late night transport provision and safety have been the focus of nightlife interventions in several countries. The following section outlines a range of such measures being used to improve nightlife transport, reduce the use of unsafe methods for getting home after a night out, and consequently reduce violence and injury among nightlife patrons.

## Interventions

Late night transport availability can be increased in nightlife areas by providing additional public transport services during peak hours. In Australia, for example, many cities have introduced late night bus services at weekends to facilitate the safe dispersal of revellers from nightlife areas. One such service in Manly (Sydney) was launched in 2004 as part of the Manly Safe Summer Campaign, with buses promoted in nightlife venues by youth volunteers. The service has since been expanded and use of the buses is free (15). In Paris,

France, the Noctilien night bus service operates throughout the city from 00.30 to 05.30, to replace the day time rail service. This service is targeted not only at those using the city's nightlife but also at the growing number of commuters who work in the city at night (16).

Although few late night bus schemes have been independently evaluated, in England police statistics have shown that improvements to late night bus services have contributed to reduced levels of assault (e.g. Manchester [17]). Here, financial barriers to the implementation of late night bus services have often been overcome through the development of local partnerships between transport service providers, local authorities, police, and bar and nightclub owners to fund bus services in their introductory periods (18). In other countries, such as the Netherlands, late night buses have been provided by the owners of discotheques themselves to shuttle customers home at the end of the night. Regardless of how late night bus services are developed, their implementation should seek to protect both customer and driver safety. They should also consider where customers are being deposited and what onward transport facilities are available, to prevent the redistribution of violence to neighbouring areas that may already face high demands for late night transport or have limited night time security.

A variety of measures can be introduced at transport points to deter violence and disorder, to increase perceptions of safety, and thus to encourage the use of safe public transport at night. These include improving street lighting, installing CCTV cameras, and the use of security staff to manage queues and assist customers. In Manchester, England, the TaxiSafe scheme (implemented as part of a broader city wide City Centre Safe scheme [17]) introduced security staff at taxi ranks and found increased perceptions of safety among taxi users and drivers, and reduced assaults around taxi ranks at night (19) (see Box 1). In Glasgow, Scotland,

### Box 1: TaxiSafe, Manchester (England)

In Manchester, security staff have been employed at late night taxi ranks to increase safety, manage queues and maintain order. Taxi 'marshals' wear high visibility clothing and can communicate with police and CCTV controllers via a radio system. Evaluation of the taxi marshal scheme found both taxi drivers and users felt safer using taxi ranks when marshals were present, while police data showed a 50% drop in crime at marshalled ranks compared with the previous year (19).

## Box 2: Nite Zone, Glasgow (Scotland)

The Nite Zone scheme in Glasgow, Scotland, aims to reduce crime and fear of crime in the city at night. Through a partnership of the city council, police and the city centre Alcohol Action Group, the scheme involves: use of dedicated night bus stops for the city's late night bus service; increased numbers of taxis servicing late night taxi ranks; security personnel at bus and taxi stops; improved lighting in the city centre; provision of additional CCTV, help points and street signs for buses and taxis; and widespread distribution of information on late night transport options. Evaluation of the project pilot scheme found violent crime had reduced by 19.1%, road crashes by 11.4%, and waiting times for taxis had reduced from one hour to 15 minutes (20).

the use of such security staff in combination with enhanced environmental safety measures and public awareness raising, resulted in reductions in both violence and road crashes (20) (see Box 2).

The presence of security staff at taxi ranks can ensure people using the ranks access only legitimate taxis. However, where taxis are hailed in the street, individuals pretending to be taxi drivers have targeted women for sexual assault. Policies to require taxi drivers to display a standard photo identification card containing their licence details, for taxis to carry external taxi plates or be of a standard design (e.g. yellow and black; Barcelona, Spain) can help customers recognise illegal taxis. In London, high levels of sexual assaults related to the use of illegitimate taxis led to implementation of the Safer Travel at Night (STAN) campaign, which raised awareness of the dangers of illegal taxis through poster, television and cinema advertising, and disseminated information on safe late night travel options across London. The campaign was associated with a reduction in sexual assaults related to illegal taxis from 212 in 2002 to 140 the following year (21).

Transport staff working in nightlife areas can themselves be at risk of violence and abuse from aggressive customers. Safety measures to protect transport staff include the use of security staff and police on public transport, the installation of cameras in vehicles, radio links between drivers and police, and modification of vehicles to protect drivers. In New York (US), for example, homicides against taxi drivers were reduced through a policy requiring all taxis to contain partitions (screens separating the driver from back seat passengers) or cameras. The scheme was introduced in 1994, and saw homicides against taxi drivers fall from

40 or more per year in the early 1990s to 15 in 1995 and further to five or less since 2001 (22).

Demands for late night transport can be particularly high in areas where bars and nightclubs have standard closing times, meaning all venues close at the same time and customers are ejected onto the streets en masse. In England and Wales, this issue was addressed through new licensing legislation, implemented in 2005, that allowed later opening of bars and nightclubs, with the intention of promoting staggered closing hours. Evaluation of the new licensing legislation is underway, yet while some local evidence suggests serious nightlife violence may have been reduced (e.g. Wirral, England [23]), moving to longer trading hours has been implemented along with increased investment in police and other resources to manage nightlife. Elsewhere, extended opening hours have led to increased levels of alcohol consumption, violence and road traffic crashes (e.g. Australia [24,25]). Conversely, earlier closing times imposed on bars and nightclubs in Cali, Colombia, were associated with reductions in injuries through both violence and road crashes (26).

Further consequences of poor late night transport services can include increased drink and drug driving, and more individuals walking home and being vulnerable to both assaults and road traffic crashes, particularly when intoxicated. In many countries, late night pedestrian deaths frequently involve alcohol (see Box 3). Further, causing death by drink driving is at least an act of criminal neglect and as such falls within many definitions of violence (27). A wide range of measures can be effective in reducing drink driving and increasing pedestrian safety at night, and some of those most pertinent to nightlife are outlined in Box 3.

In addition to work to prevent drink driving and improve road safety, simple messages such as those that encourage people to travel home accompanied by friends rather than alone or to ensure they retain enough money to pay for safe transport home after a night out can be useful in promoting safe journeys home. For example, having no money left at the end of the night can force people to adopt risky methods of getting home. Consequently, in Australia, pre-pay taxi voucher schemes are used in several areas, through which people can purchase taxi vouchers from newsagents before going out and utilise these in any legitimate taxi (28). In some parts of England (e.g. Preston), student schemes have been developed between universities and local taxi companies through which students can use their student identification cards to use taxis, with fares later retrieved via their university (29).

### Box 3: Road traffic crashes

While the focus of this fact sheet is violence prevention, the availability of late night transport is also strongly linked to unintentional injury through road traffic crashes. Here, inability to access public transport after visiting bars and nightclubs may encourage people to drive home from nightlife under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or walk home intoxicated along dark streets.

Environmental measures such as additional lighting can increase the safety of walking routes home, helping reduce individuals' vulnerability to both road traffic crashes and assaults. Further, a range of traffic calming measures can reduce the risks of intoxicated pedestrians suffering road traffic crashes. For example, in Ibiza, Spain, a main highway separating two of the island's largest nightclubs was the scene of a number of pedestrian deaths involving young club-goers. A range of improvements have since been introduced to slow traffic down, prevent club-goers walking onto the highway and ensure that public transport only collects and deposits customers in safe areas. For example, traffic lights have been installed at regular intervals covering the affected section of highway, designed to slow traffic down as it passes the nightclubs. A similar

development in Australia, the 'Dwell-on-Red' scheme, was found to be effective in reducing traffic speeds in high risk areas at night (30).

There is a wide range of literature available on measures to reduce drink driving, with some of the most effective considered to be lower legal blood alcohol limits for driving and strict enforcement of drink driving legislation (e.g. police breath testing). In Sweden, for example, a reduction of the blood alcohol content (BAC) limit for driving from 0.5g/L to 0.2g/L reduced alcohol-related road deaths by up to 10% (31). Some countries have implemented zero BAC limits for younger drivers that have been found to be effective in reducing drink driving in youths (32). In Australia, use of random breath testing for drivers resulted in a 22% decrease in fatal road traffic crashes and a 36% reduction in alcohol-related traffic crashes (33,34). Other measures such as designated driver schemes (where drivers are encouraged to remain alcohol-free) have been used to reduce drink driving although there is little evidence for their effectiveness and in some studies such schemes have been associated with increased alcohol consumption by passengers (35,36).

### Summary

The adequate provision and management of safe late night transport in nightlife areas can be a key factor in violence prevention. Poor availability of late night transport means young people are required to spend longer in nightlife areas after bars and nightclubs have closed, and leads to frustration and competition for scarce transport resources and also the use of unsafe methods of returning home. Such factors increase the potential for violence between young people in nightlife areas and can make them vulnerable to assault on journeys. They also increase the risks of road traffic crashes as intoxicated individuals attempt to walk home or drive home after a night out. Further, transport staff are an occupational group at particularly high risk of violence in many countries.

The examples outlined here have shown how transport provision and safety are being developed in nightlife areas internationally. Such measures should be an important factor of any nightlife environment. In particular, where nightlife economies are expanding, planners should ensure that strategies to increase the number of people coming into nightlife areas also provide for adequate safe late night transport to manage

their dispersal at the end of the night. However, while improvements to late night transport can reduce violence, they are not a stand-alone cure. Even cities with 24-hour public transport services experience violence at the end of a night out, for example when confrontations occur at other congregation points such as fast food venues, when intoxicated individuals actively seek fights or when arguments developing inside bars continue in the streets. Consequently, transport measures should be seen as key components in wider policies and programmes to provide safer nightlife, reduce hazardous and harmful alcohol consumption and reduce the risks of violence. Such initiatives are often best undertaken through partnerships (including local governors, police, transport services and nightlife industries), to develop sustainable and safe environments that reduce drunkenness, protect young people while using nightlife, and enable them to return home safely at the end of a night out.

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Other Fact Sheets available from the VPA Working Group on Youth Violence, Alcohol and Nightlife:

Fact Sheet 1: An introduction to youth violence, alcohol and nightlife

Fact Sheet 2: The role of door staff in violence prevention

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