

Safe nights out:
Workers' perspectives
on tackling
violence against
women and girls

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Background

- There is a relationship between VAWG and the NTE, and especially when combined with the consumption of alcohol.
 - Existing research focused on workers within the NTE is limited and usually focuses on only one group of workers.
 - Safer Streets funding was secured to build an evidence base about key risks, what works well, how to identify perpetrators, how to protect potential victims of VAWG.
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Overarching Research Questions

1. What is the understanding of violence against women and girls amongst night-time economy workers?
2. What strategies (if any) are taken by night-time economy venues and staff to reduce incidences of violence against women and girls and/or increase the detection of perpetrators?
3. What are the experiences of night-time economy workers as bystanders?
4. To what extent (if any) have night-time economy workers experienced violence and harassment?
5. How do night-time venues and workers contribute to violence against women and girls and other harmful behaviour in public spaces?



Methodology: Focus Groups/Interviews

Professional	Number of participants	Gender (Female: Male)
Security/Door Staff: SG	4	2:2
Fast Food Workers 1: FF FG1	4	0:4
Fast Food workers 2: FF FG2	3	3:0
Street Pastors: SP	4	3:1
Bar Staff: Bar FG1	3	2:1
Bar Staff: Bar FG2	3	2:1
Fast food courier: FFC	1	0:1
Night club staff: Club FG1	5	3:2
Night club staff: Club FG2	7	3:4
Night Club staff: Club FG3	3	1:2
Police: Police FG1	4	1:3
Police: Police FG2	4	0:4
Police: Police FG3	3	0:3
Police: Police FG4	3	1:2
Police: Police FG5	3	1:2
Police: Police FG6	2	0:2
Taxi drivers: TD1	1	0:1
Taxi drivers: TD2	1	0:1
Total number of participants	58	

Key Themes

Five key themes were identified:

1. Knowledge and understanding of VAWG
2. Training and training needs
3. Workers experiences, including the normalisation of sexual violence and reporting practices
4. Policing the night-time economy
5. Premise design, layout and visual aids.




Knowledge and Understanding

Most participants showed a good awareness of what was meant by VAWG. The majority were able to provide definitions of what stood as VAWG, but gave varying descriptions that encompassed physical, verbal, emotional and psychological manifestations. This led to high levels of **inconsistency**.

Club FG1: *'It can be small things, any sort of touch, unsolicited, I would count as violence...any physical harm...someone walking home at night can get catcalled and it can feel really aggressive, but it is based on personal opinion and what you are like as a person.'*

Bar FG2: *'I dunno, I, the way that I see it.... it's more like taking advantage of them as well. Like I feel like working behind the bar you've seen like, males or even other females going up to girls and trying to talk them into a conversation that they don't particularly feel comfortable in.....'*

FF FG1: *'Obviously it means that there is a higher percentage of women getting attacked than men...rape, probably assault, domestic batterings.... I don't know really.'*



What is
Violence Against
Women and Girls ?

Knowledge and Understanding

Male taxi drivers expressed the difficulties that males might have in determining and identifying what qualifies as VAWG in certain situations due to lack of personal experience in this area:

'It's like weird interactions and inappropriate stuff...I suppose it's to do with privilege as well. Like me, nobody ever speaks to me in that kind of way, so I've got no direct experience of it. So, spotting it happening to other people can be difficult.'

They were less confident in their ability to determine whether VAWG had occurred. As this **Police Officer** explained:

'It can be quite difficult to identify...could be she's upset, and he's got his arms round her....a standard argument....or a pattern of controlling behaviour....it's quite difficult to pick up on.'

The relationship with alcohol was acknowledged and there were **good and consistent** protocols in place to both prevent and deal with allegations of spiking. **Zero Tolerance Training and Operation Lookout were commended.**



Supporting Women at risk of VAWG

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- NTE workers drew on numerous strategies to limit alcohol consumption, although they recognised that pre-drinking and cheap offers made this difficult.
 - The majority, but not all, knew about Ask Angela. Some levels of doubt about its usefulness.
 - They were not well apprised of safe havens.
 - Many engaged in active surveillance but argued their heightened suspicion and any interventions involved **'going with their gut'**. This applied to all types of NTE worker including the Police. Interventions were premised on personal levels of confidence.



Training Needs

- Overwhelming call for **more training** from all groups about how to recognise and address VAWG
- As a Security Guard explained:
- *‘Profiling people and characterising certain behaviours, looking more extensively into the why someone might be acting in that way...how are you ever gonna catch someone spiking someone unless you are razor eyes...I think if there was training that identified human behaviour because, you know, I can’t remember correct term for it, but I know there’s some kind of training or background where you can... it teaches you certain things about people’s body language, and demeanour... that’s a bit more extensive than what we get taught and might be a good way of being able to get the guys to understand that there is someone that we need to look out for.’*
- Preferred face to face opportunities and did not want to have to pay for the training themselves (case for SGs).



Workers' experiences

- Female workers reported that sexual violence was both ubiquitous and 'to be expected' – a 'normal' aspect of nighttime work.
- Club FG3: *'I've had two different customers jump through the window on top of me trying to punch my head in, threatening to kill me... because I've not given them their coats back... I've been groped... I've been harassed for my number...'*
- But these experiences were also detailed by male workers:

'Last week, I had a girl try to spit at me, because I didn't want to interact with her. I've had a female try to grope me just as I'm on the dance floor just trying to clean up. I had a girl literally try to grab my bum, try to do a whole strip dance on my mop as I'm trying to clean.... had a girl at the bar tried to grab my face to kiss me whilst I'm literally just trying to serve...'

- The Police had similar experiences: ***"Yeah, I've had my arse slapped before"***.



Gendered abuse

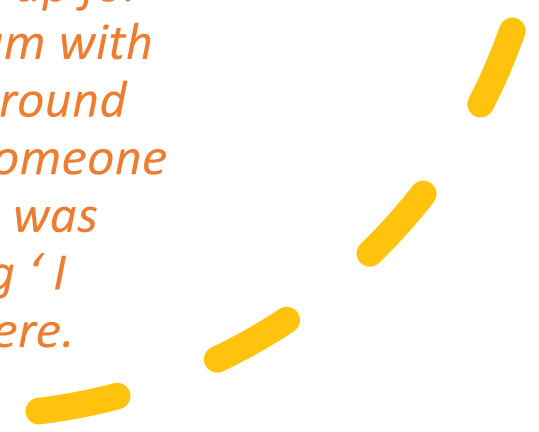
- There were significant differences in the types of abuse men and women experienced - the threatening and sexual aspect being significant:

'The abuse you get as a woman is very different, it's very sexual like it... I've had a male threaten to rape me and come back and they're gonna rape me and they're gonna do this and they're gonna do that like it's not the same abuse that you would get if you were a man because, for some weird reason, it's almost like it's weird for them to threaten to hit a girl, but it's OK for them to threaten to rape a woman.'

- Abuse had far-reaching consequences:
 - Lack of challenge, preference to de-escalate
 - Little reporting across all groups, instead seek peer support, esp., security guards.
 - Fear of repercussions, walking home, being recognised outside of work



SG: 'There are some nasty people, and there's an element that I might bump into them, I am vulnerable. When you do this job, you do change the way that you do things when you are not at work....I wear my hair up for work and down when I am with my son.....I was walking round ASDA with my son and someone I had ejected from a bar, was looking at me and saying 'I know you from somewhere.'



Policing the NTE: Who's responsibility is it?



- **Respondents stressed significant understaffing and thereby response policing:** *'the night staff are so understaffed that they end up using late staff to go out to calls...They have no one, so there's no one on the street... sometimes it's down to staffing two weekends in a row they had no one ..no night time economy officers walking about because they're out dealing with one three sixes.'*
- **Anxiety about intervening, heightened levels of mistrust and generalised critique:** *'I walk down Canterbury high street and get called out all the time... I did a night-time economy shift...and honestly, the amount of comments that I was getting during the night as such 'oh rapes not a priority' and that sort of stuff, it is, I know it is...that then obviously affects everyone's view of us and you then get called things in the streets and yeah, it's degrading because people don't wanna go to tell you things because they think you're a rapist and a murderer...but the one, that one person [referring to Police perpetrators], the screw ups and they screw up big. Unfortunately, everyone is tarred with the same brush...it takes one officer...and the whole structure is damaged.'*



Securing night-time spaces

- Shared but unclear responsibility between police, security guards and Street Pastors
- The 'thin black line'? SGs described as a buffer between the public and NTE workers, they could de-escalate situations, 'move-on' customers who were causing trouble & intervene in altercations— sometimes beyond their official remit. **First responders and extremely proactive, stressing their professionalism, no longer the 'thug', instead proud of their role.**

'I've always had the attitude and I've always said ...that if there's something within the vicinity of where you are and you can help go and deal with it... do what you 'gotta' do... if something's happening and you can put a stop to it safely, then then do that... We've often been criticised for that because they're saying well it's not in your remit you shouldn't be on that but I think this is the wider problem is people are committing crimes... doing these things because -no-one challenges them.'



The formal and informal interface

The SGs respected the Police but felt generally unsupported,

- *'You know what we have to do.... and I think they, the Police, when they do turn up [they are] quite quick to criticise. Why are we dealt with in that way? I think this is the problem that I've sort of always had an issue with for a while.... we're often held to account far beyond...what we should be.... If the government agencies expect us to perform that way, then they should also support us.'*
- **And not taken seriously when they had experienced violence:**
- *'It's almost like you're expected to take that kind of abuse it's something that we all experience, and we all see it but and don't get me wrong, we're not trying to disregard the Police, but it's like...it's the general attitude... I believe they have towards security and door and especially door supervisors that we are expected to take a certain amount of abuse whether that be racial, sexual, whatever it is, we're supposed to tolerate that...'*



Negotiating the formal and informal interface

The relationship and the distinction between the police and the Street Pastors was clearer

Street Pastors: 'Yeah, which I think a different atmosphere than we bring, to what the police do, 'cause... Yeah, police more, kind of, authoritarian then, you know, having quite aggressive whereas you know, although we have uniform, we're not- we're not part of the police, you know, more kind of independent. So, it's more of a softer approach to people, you know. Although yeah, we do have connections with the police as well. If it did- things did escalate, then we can call the police you know.'

The police valued the role of security guards but were concerned about boundaries

Police FG1: 'I used to work on the door work at the age of 18 down in Scotland and down here in Kent and working on the door is a different job from being a Police Officer...you are there to help the nightclub, or club, pub adhere to their licencing conditions... make sure nobody in there is too drunk. If issues start, if fights breakout separate that fight.'

Conclusions

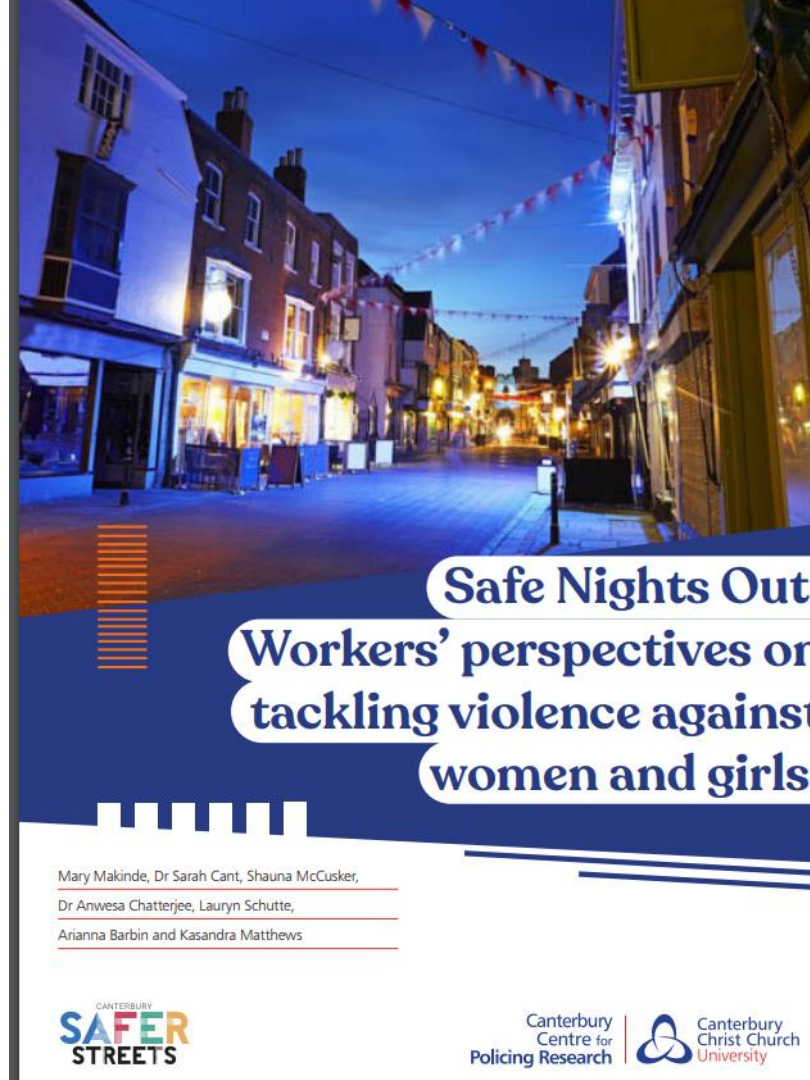
- There is evidence to suggest that many of the initiatives such as zero tolerance training are valued and impactful.
- Robust and consistent practices to combat and respond to allegations of spiking are in place.
- Knowledge of, and responses to VAWG are inconsistent, and there is an absence of clarity of what appropriate intervention and advice would look like.
- NTE Workers must protect their customers but also shield themselves when verbal abuse, violent and sexualised harassment, retribution, and challenges to their authority are all commonplace.
- These response result from personal knowledge and confidence, not official training, and are inconsistent.
- Collaboration between statutory and non-statutory agencies could be further enhanced.





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The Safer Streets team would like to thank every individual that took the time to take part in focus groups and interviews. We are especially grateful that they shared their experiences, some of which were traumatic to retell, which have helped shape the recommendations in this report. Several key gatekeepers secured access to our respondents, and we thank them for their support. Kent Police were extremely encouraging of the research and provided much insight and data. The research was possible through the support of Canterbury Christ Church University and several colleagues. We especially thank Professor Robin Bryant, William Hill and Professor David Bates.