

The Alcohol Education Trust release survey findings on young people and their experience of drink spiking and offer advice to stay safer in the night time economy and at house parties



Following recent high profile media coverage of drink spiking cases, The Alcohol Education Trust (AET) conducted a snap poll of young adults aged 16 – 25 (who it supports throughout England and Scotland) to provide more evidence as to the levels of drink spiking, where it is taking place and how often it is being reported. The poll was open for a week from the 12th October with 747 responses. Of these 461 were female, 252 were male and 34 identified as 'other'.

Key findings:

- Overall, 12% of respondents (94 people) reported having a drink spiked, (15% of females, 7% of males and 17% of those identifying as other). A further 5% thought their drink may have been spiked.
- Among young people who reported having had a drink spiked, 77% said that their drink had contained alcohol, compared to 23% where the drink had been alcohol-free - confirmation that any drink can be spiked, whether alcoholic or not.
- The public perception is that drink spiking occurs mainly in pubs and clubs, by strangers, but the survey found that among those who had experienced a drink being spiked, the most common location of spiking was at a private party (35%) followed by at a night club (28%), with 13% in a bar/pub, 7% at a festival and 17% in another location.
- Shockingly, 92% of participants who had been a victim of drink spiking didn't report

it. A variety of reasons were given including thinking they wouldn't be taken seriously (14%), thinking there wouldn't be enough proof (8%) or only realising what had happened to them when it was too late to report it (11%).

- Of the small number who did report that their drink had been spiked, 25% told the police, 26% a medic and 25% a bouncer/venue staff. 8% told a party host, 8% a friend and 8% a parent. Worryingly, 50% of those who reported spiking said nothing happened as a result, but for 9% it was investigated, 8% received help from their parents, 8% said that security was added to the venue as a result. Unfortunately, 8% were not believed. Of those who didn't report the drink spiking, 22% said that they wished they had.
- When asked what they would find helpful to prevent/deal with drink spiking, the top answers were: Advice re what to do if a drink is spiked (33%); campaigns/ ads/ raising awareness (15%); education at school/college/uni (12%); advice re how to know if a drink has been spiked (11%); and targeting the perpetrators (2%).
- Only 36% of survey respondents said that they felt confident about what to do if a friend's drink had been spiked. 60% said they didn't know where to go for help and support around drink spiking, so the AET is now putting together a campaign both highlighting the issues and emphasising the importance of reporting cases as soon as possible. The campaign also gives top tips to prevent drink spiking from happening (see below for more information).

The responses from the AET survey were reinforced by the findings of a survey by The Tab - a site covering youth and student culture. An Instagram survey, taken by over 23,000 people, asked: 'Since the start of this University year, do you believe you have been spiked?' Overall 11% of participants in the Tab survey,



thought that their drink had been spiked and 49% thought that a friend's drink had been spiked. Prevalence varied widely between universities, with 18.9% of participants in Leeds, Oxford Brookes and Bournemouth thinking that their drink had been spiked compared to 8% in Oxford, London and Lancaster. In addition, a YOUGov poll of 2,000 people for the Independent found that a similar level of one in nine women and 8% of men had experienced their drink being spiked.

Despite this, the National Police Chiefs' Council said that just under 200 drink spiking incidents were reported to police forces across the UK in August and September this year. The data from 40 forces showed there were 198 confirmed reports of drink spiking, with five forces still to provide information. This illustrates the low level of reporting to the police, suggesting that these figures might be just the tip of the iceberg.

What should be done?

The AET has been supporting young people over the last 12 years and throughout that time, drink spiking has always been an issue. Some of the key concerns have been the low level of reporting, the problem with getting evidence and the difficulty in persuading police/medics to take blood or urine samples.

At the end of October, groups from more than 50 towns and cities across the UK joined an online campaign "Girls Night In" to highlight the issue of women's safety and put pressure on venues by boycotting them. The campaign called for covers for drinks, better training for night-life staff, and for police to conduct more rigorous searches of clubbers. Campaigners also argue that there should be dedicated

welfare staff within venues to help people get home safely. A petition to legally require nightclubs to thoroughly search guests on entry accrued more than 173,000 signatures and a second petition demanded that drink spiking kits should be kept on premise to test drinks that may have been subject to spiking. These measures, together with prominent CCTV, would help reduce incidences in the night time economy.

It is very important to realise, however, that spiking also happens at house parties and in unsupervised places. This means the perpetrators are within victims' wider friendship groups. The AET is working with young adults to call drink spikers out, to make clear it's no joke and that spiking a drink is a serious criminal offence punishable by up to 10 years in jail. We are working to ensure that there is more reporting of spiking and to increase confidence that those reports will be followed up by the police. Only then will the spikers see that they are more likely to be caught and charged.



To view the short film clip created by the Alcohol Education Trust, please click [here](#).

Top tips when going out to clubs and bars

The recent spate of drink spiking and injecting and extensive media coverage has heightened awareness of the risk, especially to young women going out, and not surprisingly has made many anxious and nervous. A few things can really help young people stay protected and feel more confident in the night time economy including:

- choosing well run venues with door staff and CCTV
- staying with trusted friends, and looking out for each other

- being careful not to drink too much as this can make them more vulnerable to others as they are less aware of what is going on.
- if on a new date, choosing a well lit, well supervised and public/central setting. Letting someone else know exactly what their plans are – and inform them if they change. Having a phone locator such as find my friends/snap chat is a great way for those close to know where they are.
- if wanting to accept a drink from a someone they don't know well, going to the bar to take the drink direct from the server, so there is no opportunity for spiking.
- being wary if a stranger buys them a drink and it's not what they requested.
- keeping an eye on their drink. If they have to leave the table (to go to the toilet, for example), it's best to ask a friend to watch over the drinks.
- buying drinks that come in bottles with screw-top lids and carrying the bottle in their bag when they go to the toilet or dance. Alternatively, they could bring drinks covers/ bottle stoppers to the venue.
- never consuming a drink if they think it may have been spiked and discussing their concerns with the manager or host.



Do remember that 90% of women who go out are not spiked – but it is important to always stay vigilant for their own safety and that of those around them, especially if someone seems very drunk or has passed out. It is important that they play their part in making sure that friends get home safely, that the venue knows what's going on, or that someone trusted will stay with them and call for help as needed.

Advice for House parties

Most people presume that drink spiking will happen to young women in bars and clubs, which indeed in many cases it does, but our research has shown that 35% of drink spiking takes place at private parties – ahead of nightclubs at 28% - so young people need to keep their wits about them where ever they choose to party.



At house parties, amongst friends someone's guard is more likely to be down and they're less likely to keep a close eye on their drinks. Drink spiking predators choose house parties as people are likely to be more relaxed and there's no CCTV either – so just a caution – It is important to stay aware, that friends look out for each other, and they don't drink too much as this does makes them more vulnerable to others. Top tips for a safe night out include making a plan for how to get home before going out; keeping hydrated by drinking plenty of water or by alternating any alcoholic drinks with something alcohol-free and eating before going out or during the evening limit the effects of alcohol and to help stay in control and to be able to keep a careful eye on drinks.

Further information

Drink spiking fact sheet for 16-25 year olds and relevant film clips

talkaboutalcohol.com/drink-spiking/

For details of the AET drink spiking survey, please click [here](#).

For details of AET's contribution to the discussion about drink spiking in the media please click [here](#).