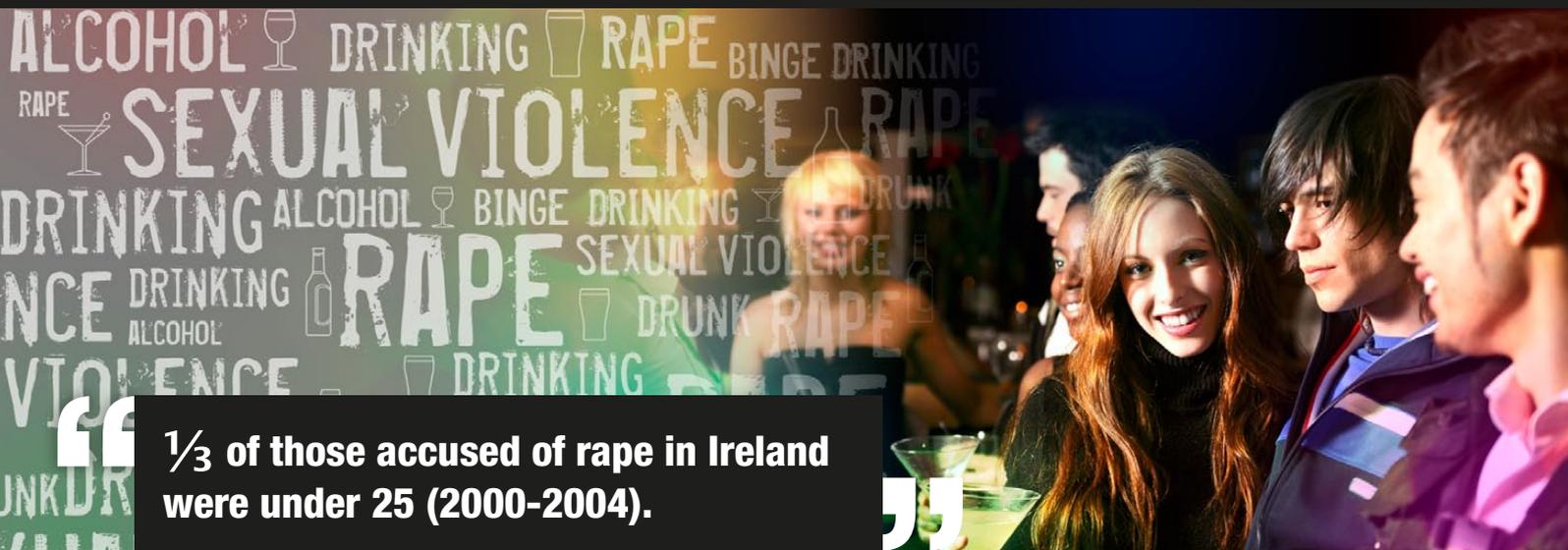


# CALLING TIME ON SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND ALCOHOL: THE FACTS



**1/3 of those accused of rape in Ireland were under 25 (2000-2004).**



FACTSHEET

# 5

## Alcohol, Youth and Sexual Violence



Alcohol consumption by adolescents and young adults is notably high in Ireland. While alcohol has not been shown to cause sexual violence, it is likely to contribute to the situational context in which sexual violence is more likely to occur. Given the propensity for binge drinking among youth in Ireland, coupled with lack of sexual and social experience and the prevalence of rape-supportive attitudes noted among Irish youth, the relationship between youth, alcohol consumption and sexual violence requires consideration.

### Young People and Sexual Violence:

- 1/3 of those accused of rape in Ireland 2000- 2004 were under 25.<sup>1</sup>
- 1/2 of adult complainants of rape in Ireland 2000 – 2004 were under 25.<sup>2</sup>
- Sexual violence perpetrated by, and against, those in the 14-18 year old category is common.<sup>3</sup>

### Effects of Alcohol Consumption on Youth:

- Young people demonstrate an increased ability (compared to older adults) to consume large quantities of alcohol with less motor impairment and sedative effects, and to achieve a higher blood alcohol level before incapacitation.<sup>4,5,6</sup>
- Adolescents and young people also tend towards greater impulsivity and poorer recognition of negative outcomes for their behaviour compared to adults.<sup>7</sup>
- Young people who binge drink are at high risk of incurring injuries, engaging in risky sexual practices, and being a victim or perpetrator of crime and violence.<sup>8,9</sup>

Images in this publication are for illustrative purposes only, any person depicted in the image is a model.

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## Youth Alcohol Consumption in Ireland:

- 86% of Irish students had experimented with alcohol by the age of 16.<sup>10</sup>
- 42.5% of 15-16 year olds reported binge drinking in the previous month.<sup>11</sup>

## Research on youth, alcohol consumption and sexual violence reveals:

1. High levels of alcohol involvement in social situations.<sup>12</sup>
2. High acceptance of sex-related alcohol expectancies among young people.<sup>13</sup>
3. Frequent use of alcohol to facilitate sexual encounters.<sup>14</sup>
4. Rigid views on sexuality. Young men perceived their own sexuality as difficult to control and believed that it was the woman's role to 'keep the male sexual "drive" under control'.<sup>15</sup>
5. High levels of rape-myth acceptance and blaming of intoxicated rape victims among young people.<sup>16</sup>

The interaction of rape-supportive attitudes, positive sex-related alcohol expectancies, inexperience in relation to sexual encounters and alcohol consumption, age-related personality characteristics like impulsivity and risk-taking, and the different physiological effects of alcohol on adolescents and young adults increases the risk of young people who are consuming alcohol to be a victim or a perpetrator of a sexual crime.

## Strategies to reduce alcohol-related sexual violence among young people:

Reducing or eliminating alcohol consumption among adolescents and young adults will not stop sexual violence among youth in Ireland: however, alcohol reduction strategies in combination with the redress of rape-supportive attitudes may reduce the vulnerability of intoxicated young people to sexual violence and the risk of sexual perpetration by some intoxicated youth. Potential strategies as identified by the World Health Organisation<sup>17</sup>, and the National Substance Misuse Strategy Report<sup>18</sup> include:

- Reducing the supply of alcohol to young people through increasing the cost of alcohol, strict enforcement of minimum age for the sale of alcohol, eliminating the sale of alcohol to intoxicated people, reducing and controlling hours of sale for alcohol
- Limit and control volume, content and placement of all alcohol advertisements
- Delay the initiation of alcohol use among young people by providing socialising activities in locations that are free of alcohol and improving knowledge and awareness of the risks of alcohol consumption, particularly binge drinking, for young people.
- Legislation that strictly controls and limits alcohol marketing, in particular where it is targeted at young people and/or presents alcohol consumption as linked to sexual success. Such legislation should be supported by an independent and proactive enforcement mechanism.
- To be combined with educational and awareness raising programmes that target young people's attitudes towards sex and sexuality, alcohol, and sexual violence.

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## About Rape Crisis Ireland:

Rape Crisis Network Ireland (RCNI) is a specialist information and resource centre on rape and all forms of sexual violence with a proven capacity in strategic leadership. The RCNI role includes the development and coordination of national projects such as expert data collection, strategic services development, supporting Rape Crisis Centres (RCCs) to reach best practice standards, using our expertise to influence national policy and social change, and supporting and facilitating multiagency partnerships. We are the representative, umbrella body for our member Rape Crisis Centres who provide free advice, counselling and support for survivors of sexual violence in Ireland.

The national coordination role delivered by RCNI across management, governance, data collection, data reporting, the design and delivery of a range of training courses and administration, facilitates frontline services to direct resources at meeting survivor needs, service delivery and local multi-agency partnerships.