

# CALLING TIME ON SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND ALCOHOL: THE FACTS



**76% of all rape defendants had been drinking at the time of the alleged rape\***

\*RAJI Study, 2009

FACTSHEET

## 1 The extent of the problem in Ireland



In 2009, the Rape and Justice in Ireland Report (RAJI) revealed very high levels of alcohol involvement in rape in Ireland. Although alcohol does not cause sexual violence it may be used to excuse violent behaviour, to blame victims, and to incapacitate victims. Alcohol may also contribute to situations in which sexual violence is more likely to occur.

### Alcohol Involvement in incidences of rape:

- 76% of all rape defendants in the RAJI study had been drinking at the time of the alleged rape.<sup>1</sup>
- 70% of women in the RAJI study reported drinking at the time they were raped.<sup>2</sup>
- Alcohol was involved in over 45% of adult women's unwanted sexual experiences.<sup>3</sup>

### Irish Drinking Habits:

- 26% of those who had consumed alcohol in a 30 day period had consumed five or more drinks compared to EU average of 10%.<sup>4</sup>
- The frequency of binge drinking in Ireland is the highest in Europe: 44% of Irish respondents who had consumed alcohol in the past 12 months indicating that they had been binge drinking at least once a week.<sup>5</sup>
- Patterns for youth alcohol consumption in Ireland echo adult patterns: 42% of boys and 44% of girls aged 15-16 reporting binge-drinking during the previous month.<sup>6</sup>

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## Irish Drinking Habits and Sexual Violence in Ireland:

Although little research has been done to assess the impact of the level of alcohol consumption on the likelihood of sexual violence, it stands to reason that binge drinking will multiply many of the effects associated with alcohol that impair recognition, response and sense of responsibility by perpetrators in sexually violent incidents.

In Ireland, the levels of binge drinking on the occasion of a rape are extraordinarily high:

- 88% of defendants on trial for rape whose alcohol consumption was known had been binge drinking at the time of the rape.<sup>7</sup>
- 45% of complainants and 40% of suspects of reported rape between 2000 and 2005 in Ireland had been binge drinking on the occasion of the rape.<sup>8</sup>
- As many as 10% of victims who reported rape to Gardaí were so intoxicated from alcohol as to be unable to offer physical or verbal resistance during the assault.<sup>9</sup>

## Targeting alcohol use as a means of reducing sexual violence: the possibilities

No direct causal link exists between alcohol consumption, at any level, and the perpetration of sexual violence. Nevertheless, harmful alcohol use can and should be targeted as part of the response in reducing rates of sexual violence in Ireland. Possibilities include:

- Educational programmes that address cultural expectations towards alcohol-related behaviour.
- Messaging and actions that address supply of and access to alcohol such as outlined in the Steering Group Report On a National Substance Misuse Strategy February 2012.
- Further research on the impact of alcohol reduction programmes on sexual violence reduction.

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### References:

- <sup>12</sup> Hanly, C., Healy, D., and Scriver, S. 2009. Rape and Justice in Ireland: A National Study of Survivor, Prosecutor and Court Responses to Rape. Dublin: Liffey: 137-138.
- <sup>3</sup> McGee, H., Garavan, R., de Barra, M., Byrne, H. and Conroy, R. 2002. The SAVI Report: Sexual Abuse and Violence in Ireland. Dublin: Liffey Press.
- <sup>45</sup> Eurobarometer 331. 2010. EU Citizens Attitudes Towards Alcohol. Special Eurobarometer 331/wave 72.3. Available at: [www.eu.citizensense28099-attitudes-towards-alcohol-eurobarometer-2010.pdf](http://www.eu.citizensense28099-attitudes-towards-alcohol-eurobarometer-2010.pdf) (accessed February 3, 2012).
- <sup>6</sup> Morgan, M. and Brand, K. 2009. ESPAD 2007: Results for Ireland. Department of Health and Children. Available at: [espad-2009-results-for-Ireland-dept-of-healthchildren-2009.pdf](http://espad-2009-results-for-Ireland-dept-of-healthchildren-2009.pdf) (accessed February 3, 2012): 5.
- <sup>7&9</sup> Hanly et.al. 2009: 273; 255; 229.

### 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, facilities frontline services to direct resources at meeting survivor needs, service delivery and local multi-agency partnerships.