

# Understanding the connection between homicide and drinking in the night-time economy

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**There is new research interest in the night-time economy of Australian towns and cities as this relates to levels of crime and violence. Assaults peak on weekend nights and follow the rhythms of night socialising, occurring within the direct confines of the night-time economy, or by indirect relation to it. Crimes include serious confrontational violence in and around licensed premises and 'spill' on to other after-dark locations that include public transport, street and domestic settings.**

National records signal a decline in Australian homicides that includes a drop in confrontational killing among male strangers and acquaintances. However, the specific circumstances and trends in relation to homicides that occur as a result of night leisure and in particular settings with significant drinking and/or drug use and the law enforcement opportunities that may exist to prevent them will remain uncertain without deeper study of fatal incidents. A thorough study of homicide records would provide a window into the nature and real levels of such violence, as well as the apparent success or failure of related current policing and crime prevention strategies.

These are the concerns of a current University of Western Sydney project examining the prevalence, locations and trends in homicides linked to night-time leisure and problematic drinking. This is jointly funded by the Criminology Research Council and [Foundation for Alcohol Rehabilitation and Education](#), and is being conducted with staff from within the Australian Institute of Criminology, where the

Australian National Homicide Database and monitoring program is located. This study will examine national homicide files in full detail, gathering information on dozens of variables regarding social settings, demographic details of offenders and victims, offender motives and offender–victim interactions. All homicides from the years 1997/1998 (n=327) and 2007/2008 (n=261) will be studied and coded to analyse levels of relation to the night-time economy and night-time leisure across a one decade period. Information will be drawn out about the typical scenarios and high-risk localities of homicides that have a direct or indirect relation to night-time leisure and drinking.

By March 2012, 134 incident files were examined in full and 86 of these homicides were judged to be either directly or indirectly related to activities in the night-time economy. This is early evidence for a new way of understanding the connection between homicide and drinking, and it suggests a strong likelihood that the real proportion of homicides related to drinking as a key night-time leisure practice are higher than currently thought. Trend data analysis, incident narratives and comparison of incident location with concentrations of the night-time economy will also be considered with the preliminary results to be released in late 2012. This project will shed light on the outcomes of policing and crime prevention strategies on incidents of fatal violence and how they might be more effective in the reduction of homicides, making a night out safer for all.

