



# **Young adult predrinking and experiences of sexual aggression at bars and clubs: Results from the Windsor bargoer study**

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# Background: Research on male-to-male alcohol-related aggression in bars and clubs



- barroom observations
- interviews
- focus group discussions
- surveys

## Several contributing factors, including:

- effects of alcohol
- the barroom environment
- men's attitudes and beliefs and masculinity concerns
- men's approval of aggression and perceptions regarding peer approval

# The *Safer Bars* program

- **Risk assessment** focuses on addressing physical environmental factors that may increase risk of aggressive behavior
- **Staff training** directed toward improving the way that staff interact with patrons

# Issue of predrinking emerged in our research on barroom aggression

In focus group discussions about aggression in bars, many participants raised the issue of predrinking:

*“...students don’t have that much money, drinks are expensive, so they just get completely hammered before they even go to the bar. So that might really play a big part in what happens at the bar – ‘cause they’re already out of hand when they get there”*

(Wells et al., 2009, pp. 1448)

# Issue of sexual aggression emerged in our research on barroom aggression

- barroom observations of 1,057 incidents of aggression observed during 1,334 visits to 118 large capacity bars/clubs in Toronto
- 258 (24%) incidents related to sexual overtures or sexual advances
- 90% of these were male-to-female

(Graham, Bernards, Osgood et al., 2014)

# What is predrinking?

- drinking in a private location, usually at someone's home, prior to going to a bar or nightclub

# Why do young adults engage in predrinking?

- save money
- social functions:
  - allows young people to socialize
  - reduces social anxiety and self-consciousness
- reach desired level of intoxication

*“Just getting drunk before you go somewhere else so you don’t have to purchase as much alcohol”*

*“No matter what the quantity, if it gets the job done, the intent is to get wasted”* (DeJong & DeRicco, 2005)

# Why is it a problem?

- rapid consumption in short period of time increases risk of blackouts, passing out, hangovers, and even alcohol poisoning
- young people are navigating public places with impaired judgement and reduced perception of risk both on their way to and from licensed premises

# Why is it a problem?

- linked to a greater likelihood of experiencing negative consequences:
  - one study found that the number of drinking consequences (a sum of 24 items) was larger for predrinking occasions compared with non-predrinking occasions (Hummer et al., 2013)
  - another study found that predrinkers were significantly more likely than non-predrinkers to be involved in a fight during a night out (Hughes et al., 2013)

# Research questions

- If young people predrink to save money, does this mean that they drink less alcohol at licensed establishments if they engage in predrinking?
- Or does predrinking lead to further heavy drinking?

# Limitations of previous research

- many studies have compared predrinkers and non-predrinkers in terms of their usual drinking behaviour, but fewer studies have examined alcohol use at the time of the drinking event
- some studies have asked people to report on their alcohol use on predrinking compared with non-predrinking days
- recall problems
- very few studies have collected breathalyzer data
- few studies have controlled for general drinking pattern

# Bargoer study



# Recruitment

- groups of young adults randomly selected for recruitment based on the “fixed line method” (Voas et al., 2006)
- same sex groups of 3-5 young adults (aged 19-29 years)
- 10pm and 12:30am, Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings over 11 week period



(Wells et al., 2015)

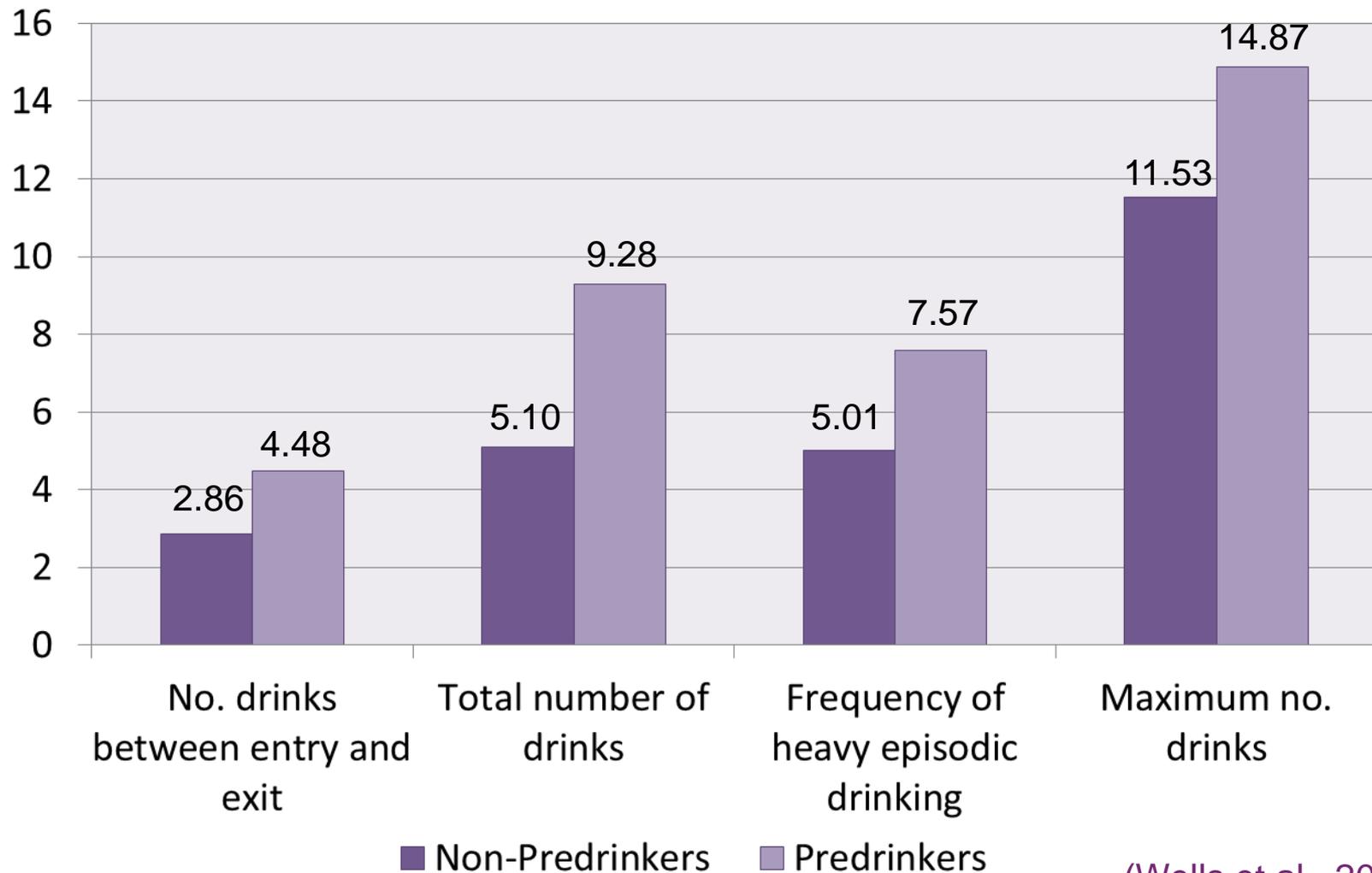
# Data collection

- Participants were asked to complete an “entry” survey
  - brief interview
  - breathalyzer sample
  - measures of member-nominated status
- Before leaving the bar district, participants returned to the mobile lab for an “exit survey”
  - brief interview
  - breathalyzer sample
- Online survey completed at a later time assessing usual drinking pattern and other topics



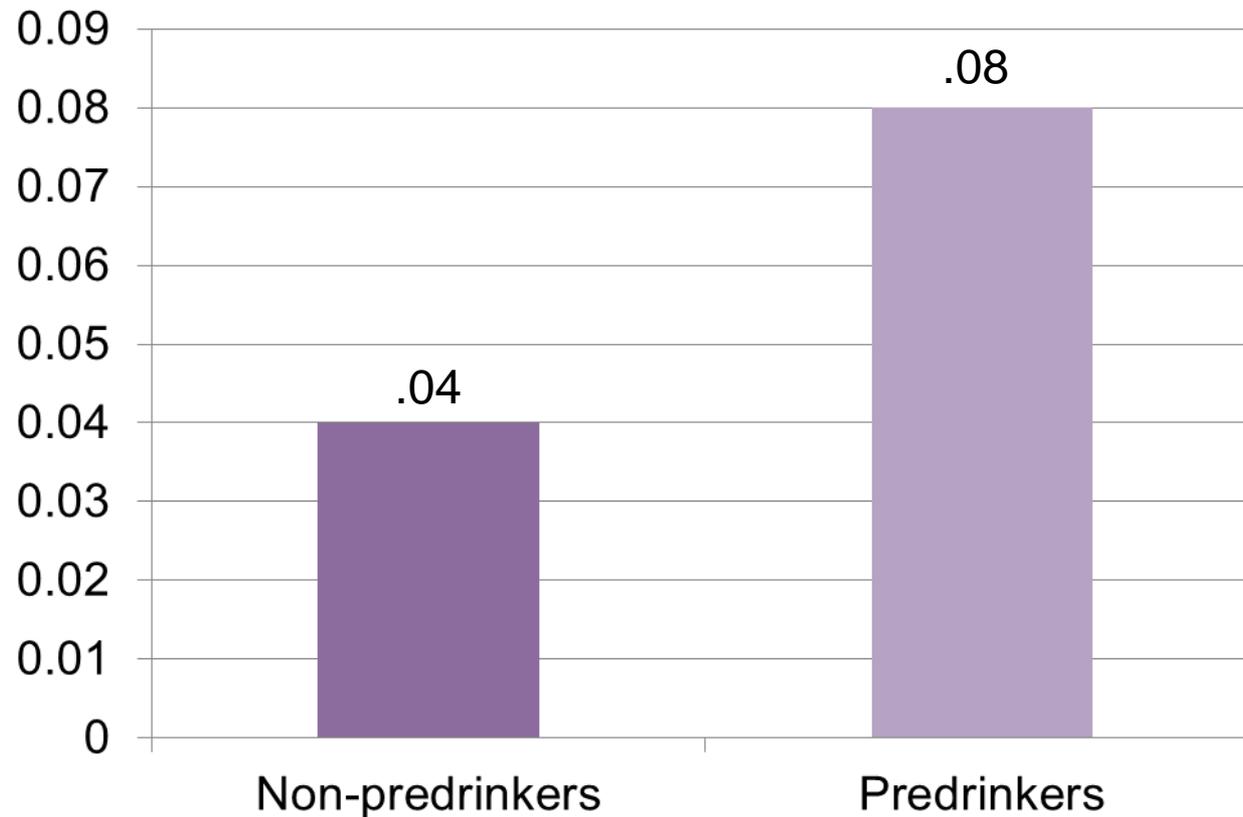
(Wells et al., 2015)

# Alcohol use on nights out and usual drinking pattern for predrinkers compared with non-predrinkers



(Wells et al., 2015)

# Mean breath alcohol concentration at end of night for predrinkers compared with non-predrinkers



(Wells et al., 2015)

# In summary

- predrinkers were more likely than non-predrinkers to engage in heavy episodic drinking and to consume a larger number of drinks
- predrinkers consumed more alcohol while out in the bar district than did non-predrinkers – thus, while they may intend to save money, predrinking is not followed by less drinking (and may promote further drinking)
- predrinkers had higher intoxication levels at the end of the night compared with non-predrinkers (controlling for drinking pattern)

(Wells et al., 2015)

# Implications

- consideration of how alcohol pricing may influence predrinking
- staff training and enhanced enforcement to recognize and deter intoxicated patrons when they arrive at the bar and better monitor and restrict how much they are drinking at the bar
- efforts to change drinking norms, such as rapid consumption
- programs promoting safer choices, such as having a sober friend present

# Sexual aggression in and around bars and clubs



# Why is it a problem?

- compared with other ages, young adult women (ages 18-24) are most at risk for rape and sexual assault (Sinozich & Langton, 2014)
- alcohol is involved in about 75% of incidents (Senn et al., 2014)
- sexual objectification experiences have been found to be linked to mental health and substance use problems among women (see review by Szymanski et al. 2011)
- how men and women interact at the bar may set the stage for what happens when they leave the bar (Kavanaugh, 2013)

# Measures of sexual aggression

## Persistence

Did anyone keep trying to hit on you when you had clearly given them the message that you were not interested?

## Unwanted touching

Did anyone touch you sexually in a way that you did not want to be touched or do something else sexual to you that you didn't want them to do?

(Graham, Bernards, Abbey, Dumas & Wells, 2014)

# Percent of women reporting sexual aggression experienced that night

	Percent
Persistence only	28.9%
Unwanted touching only	5.3%
Both persistence and touching	18.4%
<b>Any sexual aggression that night</b>	<b>52.6%</b>

(Graham, Bernards, Abbey, Dumas & Wells, 2014)

# Link between women's alcohol use and their experiences of sexual aggression

- women's alcohol consumption on the survey night was positively associated with likelihood of experiencing sexual aggression
- alcohol may make women less able to communicate clearly that the behaviour was unwanted or less able to recognize risks
- or more intoxicated women may be targeted because they are seen as more sexually available or less able to resist

(Graham, Bernards, Abbey, Dumas & Wells, 2014)

# Link between women's alcohol use and their experiences with sexual aggression

- having a lower status position in the group was associated with increased risk of sexual aggression among women who had consumed five or more drinks
- possibly seen as more sexually available, less able to resist or easy targets

(Graham, Bernards, Abbey, Dumas & Wells, 2014)

# What happens when a woman experiences unwanted sexual advances in a bar or club?

- women usually respond with evasion and indirect methods of discouragement
- third parties sometimes intervene but also sometimes encourage the initiator
- bar staff rarely intervene

(Graham, Bernards, Osgood et al., 2014)

# Thank you!

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