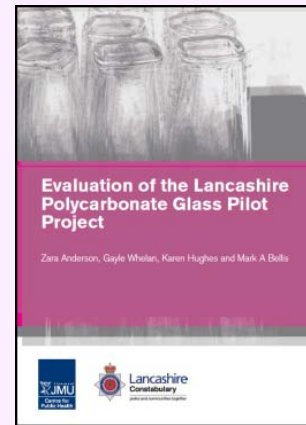


Interventions delivered in drinking environments in the UK

Polycarbonate glassware in Lancashire, UK

Glassware used in pubs, bars and nightclubs can be a major cause of injury to customers and staff. Glasses and bottles are used in 5% of all violent incidents in England and Wales¹ and are the most common weapons used in violence occurring in drinking environments.² Broken glassware is also a common cause of unintentional injury. To prevent serious violent injury from glassware, police and health services in Lancashire, UK, trialled the use of polycarbonate glassware (PCG) in pubs, bars and nightclubs. PCG is made from robust, durable plastic; it looks the same as normal glassware, but is virtually unbreakable.



The Lancashire trial was evaluated to explore the impact of PCG on injuries and perceived levels of safety in drinking premises. Further, with widespread resistance to the use of PCG among the alcohol industry given perceived negative impacts on trade (e.g. reduced drinking experience and increased perceptions of violence), the study aimed to explore the acceptability of PCG to both drinkers and staff working in drinking venues.³

Between three and five venues in each of three towns were chosen to participate in the intervention, with each being assigned a matched control. Intervention venues had all their usual glassware replaced with PCG, with extra stock provided if needed through the trial. A before and after survey of customers was undertaken in each establishment. Throughout the trial, data were recorded on: glass injuries in patrons and staff, numbers of broken bottles and glasses, weekly sales figures, and glass-related incidents reported to the police and health services. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with licensees/managers of the intervention premises.

In venues that consistently used PCG, glass breakages decreased from an average of 17 per week before the intervention to none during it. The number of glass-related injuries recorded for staff and customers was low overall, although a non-significant decrease was seen in venues that introduced PCG. There were no changes in customers' perceptions of safety or violence in general in the venues or the study towns, although there was a small increase in the proportion of customers who thought that glass-related violence specifically was a problem in the towns (but not the venues). Weekly sales figures were not affected by the introduction of PCG, few negative impacts on drinking experience were identified and managers reported increased feelings of safety among staff. Despite initial scepticism about PCG, all managers/licensees voluntarily opted to continue using PCG after the trial period. Overall, the study concluded that the introduction of PCG would be acceptable and useful in bars and nightclubs. However, a larger study would be necessary to identify any impacts specifically on intentional and unintentional injury.

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