

# Outdoor music festivals: Cacophonous consumption or melodious moderation?

Author(s)

Martinus T, McAlaney J, McLaughlin LJ et al.

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## **Abstract**

Large outdoor music festivals have emerged as part of a general expansion of licensed recreational activities, but in research terms they have been largely impenetrable due to commercial sensitivities. These sensitivities notwithstanding, the number and scale of such events necessitate a greater understanding of alcohol and drug use and the potential to promote normative protective behaviours in this context. This study examines self-reported alcohol and drug behaviours of 1589 attendees at a music festival in Scotland during the summer of 2008. Similarities between the outdoor rock music festivals and the dance club scene are considered alongside the challenges associated with risk reduction in these settings. Results show that alcohol was consumed by the majority of samples; however, negative consequences were reported by a minority of respondents, suggesting evidence of controlled hedonism within a situation traditionally associated with unrestrained excess. Similarly, the majority of samples did not use drugs. The majority also report a number of self-regulating protective behaviours suggesting that alcohol and drug use is contained within a developing social culture of controlled intoxication. Results further suggest that although music festivals are transitory events, there is a degree of consistency amongst attendees. Music festivals may therefore be atypical but

potentially effective environments to increase protective behaviours using normative messaging and modern communications media. This study was resourced exclusively by local alcohol and drug partnerships.

Web link

<http://informahealthcare.com/doi/abs/10.3109/09687630903357692>

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