

Men missing on a night out update: 2010 to 2018

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Background

The first “*Men missing on a night out*” study (Newiss and Greatbatch, 2017) was published in December 2017. The research examined 96 cases of men who were reported missing, and who were found to have died, over the period 1 January 2010 to 31 August 2015. The research highlighted the high risk of fatality amongst these cases (greater than 90 per cent if the person was not found within three days) and explored the implications for search managers.

This briefing paper updates the findings in the original study with an analysis of new cases that have occurred since then. Reference is made to the following periods:

2010-15	The original study period (1 January 2010 to 31 August 2015) – a 5 year, 8 month period	96 cases
2015-18	The new study period (1 September 2015 to 31 December 2018) – a 3 year, 4 month period	54 cases
2010-18	The combined period (1 January 2010 to 31 December 2018) – a 9 year period	150 cases

The new study aimed to check whether the basic descriptive findings of the new cases (age, employment, duration missing, location found etc.) were broadly consistent with the original study, and to highlight any important differences.

A detailed spatial analysis of the key geographical variables in missing on a night out cases has not (yet) been undertaken on the new cases and is therefore not reported in this paper.

Method

The new study employed the same method as the original study (Newiss and Greatbatch, 2017, see page 6). Cases of men missing on a night out (using the same definition, *ibid.*) were identified both contemporaneously (i.e. as they occurred during the study period) and from a search of online media sources at the end of the period.

In the main, data were collected from online media sources (presenting the same limitations as the original study, *ibid.*)

Findings

Number of cases per year

A total of 150 cases were identified during the nine-year period 1 January 2010 to 31 December 2018, an average of 17 a year. The minimum number recorded in a single year was 14; the maximum 24.

Age

The age profile is broadly consistent for the 2010-15, 2015-18 and the combined 2010-18 cases: 45 per cent were 21 or under at the time they went missing, and around 70 per cent were 25 years-old or under (see Table 2). The ages ranged from 16 to 62 years-old.

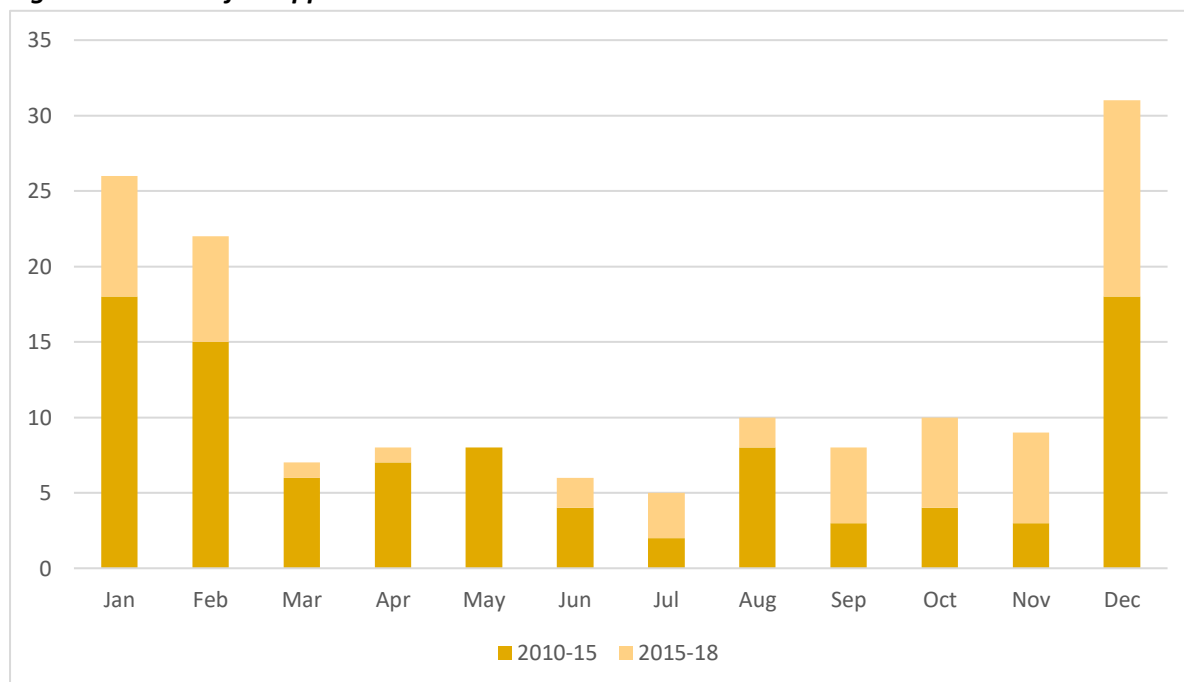
Student or employed

Just over one-third of the men were students at the time they went missing (34 per cent of the 2010-15 period and 38 per cent of the 2015-18 period; 35 per cent combined).

Month of disappearance

Figure 1 shows the number of cases recorded in each month of the year. In both the 2010-15 and the 2015-18 periods just over half of all cases occurred during the winter months of December, January and February. Disappearances following Christmas parties (December) and New Year's Eve celebrations (December/January – depending on when the person was last seen) were a recurring theme.

Figure 1: Month of disappearance



Note: three cases from the original 2010-15 study that were initially coded as “December” cases, were re-coded in the above chart as “January” cases. Each of these resulted from the person going missing following New Year's Eve celebrations; however, they were actually last seen alive on 1 January.

Last Venue type

Across the two time periods three-quarters of the men had left a nightclub, bar or pub prior to going missing (see Table 2).

Location where bodies were found

The most notable difference between the 2010-15 and 2015-18 periods was the location where bodies were found. In the 2010-15 period (n=96 cases), just 11 cases (11 per cent) resulted in the body of the missing person being found on land. Double the proportion (22 per cent, 12 cases) were found on land in the 2015-18 period. Table 1 shows the increase in 'land' cases primarily resulted from a greater number of urban land fatalities, and was offset by a decrease (from 54 per cent in 2010-15 to 39 per cent in 2015-18) in the proportion of cases resulting in the body being retrieved from rivers.

The combined figures (for 2010-18, n=150 cases) still show that the bodies are overwhelmingly likely to be found in water (85 per cent) compared to on land (15 per cent).

Table 1: Location where bodies were found, water and land

	2010-15		2015-18		2010-18	
	n =	(%)	n =	n =	(%)	n =
Found in water:						
River (including embankment)	52	(54)	21	(39)	73	(49)
Canals (including drainage dykes)	11	(11)	7	(13)	18	(12)
Sea, beach or shore	11	(11)	4	(7)	15	(10)
Harbours, docks, quays or marinas	6	(6)	5	(9)	11	(7)
Lakes, ponds, reservoirs	5	(5)	5	(9)	10	(7)
Total found in water	85	(89)	42	(78)	127	(85)
Found on land:						
Urban (including business premises, residential areas etc.)	5	(5)	8	(15)	13	(9)
Rural (fields, woodland, open areas etc.)	6	(6)	4	(7)	10	(7)
Total found on land	11	(11)	12	(22)	23	(15)
Total	96	(100)	54	(100)	150	(100)

Percentages may not sum to the totals because of rounding.

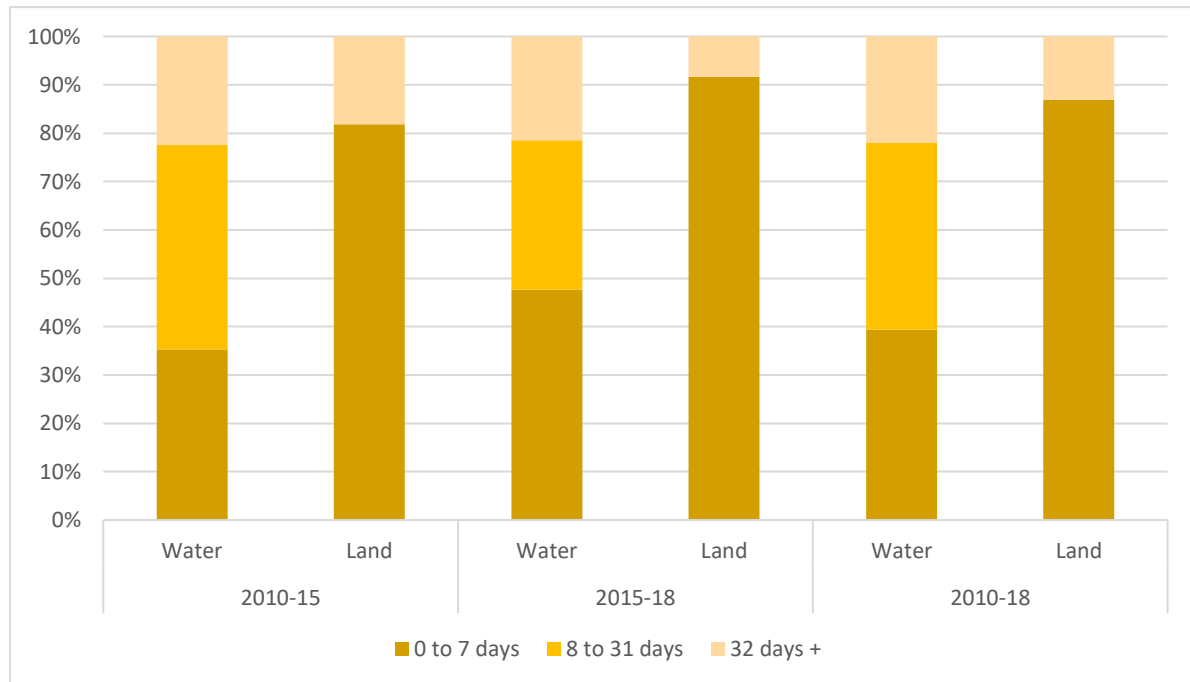
Duration missing

A higher proportion of cases were resolved within one week in the 2015-18 period (57 per cent) compared to the 2010-15 cases (41 per cent); bringing the combined proportion to 47 per cent (2010-18). However, roughly the same – one-fifth of cases – took longer than one month to be resolved in both time periods (see Table 2)¹.

¹ In contrast, just 2 per cent of all missing person cases last longer than one week (National Crime Agency, 2017).

Figure 2 shows that the proportion of cases resolved within one week increased for both deaths in water and on land over the two time periods. The proportion of deaths in water that took longer than one month for the body to be found remained the same.

Figure 2: Proportion of cases resolved by duration, water and land



Cause of death

The higher number of 'land' cases resulted in a wider variety of causes of death than previously identified in the 2010-15 cases. Over the combined period (2010-18), of the 23 cases found on land, seven resulted from a fall; five from hypothermia; three from a drugs overdose; two from obstruction of the airways (resulting from alcohol intoxication), and two from other (accidental) injuries suffered (in four cases this information was not available). Understandably, drowning remains the most frequently recorded cause of death. Further details are available in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of missing person characteristics and body location variables

	2010 to 2015 (n=96)		2015 to 2018 (n=54)		2010 to 2018 (n=150)	
	n =	(%)	n =	(%)	n =	(%)
Age						
≤ 21 years-old	42	(44)	25	(46)	67	(45)
22 to 25 years-old	26	(27)	13	(24)	39	(26)
26 to 35 years-old	16	(17)	8	(15)	24	(16)
36 to 45 years-old	6	(6)	5	(9)	11	(7)
46 to 55 years-old	4	(4)	1	(2)	5	(3)
≥ 56 years-old	2	(2)	2	(4)	4	(3)
Total	96	(100)	54	(100)	150	(100)
Student or employed						
Student	58	(66)	23	(62)	81	(65)
Employed	30	(34)	14	(38)	44	(35)
No information	8	-	17	-	25	-
Total ¹	96	(100)	54	(100)	150	(100)
Last Venue type²						
Nightclub, bar	54	(57)	22	(50)	76	(55)
Pub	18	(19)	12	(27)	30	(22)
Hotel	4	(4)	3	(7)	7	(5)
House	9	(9)	5	(11)	14	(10)
Outside	5	(5)	1	(2)	6	(4)
Open air gig, show, rave	3	(3)	1	(2)	4	(3)
Leisure venue	2	(2)	0	(0)	2	(1)
Not known	1	-	10	-	11	-
Total ¹	96	(100)	54	(100)	150	(100)

	2010 to 2015 (n=96)		2015 to 2018 (n=54)		2010 to 2018 (n=150)	
	n =	(%)	n =	n =	(%)	n =
Duration missing						
0 to 7 days	39	(41)	31	(57)	70	(47)
> 1 week to ≤ 31 days	36	(38)	13	(24)	49	(33)
> 31 days	21	(22)	10	(19)	31	(21)
Total	96	(100)	54	(100)	150	(100)
Cause of death						
Found in water:						
Drowning ³	42	(95)	31	(100)	73	(97)
Fall	2	(5)	0	(0)	2	(3)
Not available	41	-	11	-	52	-
Total found in water ¹	85	(100)	42	(100)	127	(100)
Found on land:						
Fall	6	(55)	1	(13)	7	(37)
Hypothermia	3	(27)	2	(25)	5	(26)
Drugs overdose	2	(18)	1	(13)	3	(16)
Obstruction of airways			2	(25)	2	(11)
Other injuries			2	(25)	2	(11)
Not known/available			4	-	4	-
Total found on land ¹	11	(100)	12	(100)	23	(100)
Total	96	(100)	54	(100)	150	(100)

Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

¹ Percentages for “Student/Employed”; “Last Venue type” and “Cause of death: found in water, found on land” have been calculated excluding cases where no information was available.

² Some of the Last Venue categories have been changed since the original study.

³ In the original study, “cold shock” was given as a separate cause of death (one case) – these cases have been combined with the category “drowning” in the above table.

Summary

This update briefing paper shows the new cases (2015-18) to have a broadly similar profile to those in the original (2010-15) study. The vast majority of men who go missing on a night out and are found dead are under the age of 35, with just over one-third being students. The winter months of December, January and February account for slightly over half of all cases. More than half of cases take longer than one week to be resolved, underlying the difficulties in locating bodies, particularly those in water.

Whilst in a great proportion of the new cases the body of the missing person was found on land, the majority (85 per cent) are still found in water.

Further analysis is required to (re)examine the spatial profile of cases and the relationship between key geographical points in order to further develop search heuristics. The addition of a police 'flag' to indicate cases where an individual goes missing on a night out on police recording systems would assist further research.

Further reading

Newiss, G. and Greatbatch, I. (2017) *Men missing on a night out: Exploring the geography of fatal disappearances to inform search strategies*. Portsmouth: University of Portsmouth.

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