Alcohol and personal security in the built environment: student engagement in the night-time economy of Kingston upon Thames, London, UK

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ABSTRACT

London has a diverse and dynamic night-time economy (NTE) valued in 2018 at £5 billion. The London Assembly's vision for future growth includes creative partnerships with outer-London boroughs to share opportunity and minimise economic decline in suburban high streets. Studies from cities across the UK recognise the contribution of University students to the NTE, but the situation in suburban London is under-researched. This exploratory study based on evidence from 604 University students in Kingston upon Thames (London) addresses that issue. It identifies relationships between time-based activity spaces of student life style and the built environment; defines time-phases and levels of alcohol consumption reconstructing journey-to-drink movements; identifies patterns of night-time expenditure; positions activity spaces in student life style within a framework of management control and local crime environments; and examines town centre issues of victimisation and personal security. The study advocates further policy-informed studies of under-researched groups in the mosaic of recreational spaces throughout London's NTE.

1.   LONDON'S NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY(NTE): REALITY AND VISION

London is a global city supporting a diverse and dynamic night-time economy (NTE) valued in 2018 at £5 billion. [1] Hospitality and entertainment services employed 200,000 people in 11,000 pubs, bars, restaurants and nightclubs; a further 19,000 jobs were provided in 240 professional theatres with a combined capacity for 110,000 people. The London Assembly is committed to create a vibrant 24-hour city. [2, 3, 4] Potential for growth has been identified; it is forecast that by 2029 a further £2 billion could be added each year to the NTE. [5] Whilst alcohol consumption (and vertical drinking) remain central to the NTE, there is a growing and alternative demand for hospitality and entertainment services. [6, 7, 8] The period 2011-17 saw a net growth of 2535 licensed restaurants, 3505 unlicensed restaurants and 1330 take-away food shops; the pub sector, in contrast, registered an increase of 405 businesses employing more than 10 people (signature premises often providing food) but closure of 1305 mainly smaller pubs across the capital. Meanwhile, in London there has been uneven change in the mix of cultural facilities. In 2001-17, the number of night clubs has reduced from 880 to 570; grassroots music venues (GMVs) decreased from 144 to 94; and LGBTQ+ venues fell from 125 to 53. [9] The nocturnal city means different things to different groups. Forward planning now acknowledges that: "…n*ight-time public spaces remain contested spaces with radically different meanings for night-time consumers, leisure businesses, police, public health agencies, local residents, night workers, voluntary agencies and local government"*. [10]

The strategic vision for night-time London developed by The Greater London Authority recognises an over-concentration of late-night entertainment and hospitality services in the West End. Night-time policy is now being guided by ten over-arching principles which

include the formation of creative partnerships with outer-London boroughs to diffuse the NTE, promote opportunity and minimise the impact of economic decline on suburban high streets. [11] Central to this night-time vision is the reduction of alcohol-based harm to visitors, a response to police statistics for alcohol-related incidents that increase from: 23% of total offences between noon and 6pm; to 52% between 6pm and 10pm; and 83% between 10pm and midnight. [12] Moreover, action is required to reduce fear of crime that is not justified by rates for criminal offences committed during the hours of darkness.

In inner and suburban London, the association between the NTE, crime and alcohol abuse persist despite the national trend towards a per capita reduction in alcohol consumption. Although on-trade alcohol sales in pubs and restaurants have reduced from 58% of the total in 1994 to 30% in 2017, the concentrated night-time offering in established NTEs still attracts consumers. Compensating sales of alcohol from supermarkets and off-licences, however, have encouraged pre-loading practices at home that delay the timing of visits to entertainment quarters, particularly at weekends. [13, 14] These issues demand intensive investigation: measurement of drinking and visitor movements is crucial to local understanding of personal security and an effective management response. Throughout the city, policy and practice need to be informed by customer metrics of affordability, inclusivity, diversity and personal safety. [15, 16] The London Night Time Observatory (coming on line in 2020) is designed to afford advisory and statistical services to the London Night Time Commission (set up in October 2017). Much still remains to be done: there is a dearth of place-based impact studies to inform strategic planning for significant groups in the NTEs across London. [17] This lacuna includes HE students. [18] This case study responds to that challenge: it explores the engagement of students in the NTE of suburban Kingston upon Thames and, by exemplification, contributes evidence towards an effective delivery of the capital's night-time vision.

2.   HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS: PERSONAL SECURITY IN THE LONDON ENVIRONMENT

The absence of detailed evidence on student engagement in London's NTE and related issues of personal security demand further consideration. In 2017, the 31 of the 167 UK providers of HE located in London accounted for 16% of the 2.3m students enrolled nationwide in a variety of undergraduate courses and postgraduate programmes of study. [19] They ranged in size from University College (37,905 students) and King's College (30,565) to more specialised providers as represented by The Guildhall School of Music and Drama (1035) and Rose Bruford College (730). HE students are domiciled unevenly across London. [20] Higher densities in some areas have fuelled the processes of 'studentification' "... *by which neighbourhoods become dominated by student residential occupation and by which night-life venues cater exclusively for students and their distinctive life-styles'*. [21] Elsewhere, local NTEs are being energised and sustained by students travelling from a wider catchment area. [22, 23, 24] Both circumstances have implications for student safety and personal wellbeing. [25, 26] Figure 1 shows the majority of London institutions were concentrated in the central zone with a scattered representation in the outer boroughs. Kingston University represents one of six of

London's universities located away from the centre of the metropolis in distinctly suburban locations that attract increasing numbers home-domiciled students from across the Greater London Authority's area and its external 'commutable' hinterland. Three further universities are located close to boundary between London's inner and outer boroughs. Figure 1 confirms that universities sited in the Inner London Boroughs benefit from a high degree of accessibility to London's public transport network; in contrast, those situated in the suburbs experience reduced levels of connectivity. One consequence, for suburban institutions, is that their students may patronise a more local NTE making fewer night-time journeys to the hubs of nightlife in the inner boroughs and West End.

Hard evidence is lacking to inform the measurement of criminal victimisation experienced by HE students. HE providers regularly issue students with guidance on personal security and publicise reporting procedures for crime and anti-social behaviour, but statistical records for on-campus incidents and the prevalence of student victimisation in the immediate neighbourhood has not been effectively reported, monitored nor collated in a standardised format. [26] These deficiencies, it has been argued, impact policy development for student safety at an institutional level and challenge the creation of a secure and sustainable academic environment. [27] The shortcomings of official crime statistics compound these administrative problems. For example, rates for student victimisation (and offending) cannot be determined from police statistics on crime and incivility; moreover, the use of residential address data to calculate ward level crime statistics underrepresents the importance of journey-to-study flows in central London and suburban centres. These density measures also fail to contextualise student patterns of term time domicile (in 2016 20% of HE students were home-based) and journey-to-study movements and are seriously compromised by the well-known issues of under-reporting. [28]

Even the few macro-level attempts to contextualise student safety in London are flawed in method of computation and argument of a direct and causal relationship between levels of student victimisation and features in the crime environment. Two representative approaches, nevertheless, provide the context for more detailed field investigation of student victimisation in the HE sector. Based on 'professional advice', *The Complete University Guide* [29] ranks each institution on the combined rates for burglary, robbery, and violence and sexual offences; these are displayed as a ratio against resident population within a three-mile radius of the main campus. Summary findings are tabulated and expressed as heat maps in the 'living here' life-style guide for prospective students. London institutions scored in the upper quintile (the 'most crime-prone') are centrally-located: SOAS (University of London), University of the Arts London, King's College London, University College London, London School of Economics and The Courtauld Institute. In contrast, those scored in the lowest quintile (the 'least crime prone') are situated in the outer boroughs: Rose Bruford College (Sidcup), St Mary's (Twickenham), Kingston (Kingston upon Thames), Roehampton (Wandsworth), St George's University of London (Tooting) and Middlesex (Hendon). This institution-level approach suggests a potential differentiation in student experience in contrasting areas of the built environment. However, there is little consistency between the rank orders registered for these HE institutions and those reported in *The Times Higher*

Education Survey 2018 where students scaled their University on levels of security within the broader domain of 'societal experience'. Here, for example, in a shorter listing of 116 HE institutions Kingston was poorly rated at 110 and Roehampton 112; whilst King's College was ranked at 42 and University College 69. [30]

Meanwhile, the statistical determination of crime 'heat spots' for offences likely to be consistent with student life-style claims to provide a further measure of objectivity to issues of student safety in the mosaic of London environments. Figure 2, for instance, displays representative London-wide patterns of significant hot spots and cold spots for anti-social behaviour and public order crimes as derived from the Getis-Ord Gi* statistic for offences recorded between September and December 2016. [31, 32] This analytical procedure aggregates recorded offences (assigned in a superimposed grid of 250m squares), weighted by the spatial proximity of crimes in neighbouring grid squares, and generates z-scores and probability (p) values to produce spatial clusters. These are shown as hot and cold spots about which it is possible to be 95% and 99% confident. The output confirms significant hot spots for both offences that extend outwards in all directions from a solid core in central London. This zone includes two-thirds of London's HE institutions. There are, in addition, several significant and compact hot spots elsewhere: for example, anti-social behaviour in Croydon and public order in Tooting. In contrast, whilst the distribution of cold spots is more peripheral and less continuous, public order offences on the greenbelt margins of outer boroughs display consistently higher confidence limits. This analysis confirms that Kingston University, its fellow 'suburban' HE institutions and those close to the Inner London Borough boundary (but excluding St George's at Tooting, a public order hot spot, and Rose Bruford College in Sidcup, an anti-social behaviour cold spot), are located in relatively neutral, 'temperate' areas not designated as hot or cold spots. Both these spatial-analytical approaches to student security have limitations: they fail to differentiate levels of personal engagement in the urban environment 24/7; and do not register potential for victimisation (for students and non-students alike) in the differentiated night-time environments across the capital.

3. HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS IN THE NTE OF KINGSTON UPON THAMES

3.1 *Study aims and student impact*

This study draws on empirical evidence from 604 students in Kingston upon Thames (population 160,000 in 2016) to interpret student engagement in the NTE in suburban London. It addresses three research questions: firstly, what relationships exist between time-based activity spaces of student life style and the built environment within the framework of local regulation and management control; secondly, what time-phases and levels of alcohol consumption characterise different student groups and journey-to-drink movements in the town centre; and, thirdly, with regard to locally significant hot spots of crime and anti-social behaviour the study tests the relationship between students' perceptions of personal security and practical issues of victimisation in the night-time environment. These objectives acknowledge the significant contribution of Kingston University to the borough economy. In

2014/2015 the institution injected an estimated £114m into the local economy and supported 2284 jobs. [33] The 23,000 students (81% full-time; 50% BME; 39% borough residents) added £71m and 1471 jobs. Meanwhile, Kingston University's *One Kingston Strategy* has grown the proportion of BME students from 46% in 2003/2004 to 51% in 2017 and steadily enriched cultural diversity in the night-time scene. [34, 35] Meanwhile, Figure 3 indicates the concentration of 2500 students in five University-owned halls of residence within walking distance of town centre facilities, 1000 (mainly overseas) students occupying new private-sector accommodation blocks released in 2017 [36, 37] and scatter of privately-rented accommodation sustain business provision in the town centre and impact on styles of policing and the delivery of night-time services. [38]

3.2   The night-time environment: characteristics and management policies

Kingston town centre (extensively remodelled 1989-90) is situated in the north of Grove Ward and functions as a significant suburban 'hub' for night-time entertainment in Greater London [39] On a typical weekend, the 23 licensed premises and four nightclubs have licensed spaces for 16,000 persons yielding a net annual benefit from night-time venue-based alcohol sales in the range of £49m to £54m. [40] Thames-side restaurants, a 14 screen cinema, 16 lane mega-bowl and theatre complement this provision. Until the small hours, scheduled train services and a dense network of bus routes (8 of which operate on a 24-hour timetable) connect this 'urban playscape' with neighbouring boroughs and central London. There is secure and extensive provision for all-night car parking. The *After-dark Strategy-Kingston Town Centre* which will endure in the Local Plan 2019-2041 envisions a smooth transition between the day-time and night-time economies of licensed venues; equally as important, it protects the interests of The Rose Theatre, Rotunda, cinemas, and non-alcohol-based entertainment facilities [41, 42] This borough strategy acknowledges well-defined hot spots of crime and incivility embedded in the town centre environment. In 2016 Grove ward (which covers the town centre) accounted for 34% (3984 offences) of the borough's recorded crime. Offences characteristic of the NTE shown on Figure 4 account for 40% of this total: anti-social behaviour (18%), violence and sexual assault (17%); and public order offences (**5%**). Moreover, five primary 'hot spots' encompassing the streets and alleyways close to the principal night clubs and Market Place accounted for 63% of alcohol-related offences. Serial surveys of visitors, young people and residents have demonstrated how these 'hot spots' raise issues of personal insecurity. [43, 44, 45]

Management policy for the night-time environment in Kingston Town Centre reacts to this situation and fuses the strategies of the Safer Kingston Strategic Partnership (SKSP) and the Kingston Alcohol Strategy (KAS). The SKSP remains committed to providing "*a strong and vibrant night time economy to underpin Kingston's reputation as a town where people can feel safe and enjoy themselves*". [46] In concert with the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, the SKSP has prepared a bespoke action plan to meet its priorities of reducing crime, disorder, alcohol-related harm and substance misuse. In conjunction, the public health focus of KAS is aligned to objectives set in the Government Alcohol Strategy [47] to ensure that alcohol-related harm is considered as part of future planning and development

processes. [48] Town centre dimensions of these strategies, embracing industry-based voluntary interventions, impact on the delivery of the NTE. These include: proactive policing; marshalled taxi ranks and minicab kiosks; Pubwatch; Best BAR None Schemes; the Behave or Be Banned "Red Card Scheme"; Scan-net ID Scheme in the principal nightclubs and pubs; deployment of drugs dogs; and Street Pastors. Introduction of a Designated Public Places Order (DPPO) is designed to strengthen police powers whenever the anti-social consumption of alcohol becomes significant. Meanwhile, *Kingstonfirst*, the town centre management arm of the Kingston Business Improvement District (created under the Local Government Act 2003) underwrites 'soft policing' schemes such as street wardens and street pastors. [49] In 2010 the success of these working partnerships in managing night-time services was recognised by Purple Flag accreditation from the Association of Town and City Management.

3.3   *Survey design and the student demographic*

Students, invariably, receive a bad press in local policy debates on the consumption and regulation of alcohol. [50] Concepts of binge-drinking, hedonism, 'ladette' culture and intoxication are widely used to interpret excessive and harmful consumption. [51, 52, 53] Studies have characterised such boisterous drinking behaviour through colourful dimensions of the 'carnivalesque'. [54] Meanwhile, 'the big night-out' [55] has achieved notoriety as an established materialistic and cultural practice in youth drinking behaviour. In parallel, sensationalist language in the national press fuel waves of 'moral panic' around headlines of excessive drinking and disorderly behaviour in public spaces. [56] The consequences for student reputation can be damaging. As Hadfield argues, [57] *playspace* for one person can soon be transformed into *fearscape* for another.

A (pilot-tested) questionnaire approved by Kingston Town Centre Management and the Kingston University Research Ethics Committee was presented online for students on My Kingston (the University student website), the KUSU (Kingston University Student Union) Facebook site and Twitter pages (via the Qualtrics platform) between June 2015 and March 2016. A covering statement explained the purpose of the survey, assured respondents of confidentiality and incentivised a response with the prospect of winning one of three £100 vouchers against Amazon, the John Lewis Partnership or Waterstones Bookshop. Reminders to encourage participation were issued on three occasions. The questionnaire was designed to profile students on: gender, ethnicity and home location; travel behaviour; group size; the pattern and timing of visits to town centre venues; expenditure on alcohol (pre-loaded and venue-based) and other items the NTE; preferred brand(s) of alcohol; the strength and quantity of 'pre-loaded' alcohol; venues for consumption; perceptions of personal safety and access to emergency or support services; and related social experiences. [58]

In the period June 2015-March 2016 a total of 481 students studying in the five University Faculties responded: scrutiny identified 403 (84%) questionnaires completed to a satisfactory standard for inclusion in the study. To boost this sample and provide face-to-face opportunities for explaining drinking behaviour and pattern of engagement in the NTE, a further sub-set of 201 students taking 10 undergraduate modules (and one taught master's

programme) were invited to complete the questionnaire under controlled conditions in teaching slots supervised by one of the authors. Following an explanation on the aims of the survey, students cooperated fully and with a sense of self-reflection; there was no dissent. Two of these time-tabled sessions in Criminology and Geography, respectively, incorporated the survey as a fully-integrated component in the undergraduate curriculum on information collection and data analysis. In each case, module leaders allocated time for follow-up workshops; these were invaluable in teasing out issues connected with drinking behaviour and student life-style at different stages in degree programmes, detecting variations in drinking practices related to term-time residence and in differentiating expenditure preferences across the student body. Equally as important, this approach ensured that evidence was collected from students who engaged in the NTE but refrained from the (excessive) consumption of alcohol either at the pre-loading or venue-based stages in the night-time experience.

The final database profiled 604 students (212 males and 392 females): 83% undergraduate (male 35%; female 65%) and 17% postgraduate (male 38%; female 62%) students. It also covered a range of ethnicities: 64% (70% males; 61% females) self-reported as White or White British; 14% (9% males; 17% females) had Asian or Asian British backgrounds; and equal proportions of each sex were Black or Black British (8%), and of mixed ethnicity (7%). Importantly, one third (35% males; 37% females) lived in University accommodation within 4km of the town centre, a situation that fostered group identity and robust participation rates in the NTE. A further 40% of males and 57% of females lived in accessible neighbouring boroughs. Table 2 disaggregates these demographics by place of residence (university hall or elsewhere) to highlight a significant female representation from Asian and Asian British backgrounds in both settings and the younger gendered age profiles of students in university accommodation.

3.4   Night-time budgeting and alcohol consumption

Self-reported personal expenditure during the last night-out averaged £25.74 (males £26.57; females £25.31). Figure 5 identifies the proportions of *all s*tudents spending on particular elements: these reduced from 85% purchasing alcohol in venues and 42% buying alcohol for a pre-loading session to less than 10% purchasing illicit drugs, cigarettes and gambling. It also depicts the average spend in each category *for those making purchases*. It is noteworthy that 19% of students had bought non-alcoholic drinks at some point during the night-out. Key differences in spending are evident by gender and ethnicity. Males, on average, spent more than females on alcohol (males £14.47; females £11.94) and food (males £15.06; females £7.97). In contrast, females who pre-loaded alcohol spent appreciably more than males (females £11.20; males £9.46). Gender differences in spending are reinforced by ethnicity. BME males, on average, spent more than white males on pre-loaded alcohol (BME £14.65; white £8.27) and non-alcoholic drinks (BME £6.25; white £3.29), whilst spending by white males exceeded BME males on 'other items' (white £12.00; BME £1.02). Average spends for White and BME females contrasted in two domains: firstly, food spending (BME £11.53; white £5.19) including inexpensive restaurant meals, purchases of 'takeaways' from fixed

premises and snacks bought from mobile vendors at the end of the night-out; and, secondly, 'other items' (BME £6.03; white £2.22).

Consistent with the objectives set for a time-geography of urban space, student drinking behaviour is deconstructed into two main phases in Figure 6: pre-loading and venue-based consumption. This division acknowledges that student preferences for drinking venue during a night-out have changed from 'pub-to-club' to 'home-to-pub- to-club' [59] (Barton and Husk, 2012) and invites re-interpretation of engagement in the NTE. [60, 61] Equally as important is evidence that pre-loading alcohol (pre-drinking, pre-lash, pre-partying, front-loading, pre-gaming, 'prinking') is associated with higher levels of consumption, intoxication and health risk. [62, 63] Indeed, some groups of young(er) people regularly binge-drink, mix different types of drinks, engage in *speed drinking* and play alcohol-fuelled party games. [64, 65, 66] Stakeholders at the Kingston Alcohol Summit in March 2012 acknowledged this situation and called for research into the pre-loading practices of young people in the borough. [67]

Overall, fifty-nine percent of Kingston students (males 57%; females 61%) had pre-loaded alcohol before visiting town centre venues. This happened at home (including University accommodation) where 17% of females as opposed to 11% of males had consumed at least 11 units of alcohol as defined by unit weightings in Table 1. Few students admitted to pre-loading alcohol in public open spaces or on public transport, although this practice was more common in the Summer months. Students who had pre-loaded alcohol consumed on average 7.1 units (s.d. 4.4 units). At this stage in the night-out males (mean 8.1 units; s.d. 4.4 units) drank more than females (mean 6.6 units; s.d. 4.1 units). At the point of leaving home to continue drinking in town centre venues, 48% of males and 55% of females had already exceeded the gendered thresholds set for binge drinking at 8 units for men and 6 units for women in one session. [68] Respondents favoured spirit-based drinks (51% had taken at least one 'shot'), wine (26%), beer (24%), and cider (18%) sourced mainly from a nearby supermarket. Although rates of pre-loading were comparable across University Faculties and ethnic backgrounds, they decreased with level of study: first-year students (71%); third-year students (54%) and postgraduates (39%). Three-quarters who had pre-loaded alcohol justified the practice: the primary reason given was the high cost of alcohol in town centre venues; in addition, a significant minority alluded to the importance of socialising and 'chilling' with friends and sports team members; whilst others sought to prepare, psychologically, for the upcoming 'hurly burly' of the nightclub scene. [69] The following series of verbatim comments from students explain reasons for pre-loading alcohol in the context of their student profile, residential location and units of alcohol consumed:

"To pre-party at a friend's house before going out to a club" *(Female, aged 24, Wimbledon resident, Asian or Asian British; pre-loaded 4 units, added 2 units)*

"So when I get to the club I'm already in the party mood and it will take fewer drinks in the club to get me drunk" *(Female, aged 20, Croydon resident, Black British: pre-loaded 3 units, added 5 units)*

"It is cheaper to drink at home and go out later. It's nice to drink at home because you

can have a chat which is harder to do in pubs/clubs" *(Female aged 20, University Hall, White British: pre-loaded 5 units, added 4 units*)

"Alcohol can get expensive in clubs so it's easier to buy a big bottle drink some before going out. It lasts a few weeks. I only spend £10 max on drinks out". *(Female, aged 20, Twickenham resident, Asian British: pre-loaded 6 units, added 10 units)*

"I am in the women's rugby team and every Wednesday we pre-drink as a tradition". *(Female, aged 20, University Hall, White British: pre-loaded 10 units, added 6 units)*

"It's a gathering of friends, and it is cheaper drinks than the clubs" *(Male, aged 20, Bromley resident, Black British: pre-loaded 3 units, added 5 units)*

"Cheaper. Can go there drunk. Kingston isn't great. It's shitty actually" *(Male, aged 21, New Malden resident, mixed ethnicity; pre-loaded 5 units, added 2 units)*

"To get buzzed before going out. It's a lot cheaper to get drunk at home than spending a lot in clubs who dilute the alcohol" *(Male, aged 20, University Hall, White/British: pre-loaded 10 units, added 10 units*

"Too expensive to buy all drinks out. At home a large bottle of vodka - £15 + coke £2 - equate to 5/6 doubles (if you're lucky!)" (*Male, aged 22, Hampton resident, White/British: pre-loaded 13 units, added 12 units)*

"To get pissed. It's more fun than being sober" (*Male aged 19, University Hall, Mixed ethnicity: pre-loaded 16 units, added 10 units*)

Figure 7 shows that student arrivals at licensed town centre venues built up slowly from 1700-1859hrs (12%) to peak between 2100-2259hrs (36%). Characteristically, 20% of males in contrast to 9% of females had taken the first alcoholic drink of the night by 1900hrs; males living elsewhere, however, tended to start the 'big night-out' during the late afternoon (only 13% of males in University halls in contrast to 31% living elsewhere had taken the first alcoholic drink by 1800hrs). Overall, 59% (56% males; 63% females) visited one licensed venue whilst 15% (17% males; 14% females) had patronised a minimum of three. Levels of patronage differed according to residence: whilst 13% from halls had visited at least three venues, the corresponding statistic for students living elsewhere was 20%. Some students took advantage of the high density of licensed premises to engage in circuit drinking to minimise travel distance and time. By far the most popular alcoholic drinks taken were spirit-based: 55% of students reported 'downing' at least one 'shot'; 27% strong beer/lager; 15% weaker beer/lager; and 13% wine. Students consumed, on average, 6.3 units of alcohol on licensed premises. Males (mean 7.6 units; s.d. 5.1 units) drank more than females (mean 5.6 units; s.d. 4.3 units). This gender difference characterised residents in university accommodation. Here, 12% of males and 7% of females exceeded 11 units of consumption in town centre venues. In contrast, 18% of male students and 6% of females living elsewhere had exceeded that intake. 'Partying to excess' at celebratory birthday events and sports

tournaments explains why a few students claimed to have consumed in excess of 30 units. Significantly, and because of the higher prices charged for alcoholic drinks in nightclubs, 19% of students who had pre-loaded alcohol (predominantly females) had then changed to a diet of soft drinks or water.

A typical student night-out in Kingston town centre lasted up to five hours: 37% of students left the town centre between 0100-0259hrs; a further 29% between 0300-0459hrs. At point of departure for home, the combined intake of pre-loaded and venue-based alcohol averaged 10 units (s.d. 6.6 units). The total consumption by males (mean 11.3 units; s.d. 6.8 units) exceeded that for females (mean 9.3 units; s.d. 6.3 units). This minimal difference is carried across to residential status: 37% of males and 35% of females in student residences had consumed in excess of 11 units. However, the gender difference was marked for those living elsewhere: 41% of males in contrast to 21% of females exceeded that threshold. From a health perspective, it is significant that 70% of males and 67% of females had exceeded the level set by the Department of Health [70] for binge drinking. Moreover, some students reported in workshop sessions that on returning home they had 'post-loaded' yet more alcohol. This practice normally involved emptying bottles and cans remaining from the pre-loading stage whilst listening to music and reviewing the night's events.

4.   STUDENT SECURITY IN THE NIGHT-TIME ENVIRONMENT

There remains an enduring association between excessive alcohol consumption and increased street level crime, anti-social behaviour and personal victimisation in town centres. [71, 72, 73, 74, 75] The research focus into how (mainly young) participants perceive and negotiate the spatial, social and cultural dimensions of engagement in night-time activity has now shifted from configuring personalised models of vulnerability to deconstructing the reality of 'human security' and lived emotional experiences in the time-space coordinates of everyday life. [76, 77] Here, the *"... notion of 'spaces of experience' captures the distinctly spatial dimension inherent in experiences in that they are contained, contextualised and rendered concrete in particular places"*. [78] Social relations within space, and human agency, rather than the design of space *per se*, exercise control and exclusion in night-time behaviour. [79, 80, 81]

4.1   Spaces of experience in Kingston

Travel to and from town centre venues can result in confrontation with inebriated persons and risks exposure to incidents of anti-social behaviour. Students reduced the likelihood of unwarranted intrusion by choice of transport mode and travel arrangements. Figure 8 indicates that the majority of students travelled in (mixed-sex) groups averaging seven members and walked (56% males; 49% females) to licensed venues in the town centre or used local bus services (37% males; 36% females). Students journeying from outside the borough favoured public transport. However, to minimise personal risk when travelling to town centre venues, 27% of females from halls of residence shared taxis. Figure 9 displays the local pattern of outward journeys. At weekends (and Wednesday evening 'student nights' favoured, disproportionately, by 58% of males and 54% of females living in University halls)

25% of students had targeted two main nightclubs: Pryzm and Hippodrome. Females, journeying from halls of residence favoured Pryzm (47% in contrast to 30% of males) and McClusky's (18% in contrast to 9% of males) as the ultimate destination. Some travelled directly from home or University accommodation (with a measure of pre-loading alcohol); others, *en route*, had broken the journey at a riverside or local bar/pub. These linkages between town centre venues traverse known 'hot spots' of crime and anti-social behaviour. It is significant that 23% of males and 16% of females from halls of residence (and comparable proportions from elsewhere) define The University Student Union Bar as a primary drinking node and starting point for onward movement to town centre venues. On weeknights, other than Wednesday, students typically aimed for a 'quiet night' and frequented 'locals' closer to halls of residence or the Thames river frontage. Travel patterns and modes on the homeward journey resemble those taken earlier in the night-out: 62% of males and 45% of females walked home, the majority in convivial groups. Moreover, the proportion of males and females (including significant numbers from university halls) that shared taxis increased to 12% and 24%, respectively. Meanwhile, students living farther away relied more heavily on available late-night public transport services.

4.2   Fear of crime and victimisation

Empirical survey evidence and student workshop sessions illuminated three aspects of night-time experience in Kingston: environmental connotations of personal safety in representative town centre locales; direct experiences of victimisation; and personal vulnerability through the excessive consumption of alcohol. In the hours of darkness, the majority of students felt safe in the built environment and associated open spaces in Kingston town centre: only 5% of males and 7% of females claimed to feel either 'fairly' or 'very' unsafe. Feelings of insecurity were greatest in nightclubs where 10% of males and 20% females (especially females from halls of residence) claimed to have felt at least 'unsafe'. These proportions reduced to 6% of males and 7% of females in bars and pubs. Personal insecurity was not directly associated with an excessive consumption of alcohol: only one fifth of male and female students consuming at least 14 units of alcohol claimed to be 'fairly' or 'very' unsafe in these environments. Women from Asian and Chinese backgrounds, however, registered higher levels of vulnerability when visiting town centre venues. This corroborates a Kingston council report that "*Although transport crime rates are low, people (especially women, young people and minority ethnic communities} have personal security concerns when travelling after dark, particularly during the waiting and walking parts of the journey*". [82] Few students commented explicitly on dimensions of town centre management and the control of alcohol. The majority considered the night-time scene as fixed; they negotiated and timed activities within that setting. Anecdotal evidence of police intervention derived from observation, but rarely direct contact. However, in the preceding six months 24% of males and 19% of females had engaged with at least one night-time support service offered in partnership by *Kingstonfirst,* the Metropolitan Police, London Ambulance Service and paramedic services and street pastors. This contact had normally involved a casual conversation; for a minority, however, it focused on a personal injury, involved a police reprimand for anti-social behaviour or cautionary advice from a marshall co-ordinating late-night taxi queues.

Whilst the majority of students recognised the primary hot spots of crime and anti-social behaviour in the town centre, they tended to exaggerate the frequency and intensity of incidents. Serial studies of student safety in Kingston have already identified incongruence between levels of personal concern and reported rates of crime, incivility and anti-social behaviour. [83, 84] Some students claimed to be genuinely anxious about the prospect of drink-fuelled intimidation by strangers and anti-social behaviour during a night out. Few, however, planned journeys to licensed venues so as to avoid contact with crime hot spots. Others compensated by organising movement in groups or planning ahead for transport and revealed a generalised sense of strategic awareness in organising the night-out. Joined-up security thinking was strongly based on previous experience and hearsay. Over the six months period preceding the survey, 47% of students (49% males; 46% females) had neither witnessed nor been affected by one of the eight safety concerns itemised in Figure 10. Reporting rates were consistent by ethnicity: whilst one-third (males 35%, females 31%) had witnessed a live fight in Kingston town centre during the six months, only 10% of men and 8% of women had been directly involved. In addition, 7% (6% males; 8% females) claimed to have been the victim of theft, including a higher proportion of BME females (11%). Far more disturbing, for both sexes, was the incidence of unwanted sexual attention. This impacted a quarter of students (33% females; 9% males) over a six month period, and is unrelated to self-reported levels of inebriation. Females from Black/Black British and Asian backgrounds were particularly vulnerable; some had been targeted with verbal abuse. Significantly, too, 15% of students (14% male; 16% female) claimed to have suffered a night-time injury during the previous six months. More striking, however, was the greater vulnerability claimed by female students from halls of residence. In contrast to peers living elsewhere, Figure 11 shows far greater proportions of these women had witnessed fights in the town centre (38%), claimed to have been too drunk to walk (25%) and been victims of unwanted sexual attention (43%) over the six month period. Debriefing in workshop sessions confirmed that some students had fallen, tripped or slipped on 'detritus' (such as a glossy flyer advertising night-time attractions or food waste) discarded on a wet pavement or unseen kerb but that personal injury was rarely the direct result of stranger-violence.

Excessive drinking during a night-out impacts on personal security. It also affects short-term memory and impairs motor functions, leading to reduced personal control and increased vulnerability to physical injury and victimisation. As a consequence of self-confessed inebriation, 18% of male and 17% of female students-reported problems in walking home from the town centre. Difficulty in recalling events from the previous night provides a further measure of inadequate self-control. Here, the pattern of response on a five point scale was consistent across gender, ethnicity and home residence: 55% of males and 53% of females claimed to have been unaffected; in contrast, 16% of males and 18% of females reported levels of confusion and memory loss scored at the two highest points on the scale. The proportions were comparable for gender and place of residence. Pre-loading alcohol not only correlates with higher levels of night time drinking but translates into heightened perceptions of personal insecurity and the reality of victimisation. In fact, over the six months preceding the survey, proportionately more males who had pre-loaded alcohol (42%) had witnessed a fight; more seriously, 10% had suffered a personal injury. Likewise, females who had pre-

loaded alcohol reported higher levels of victimisation: 38% had attracted unwanted sexual attention; 35% had witnessed a fight; 22% claimed to have been too drunk to walk; 22% had suffered an injury; and 15% had been approached to buy drugs. Fortunately, the majority of vulnerable students, especially females from halls of residence, could depend on support from group members to compensate for personal failings.

5. PATHWAYS FOR RESEARCH

Throughout London, districts and high streets are being re-invented and revitalised as consumption spaces serving the night-time economy. [85, 86] Civic and commercial buildings ripe for transformation continue to be 'morphed' into themed pubs, designer bars and clubs. [87] Investment proceeds in entertainment complexes unrelated to night-time alcohol provision which impact on the density and footfall of customers in local environments. [88] In this context, the rhythm of student engagement in Kingston night-life is well established. Personal security is set centre stage in the built environment: students negotiate and individualise the complex physical and emotional spaces of the town centre 'playscape'. The main axes of the journey-to-drink in Kingston cut across the primary hot spots of crime and anti-social behaviour; the majority of students, however, disregard the possibility of physical harm or personal abuse. First year undergraduates soon acquire a basic place-based knowledge of affordable recreational attractions and opportunities in the town centre *playscape* from co-residents in halls of residence and targeted postings on social media. [89] Preferences and patronage become more refined in subsequent years in response to removal from halls of residence to rented accommodation (often) more distant from town centre venues and the consolidation of friendship groups. [90] The key nightclubs retain an attraction projected by frequent postings on social media; likewise, the cluster of town centre public houses. The reality, for the majority of students, is that alcohol remains at the heart of the night-out experience. [91] This finding resonates with the need to understand student perceptions of place, locality and social bonding within the night-time environment. It is consistent with the argument for shifting analysis from "*a divisive rhetoric of fear to exploring the contexts in which people prefer to drink*" [92] and the pleasures derived from diverse provision, to a more nuanced and localised understanding of how drinking alcohol, drunkenness and space are articulated. The research agenda now needs to connect with consumers' patterns, preferences and places for peer group socialisation; quest for identity and community orientation; and strategies to protect personal security. [93, 94, 95]

From the perspective of urban administration, safety issues are of paramount importance in delivering the NTE. For students, amongst other groups, secure attachment to place is created and shaped by shared experiences and repetitive visits. Here, the physical design and business infrastructure of the town centre conditions the density, flow and distribution of revellers throughout the night. Previous research has identified distinctive time-space 'pathways' [96] and 'drinking circuits'. [97] It is known that unregulated visitor flows give rise to 'clustering' where population streams converge and 'congestion' occurs in public spaces and street networks, leading to tensions and potential flashpoints for alcohol-fuelled disturbance. [98] Further investigation, however, is required to understand: the prevalence of spontaneous

youth drinking behaviour as opposed to 'choreographed' circuits based on taste and brand loyalty; [99] how the physical proximity of corporate *pubcos*, independents and the niche provision of gay bars and 'metrosexual ' venues encourages drinkers to visit different types of venue during a 'big night out'; [100] and the association between the density of licensed venues and incidence of anti-social behaviour and violence. [101] Place-based knowledge is, therefore, fundamental to promoting a sustainable NTE. [102, 103] Policies for managing change have to be grounded in detailed research for targeted policing, enforcement and regulation. Here, Wickham [104] emphasises the need for stakeholders to share local intelligence, discern hot spots of crime and monitor trends in client behaviour in space and time. These directions are consistent with the GLA vision for London as a 24-hour city.

This micro-level study of HE students in Kingston makes a distinctive contribution to the research base on metropolitan night life. [105, 106, 107, 108] It provides a template for replication in an urban study. Kingston town centre provides a relatively secure and carefully-regulated environment for night-time recreation, and affirms the contributions by university students - from different residential backgrounds - to its cultural dynamic. Its narrative of the student night-out reveals the temporal and spatial patterns of journey-to-drink movements, drinking preferences, spending patterns and perceptions of personal security. The study deconstructs levels of alcohol consumption at key stages in the night-out by gender, ethnicity and residence. There are clear differences in gender and ethnicity in terms of drinking practices and movement from place of residence to venue (and back to residence). These extend to perceptions of personal safety: it is encouraging that more than 90% of students felt safe in the built environment and the associated open spaces in Kingston town centre and that personal insecurity was not directly associated with levels of alcohol intake. This narrative is important: it informs the regulation of alcohol and land-use policies set by stakeholders in town centre management and the operations of public services and the voluntary sector in securing the night-time environment for a distinctive set of customers in outer London.

Footnote

[1]There is no standard definition of the time window for 'night-time economy'. Invariably, studies on trade sales of alcohol from licensed venues 1800-0600 hours use the term 'night-time economy' (NTE); meanwhile, studies embracing activities from the early evening favour 'evening and night-time economy' (ENTE). [110] For convenience, this case- study of Kingston University students uses the shorthand NTE to cover both periods.

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Tables

Drink	Strength (%)	Unit (weighting)
glass (125ml) of wine	14	1.8
glass (175ml) of wine	14	2
pint (568ml) high strength beer/lager/cider	5.2	3
pint (568ml) low strength beer/lager/cider	3.5	2.2
bottle beer/lager/cider	5	1.7
spirits (25ml)	1	1

Source: Drinkaware, 2016.

Table 1: Units of alcohol in representative drinks

Characteristic	Males		Females		Total sample	
	Univ. Hall	Elsewhere	Univ. Hall	Elsewhere	Univ. Hall	Elsewhere
	No (%)	No (%)	No (%)	No (%)	No (%)	No (%)
Ethnic background						
White or white British	55 (74)	94 (70)	96 (66)	141 (57)	151 (69)	235 (61)
Mixed ethnicity	6 (8)	9 (7)	11 (8)	17 (7)	17 (8)	26 (7)
Black or Black British	5 (7)	13 (10)	8 (5)	24 (10)	13 (6)	37 (10)
Asian or Asian British	5 (7)	13 (10)	23 (16)	44 (18)	28 (13)	57 (15)
Chinese	1 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	5 (2)	1 (0)	5 (1)
Other ethnic group	2 (3)	5 (4)	8 (5)	15 (6)	10 (5)	24 (6)
Overall	74	134	146	246	220	384
Age distribution						
Age (years)						
18	8 (11)	17 (13)	26 (18)	20 (8)	34 (15)	37 (10)
19	21 (28)	21 (16)	43 (29)	25 (10)	64 (29)	46 (12)
20	20 (27)	19 (14)	39 (27)	53 (22)	59 (27)	72 (19)
Over 20	25 (33)	77 (48)	38 (26)	148 (50)	63 (29)	225 (59)
Overall	74	134	146	246	220	380
Postcode Area						
KT1	23 (31)	23 (17)	34 (24)	51 (21)	57 (26)	74 (19)
Other codes	51 (69)	111 (83)	112 (76)	195 (69)	163 (74)	306 (81)
Overall	74	134	146	246	220	380

No. of venues

1	44 (59)	72 (54)	94 (64)	145 (59)	138 (63)	217 (57)
2	20 (27)	34 (25)	34 (23)	54 (22)	54 (25)	88 (23)
3 or more	10 (14)	28 (21)	18 (12)	47 (19)	28 (13)	75 (20)
Overall	74	134	146	246	220	380

Table 2: Kingston University Students: characteristics of respondents
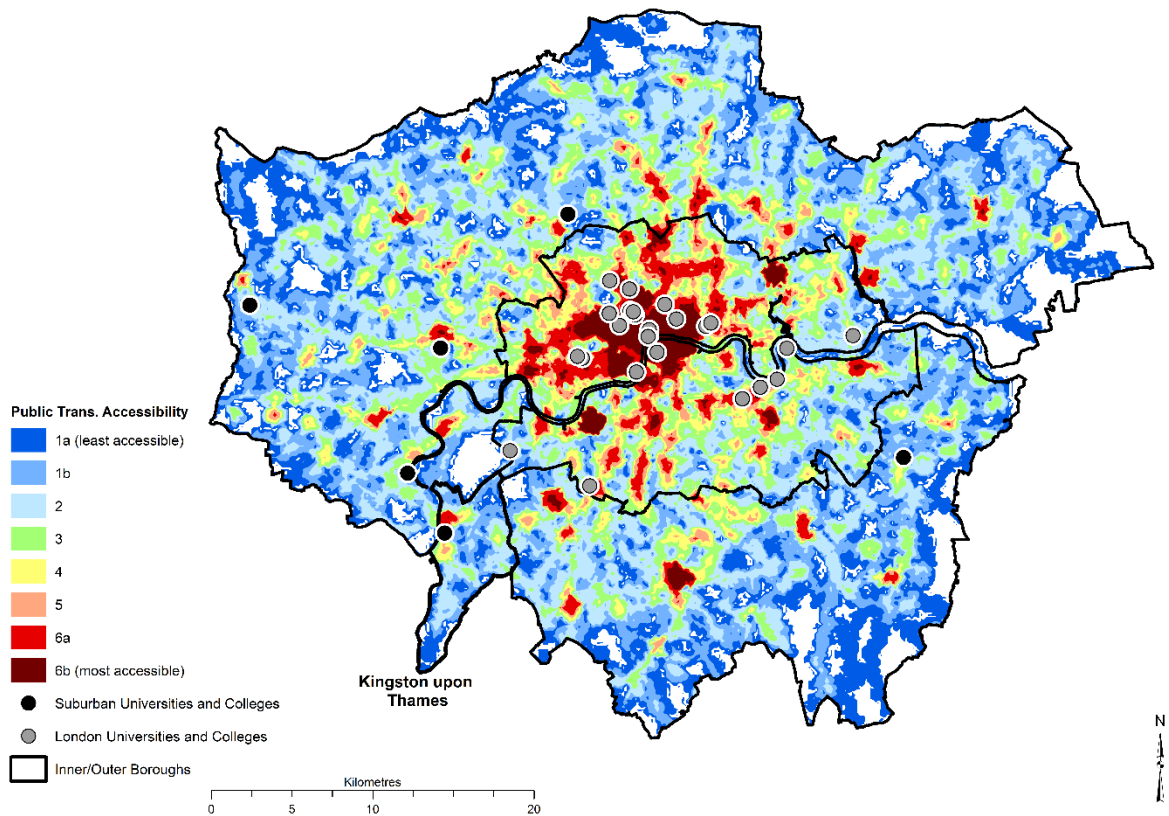
Source: authors' survey

Figure 1: Universities in inner and outer London: accessibility to the public transport network

Source: Ordnance Survey, Edina. © Crown copyright and/or database right 2020; Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) data https://data.london.gov.uk/

Note: The Public Transport Accessibility Levels (0 to 6b) are measures of accessibility of a point on London's public transport network (bus, train, tram and underground) that takes into account walk access time and service availability. A score of 0 indicates very poor access and 6b is excellent access. The PTALs used here are for 2015.
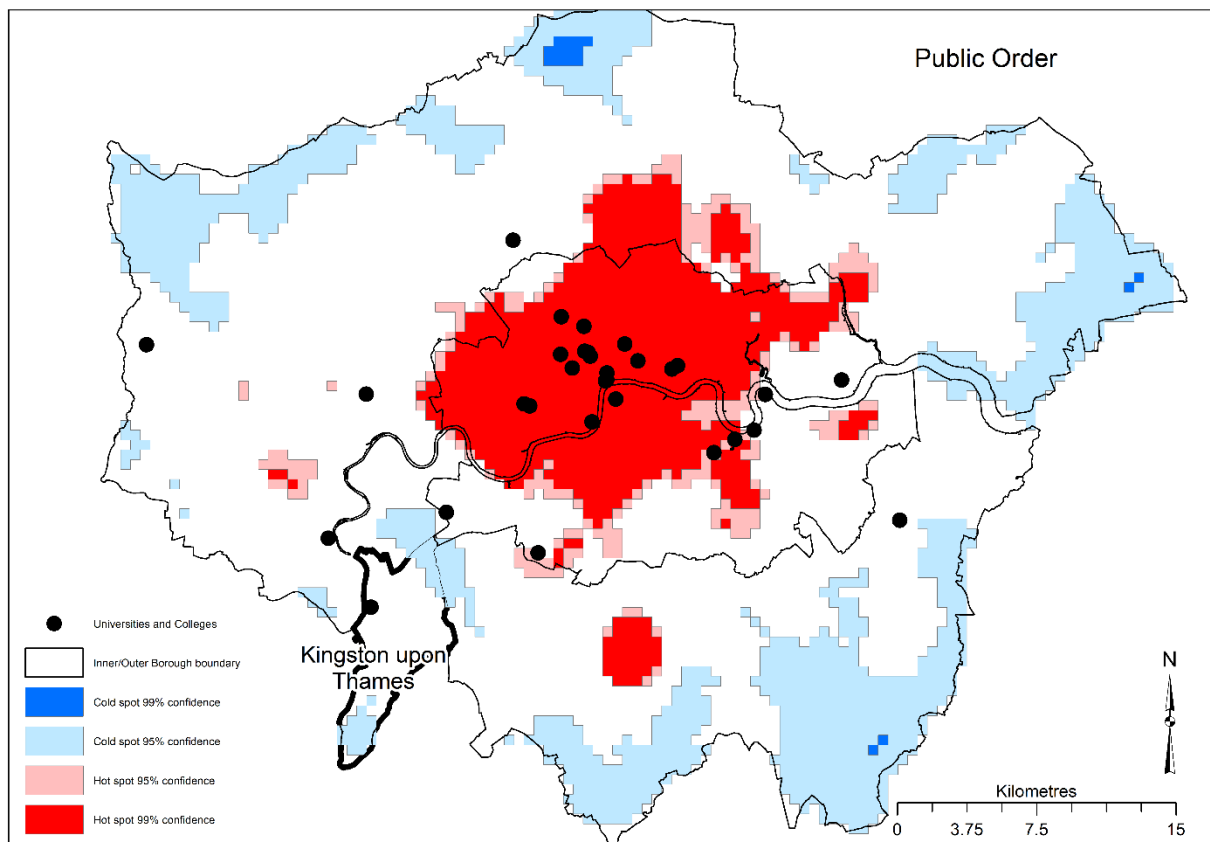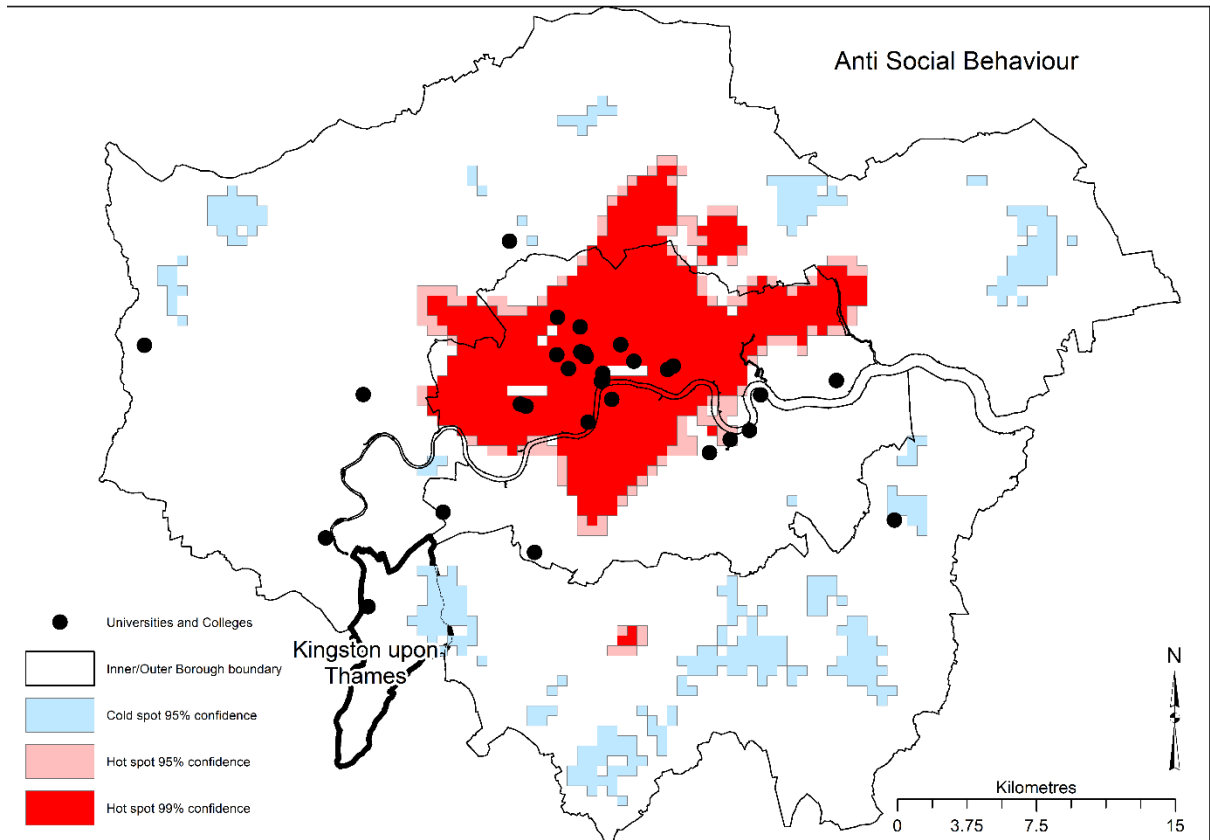
Figure 2: Universities in London: hotspots for anti-social behaviour and public order offences close to institutions

Source: Ordnance Survey, Edina. © Crown copyright and/or database right 2020; OSCrime data made available under Open Government Licence V3.0 from https://data.police.uk/

Note: Optimised hot spot analysis takes a set of incident points (here selected criminal offences over a period of four months) and creates statistically significant hot and cold spots using the Getis-Ord Gi* statistic weighting each feature by proximity to its neighbours. When aggregated and mapped to regular grid units, this statistic provides a guide as to where high or low values are clustered spatially, here shown at the 90%, 95% and 99% confidence levels.
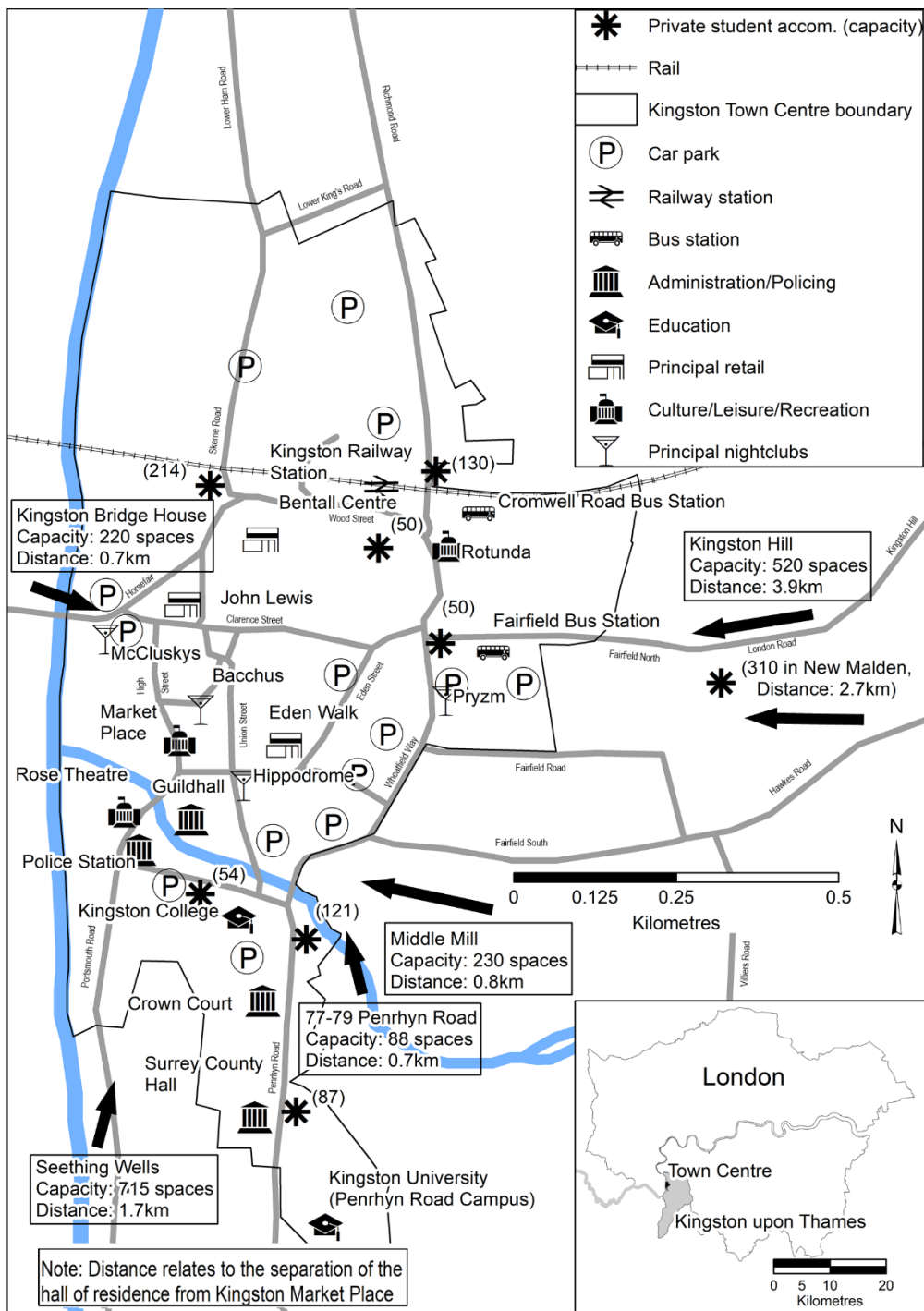
Private student accom. (capacity)

Rail

Kingston Town Centre boundary

(P) Car park

Railway station

Bus station

Administration/Policing

Education

Principal retail

Culture/Leisure/Recreation

Principal nightclubs

Lower Ham Road

Richmond Road

Lower King's Road

Sterne Road

Kingston Railway Station

(214)

(130)

Bentall Centre

Wood Street

Cromwell Road Bus Station

Kingston Bridge House
Capacity: 220 spaces
Distance: 0.7km

(50)

Rotunda

Kingston Hill

Kingston Hill
Capacity: 520 spaces
Distance: 3.9km

John Lewis

Horsefair

Clarence Street

(50)

Fairfield Bus Station

Fairfield North

London Road

McCluskys

High Street

Bacchus

Eden Walk

Eden Street

Pryzm

(310 in New Malden,
Distance: 2.7km)

Market Place

Union Street

Fairfield Road

Hawkes Road

Rose Theatre

Guildhall

Hippodrome

Wheatfield Way

Fairfield South

N

Police Station

(54)

Kingston College

(121)

Middle Mill
Capacity: 230 spaces
Distance: 0.8km

0   0.125   0.25   0.5
Kilometres

Villers Road

Crown Court

Portsmouth Road

77-79 Penrhyn Road
Capacity: 88 spaces
Distance: 0.7km

Surrey County Hall

Penrhyn Road

(87)

London

Town Centre

Kingston upon Thames

Seething Wells
Capacity: 715 spaces
Distance: 1.7km

Kingston University
(Penrhyn Road Campus)

0   5   10   20
Kilometres

Note: Distance relates to the separation of the
hall of residence from Kingston Market Place

Figure 3: Kingston town centre: core-frame activities in urban land use
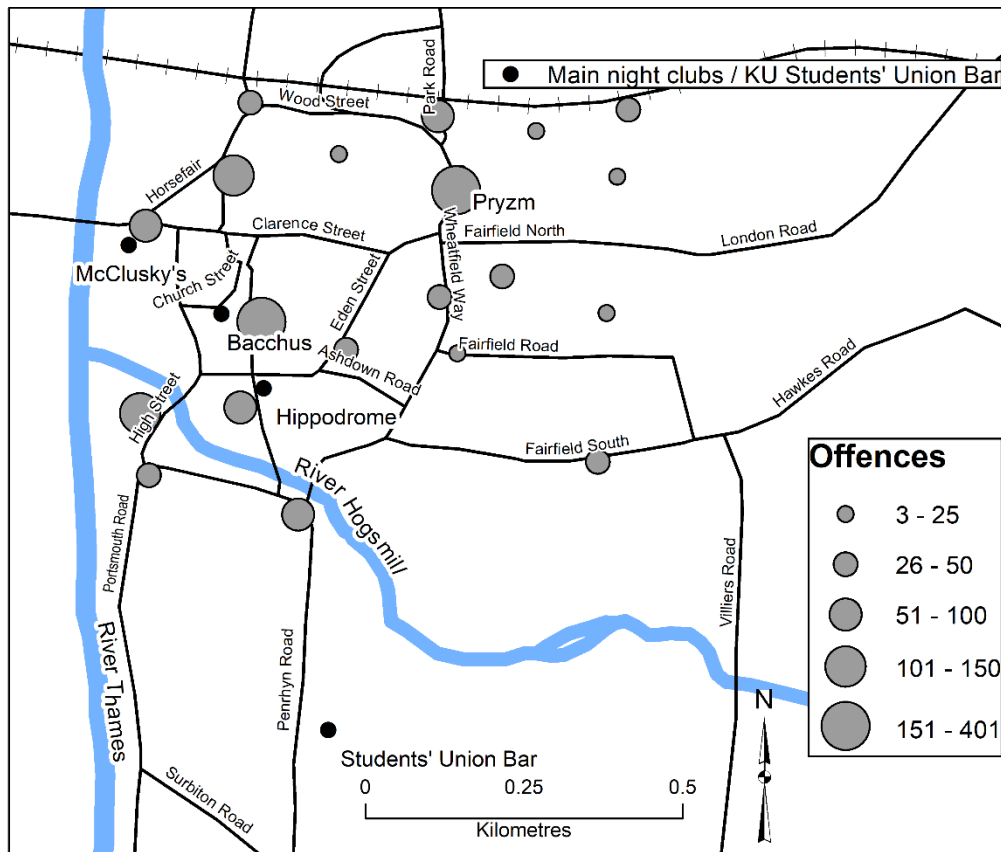
Figure 4: Hot spots of alcohol-related crime in Kingston town centre 2016

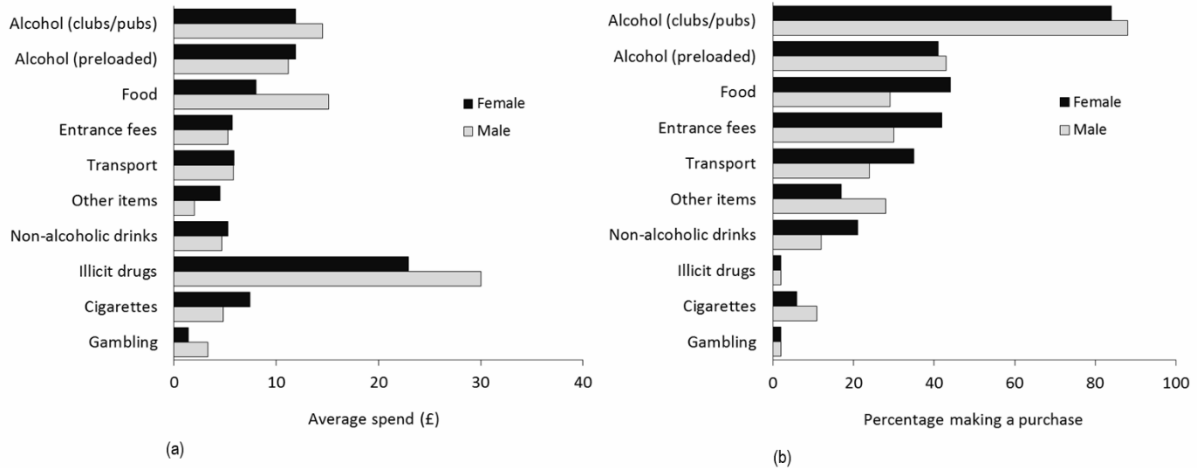Source: Metropolitan Police Statistics

Figure 5a/b: Expenditure patterns during the last night-out
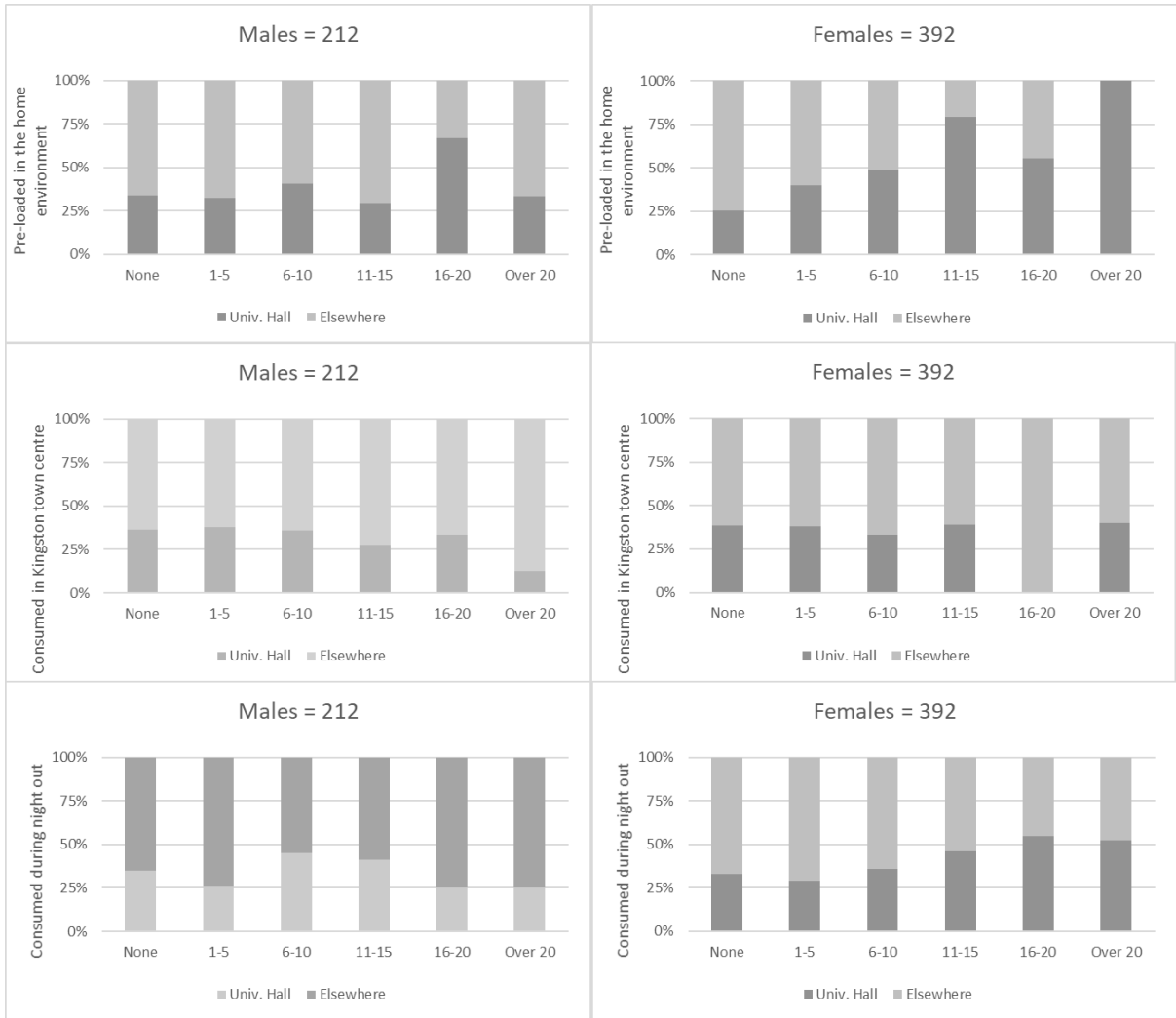
Source: authors' survey

Figure 6: Kingston University Students: units of alcohol consumed during the last night out (by domicile)
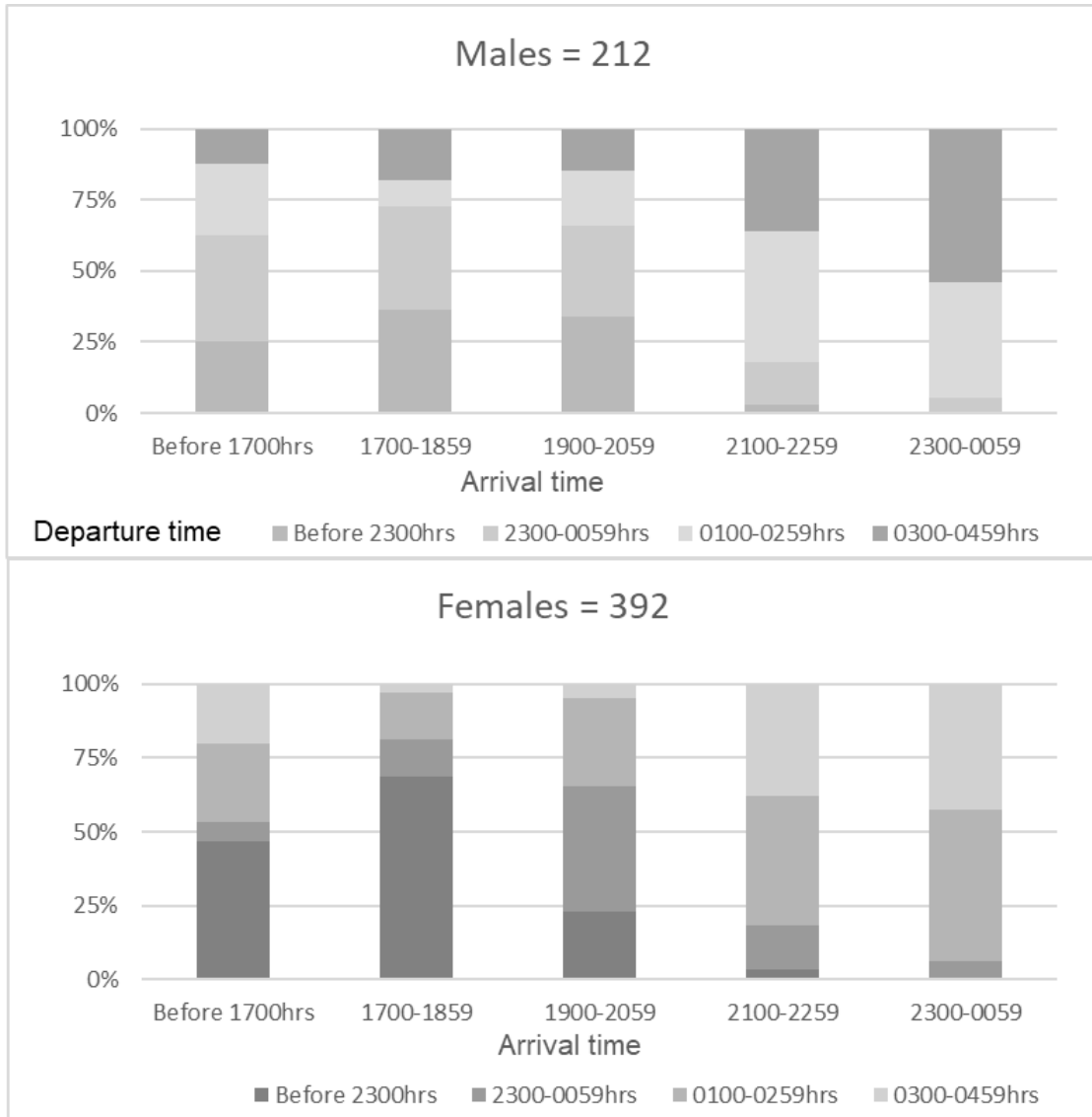
Source: authors' survey

Figure 7: Duration of visit to licensed premises in Kingston town centre
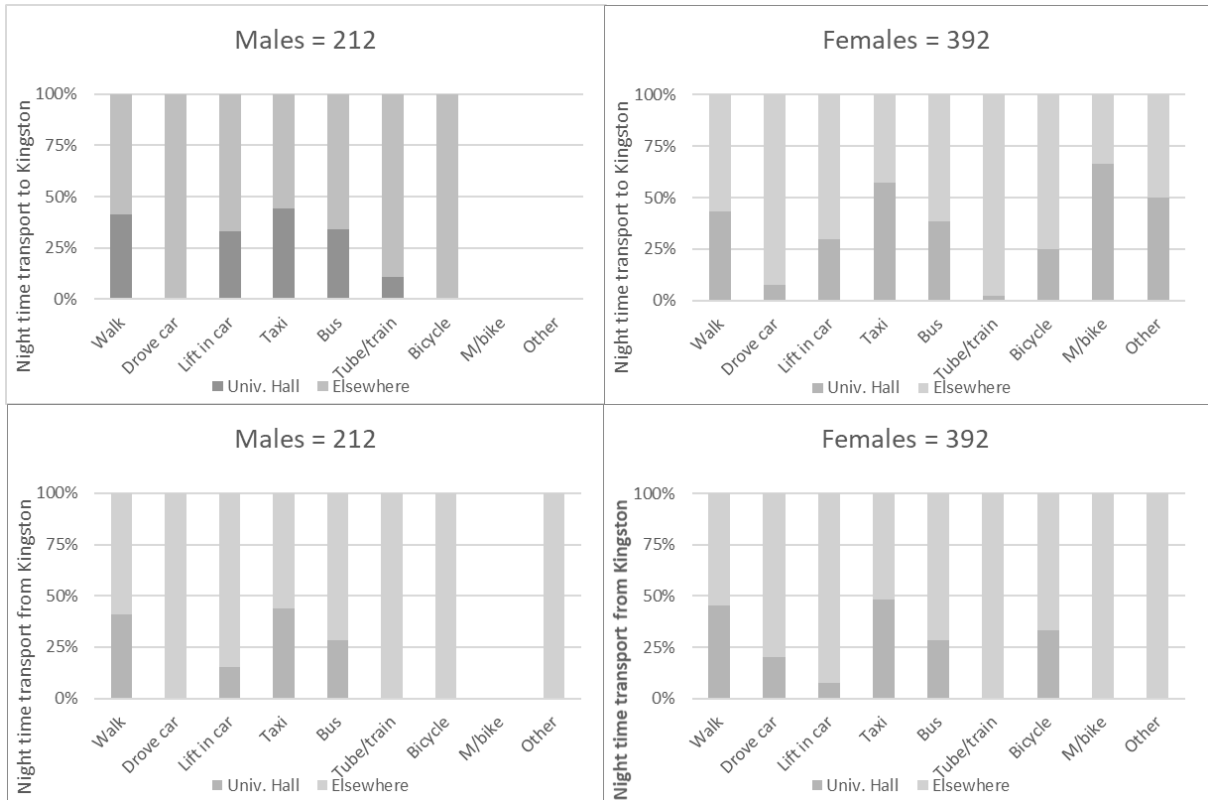
Source: authors' survey

Figure 8: Kingston University Students: night-time transport to and from Kingston town centre (by domicile)
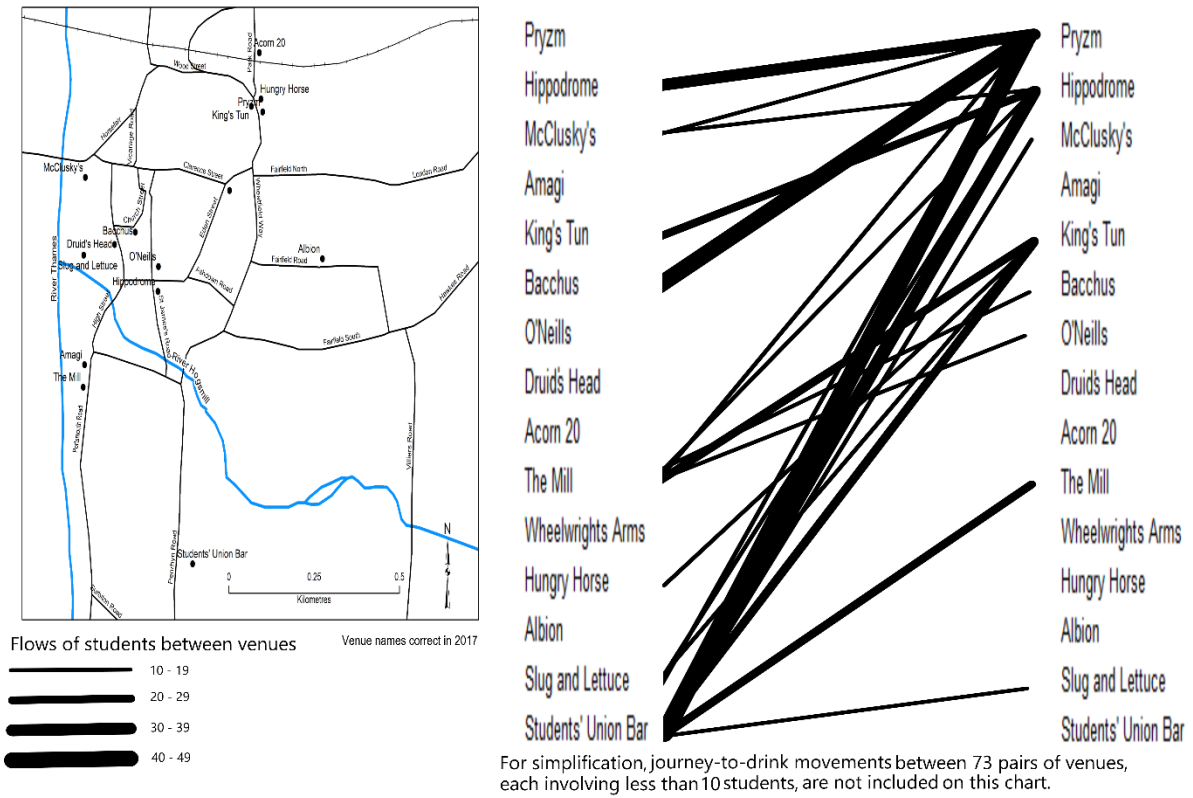
Source: authors' survey

Figure 9: Journey-to-drink flows: linkages between venues
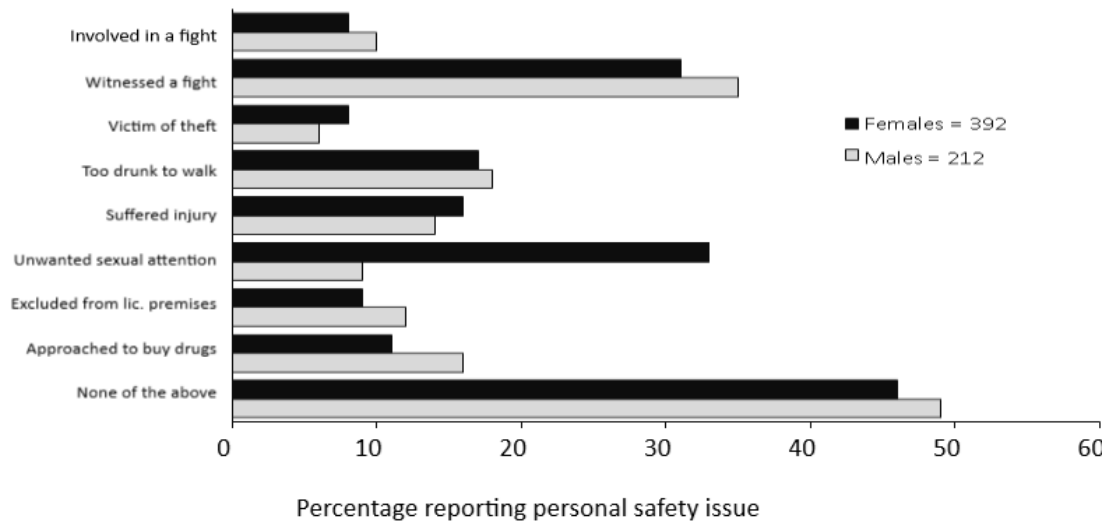
Source: authors' survey

Figure 10: Personal safety issues in Kingston town centre
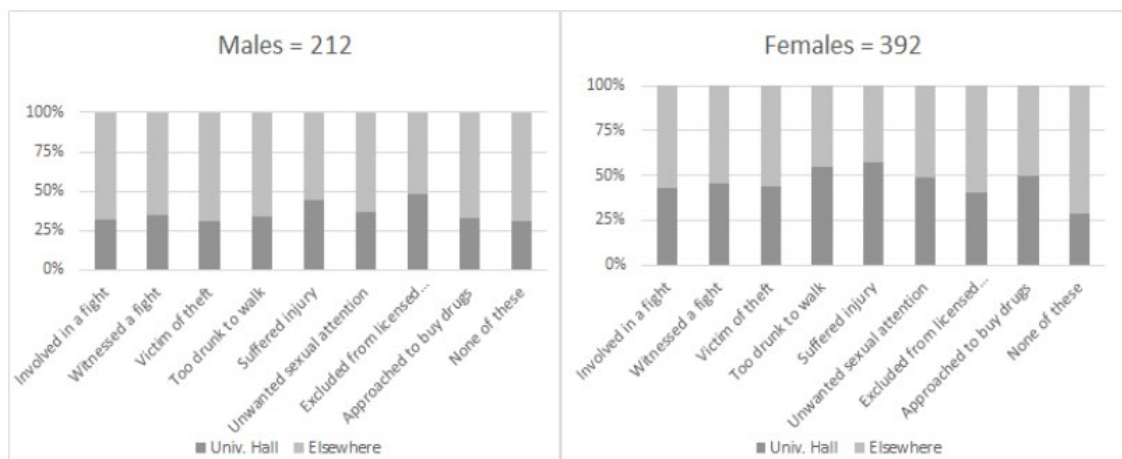
Source: authors' survey

Figure 11: Kingston University Students: personal safety issues experienced in Kingston town centre in the past six months (by domicile)

Source: authors' survey