

Alcohol number one 'date rape' drug: Study

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A new study finds that victims were drunk in more than 80 percent of sexual assaults. Photo / Chris Skelton

Alcohol is the number one "date rape" drug in New Zealand, according to an Environmental Science & Research (ESR) study.

ESR looked at 500-plus drug-related sexual assaults and found that in more than 80 per cent of the cases the victims were drunk.

The figures were similar to overseas studies.

The findings were presented at workshops organised by ESR for investigators of sexual assault.

ESR toxicologist Diana Kappatos said in cases where specimens were collected less than eight hours after the alleged incident alcohol was found in 83 per cent.

In all cases where alcohol was found, 90 per cent were over the 80mg drink-driving limit. In 54 per cent of these cases, the blood alcohol level was more than 150mg.

Cannabis was the next most frequently found drug - present in 147 of the 538 cases studied.

"Drink spiking does happen in New Zealand and our study found specific incidents of it," Ms Kappatos said.

"But this data also shows that people need to not only look after their drink to ensure no one is adding anything to it but also look after themselves and monitor what they are being encouraged to take or are voluntarily taking themselves."

FBI chief toxicologist Dr Marc LeBeau said that in the United States alcohol was considered the most prevalent drug associated with sexual assaults, but was rarely recognised as a "date rape" drug because of its social acceptance.

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