

CRIME AND JUSTICE BULLETIN

NUMBER 253 | DECEMBER 2022

Changes in and correlates of Australian public support for liquor licensing restrictions

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AIM

This study has three aims. The first is to examine changes in public support for reducing the number of outlets that sell alcohol, reducing trading hours for all pubs and clubs, stricter enforcement of the law against serving customers who are drunk, restricting late night trading of alcohol, and strict monitoring of late night licensed premises. The second is to identify the main demographic and social correlates of attitudes toward each policy. The third is to determine whether the marginal effects of jurisdiction and age on support for reduced outlets, reduced trading hours, and intensified enforcement have changed over time.

METHOD

The data source for the study are the National Drug Strategy Household Surveys (NDSHS) carried out between 2001 and 2019 (inclusive). The first aim is addressed by tabulating support for the five forms of trading hour restrictions by survey year and testing for significant changes across years using Chi-square tests (adjusted for survey design). The second and third aims are addressed by running a series of logistic regression analyses (also adjusted for survey design) for each of the policy questions of interest.

RESULTS

Public support for reducing the number of outlets that sell alcohol has risen by 44% since 2001 but remains low. Public support for stricter enforcement of the law against serving customers who are drunk rose significantly between 2004 and 2010 and remained high and stable between 2010 and 2019. The remaining three policies showed a pattern of rising support between 2004 and 2011, and then rapidly falling support between 2013 and 2019. There is strong support for all five policies among women, older people, those who drink less frequently and those who, in the previous 12 months, have been assaulted, threatened with assault, or put in fear by someone under the influence of alcohol.

CONCLUSION

Public support for a general reduction in trading hours is currently at a low ebb, but public support for stricter enforcement of responsible service of alcohol laws and for strict monitoring of late-night licensed premises remains strong.

KEYWORDS

public opinion

liquor licensing

alcohol-related violence

lockout law

INTRODUCTION

Liquor licensing has long been a hotly contested area of Australian State and Territory Government policy (Grabosky, 1977; Harden, 2010). National Competition Policy in the wake of the Hilmer Report (Hilmer, 1993) fostered a resistance on the part of the Federal Government to any policy that could be construed as anti-competitive, including policies designed to reduce or minimize alcohol-related harm (Room, 2015). At the time of the Hilmer Report, however, there was widespread public support in NSW (and many other jurisdictions) for stronger controls over the sale of alcohol (McAllister, 1995; Tobin et al., 2011). Harm minimisation was established as a key guiding principle of liquor licensing law in NSW in 1996. Responsible service of alcohol training was made compulsory for the liquor industry in 2003. In 2004, a system of social impact assessments was made mandatory in all applications for the granting or renewal of a liquor license (Parliament of NSW, 2004; Roth, 2007).

Public support for increased controls on licensed premises grew in the years that followed, not only in NSW (Wilkinson et al., 2009) but in other states as well (Homan, 2019). In 2008 the then NSW Labor Government introduced the so-called 'declared premises' scheme, which imposed trading hour restrictions on the 48 licensed premises that had the highest number of recorded assaults between July 2007 and June 2008 (Roth & Angus, 2015). Following its election in 2011, the NSW Liberal/National Coalition Government introduced a 'three strikes' disciplinary scheme designed to impose progressively more restrictive trading conditions on licensed premises that repeatedly breached the provisions of the Liquor Act (Roth & Angus, 2015). The process of ever-tightening liquor licence controls culminated in 2014, when the alcohol-related assault and subsequent death of Daniel Christie on New Year's Eve prompted the NSW Government to introduce what became known as the 'lockout laws.' These laws were based on restrictions introduced in Newcastle that appeared to be effective in reducing alcohol related violence (Kypri et al., 2011).

These laws required all licensed premises in Kings Cross and the Sydney CBD to cease accepting new customers after 1.30AM and cease serving alcohol altogether after 3.00AM (Menéndez, et al., 2017). The lockout laws were greeted enthusiastically by public health advocates but provoked considerable criticism from sections of media and the retail and entertainment industries (Callinan, 2016; Keep Sydney Open (KSO), 2019; Nicolls, 2016; The Darlinghurst Business Partnership, 2019). The NSW Government responded by appointing former High Court Judge Ian Callinan to review the lockout laws. Following his review (Callinan, 2016), the NSW Government agreed to a minor extension of trading hours for licensed premises (Liquor & Gaming NSW, 2016).

This, however, seems to have done little to dampen resistance to the lockout laws. In response to the continued criticism, the NSW Parliament appointed a Joint Select Committee to report on Sydney's Night-Time Economy. It recommended that the lockout laws be 'urgently' scrapped, on the grounds that they were depriving Sydney of \$16 billion of potential economic activity by not taking full advantage of the night-time economy (Parliament of NSW, 2019). On the 14th of January 2020, the NSW Government announced that it would remove the 1.30AM lockout for all venues in the Sydney CBD entertainment precinct, remove the restrictions on serving cocktails, shots and drinks in glass after midnight in this precinct; extend the time for 'last drinks' at venues with good records in this precinct by 30 minutes; extend bottle shop opening hours across NSW until midnight from Monday to Saturday (with 11.00PM closing on Sunday); and increase small bar patron capacity from 100 to 120 across NSW (NSW Government, 2020). On the 9th of February, these changes were extended to the Kings Cross entertainment precinct. The requirement for RSA marshals and CCTV in this precinct was also dropped.

NSW was not the only state to roll back its restrictions on the trading hours of licensed premises. In January 2017, the Queensland Government commissioned the Institute for Social Research to conduct a review of the lockout laws in that State. The review (Ferris et al., 2017) found no evidence that assaults had declined, perhaps because most licensed premises appeared to ignore the legislative requirements to cease serving alcohol at 3.00AM. Whatever the cause, in response to the review, the Queensland Government abandoned its lockout laws (Australian Broadcasting Commission [ABC news], 2017).

Victoria and Western Australia abandoned or modified similar laws in 2008 and 2009 (Harden, 2010; WA Nightclubs Association, 2016). The reversal of policy on the regulation of licensed premises has been widely interpreted as a response to public discontent with the growing list of restrictions placed on licensed premises. To date, however, there has been no detailed analysis of public opinion on the relative merits of different forms of liquor licensing restriction. The research that has been done (see below) identified some of the main trends, but in order to obtain a general overview of public attitudes toward alcohol policy, has sometimes grouped quite diverse policies under the general heading of restrictions on 'availability.' Policies, such as restricting the number of liquor outlets, the general liquor licence trading hours, the time of day during which alcohol can be sold and the enforcement of responsible service laws *can* be thought of as diverse ways of influencing alcohol availability. From a public policy perspective, however, these are very different policies.

The assumptions governments make about public opinion, whether correct or incorrect, can exert powerful influence on the specific policy options they are willing to consider. The aim of this report is to present and discuss the results of a study into changes in public opinion on the regulation of licensed premises. Before introducing the study, we briefly review a number of earlier studies on public attitudes to alcohol and its consumption. We then explain how our study differs from these earlier studies, with a view to identifying the distinctive contribution it makes to debate about the liquor licensing policy.

Past Research

In his analysis of public attitudes to liquor licensing, McAllister (1995) employed the 1993 National Drug Strategy Household Survey (NDSHS), a representative sample survey of the population aged fourteen and over in all States and Territories (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2020). The 1993 NDSHS asks respondents to indicate which of 11 alcohol policy options they support. The options included reducing the number of outlets that sell alcohol, stricter enforcement of the law against serving alcohol to customers who are underage and limiting advertising for alcohol on TV until after 9.30PM. Responses to this question were captured on a Likert scale ranging from strongly support, support, neither support nor oppose, oppose, or strongly oppose. Combining the first two of these Likert scale items, McAllister (1995) found marked differences across the States and Territories in support for the various policy options. Rather than analyse the correlates of support for each of the 11 different policies canvassed in the 1993 NDSHS, he factor-analysed responses to all 11 alcohol-control policies and then analysed the correlation between drinking frequency and support for two factors: one of which he labelled alcohol availability, and the other of which he labelled sports sponsorship. Among other things, he found strong support for stronger restrictions on both factors among those who drank (alcohol) less often.

Wilkinson et al., (2009) used the NDSHS to examine trends over time in public support for various alcohol policies. Rather than combining the 'strongly support' and 'support' items to measure levels of support for each policy, they created a public support scale ranging from 5 (strongly support) to 1 (strongly oppose). Using this measure, they found a fall between 1993 and 2004 in public support for increasing the price of alcohol, raising the legal drinking age, reducing the number of outlets that sell alcohol, reducing the trading hours for all pubs and clubs, and stricter enforcement of the law against serving customers who are drunk.

Callinan et al., (2014) extended the analysis conducted by Wilkinson et al., (2009) to cover the period between 1995 and 2010. Employing the same scale measure of support, they conducted a factorial analysis of variance to examine changes in and correlates of support for various alcohol control policies between 1995 and 2010. Following an initial decline between 1995 and 2004, they observed a significant rise from 2004 onwards, in support for various alcohol control policies, including increasing the price of alcohol, reducing the number of outlets that serve alcohol and reducing the trading hours of all pubs and clubs. After using principal components analysis to construct a general measure of availability (based on responses to questions tapping support for increasing the price of alcohol, reducing the number of alcohol outlets, and reducing the trading hours of all pubs and clubs) they found rising public support for reducing alcohol availability among both men and women, across all age groups, and across groups differing in their frequency of alcohol use.

By 2016, the picture had changed significantly. Livingston et al., (2019) found a nine per cent overall decline in support for what they called 'late trading policies' (a composite measure of support for reducing the trading hours of all pubs and clubs and support for restricting late night trading of alcohol). The decline in support was particularly noteworthy in NSW, but significant declines in support for late trading restrictions were also found amongst various subgroups, including older respondents and drinkers (compared with non-drinkers). Reflecting on the change in public support for liquor licence restrictions, they speculated that 'opponents' of late trading policies and other liquor licensing restrictions had been 'relatively successful at changing the minds of the public' (Livingston et al., 2019). Tindall et al. (2016), in a survey of public attitudes to liquor licensing in both Newcastle and Geelong, also found strong support for restrictions on the availability of alcohol, particularly among those at risk of acute alcohol harm.

These studies have shed valuable light on general trends in public attitudes to alcohol policy but raise two concerns. The first concern is that treating a Likert scale ordering of responses ranging from 'strongly support' to 'strongly oppose' as if it were an interval scale measure of support appears somewhat problematic. Apart from the fact that it is hard to conceptualise 'strongly oppose' as if it were a weak form of support, or 'neither support nor oppose' as an intermediate form of support, there is simply no warrant for the implicit assumption that equal increments in a Likert scale measuring public support represent equal (subjective) increments in public support. When dealing with categorical outcomes it would seem more appropriate to use methods specifically directed toward the analysis of categorical data.

The more important issue is that disparate policies have often been grouped together for the purposes of analysis; a strategy that simplifies the analysis; but which may also oversimplify the public response to particular alcohol policy options. Wilkinson et al., (2009), for example, conducted a factor analysis of all 16 NDSHS policy items, and extracted four factors, variously labelled, accessibility, promotion limits and warnings, controlling hazardous behaviour and controlling public space. They then examined the correlates of these factors, finding that support for restrictions on availability was stronger among women, older respondents, and those who were better educated. The factor they labelled 'controlling accessibility', however, loaded strongly on responses to quite diverse policies, including increasing the price of alcohol, reducing the number of outlets that sell alcohol, reducing the trading hours of all pubs and clubs, raising the legal drinking age, restricting late night trading in alcohol, and increasing the tax on alcohol products to pay for health, education, and the cost of treating alcohol-related problems. From the standpoint of both public opinion and public policy, these options raise very different concerns.

The present study

The study seeks answers to three questions. The first concerns the changes that have occurred since 2001 in public support for reducing the number of outlets that sell alcohol, reducing trading hours for all pubs and clubs, stricter enforcement of the law against serving customers who are drunk, restricting late night trading of alcohol and strict monitoring of late-night licensed premises. The second concerns the demographic and social correlates of attitudes toward these policies. The third question concerns the question of whether the marginal effects of jurisdiction and age on support for a reduction in the number of outlets selling alcohol, a reduction in the trading hours of all pubs and clubs and restricting late night trading in alcohol have changed over time.

The research reported here differs from past research on public opinion on alcohol policy in three ways. First, as is apparent from the previous paragraph, the focus is on five specific aspects of liquor licensing policy rather than on general public attitudes to alcohol policy. This should increase the utility of the analysis to policy makers and regulators. Second, we extend the analysis of trends in public opinion on alcohol policy to 2019. Third, rather than creating a scale of public support, we create a binary measure of support which takes the value '1' if the respondent endorses 'strongly support' or 'support' for a particular policy and '0' otherwise. We then analyse the correlates of policy support using logistic regression. Finally, rather than exploring interaction effects by including interaction terms in a logistic regression model and reporting the results in terms of odds ratios, we estimate effects in terms of changes in the probability of support for a particular policy. Changes in the probability of support are much easier to understand than changes in the odds ratios associated with interaction terms in logistic regression.

DATA AND METHOD

Data source

The data source for the study is the National Drug Strategy Household Survey (NDSHS), which is a large cross-sectional survey of drug and alcohol use (and attitudes toward it) in the Australian population aged fourteen and over. It excludes those who are in hospitals, nursing homes, non-permanent addresses such as motels and hostels, and other environments, such as Defence Force barracks or prisons, as well as those who do not speak English. It is conducted every three years using stratified, multistage random sampling. The sample is stratified into 15 different regions and weighting is applied to ensure a representative sample of English-speaking Australians residing in private dwellings.

The prevalence estimates in this report are drawn from the seven surveys conducted between (and including) 2001 and 2019. The sample sizes in these surveys were: 26,744 (2001), 29,445 (2004), 23,356 (2007), 26,648 (2010), 23,855 (2013), 23,749 (2016) and 22,015 (2019). More detail on the nature of the survey can be found in the survey technical report (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2019). To address the research questions, we combine the responses to each question of interest into two categories: support (combining support and strongly support and coded '1') and other (combining neither support nor oppose; oppose; and strongly oppose and coded '0').

Analysis

To assess the changes that have occurred since 2001 in public support for the listed liquor licensing policies, we tabulate support for the five forms of trading hour restrictions by survey year and test for significant changes across years using Chi-square tests adjusted for survey design. The adjustment is based on a first-order Taylor series linear approximation (Wolter, 2007; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2019) and ensures the test employs the correct standard errors. To test the effect of different covariates on support for changes to liquor licence policy, we run a series of logistic regression analyses (also adjusted for survey design) for each of the policy questions of interest. The demographic and social covariates of interest in these regressions are gender (coded '1' if female and '0' otherwise), age (coded '1' if 14-29, '2' if 30-39, '3' if 40-49, '4' if 50-59 and '5' if 60+), remoteness (coded '1' if resides in a major city, '2' if resides in an inner or outer regional area, and '3' if resides in a remote or very remote area), income (coded '1' if the respondent is in the top three categories of personal income and '0' otherwise¹), and state/territory (hereafter referred to as 'jurisdiction').

We also include two other covariates. The first is a measure of how often the respondent drinks alcohol (coded '1' if respondent drinks every day, '2' if drinks 3-6 days a week, '3' if drinks 1 to 2 days a week, '4' if drinks about 2 to 3 days a month, '5' if drinks about once a month and '6' if doesn't drink or drinks less than once a month). We include this variable because past research has shown it to be a strong correlate of support for restrictions on licensed premises. The second is a measure whether the respondent reports having been a victim of assault or threatened assault or reports having been put in fear by someone under the influence of alcohol in the last 12 months. We include this measure because, a priori, one would expect those who are victims of alcohol-related violence or threats to be more supportive of restrictions than those who are not victims.

Differences in odds ratios are not directly translatable into differences in predicted probabilities. To explore interaction effects involving survey year, jurisdiction, and age, we estimate and report the marginal effects of these variables on the probability of support (averaged over the estimation sample).

¹ There are 13 income categories but the range in each category changes from survey to survey in response to changes in personal income.

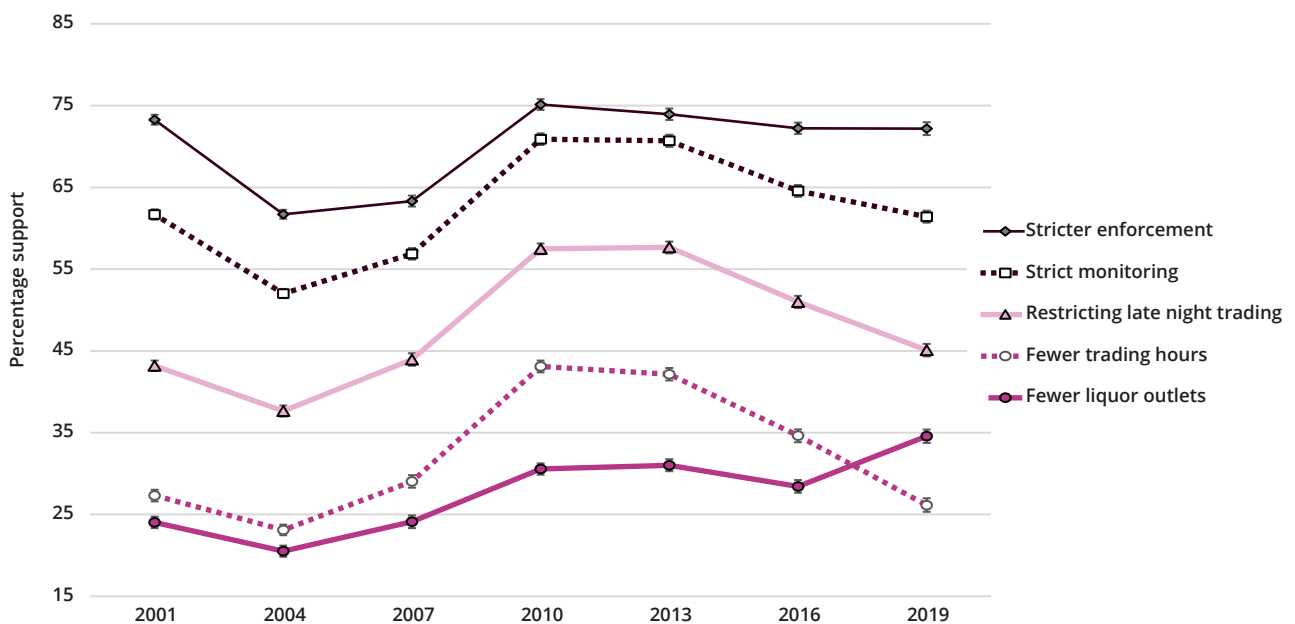
RESULTS

Trends in support for restrictions on trading hours

Figure 1 shows the trend in levels of support for each of the five policy options by survey year. The policy attracting the strongest support in all years involves stricter enforcement of the law against serving customers who are drunk. In 2019, 72% of all Australians 14 and over supported this policy. The other policies, in order of declining popularity in 2019, were strict monitoring of late-night licensed premises (61% support), restricting late night trading of alcohol (45% support), reducing the number of outlets that sell alcohol (35% support) and reducing the trading hours of all pubs and clubs (26% support).

There are quite marked differences in the trend for each of these policies. Support for stricter enforcement of the law against serving customers who are drunk changed very little over time, rising by 2.5 percentage points (p.p) between 2001 and 2010 and then declining by 4.1 p.p between 2010 and 2019. In 2019, it was supported by more than 70% of the Australian population aged fourteen and over. In 2010, more than 70% also supported strict monitoring of late-night licensed premises. By 2019, however, support for this policy and fallen to 61%. Support for restricting late night trading of alcohol peaked in 2010 and 2013 at over 55%, but then fell to around 45% in 2019. Support for reducing the trading hours of all pubs and clubs peaked at just over 43% in 2010 but by 2019 was down to around 26%. The least popular policy is that of reducing the number of liquor outlets. Support for this policy, however, rose from 24% in 2001 to 35% in 2019.

Figure 1. Support for restrictive liquor licensing policy by policy type and survey year



Liquor license policy and its correlates

Table 1 shows the results of a logistic regression analysis of support for reducing the number of outlets that sell alcohol and reducing the trading hours for all pubs and clubs. The key point to emerge from the first panel of Table 1, is that even after controlling for gender, age, remoteness of residence, drinking frequency, jurisdiction, and whether or not the respondent had in the last 12 months experienced an alcohol-related antisocial act, the odds ratios for survey year suggest a steady rise in support for fewer outlets. The same is not true of support for reduced trading hours. The odds ratios here reflect the rising and falling pattern seen in Figure 1.

Table 1. Models of support for fewer alcohol outlets and reduced trading hours

Variable	Support fewer outlets				Support fewer hours			
	Odds Ratio	p<0.05	Lower 95 CI	Upper 95 CI	Odds Ratio	p<0.05	Lower 95 CI	Upper 95 CI
Female	1.292	0.000	1.241	1.344	1.255	0.000	1.209	1.302
Age group (ref. = 14-29)								
30-39	1.812	0.000	1.685	1.949	2.268	0.000	2.116	2.431
40-49	2.648	0.000	2.464	2.846	3.676	0.000	3.431	3.937
50-59	3.433	0.000	3.193	3.691	5.006	0.000	4.671	5.366
60+	4.856	0.000	4.534	5.201	6.785	0.000	6.346	7.253
Area (ref. = major cities)								
Regional	1.026	0.283	0.979	1.076	1.107	0.000	1.060	1.156
Remote/very remote	1.176	0.007	1.046	1.322	1.071	0.244	0.954	1.203
Alcohol consumption (ref. = every day)								
3-6 days/week	1.232	0.000	1.143	1.328	1.176	0.000	1.103	1.254
1 to 2 days/week	1.479	0.000	1.368	1.599	1.309	0.000	1.222	1.401
2 to 3 days/month	2.090	0.000	1.925	2.268	1.647	0.000	1.531	1.772
about once a month	2.729	0.000	2.494	2.986	1.946	0.000	1.791	2.114
less than once a month								
Jurisdiction (ref. = NSW)								
VIC	3.629	0.000	3.357	3.922	2.573	0.000	2.398	2.761
QLD	1.066	0.054	0.999	1.138	0.807	0.000	0.759	0.858
WA	0.820	0.000	0.769	0.874	0.710	0.000	0.670	0.752
SA	0.784	0.000	0.730	0.841	0.489	0.000	0.457	0.523
SA	0.733	0.000	0.681	0.790	0.639	0.000	0.597	0.684
TAS	0.954	0.431	0.848	1.073	0.612	0.000	0.547	0.686
ACT	1.023	0.635	0.932	1.122	0.993	0.867	0.913	1.080
NT	1.350	0.000	1.218	1.496	0.756	0.000	0.684	0.835
Alcohol victim	1.331	0.000	1.271	1.394	1.220	0.000	1.168	1.274
Survey year (ref. = 2001)								
2004	0.874	0.001	0.805	0.948	0.863	0.000	0.798	0.932
2007	1.026	0.394	0.967	1.090	1.117	0.000	1.056	1.181
2010	1.307	0.000	1.210	1.412	2.309	0.000	2.154	2.475
2013	1.362	0.000	1.286	1.442	2.103	0.000	1.994	2.218
2016	1.222	0.000	1.124	1.329	1.608	0.000	1.490	1.735
2019	1.769	0.000	1.626	1.924	0.723	0.000	0.661	0.791
Constant	0.048	0.000	0.043	0.054	0.069	0.000	0.063	0.076

There are some noteworthy jurisdictional and demographic differences in the correlates of support for the reduced outlet and reduced trading hour policies. Both policies find significantly more support amongst women, older Australians, those who drink alcohol less frequently and those who in the last 12 months have been assaulted, threatened with assault, or made fearful by someone under the influence of alcohol. The age effects are particularly pronounced, with the odds of support for both policies amongst those in the age group 60+ being more than 2.5 times those in the age group 30-39.

The residents of Queensland (QLD), Western Australia (WA) and South Australia (SA) are significantly less likely to support a policy of reducing the number of outlets that sell alcohol than the residents of NSW. Those living in remote or very remote areas are more likely to support fewer outlets than those living in major cities/regional areas, while those living in regional areas are more likely to support a reduction in trading hours than either those in major cities or in remote/very remote areas. There are significantly lower odds for all jurisdictions except the ACT when it comes to supporting a policy of fewer hours.

Table 2 presents the logistic models for stricter enforcement of the law against serving customers who are drunk (first panel), restricting late night trading in alcohol (second panel) and strict monitoring of late-night licensed premises (last panel). The odds ratios for survey year reflect the rising and falling pattern seen in Figure 1.

As with the previous two policies we examined, there are several similarities in the correlates of support for these policies. Support is higher for all three policies among women, those who are older, those who drink less frequently, and those who, in the last 12 months, have experienced actual violence, the threat of violence or who have been put in fear by someone under the influence of alcohol. There is significantly less support in regional and remote/very remote areas for stricter enforcement of the law against serving customers who are drunk than in major cities. On the other hand, the residents of regional and remote/very remote areas are significantly more supportive of restricting late night trading of alcohol than those in major cities (although the effect for remote/very remote is borderline significant).

Table 2. Models of support for more responsible service, restricted late night sale of alcohol and stricter monitoring of late night licensed premises

Variable	Support stricter service			Restricting late night sale of alcohol			Support strict monitoring of late night premises					
	Odds Ratio	p<0.05	Lower 95 CI	Upper 95 CI	Odds Ratio	p<0.05	Lower 95 CI	Upper 95 CI	Odds Ratio	p<0.05	Lower 95 CI	Upper 95 CI
Female	1.405	0.000	1.353	1.459	1.327	0.000	1.282	1.374	1.278	0.000	1.234	1.324
Age group (ref. = 14-29)												
30-39	1.935	0.000	1.831	2.043	2.427	0.000	2.293	2.568	2.042	0.000	1.938	2.151
40-49	2.622	0.000	2.475	2.779	3.983	0.000	3.760	4.218	2.899	0.000	2.745	3.062
50-59	3.238	0.000	3.045	3.444	5.699	0.000	5.370	6.049	3.862	0.000	3.644	4.093
60+	4.096	0.000	3.864	4.343	8.516	0.000	8.040	9.021	4.970	0.000	4.703	5.253
Area (ref. = major cities)												
Regional	0.922	0.000	0.881	0.964	1.134	0.000	1.089	1.182	1.067	0.003	1.023	1.114
Remote/very remote	0.802	0.000	0.720	0.893	1.109	0.053	0.998	1.231	0.880	0.015	0.793	0.976
Alcohol consumption (ref. = every day)												
3-6 days/week	1.252	0.000	1.172	1.337	1.175	0.000	1.108	1.246	1.265	0.000	1.189	1.346
1 to 2 days/week	1.291	0.000	1.205	1.384	1.280	0.000	1.203	1.362	1.253	0.000	1.174	1.337
2 to 3 days/month	1.541	0.000	1.428	1.662	1.596	0.000	1.491	1.707	1.464	0.000	1.364	1.571
about once a month	1.447	0.000	1.327	1.579	1.751	0.000	1.618	1.894	1.465	0.000	1.350	1.589
less than once a month	1.688	0.000	1.565	1.821	2.274	0.000	2.125	2.434	1.680	0.000	1.566	1.803
Jurisdiction (ref. = NSW)												
VIC	1.072	0.035	1.005	1.144	0.861	0.000	0.812	0.913	1.022	0.493	0.961	1.086
QLD	1.057	0.075	0.994	1.124	0.786	0.000	0.744	0.831	0.901	0.000	0.851	0.954
WA	0.965	0.286	0.903	1.031	0.657	0.000	0.618	0.698	0.797	0.000	0.749	0.848
SA	1.014	0.698	0.945	1.089	0.674	0.000	0.632	0.718	0.831	0.000	0.778	0.888
TAS	1.101	0.114	0.977	1.240	0.718	0.000	0.645	0.800	0.859	0.006	0.770	0.958
ACT	1.242	0.000	1.127	1.370	0.988	0.765	0.910	1.072	1.066	0.151	0.977	1.164
NT	1.109	0.043	1.003	1.227	0.772	0.000	0.703	0.847	0.906	0.042	0.824	0.997
Alcohol victim	1.574	0.000	1.504	1.647	1.183	0.000	1.137	1.232	1.522	0.000	1.459	1.587
2001 (ref.)												
2004	0.660	0.000	0.616	0.707	0.880	0.000	0.823	0.941	0.768	0.000	0.720	0.819
2007	0.639	0.000	0.605	0.675	1.046	0.081	0.994	1.101	0.831	0.000	0.790	0.874
2010	1.201	0.000	1.113	1.295	1.948	0.000	1.825	2.079	1.711	0.000	1.596	1.834
2013	1.142	0.000	1.077	1.211	1.971	0.000	1.874	2.074	1.699	0.000	1.609	1.793
2016	0.961	0.342	0.886	1.043	1.455	0.000	1.354	1.562	1.217	0.000	1.130	1.310
2019	0.834	0.000	0.767	0.906	1.017	0.671	0.943	1.096	0.900	0.007	0.835	0.971
Constant	0.780	0.000	0.715	0.851	0.143	0.000	0.131	0.155	0.436	0.000	0.402	0.474

Interaction effects: jurisdiction and survey year

Figure 2 shows the marginal effect of survey year and jurisdiction on support for fewer alcohol outlets. The ACT and VIC are not shown because support for this policy in those jurisdictions was not significantly different from that in NSW, even after controlling for survey year. There are two points to take away from Figure 2. The first is that support for reducing the number of liquor outlets in the NT is significantly higher than in NSW. Furthermore, the gap, in nominal terms at least, appears to be growing. The second point is that support for reducing the number of liquor outlets is significantly lower in QLD, WA, and SA than it is in NSW, and the difference here appears to be widening.

Figure 2. Marginal effect of jurisdiction by survey year on support for fewer alcohol outlets (ref. NSW)

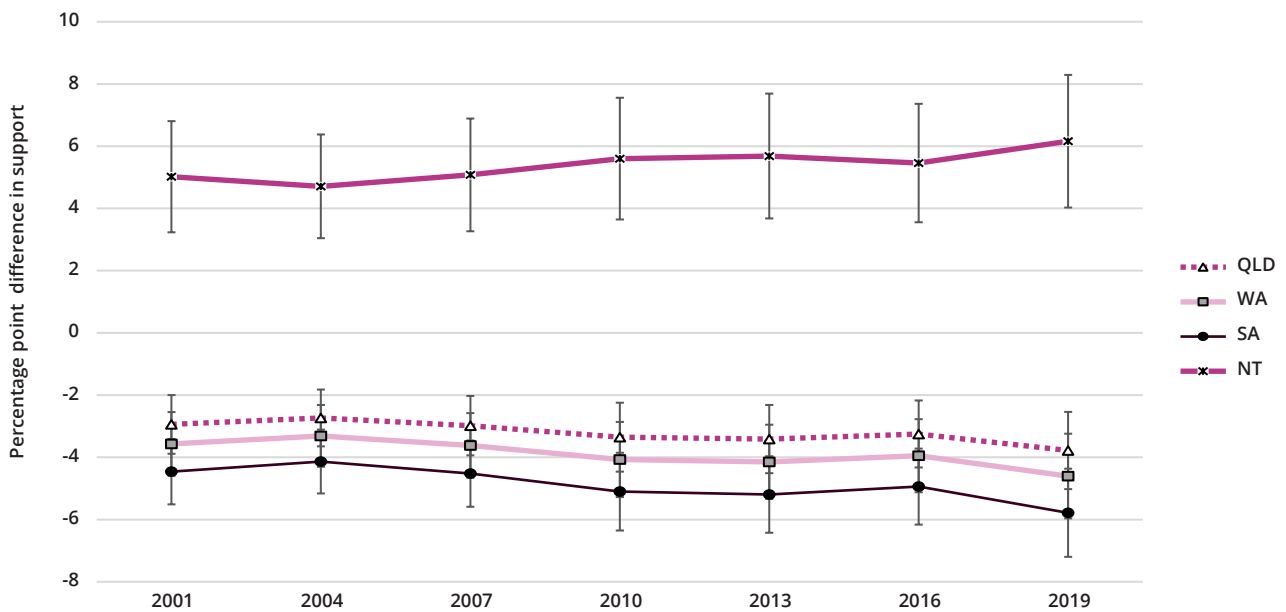


Figure 3 shows the marginal effect of survey year and jurisdiction on support for reducing the trading hours of all pubs and clubs. The ACT is not shown because support for this policy was not significantly different from that in NSW. Support for reducing trading hours was lower in VIC, QLD, WA, SA, TAS, and the NT than in NSW over the entire period between 2001 and 2019. The gap between NSW and other jurisdictions appears to expand between 2004 and 2010, and then progressively shrink from 2010 onwards. In the case of WA, the year effect is significant and large. In 2010, for example, support for reducing the trading hours of all pubs and clubs is more than 15 p.p. lower in WA than in NSW. By 2019, however, this difference in support had fallen to less than 10 p.p..

Figure 3. Marginal effect of jurisdiction by survey year on support for reduced trading hours (ref. NSW)

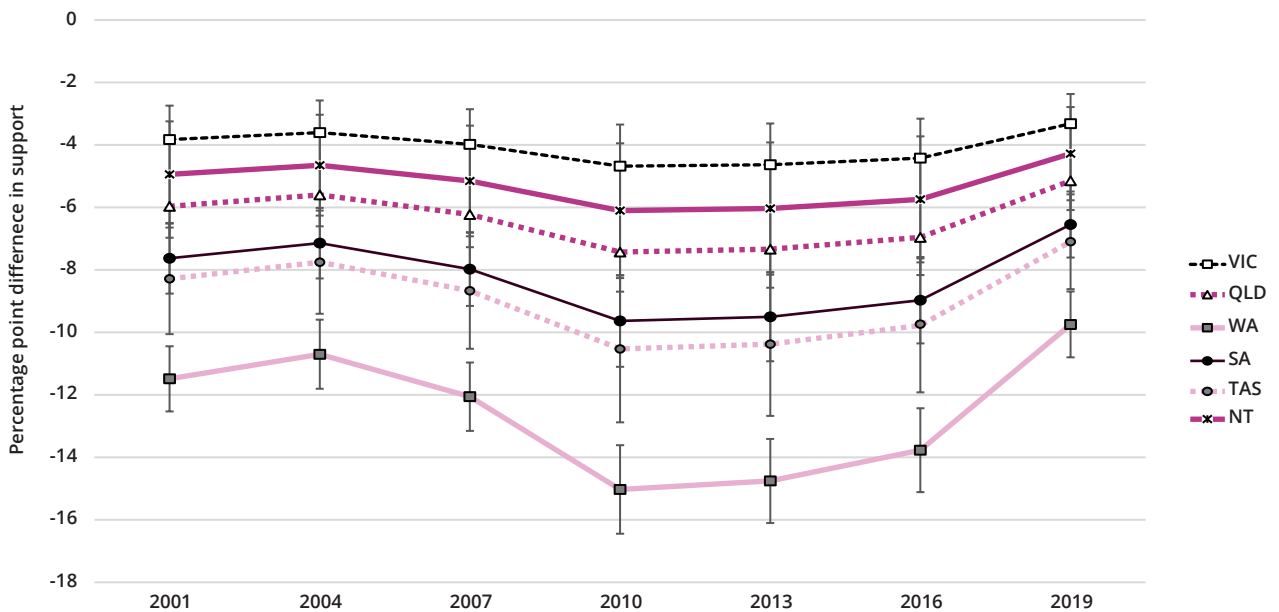
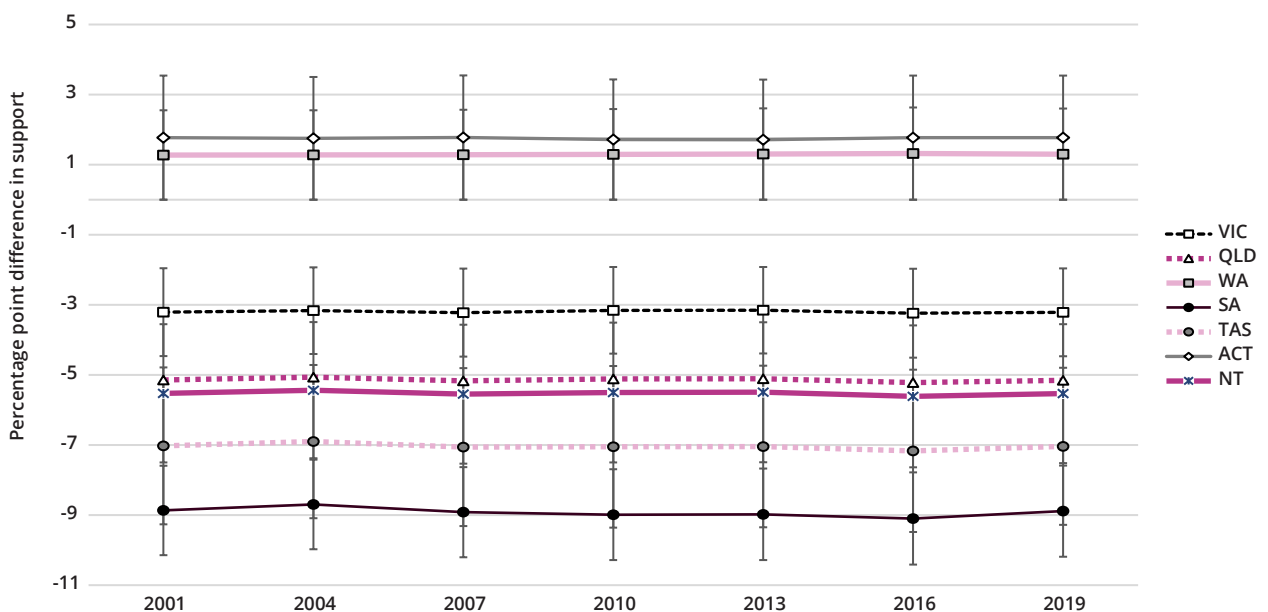


Figure 4 shows the marginal effect of jurisdiction on support for restricting late night trading of alcohol. There is significantly more support for this option in the ACT and WA than in NSW. There is significantly less support in the remaining jurisdictions. There is no sign of any significant change over time in the role that jurisdiction has played in shaping attitudes toward support for restricting late night trading in alcohol.

Figure 4. Marginal effect of jurisdiction by survey year on support for restricting late night trading in alcohol (ref. NSW)



Interaction effects: age and survey year

Figures 5 to 7 show the marginal effect of age and survey year on support for fewer alcohol outlets (Figure 5), support for reduced trading hours for all pubs and clubs (Figure 6), and support for restricted late-night trading of alcohol (Figure 7). The reference category is the age group 14-29. The growing marginal effect of age is clear across all age groups in Figure 5. In 2001, for example, support for the policy among 30-39-year-old respondents was only around six p.p. higher than among 14-29 year old respondents. By 2019, that gap had widened to nearly nine p.p. (in relative terms, an increase of 44%). The increasing marginal effect of age is smaller for the other age groups but still substantial. In 2001, for example, there was a 22.8 p.p. difference between those aged 60+ and those aged 14-19 in their support for fewer alcohol outlets. By 2019, that gap had increased to 29.6 p.p., an increase in relative terms of around 30%.

Figure 5. Marginal effect of age by survey year on support for fewer alcohol outlets (ref. 14-29 yr olds)

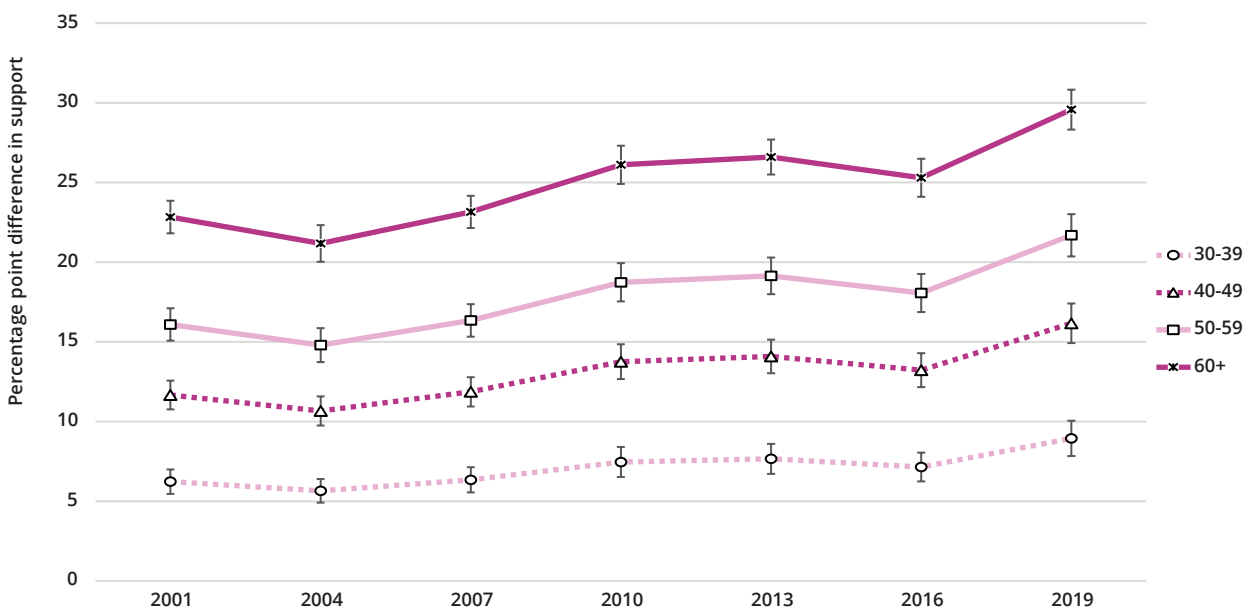


Figure 6 reveals that the general pattern of rising and falling support for reducing trading hours for all pubs and clubs seen in Figure 1 applies across all age groups. The declining marginal effect of age after 2010 is particularly sharp. In 2010, the gaps in support for this option between those aged 14 to 29 and older age groups were: 14.8 p.p. (30-39), 25.7 p.p. (40-49), 33 p.p. (50-59), and 40 p.p. (60+). By 2019, those same gaps had shrunk by 52%, 46%, 42% and 38%, respectively. By 2019, the marginal effect of age on support for reducing the trading hours of all pubs and clubs was smaller than it had been nearly 20 years earlier. Figure 7 exhibits a more attenuated version of the pattern seen in Figure 6. The marginal effect of age on support for restricted late-night trading in alcohol increases over time to 2010 and then declines. The declines from the peak in 2010, however, are much smaller than we saw in Figure 6, being respectively 19.6% (30-39), 13.5% (40-49), 8.9% (50-59) and 3.9% (60+).

Figure 6. Marginal effect of age by survey year on support for reduced trading hours for all pubs and clubs (ref. 14-29 yr olds)

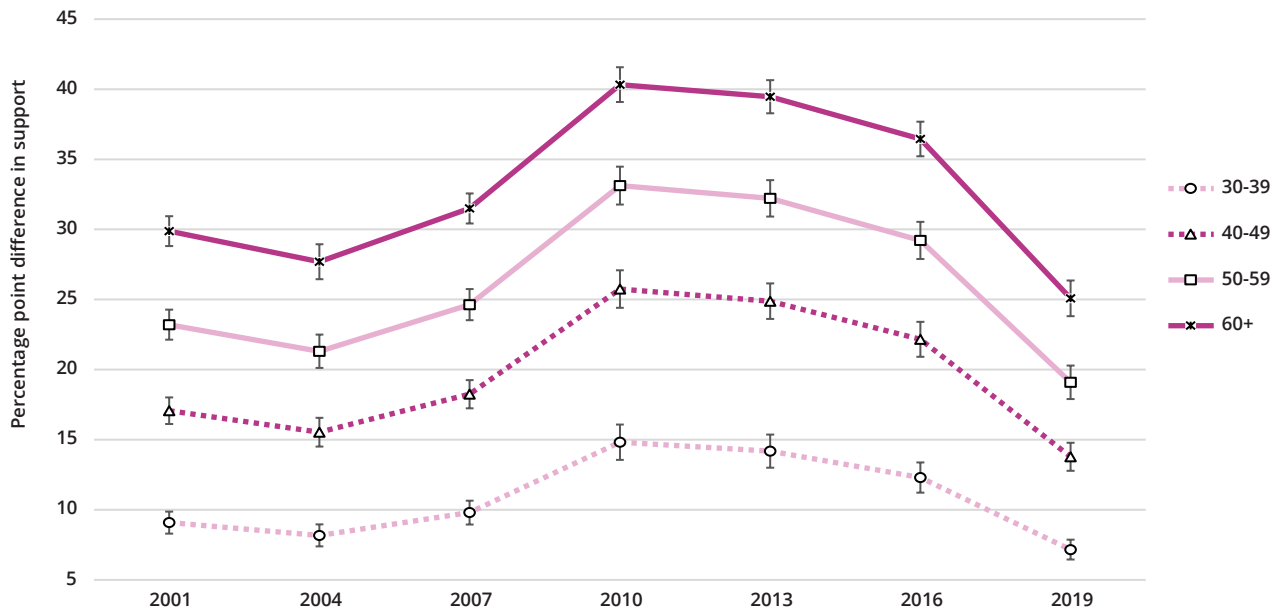
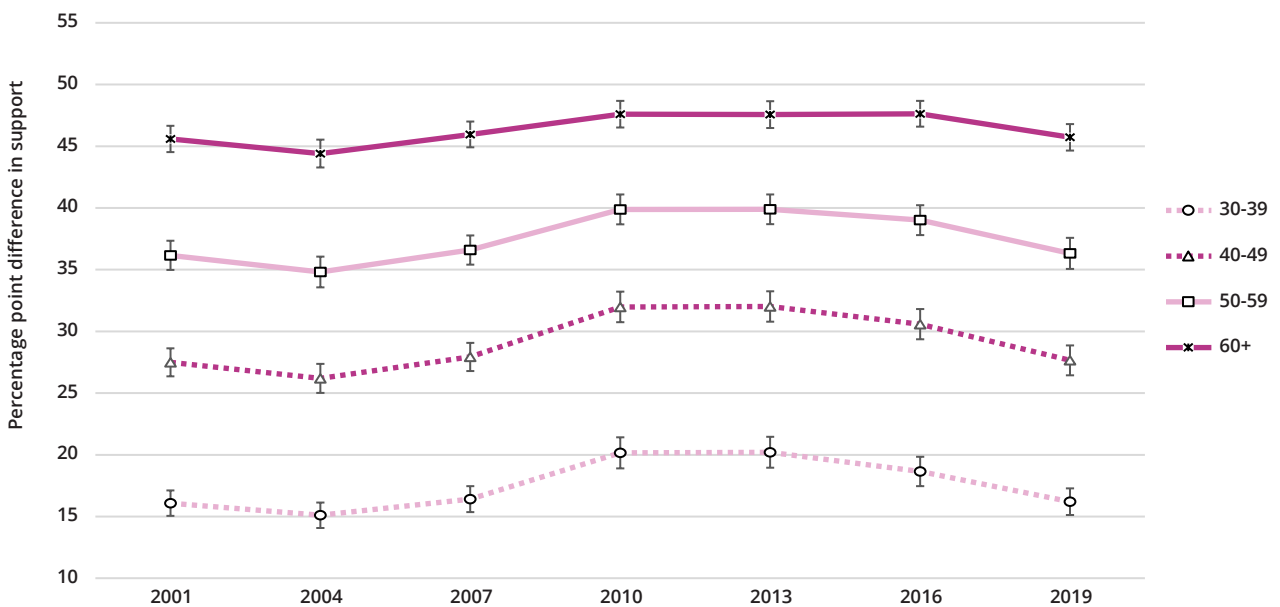


Figure 7. Marginal effect of age by survey year on support for restricted late night trading hours of alcohol (ref. 14-29 yr olds)



DISCUSSION

The current study sought answers to three questions. The first concerned the changes that have occurred since 2001 in public support for reducing the number of outlets that sell alcohol, reducing trading hours for all pubs and clubs, stricter enforcement of the law against serving customers who are drunk, restricting late night trading of alcohol and strict monitoring of late-night licensed premises. The second concerned the demographic and social correlates of attitudes toward these policies. The third concerned the effect of two key demographic factors (state/territory and age) on support for fewer outlets selling alcohol, a reduction in the trading hours of all pubs and clubs and restricting late night trading in alcohol.

The evidence on the first question suggests that public attitudes to liquor licensing controls can be highly volatile. Support for reducing the trading hours of all pubs and clubs rose (in relative terms) by 58% between 2001 and 2010 but then declined to 65% between 2010 and 2019. Public support for strict monitoring of late-night licensed premises rose by 33% between 2001 and 2010 and then declined by 28%. Public support for restricting late night trading rose by 33% between 2001 and 2010, but then declined by 44%. We have no way of knowing with certainty what caused this rise and fall in support for restricted trading hours, however it seems highly likely that the critical media response to the introduction of the lockout laws, coupled with lobbying by vested interest groups, played an important role. The rise and fall of support for restrictions on the trading hours of licensed premises is a reminder, if one were needed, of the difficulties facing any Government trying to balance public health considerations against those involving personal liberty.

It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that the public appetite for liquor licensing restrictions has evaporated. Support for stricter enforcement of the law against serving customers who are drunk changed very little between 2001 and 2010 and remains high. Among the five policies we examined, stricter enforcement of the law against serving customers who are drunk attracts the strongest public support. This is true in all jurisdictions and in every NDSHS survey since 2001. Over 70% of Australians aged fourteen and over (72%) support this policy. More than half (61%) also support strict monitoring of late-night licensed premises. This is very encouraging. Any policy that reduces alcohol abuse is likely to reduce alcohol-related violence and antisocial behaviour (Chopra et al., 2018; Donnelly et al., 2017; Giesbrecht & Livingston 2014; Holmes et al., 2018; Kypri & Livingston, 2020; Stockwell & Chikritzhs, 2009). Past research, however, has shown substantial and persistent non-compliance with responsible service laws (Donnelly & Briscoe, 2002; Donnelly, 2012). The high level of public support for measures designed to reduce irresponsible service of alcohol should give regulatory authorities a strong incentive to enforce that compliance.

Support for the other policies we canvassed is lower than that for responsible service and strict monitoring of late night licensed premises. It is, however, still substantial—with 45% supportive of restricting late night trading of alcohol, 35% supportive of reducing the number of outlets that sell alcohol, and 26% supportive of a reduction in the trading hours of all pubs and clubs. The lack of majority national support for restricting late night trading and reducing the number of liquor outlets should not discourage governments from considering these options. National attitudes to liquor licensing restrictions are not likely to be reflected in every State, Region, or Local Government Area. Support for fewer alcohol outlets is between five and six per cent higher in the NT than in NSW, while support for this policy in QLD, WA and SA is between four and six per cent lower than in NSW. There are marked differences between urban, regional, and remote Australia in the kinds of liquor licensing policies their residents support. The differences between Local Government Areas in attitudes to liquor licensing policy are likely to be even larger. These differences highlight the impediments facing (and, perhaps undesirability of) any attempt to create uniform national laws on liquor licensing (Law Council of Australia, 2016).

The finding that there is stronger support for each of the five policies among women, older people, and those who drink less frequently, is consistent with earlier research (Callinan et al., 2014; Livingston et al., 2019; McAllister, 1995). The stronger support evinced for all five policies by those who have been assaulted, threatened with assault, or put in fear by someone under the influence of alcohol in the previous 12 months has not been previously reported. It is worth noting that in 2019, one in five

Australians over fourteen experienced one of these outcomes. Also worth noting that the percentage of respondents to the NDSHS who report having been 'put in fear' by someone under the influence of alcohol and the percentage who nominate alcohol as the first drug they think of, when they hear people talk about a drug problem, have significantly declined since 2001 (see Appendix 1). This may be one of the reasons for the decline in support for restrictions on the trading hours of licensed premises.

Of course, it must be remembered that the conclusions advanced here are based on responses to a national survey that excludes the homeless and institutionalised populations, both of whom have high levels of alcohol consumption and whose views on liquor licensing may differ from those found in the current report. The weighting of responses ensures representativeness in terms of age and sex but may not guarantee representativeness on other dimensions. Rehm et al., (2020) and Chikritzhs (2021) have both recently expressed concern about the reliability of estimates of population parameters obtained from the NDSHS. The current study was not directed at estimating the prevalence of heavy drinking or the distribution of alcohol consumption across various subgroups of the population. It was focussed on responses to a set of questions dealing with attitudes to various liquor licensing policies. These questions are far less sensitive than those seeking personal information on alcohol consumption. This gives us reason to believe the current results are a fair reflection of the views held by English speaking Australians not currently homeless or residing in an institution.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank Dr Neil Donnelly and Dr Suzanne Poynton and the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this report. Thanks also to the two anonymous referees who reviewed the report and provided valuable feedback.

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APPENDIX 1

Figure A1. % identifying alcohol as a main drug problem and % reporting verbal abuse by someone under the influence of alcohol by survey year

