

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

Don Weatherburn^a

^a Professor, National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre. Email: d.weatherburn@unsw.edu.au. Ph. 0409 021 127.

SUMMARY

CRIME AND JUSTICE BULLETIN
NUMBER 253 | DECEMBER 2022

BACKGROUND

Public support for stronger controls over liquor licensing grew strongly in Australia between 1995 and 2014. In NSW, 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.' Those laws have since been abandoned and support for tougher liquor licensing laws appears to have also declined in other States and Territories.

This study analyses data from the National Drug Strategy Household Surveys conducted between 2001 and 2019 to examine changes in public attitudes toward five liquor licensing policies: 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. In addition to assessing changes in public support for these policies, the report also provides information on which groups in the community and which states and territories most strongly support or oppose each of these policies.

KEYWORDS

public opinion

liquor licensing

alcohol-related violence

lockout law

KEY FINDINGS

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

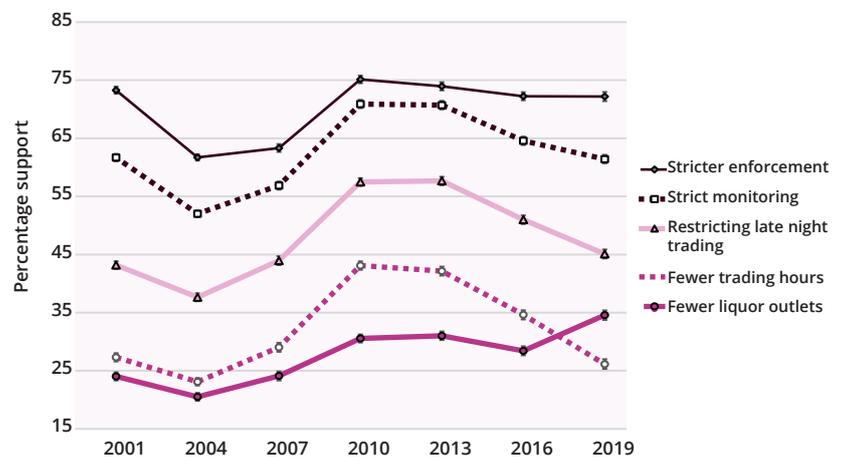


Figure 1 shows the change between 2001 and 2019 in the percentage of the Australian population aged over 14 who support or strongly support each of the five policies. Across all years the policy attracting the strongest support in all years involves stricter enforcement of the law against serving customers 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). The level of support, however, varies greatly depending on which jurisdiction a person lives, whether they live in an urban or rural environment and whether they have been assaulted or threatened with assault 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.