# Aussies signal thirst for goverment efforts, but alcohol industry still on the nose

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Three quarters (75%) of Australians think we have a problem with excess drinking or alcohol abuse, but for the first time this decade the annual poll has seen a significant shift in public perceptions – with an increasing number of Australians embracing recent government efforts to address alcohol harms and eager for the industry to be held more accountable.

Now in its sixth year, the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education’s (FARE) [*Annual alcohol poll 2015: Attitudes and behaviours*](https://www.fare.org.au/annual-alcohol-poll-2015/) provides valuable trend data and insights into community perspectives on alcohol.

Trend data shows a marked decline in the number of Australians who think our alcohol problems are unlikely to get better in the near future (71%, down from 76% in 2014).

The majority of Australians (73%) still think more needs to be done to reduce the harms from alcohol, but this has declined from 79% in 2014. Similarly, last year 64% of Australians thought governments weren’t doing enough to reduce alcohol harms. In the latest poll that figure has dropped to 55%.

FARE Chief Executive Michael Thorn says it is clear what is driving the shift in the nation’s attitudes to alcohol.

“The 2014 poll was undertaken at the height of community concern about alcohol-related violence in Sydney, when the devastating impact of alcohol featured prominently in the media. This year’s poll was reflective of a very different environment, following decisive action by the NSW Government to address alcohol harms. By introducing a range of measures including trading hour restrictions, NSW has led the way in restoring community confidence,” Mr Thorn said.

The poll found Australians are supportive of the alcohol policies implemented in New South Wales and, more recently, being proposed in Queensland. Four in every five Australians (81%) think that pubs, clubs and bars should close at 3am or earlier.  
In addition to a strong government response, most Australians believe that clubs and pubs (60%) and alcohol companies (66%) need to be doing more to prevent harms.

Many suggest we go straight to the source of the problem to fund prevention and intervention services, with 70% of Australians believing the alcohol industry should pay for reducing alcohol harms.

The poll also highlighted public scepticism of the alcohol industry’s intentions, with 69% wanting industry to be banned from making political donations and 59% of Australians believing the alcohol industry is targeting young people and minors under the legal drinking age.

Industry-led initiatives, such as asking young Australians for identification at the point-of-sale, are rarely being implemented. The poll found 42% of Gen Y had never been asked for ID in the last year at a bottle shop and 38% had never been asked at a pub, club or bar.

Australians are also concerned about the quantity and content of alcohol advertising the industry is producing. 73% had recently seen an alcohol advertising and the majority (69%) thought it was inappropriate, most commonly because the advertisement was aimed at young people or promoted drinking as key to success.

FARE’s Director of Policy and Research Caterina Giorgi says Australians are rightfully sceptical of an industry whose main imperative is to sell as much alcohol as possible.

“The poll shows the community is becoming wise to alcohol industry tactics; from targeting young people, to influencing policy and failing to effectively self-regulate their advertising. Alcohol is responsible for 15 deaths and 430 hospitalisations each day, and the majority of Australians want pubs, clubs and alcohol companies to pay for reducing these harms. It’s time the industry are held accountable for the harm their product causes,” Ms Giorgi said.

The poll also showed majority support for a number of other policies, including: increasing the number of police on our streets (85%), increasing the penalties for alcohol-related violence (86%), banning alcohol advertising from public transport (65%) and on television before 8:30pm (63%), introducing health information labels on alcohol products (60%), and developing a National Alcohol Plan for Australia which would outline strategies to be implemented by all levels of government (68%).

FARE Chief Executive Michael Thorn says the poll findings contain important evidence for policy makers, demonstrating Australian voters are keen to change our relationship with alcohol and that Australians are receptive to efforts to address this problem.

“The message from the 2015 alcohol poll is clear: Australians want to see change and they will respond positively to governments that take decisive action. Alcohol has long been seen as an issue that’s too hard to touch – but the poll shows this couldn’t be further from the truth.

A majority of Australians think alcohol is a problem, the majority support a range of policy solutions, and we’ve seen from the response to efforts to date that communities will reward strong leadership and embrace meaningful alcohol reform,” Mr Thorn said.

[view media release in pdf](/wp-content/uploads/Annual-alcohol-poll-2015-Media-release-Final-30042015.pdf)

[view the report](https://www.fare.org.au/annual-alcohol-poll-2015/)

### Metadata