

Online sale and delivery of alcohol in ACT

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Executive summary

The ACT Government is currently considering updates to their liquor regulation to address the online sale and delivery of alcohol. This is critical as the regulatory environment has not kept pace with the changes in the way alcohol is sold, placing families and communities at greater risk of alcohol harms.

This report provides a snapshot of the views of Canberrans on possible policy options for the online sale and delivery of alcohol, as well as their alcohol use.

Nearly a third (32%) of people believe that the ACT Government is not doing enough to address the harms from alcohol, with one-fifth (20.3%) believing that they are doing enough and 47.7% being unsure.

In relation to policy options for the online sale and delivery of alcohol, the majority of people were supportive of:

- identification being verified when placing an alcohol order online (81%) and at the point of delivery (78.4%)
- people delivering alcohol having responsible service of alcohol training that is specific to the delivery context (74.1%)
- strong penalties for companies that deliver alcohol to children (93.4%) and to people who are intoxicated (65.6%).

Twice as many Canberrans (50.1%) supported alcohol not being delivered after 10pm, compared to people who disagreed (22.5%) and who were neutral (27.4%).

Around a third of people (32.6%) supported a two-hour pause between when an alcohol order is made online and when the alcohol is delivered, and around a third disagreed (33.8%). Neutral responses made up around a third (33.6%), indicating that a substantial proportion of people may be unaware of this as a policy option.

In relation to policy options on alcohol marketing, the majority of people were supportive of:

- ensuring that children's online activity (89.8%) and anyone's online activity (74.5%) is not collected to market alcoholic products
- not allowing alcohol companies to send push notifications to a person's phone, prompting them to purchase alcohol (84.1%)
- implementing digital health warnings about the risks of alcohol on all alcohol retail websites (83.9%) and on online alcohol advertisements (83.9%)
- strong penalties for alcohol companies that advertise to people who have opted out of advertising (86.7%).

Over a quarter (26.2%) of people ordered alcohol to be delivered into their home in the past 12 months.

The majority (86.1%) of Canberrans had an alcoholic drink in the past 12 months. Of these people:

- over a quarter (28.2%) reported that they drink alcohol to relieve stress and one in seven (14.4%) reported that they drink alcohol to deal with anxiety
- one in 10 (10.4%) reported that someone had expressed concern about their alcohol use, and one in 10 (9.7%) are concerned about their own alcohol use.

One in six (17.1%) Canberrans are concerned with the amount of alcohol a family member is drinking, and one in eight (12.1%) are concerned with the amount a friend is drinking. Women (21.9%) were more likely to be concerned about the alcohol use of a family member than men (12.1%), with one in five reporting they are concerned.

These findings provide further evidence of the need to introduce a range of policy measures relating to the online sale and delivery of alcohol that prioritise the health and wellbeing of Canberrans.

Background

Everyone should have the opportunity to be healthy, safe and free from the harms that alcohol causes to families and communities.

However, alcohol causes significant harm to people in the ACT with around 60 people dying each year from disease or injury wholly or partially attributable to alcohol, and more than 1,500 being hospitalised.¹

Harm is exacerbated by the rapid expansion of online sale and delivery of alcohol, which has vastly increased availability and accessibility, creating increased risks to community health and safety. Reform is urgently needed to address this and to prevent harm from the online sale and rapid delivery of alcohol into the home.

The ACT Government is currently considering reforms to the sale and delivery of alcohol. This is vital to ensuring that the regulatory environment keeps pace with the rapidly changing environment for sales and increased risk of harm to the community.

About the polling

The Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) commissioned Pure Profile to conduct a poll of Canberrans online between 25 August and 4 September 2023.

The sample comprised 503 people aged 18 years and over, residing in the ACT. The sample is representative for age and gender in the ACT.

In reporting analysis by gender, only male and female respondents have been included, due to low sample size for respondents answering non-binary.



¹ National Drug Research Institute (2023). Australian alcohol-attributable harm visualisation tool <https://www.alcoholharmtool.info/index.php>. Figures are 5-year averages taken from most recent data available – 2016-2020.

Findings

Perspectives on government action

Canberrans were asked if they believe the ACT Government is doing enough to address the harms from alcohol.

Nearly a third (32%; Table 1) believe that the ACT Government is not doing enough to address the harms from alcohol, with one fifth (20.3%) of people believing that they are doing enough and 47.7% being unsure.

Belief that the government is not doing enough is consistent between men and women.

Table 1. Proportion of Canberrans that think the ACT Government is doing enough to address harm from alcohol, by gender (N=503)

	YES DOING ENOUGH %	NO NOT DOING ENOUGH %	UNSURE IF DOING ENOUGH %
Total	20.3	32.0	47.7
Gender			
Male	29.2	27.9	42.9
Female	12.3	35.8	51.9

Perspectives on policy options for online sale and delivery of alcohol

Canberrans were asked their opinion on policy measures to regulate the delivery of alcohol into homes.

The majority of people agree that people's identification should be verified when placing an alcohol order online (81%; Table 2) and at the point of delivery (78.4%).

Women (82.3%) were more supportive of identification being checked at the point of delivery than men (74.2%).

Table 2. Canberrans' support for policy measures to regulate alcohol delivery – Identity verification, by gender (N=503)

	TOTAL %	MALE %	FEMALE %
People's ID should be checked online when alcohol is ordered.			
Strongly disagree	2.6	2.5	2.7
Disagree	6.0	8.3	3.8
Neutral	10.5	11.7	9.6
Agree	41.6	43.3	40.0
Strongly agree	39.4	34.2	43.8
People's ID should be checked at the door when alcohol is delivered.			
Strongly disagree	2.2	2.9	1.5
Disagree	6.0	7.5	4.6
Neutral	13.5	15.4	11.5
Agree	38.0	37.1	39.2
Strongly agree	40.4	37.1	43.1

More than half (50.1%; Table 3) of people agreed that alcohol should not be delivered later than 10pm. Results were consistent between men and women.

Table 3. Canberrans' support for policy measures to regulate alcohol delivery – Deliveries no later than 10pm, by gender (N=503)

	TOTAL %	MALE %	FEMALE %
Alcohol should not be delivered later than 10pm.			
Strongly disagree	5.6	6.3	5.0
Disagree	16.9	18.3	15.8
Neutral	27.4	28.8	26.2
Agree	27.6	25.8	29.2
Strongly agree	22.5	20.8	23.8

Around a third of people (32.6%; Table 4) agreed that there should be at least two hours between when an alcohol order is made online and when the alcohol is delivered to the home. Results were consistent between men and women.

Table 4. Canberrans' support for policy measures to regulate alcohol delivery – At least 2 hours between order and delivery, by gender (N=503)

	TOTAL %	MALE %	FEMALE %
There should be at least 2 hours between when an order is made and when alcohol is delivered.			
Strongly disagree	10.9	12.5	9.6
Disagree	22.9	25.4	20.4
Neutral	33.6	32.1	34.6
Agree	19.3	17.5	21.2
Strongly agree	13.3	12.5	14.2

Most (74.1%; Table 5) people agreed that people delivering alcohol should have responsible service of alcohol training that is specific to the delivery context. Results were consistent between men and women.

Table 5. Canberrans' support for policy measures to regulate alcohol delivery – Responsible service of alcohol training, by gender (N=503)

	TOTAL %	MALE %	FEMALE %
People delivering alcohol should have responsible service of alcohol training.			
Strongly disagree	3.4	3.8	3.1
Disagree	5.4	5.4	5.4
Neutral	17.1	15.4	18.5
Agree	43.7	45.4	42.3
Strongly agree	30.4	30.0	30.8

There was significant (93.4%; Table 6) support for strong penalties for companies that deliver alcohol to children. Results were consistent between men and women.

Table 6. Canberrans' support for policy measures to regulate alcohol delivery – Penalties for companies that deliver alcohol to children, by gender (N=503)

	TOTAL %	MALE %	FEMALE %
There should be strong penalties for companies that deliver alcohol to children.			
Strongly disagree	0.0	0.0	0.0
Disagree	0.2	0.0	0.4
Neutral	6.4	7.9	5.0
Agree	25.6	27.5	24.2
Strongly agree	67.8	64.6	70.4

Over half (65.6%; Table 7) of people agreed that there should be strong penalties for companies that deliver alcohol to people who are intoxicated. Almost a quarter (23.3%) of people were neutral about this policy. Women (70.7%) were more supportive of this policy than men (60%).

Table 7. Canberrans' support for policy measures to regulate alcohol delivery – Penalties for companies that deliver alcohol to people who are intoxicated, by gender (N=503)

	TOTAL %	MALE %	FEMALE %
There should be strong penalties for companies that deliver alcohol to people who are intoxicated.			
Strongly disagree	2.2	2.1	2.3
Disagree	8.9	11.7	6.5
Neutral	23.3	26.3	20.4
Agree	33.6	30.0	36.9
Strongly agree	32.0	30.0	33.8



Perspectives on policy options for alcohol marketing

Canberrans were asked their opinion on policy measures to regulate the sale of alcohol online. When asked about data collection the majority (89.8%; Table 8) agreed that children's activity online should not be collected to market alcoholic products. Most (74.5%) agreed that no one's activity online should be collected to market alcohol products. Women (78.8%) were more supportive than men (69.6%) of no-one's activity being collected to market alcoholic products.

Table 8. Canberrans' support for policy measures to regulate the sale of alcohol online – Using personal data for alcohol marketing, by gender (N=503)

	TOTAL %	MALE %	FEMALE %
Data on children's activity online should not be collected and/or used to market alcoholic products.			
Strongly disagree	1.4	0.4	2.3
Disagree	2.8	4.2	1.5
Neutral	6.0	6.3	5.8
Agree	26.2	27.5	25.4
Strongly agree	63.6	61.7	65.0
Data on people's activity online should not be collected or used to market alcoholic products.			
Strongly disagree	1.2	0.8	1.5
Disagree	5.4	8.3	2.7
Neutral	18.9	21.3	16.9
Agree	29.2	24.6	33.8
Strongly agree	45.3	45.0	45.0

Most (84.1%; Table 9) agreed that alcohol companies should not be able to send push notifications to a person's phone, prompting them to purchase alcohol. Results were consistent between men and women.

Table 9. Canberrans' support for policy measures to regulate the sale of alcohol online – Push notifications, by gender (N=503)

	TOTAL %	MALE %	FEMALE %
Alcohol companies should not be able to send push notifications to a person's phone prompting them to purchase alcohol.			
Strongly disagree	1.2	1.7	0.8
Disagree	4.8	5.8	3.8
Neutral	9.9	10.4	9.6
Agree	31.8	34.2	30.0
Strongly agree	52.3	47.9	55.8

When asked about the visibility of health warnings on alcohol websites, most agreed that health warnings about the risks of alcohol use should be on all alcohol retail websites (83.9%; Table 10) and that health warnings should be on all alcohol advertisements online (83.9%). Women (87.0%) were more supportive of health warnings being on all alcohol advertisements online than men (80.4%).

Table 10. Canberrans' support for policy measures to regulate the sale of alcohol online – Health warnings online, by gender (N=503)

	TOTAL %	MALE %	FEMALE %
Health warnings about the risks of alcohol use should be on all alcohol retail websites.			
Strongly disagree	0.4	0.4	0.4
Disagree	3.2	5.4	1.2
Neutral	12.5	12.5	12.7
Agree	40.4	39.6	41.2
Strongly agree	43.5	42.1	44.6
Health warnings should be on all alcohol advertisements online.			
Strongly disagree	0.4	0.4	0.4
Disagree	3.4	6.7	0.4
Neutral	12.3	12.5	12.3
Agree	41.4	42.1	40.8
Strongly agree	42.5	38.3	46.2

The majority (86.7%; Table 11) of people agreed that there should be strong penalties for alcohol companies that advertise to people who have opted out of advertising. Results were consistent between men and women.

Table 11. Canberrans' support for policy measures to regulate the sale of alcohol online – Penalties for companies that advertise to people, by gender (N=503)

	TOTAL %	MALE %	FEMALE %
There should be strong penalties for alcohol companies that advertise to people who have opted out of advertising.			
Strongly disagree	0.2	0.4	0.0
Disagree	1.6	1.7	1.5
Neutral	11.5	13.3	10.0
Agree	33.2	37.1	30.0
Strongly agree	53.5	47.5	58.5

Use of alcohol delivery

Over a quarter (26.2%; Table 12) of Canberrans have ordered alcohol to be delivered to their homes in the past 12 months.

Table 12. Canberrans ordering alcohol online in the past 12 months (N=503)

	YES %	NO %	CAN'T RECALL %
There should be strong penalties for alcohol companies that advertise to people who have opted out of advertising.			
Total	26.2	72.0	1.8



Alcohol use

The majority (86.1%; Table 13) of Canberrans had an alcoholic drink in the past 12 months.

When asked about the frequency of drinking alcohol, over half (54.0%) reported having an alcoholic drink at least weekly, with one in five (20.3%) drinking three to six days a week. Two thirds (68.3%) of men and 41.1% of women drink at least weekly.

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) alcohol guidelines² define high risk of harms experienced from alcohol use as drinking more than 10 standard drinks a week or more than four standard drinks on a single occasion.

With regard to the single occasion guideline, one in eight (12.7%) of Canberrans exceeded it and reported drinking five or more drinks in one sitting. Results were consistent between men and women.

Table 13. Alcohol use by gender (N=434)

	TOTAL %	MALE %	FEMALE %
Total - Had alcoholic drink in past 12 months	86.1*	86.7	85.8
Frequency			
Every day	8.8	12.0	5.8
3-6 days a week	20.3	26.0	15.2
1-2 days a week	24.9	30.3	20.1
2-3 days a month	19.1	15.9	21.9
~1 day a month	10.8	6.7	14.3
Less often	15.7	9.1	21.9
Standard drinks (SD) on usual occasion			
<1 SD	9.5	6.3	12.2
1-2 SD	51.9	51.4	52.3
3-4 SD	25.2	28.8	22.1
≥5 SD	12.7	13.6	12.3
≥7 SD	5.5	5.9	5.5

*The sample size for Table 13 is 434 – those that answered 'yes' and those that answered 'maybe'. However, the figures reported in the top row are only those that answered 'yes' and refers to a sample size of 503.

2 National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) (2020). Australian guidelines to reduce health risks from drinking alcohol. <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/health-advice/alcohol>

Reasons for drinking alcohol

People were asked about the reasons why they drink alcohol and were able to select multiple options. The results were consistent regardless of gender.

For people who indicated that they had an alcoholic drink in the past 12 months, the most common reason people reported using alcohol was to socialise (70.4%; Table 14).

Over a quarter (28.2%) reported that they drink alcohol to relieve stress.

One in seven (14.4%) reported that they drink alcohol to deal with anxiety.

One in eleven (9.5%) indicated that they drink alcohol to get drunk.

Around a fifth (19.7%) reported that they drink because other people around them are drinking alcohol.

Table 14. Reasons for having an alcoholic drink, by gender (N=432)

I DRINK ALCOHOL...	TOTAL %	MALE %	FEMALE %
To relieve stress	28.2	30.3	26.6
To deal with anxiety	14.4	11.5	17.1
To get drunk	9.5	10.6	8.6
When socialising	70.4	66.8	73.9
Because other people are drinking	19.7	16.8	22.5
Other	19.2	20.7	17.6

Concern about alcohol use

Canberrans were asked about whether anyone they know has expressed concern about their alcohol use.

One in ten (10.4%; Table 15) reported that someone has expressed concern about their alcohol use. Results were consistent between men and women.

Table 15. Has someone expressed concern about your alcohol use, by gender (N=432)

	YES %	NO %	UNSURE %
Total	10.4	87.7	1.9
Gender			
Male	11.1	88.0	1.0
Female	9.9	87.4	2.7

Canberrans were also asked if they were concerned with the amount of alcohol they used, and the amount of alcohol used by their family members and friends. One in ten (9.7%; Table 16) reported that they are concerned with the amount of their alcohol use. Results were consistent between men and women.

The majority (68.2%) of people were not concerned about their own alcohol use or that of anyone they know.

One in six (17.1%) were concerned with the amount of alcohol a family member is drinking. Women (21.9%) were more likely to be concerned about the alcohol use of a family member than men (12.1%), with one in five reporting they are concerned.

One in eight (12.1%) were concerned with the amount of alcohol a friend is drinking.

Table 16. Concern about yourself and others, by gender (N=503)

I AM CONCERNED WITH THE AMOUNT OF ALCOHOL...	TOTAL %	MALE %	FEMALE %
That I am drinking	9.7	10.0	9.6
That a family member is drinking	17.1	12.1	21.9
That a friend is drinking	12.1	10.0	13.8
I am not concerned about my alcohol use or that of anyone I know	68.2	75.0	61.9