

Does increasing community and liquor licensees' awareness, police activity, and feedback reduce alcohol-related violent crime? A benefit-cost analysis.

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Abstract

Approximately half of all alcohol-related crime is violent crime associated with heavy episodic drinking. Multi-component interventions are highly acceptable to communities and may be effective in reducing alcohol-related crime generally, but their impact on alcohol-related violent crime has not been examined. This study evaluated the impact and benefit-cost of a multi-component intervention (increasing community and liquor licensees' awareness, police activity, and feedback) on crimes typically associated with alcohol-related violence. The intervention was tailored to weekends identified as historically problematic in 10 experimental communities in NSW, Australia, relative to 10 control ones. There was no effect on alcohol-related assaults and a small, but statistically significant and cost-beneficial, effect on alcohol-related sexual assaults: a 64% reduction in in the experimental relative to control communities, equivalent to five fewer alcohol-related sexual assaults, with a net social benefit estimated as AUD\$3,938,218. The positive benefit-cost ratio was primarily a function of the value that communities placed on reducing alcohol-related harm: the intervention would need to be more than twice as effective for its economic benefits to be comparable to its costs. It is most likely that greater reductions in crimes associated with alcohol-related violence would be achieved by a combination of complementary legislative and community-based interventions.

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