Short-term changes in nightlife attendance and patron intoxication following alcohol restrictions in Queensland, Australia

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Abstract

BACKGROUND:
This study aims to explore short-term changes following the introduction of alcohol restrictions (most notably 2 am to 3 am last drinks). We examined patterns of nightlife attendance, intoxication, and alcohol use among patrons shortly before and after restrictions were introduced in Fortitude Valley, Brisbane: the largest night-time entertainment precinct of Queensland.

METHODS:
Street-intercept patron interviews were conducted in Fortitude Valley in June (n = 497) and July (n = 562) 2016. A pre-post design was used to assess changes in time spent out drinking/partying prior to the interview, time of arrival in the precinct, pre-drinking, and blood alcohol concentration (BAC).

RESULTS:
Regression models indicated that after the policy introduction, the proportion of people arriving at Fortitude Valley before 10:00 pm increased (OR = 1.38; 95% CI = 1.04, 1.82). Participants reported going out, on average, one hour earlier after the intervention (? = - 0.17; 95% CI = 0.11, 0.22). There was a decrease (RRR = 0.58; 95% CI = 0.43, 0.79) in the proportion of participants who had a high level of intoxication (BAC ?0.10 g/dL) post-intervention. No other significant differences were found.

CONCLUSIONS:
Earlier cessation of alcohol sales and stopping the sale of rapid intoxication drinks after midnight was associated with people arriving in Fortitude Valley earlier. Though legislative loopholes allowed some venues to continue trading to 5 am, the proportion of people in the precinct who were highly intoxicated decreased after the restriction. Further measurement will be required to determine whether the reduction has persisted.

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