

Let's get
it right

Availability and the Alcohol Reform Bill

Alcohol is available almost anywhere at any time. This has directly led to an increase in alcohol-related harm. Relaxing our liquor laws was a mistake. Let's get it right.

Does availability matter?

Yes. The research is very clear: the easier it is to get alcohol, the more people drink. The more people drink, the greater the alcohol-related harm. It's that simple.

Long trading hours and high density of liquor outlets increase availability and are clearly linked to an increase in alcohol-related harm.

Extending the hours of sale by as little as one hour can increase the rate of alcohol-related harm. Evidence also shows longer trading hours mean higher rates of:

- drink driving and impaired driver crashes
- injury and alcohol-related emergency presentations
- violence, domestic violence and murder
- disruptive intoxication including criminal damage and harassment.

For every off-licence within a kilometre of a residential area, there is a 4 percent increase in binge drinking. Outlet density is linked to underage drinking, student drinking and high-risk drinking by young people.

The weight of the evidence shows that, as outlet density increases, so do rates of:

- violence and physical assault
- sexually transmitted infections
- child abuse
- drink driving.

Is New Zealand getting it right?

No. In 1989, the Sale of Liquor Act liberalised New Zealand's alcohol laws. It removed restrictions around hours of trade and the number of licences that could be granted within our communities.

Liberalisation was hoped to create a sophisticated drinking culture. Evidence has since proven these hopes wrong.

- Total alcohol consumption rose by 9 percent between 1998 and 2008.
- About 1,000 venues across the country are licensed to sell alcohol 24/7.
- Around 2,500 venues are able to sell alcohol after 2am.
- The number of outlets licensed to sell alcohol has more than doubled since 1990.
- Some communities are saturated with alcohol outlets. This is much more common in lower socio-economic areas. Alcohol-related issues are concentrated in these communities.

New Zealand drinking culture has not become more sophisticated, it has become more harmful.

- 275,000 adults set out to get drunk on their last drinking occasion.
- 450,000 adults were binge drinking on their last drinking occasion.
- 786,000 New Zealanders have been categorised as binge drinkers.
- Between 18 and 35 percent of injury-based emergency department presentations are estimated to be alcohol-related, rising to between 60 and 70 percent during the weekend.

- Over 300 alcohol-related offences are committed every day.

What did the Law Commission recommend?

The Law Commission recommended reducing the hours that liquor can be sold across the country.

- Off-licences have to close by 10pm and not reopen until 9am.
- On-licences have to close by 4am and not reopen until 9am.
- A compulsory one-way door policy from 2am for on-licences. This means people cannot enter after 2am but don't have to leave until closing time.

The Commission also recommended greater community input into licensing decisions and local policies. Through wide consultation, local authorities can create a local alcohol policy that takes into account:

- the number, type and hours of licensed premises in the district
- a broad assessment of the range and level of alcohol-related problems occurring in the district.

FACTSHEETS

1	What you need to know
2	Alcohol pricing
3	Alcohol advertising
4	Alcohol availability
5	Drink driving
6	Mythbusting the alcohol industry
→	drugfoundation.org.nz/alcohol-reform

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FAST FACTS



24/7

IT IS POSSIBLE TO BUY ALCOHOL AROUND THE CLOCK IN NEW ZEALAND



4%

THE INCREASE IN BINGE DRINKING FOR EVERY OFF-LICENCE IN A COMMUNITY



70%

THE PERCENTAGE OF A&E PRESENTATIONS DUE TO ALCOHOL ON ANY GIVEN WEEKEND

Local alcohol policies can include:

- restrictions on the national hours prescribed in the statute for the opening and closing of licensed premises
- danger areas within the district that may reasonably be identified as having reached or being close to reaching saturation levels in terms of the cumulative impact of licensed premises.

The Law Commission also recommended it should be harder to get a liquor licence and easier to lose one and that "amenity or good order of a locality" should be taken into account when granting one.

Does the Alcohol Reform Bill get it right?

Almost. The current bill includes most of the Law Commission recommendations to limit alcohol availability. However, it also includes provisions that have the potential to undermine their effectiveness.

National maximum trading hours are reinstated, but they are longer than those recommended by the Law Commission. Under the bill as it stands, there are only three hours out of every 24 during which alcohol cannot be purchased.

	LAW COMMISSION	CURRENT BILL
Off-licences	9am–10pm	7am–11pm
On-licences	9am–4am	8am–4am

Local alcohol policies can increase or restrict the national maximum hours. This still allows for the possibility of 24-hour trade.

The inclusion of local area policies does provide far greater potential for communities to have a say, but they are only voluntary. Given the cost and time-consuming nature of the process required to implement a Local Alcohol Policy, there is an incentive for local authorities not to create them.

“If you place another liquor store in Cannons Creek, then you might as well place a bigger Police station there as well.”

Fa'amatuainu Poutoa, youth worker in Porirua

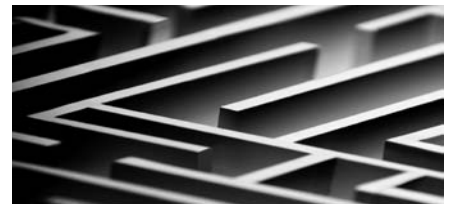
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Restricting the trading hours of off-licences was supported by 78 percent of submitters to the Law Commission, including the New Zealand Police and ALAC. There was also strong support for restricting the hours of on-licences, with the Law Commission receiving around 600 submissions supporting such moves.

To get it right, the Alcohol Reform Bill needs to:

- reduce the national maximum trading hours to those recommended by the Law Commission
- make local alcohol policies compulsory for all local authorities
- allow local alcohol policies to restrict but not extend the national maximum trading hours.

ABOUT US



The New Zealand Drug Foundation has long been interested in how the law governing the sale and supply of alcohol could be strengthened to reduce alcohol-related harm and create a healthier drinking culture in New Zealand.

We provide leadership and representation of our nationwide membership of organisations and individuals working on alcohol and other drug issues.

This factsheet is one of a number we have developed as part of a toolkit to support Members of Parliament, the media, communities and individuals to engage in evidence-based discussion on the Alcohol Reform Bill.

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