

YOUNG ADULTS' EXPERIENCE OF RESPONSIBLE SERVICE PRACTICE IN NSW: AN UPDATE.

Alcohol Studies Bulletin (No. 9)

Scott, Donnelly, Poynton & Weatherburn, (2007).

Sydney: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research

Plain English summary and implications for police prepared by Roger Nicholas.

Aims and Methodology

This study was a replication of an earlier project conducted in 2002. The current study was a telephone survey of 2,427 19-39 year olds in NSW to assess their impressions of the extent to which responsible service of alcohol (RSA) practices had been implemented. The participants were asked whether they personally had exhibited various signs of alcohol intoxication (or they had observed signs of intoxication in others) when they were on licensed premises. The researchers also ascertained the nature of the responses of the staff of licensed premises (if any) to the intoxicated behaviour. The earlier research was replicated to determine if government initiatives to encourage RSA practices and to better link alcohol-related incidents to specific licensed premises, had impacted on levels of RSA.

Key findings:

- Of the 1,601 respondents who reported having consumed alcohol at acute-risk levels during the past 12 months, 51% reported that on the last occasion this occurred they had been drinking on licensed premises (compared with 54.4% in 2002).
- Eight hundred and twenty respondents indicated that when they were last drinking on licensed premises, they showed signs of intoxication. Almost 32% reported experiencing a loss of coordination, 30% reported slurred speech, 26% reported loud or quarrelsome behaviour, 13% reported spilling drinks, and 10% reported falling over. Apart from the rates of spilling drinks and staggering/falling over, which declined slightly since the 2002 study, the other measures of intoxication were unaltered. The number of patrons who showed at least one sign of intoxication was unaltered. There was a significant reduction in the number of patrons who showed 3 or more signs of intoxication from 19% in 2002 to 15% in 2006.
- The respondents who reported at least one sign of intoxication were then asked how the licensed premises staff had reacted to this. In 54% of cases the staff continued to serve them drinks (no change from 2002) and on only 5% of occasions were they refused any more alcoholic drinks (up from 2% in 2002). On 2% of occasions they were asked to leave the premises, down from 4% in 2002. Among those showing three or more signs of intoxication, the percentage who reported that at least one RSA measure was implemented increased to 28% up from 12% in 2002. On these occasions there was an increase in refusals of service, having staff suggest that they stop drinking and advising on or organising transport home.
- Of those patrons who reported that they did not show any signs of intoxication on their last

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occasion of at risk drinking at licensed premises, there was a (probable) increase between 2002 and 2006 in the percentage who reported that they had observed signs of intoxication in others. When asked about the responses of the staff to this intoxication, approximately one third reported that no RSA strategies were implemented (unchanged from 2002), 23% refused to serve any more alcohol (statistically unchanged from 2002), 24% continued to serve them alcoholic drinks (unchanged from 2002), 23% asked them to leave the licensed premises (unchanged from 2002) and 14% advised them on or organised transport home (up from 6% in 2002).

Implications for policing

While there was an increase in the number of grossly intoxicated young people (showing three or more signs of intoxication) receiving RSA interventions from one in ten in 2002 to one in four in 2006, there is still considerable room for improvement so far as the RSA is concerned. Approximately half of the patrons who showed three or more signs of intoxication continued to be served alcohol. This is clearly not acceptable from a policing perspective, given the likelihood of this being associated with behavioural or criminal problems. While RSA programs can be effective in reducing alcohol-related problems in communities, this is largely dependent on the degree to which they are reinforced by enforcement activities.

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