

Exploring previously unstudied effects of late-night restrictions on licensed venues on family and domestic violence

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Introduction and Aims: Late-night restrictions on entry to licensed venues and early closing times were introduced to curtail alcohol-related violence in Newcastle (2008) and Hamilton (2010), New South Wales, Australia. To date these restrictions have only been evaluated with respect to non-domestic violence. However, a growing body of evidence is examining the effects of alcohol control policies on domestic violence. This study aimed to explore whether late night restrictions on access to licensed venues were associated with changes in reported rates of family and domestic violence.

Design and Methods: We used a non-equivalent control group design to analyse monthly counts of domestic violence assaults across four study sites (two test sites: Newcastle and Hamilton, and two control sites: Wollongong and Maitland, respectively) from January 2001 through December 2019. Negative binomial generalised linear models were used to test whether the interventions affected reported rates of domestic assaults.

Results: Reported domestic violence assaults fell at both test sites following the intervention (6.05 to 4.7 (95% Confidence Interval (CI): [4.45 – 5.3]) in Newcastle and 6.51 to 5.28 (95% CI [4.84 – 5.72])). The relative reduction attributable to the intervention in Newcastle was 30% (IRR = 0.70, 95% CI: 0.60 – 0.82). In Hamilton the relative reduction attributable to the intervention was 47% (IRR = 0.53, 95% CI (0.46 – 0.62)).

Discussions and Conclusions: This study indicates that late-night restrictions on access to licensed venues had a protective effect on reported family and domestic violence assaults in comparison to control sites.

Implications for Practice or Policy: This study broadens our understanding of the kinds of violence affected by late-night attendance at licensed venues and suggests that domestic violence assaults should be included in future evaluations of interventions that regulate access to alcohol in the night-time economy.

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