

2015 New South Wales election poll: Perspectives on alcohol

Key findings

- 73% of NSW residents would like the leaders of the major parties, Premier Mike Baird and Opposition Leader Luke Foley, to outline their plans to address alcohol-related harms prior to the 2015 NSW State Election.
- 66% of NSW residents are in favour of the NSW Government's measures to reduce alcohol-related violence announced in January 2014. These measures included a 3am last drinks and a 1:30am lockout in the Sydney CBD, and a 10pm close for take-away alcohol across NSW.
- 74% of NSW residents believe that Australia has a problem with excess drinking or alcohol abuse.
- 69% of NSW residents believe that alcohol-related problems will get worse or remain the same in the next five to ten years.
- 71% of NSW residents believe that more needs to be done to reduce the harm caused by alcohol-related illness, injury and related issues.
- 31% of NSW residents have been affected by alcohol-related violence. One in eight (13%) have been a victim of alcohol-related violence, and one in five (22%) have had a family member or friend who has been affected by alcohol-related violence.
- 58% of NSW residents consider the city or centre of town unsafe on a Saturday night. This represents a decline from the 67% of NSW residents who felt the city or centre of town was unsafe in 2014.
- 91% of those who considered the city or centre of town unsafe on a Saturday night indicated that it was because of people affected by alcohol.
- A range of policies to reduce alcohol-related harms were supported by NSW residents, including increasing penalties for people involved in alcohol-related violence (85%); introducing a closing time for pubs, clubs and bars of no later than 3am (82%); and banning political donations from the alcohol industry (70%).
- 65% of NSW residents believe that alcohol advertising should be banned on public transport and 58% believe that alcohol advertising should be banned at bus and train stops.

About the Polling

The Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) commissioned Galaxy Research to undertake polling of New South Wales (NSW) residents to gain an understanding of their perspectives on alcohol policies in the lead up to the 2015 NSW State Election.

This study was conducted online among members of a permission-based panel. The sample was selected from the panel members and had quotas applied to it, in order to ensure that it reflected the current population statistics. Fieldwork commenced on Thursday 8 January 2015 and was completed on Wednesday 14 January 2015. The survey sample comprised 351 respondents aged 18 years and older residing in NSW.

Following the collection of data, the results were weighted by age, gender and region to reflect the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) population estimates.

Findings

Australia's problem with alcohol and Government's actions

The majority of NSW residents (73%) indicated that they would like the leaders of the major parties, Premier Mike Baird and Opposition Leader Luke Foley, to outline their plans to address alcohol-related harms prior to the 2015 NSW State Election. Of the remaining respondents, 11% indicated that they do not, while 16% are unsure.

The majority of NSW residents (66%) are in favour of the NSW Government's January 2014 announcement of measures to reduce alcohol-related violence (including a 3am last drinks and a 1:30am lockout in the Sydney CBD, and a 10pm close for take-away alcohol across NSW), 20% are opposed to these measures and 14% are unsure.

The majority of NSW residents (74%) believe that Australia has a problem with excess drinking or alcohol abuse, 17% do not and the remaining 9% are unsure. This represents a decrease from 2014 (80%).

The majority of NSW residents (69%) believe that alcohol-related problems in Australia will either remain the same or get worse over the next five to ten years, 21% believe there will be a reduction in alcohol-related problems and 10% are unsure. This is consistent with 2014, where 72% of NSW residents believed that alcohol-related problems would remain the same or get worse.

The majority of NSW residents (71%) believe that more needs to be done to reduce the harm caused by alcohol-related illness, injury and related issues, 16% do not and 13% are unsure. This represents a decrease from 2014 (80%).

The table below provides an overview of NSW residents' concerns about alcohol-related harms between 2012 and 2015.

	2012 (%)	2013 (%)	2014 (%)	2015 (%)
Australia has a problem with excess drinking or alcohol abuse	80	75	80	74↓
Alcohol-related problems will remain the same or get worse in the next 5-10 years	76	77	72	69
More needs to be done to address alcohol-related harms	77	76	80	71↓

↑↓ denotes a statistically significant change from the previous year's results (applied to 2015 data only).

Community Safety

More than one-third of NSW residents have been affected by alcohol-related violence (31%). This represents a decrease from 2014 (38%) and is the same as 2013 (31%).

One in eight NSW residents (13%) have been a victim of alcohol-related violence and more than one in five (22%) have had a family member or friend who has been affected by alcohol-related violence.

More than half (58%) of NSW residents consider the city or centre of town to be unsafe on a Saturday night, 34% consider the city or centre of town to be safe and 8% are unsure. This represents a decline from 2014 where 67% of NSW residents considered the city unsafe.

The table below provides an overview of NSW residents' perceptions of safety between 2014 and 2015.

	2014 (%)	2015 (%)
Very safe	2	2
Safe	22	32↑
Unsafe	41	38
Very unsafe	26	20↓
Don't know	9	8

↑↓ denotes a statistically significant change from the previous year's results (applied to 2015 data only).

NSW residents who indicated that the city or centre of town was unsafe were then asked what factors make it unsafe. The vast majority (91%) indicated that people affected by alcohol make the city or town unsafe. This is greater than those who selected people affected by drugs (76%) and threatening behaviour (69%) as factors that make the city or centre of town unsafe.

The table below provides an overview of responses for NSW residents who indicated the city or centre of town is unsafe on a Saturday night.

	2014 (%)	2015 (%)
People affected by alcohol	94	91
People affected by drugs	79	76
Threatening behaviour	79	69↓
Large groups of people	54	48
Poor lighting	38	36
Other	5	4

Note that participants were able to select more than one response. Therefore the total may exceed 100%.

↑↓ denotes a statistically significant change from the previous year's results (applied to 2015 data only).

Perspectives on alcohol-related policies

The majority of NSW residents support the introduction of all 13 alcohol policies raised in the poll, with support for each of the measures ranging from 52% to 85%.

Policies that received majority support include increasing penalties for people involved in alcohol-related violence (85%); introducing a closing time for pubs, clubs and bars of no later than 3am (82%); and banning political donations from the alcohol industry (70%).

The table below provides an overview of NSW residents' support for alcohol-related policies.

	Support (%)	Do not support (%)	Don't know (%)
Increasing penalties for people involved in alcohol-related violence	85	8	7
Closed-circuit television (CCTV) in and around licensed venues	82	8	10
A closing time for pubs, clubs and bars of no later than 3am	82	8	10
Increasing police numbers at times and places where alcohol-related violence is greater	81	10	9
More public transport options in areas where there are pubs, clubs and bars	81	10	10
Introducing identification (ID) scanners	73	13	14
Stopping the sale of alcohol 30 minutes before closing time	72	16	12
Political parties should not receive donations from the alcohol industry	70	15	15
Introducing a 1am lockout for pubs, clubs and bars	65	25	10
Not allowing alcohol to be sold for less than \$1 per standard drink	65	21	14
Placing a limit of four drinks on the number of drinks a person can purchase at one time after 10pm	62	25	12
Stopping the sale of alcohol and energy drinks after midnight	59	27	14
Stopping the sale of shots after 10pm	52	30	18

The majority of NSW residents believe that alcohol advertising should be banned on public transport (65%) and at bus and train stops (58%).

The table below provides an overview of NSW residents' perspectives on banning alcohol advertising on public property.

	Support (%)
Ban on alcohol advertising on public transport (e.g. buses and trains)	65
Ban on alcohol advertising at bus and train stops	58
Ban on alcohol advertising at sports grounds	47
None of the above	30

Conclusion

Over the last 12 months there has been a decrease in NSW residents who think that Australia has a problem with alcohol (6% decrease) and of NSW residents who think more needs to be done to address alcohol-related harms (9% decrease). There has also been a 9% decrease in the number of NSW residents who feel unsafe in the city or centre of town on a Saturday night.

It is important to note that the 2014 poll was completed just prior to the announcement by the then Premier Barry O'Farrell on 21 January 2014 about the NSW Government's reform measures to prevent alcohol-related violence. These measures included the development of a Sydney CBD precinct with 3am last drinks, a 1:30am lockout and a freeze on new liquor licenses. Other measures for all of NSW included a 10pm close for takeaway alcohol sales and a risk-based licensing scheme requiring licensees to pay an annual fee for their licence.

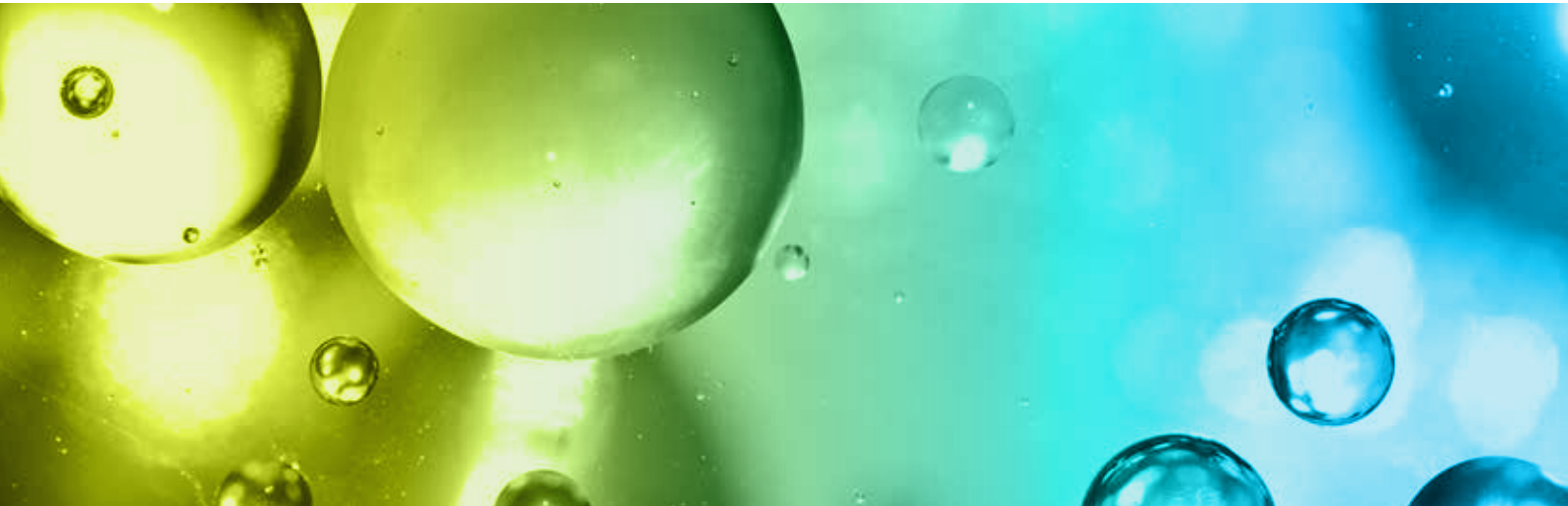
These changes could account for the decrease in people believing Australia has a problem with alcohol and that more needs to be done to address alcohol-related harm. They could also contribute to the increased perception of safety in the city or centre of town on a Saturday night.

One year on from the introduction of these measures, the majority of NSW residents are supportive of these reforms, with 66% of NSW residents supporting the measures, compared to 20% who oppose them. The majority of NSW residents (73%) also want a clear plan of government action to address alcohol-related harm prior to the 2015 NSW State Election. There is strong support for a number of policies to reduce alcohol harms including a 3am closing time (82%) and banning alcohol advertising on public property including on public transport (65%) and on bus and train stops (58%).

While there have been improvements in community attitudes towards alcohol-related harm and government action to address these harms, this poll shows that NSW residents are still concerned about alcohol. The majority of NSW residents think that Australia has a problem with alcohol (74%), that the problem is unlikely to get any better in the near future (69%) and that more needs to be done to reduce the problem (71%). More than half of NSW residents feel unsafe in the city or centre of town on a Saturday night (58%), and the overwhelming majority attribute this to people affected by alcohol (91%).



Foundation for Alcohol
Research & Education



About FARE

The Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) is an independent, not-for-profit organisation working to stop the harm caused by alcohol. Alcohol harm in Australia is significant. More than 5,500 lives are lost every year and more than 157,000 people are hospitalised making alcohol one of our nation's greatest preventative health challenges.

For over a decade, FARE has been working with communities, governments, health professionals and police across the country to stop alcohol harms by supporting world-leading research, raising public awareness and advocating for changes to alcohol policy. In that time FARE has helped more than 750 communities and organisations, and backed over 1,400 projects around Australia.

FARE is guided by the *World Health Organization's Global Strategy to Reduce the Harmful Use of Alcohol* for stopping alcohol harms through population-based strategies, problem directed policies, and direct interventions.

If you would like to contribute to FARE's important work, call us on (02) 6122 8600, email info@fare.org.au or visit FARE's website: www.fare.org.au.

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