

Alcohol retail during COVID-19 (2020-2021)

FEBRUARY 2022

Key points

- Alcohol retailer turnover in Australia has increased by \$3.6 billion (29 per cent) from 2019 to 2021, reaching a record \$15.9 billion in 2021.
- Turnover for December 2021 was the highest month on record, reaching a total of \$2.1 billion in that month alone.
- Turnover in all Australian jurisdictions that report data is significantly higher for the calendar year of 2021 than 2019.
- Alcohol retail turnover data is regularly released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), collected via barcode scanners and retailer surveys. It includes packaged alcohol sold at bottle-shops and online retailers but excludes alcohol sold at licenced premises.
- Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, analysis of alcohol sales data estimates that 80% of all alcohol sold in Australia is packaged alcohol, not alcohol sold on premise.¹

Findings

Alcohol retail turnover in Australia has reached an all time high in 2021, above turnover levels in 2020 and significantly above 2019 levels (see Figure 1 and Table 1).

Turnover in 2021 reached a record of \$15.9 billion for the calendar year. This reflects an additional \$3.6 billion between 2019 to 2021, or a 29 per cent increase.

FIGURE 1: AUSTRALIAN ALCOHOL RETAILER TURNOVER (\$ MILLION), ABS

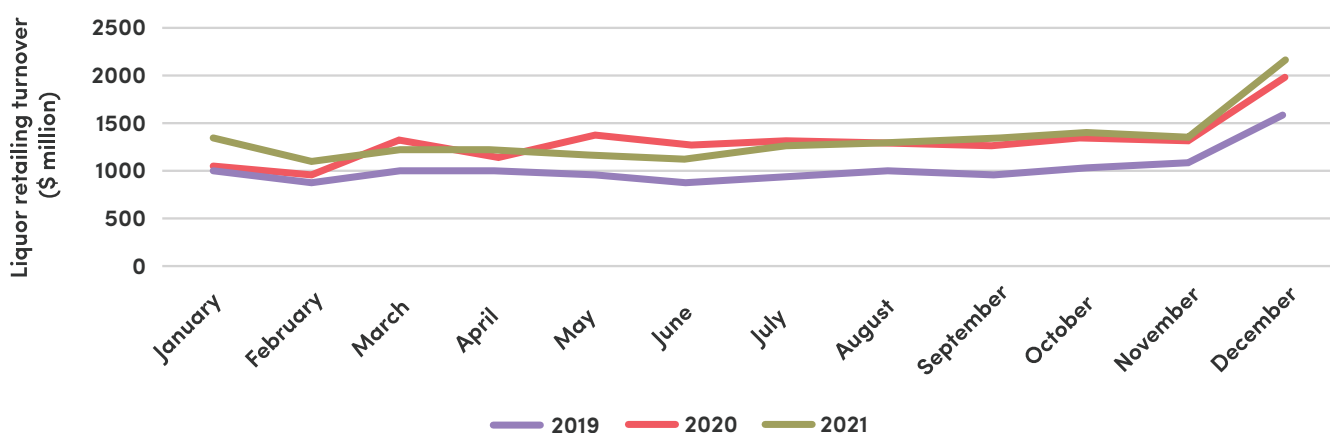


TABLE 1: MONTHLY AND YEARLY ALCOHOL RETAIL TURNOVER IN AUSTRALIA (\$ MILLION), ABS

	2019	2020	2021
JANUARY	1,011.8	1,046.2	1,331
FEBRUARY	880.1	939.1	1,087.4
MARCH	999.3	1,318.7	1,238.9
APRIL	994	1,142.1	1,232.1
MAY	936.3	1,365.2	1,160.8
JUNE	900.4	1,259.9	1,127.4
JULY	934.2	1,294.4	1,251.5
AUGUST	989.9	1,270.6	1,293.9
SEPTEMBER	976.6	1,275.2	1,359.5
OCTOBER	1,032.7	1,371.5	1,385.5
NOVEMBER	1,109.1	1,345.7	1,334.5
DECEMBER	1,569.7	1,996.6	2,124.1
TOTAL	12,334.1	15,625.2	15,926.6

The month of December is historically the highest month for alcohol retail turnover in the year. This was true for December 2021, which reached the highest level of turnover ever recorded in the ABS Retail Trade data series, at \$2.1 billion.

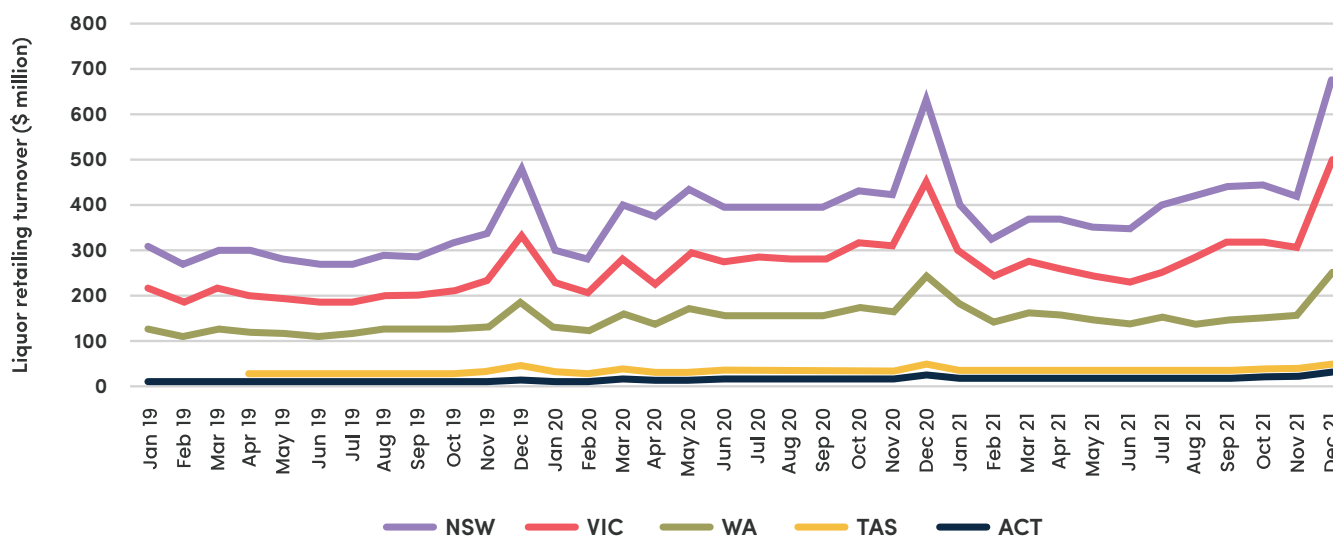
Analysis of monthly differences between 2019 and 2021 reveals that turnover is consistently higher for all months of the year (see Table 2).

TABLE 2: MONTHLY DIFFERENCES IN ALCOHOL RETAIL TURNOVER IN AUSTRALIA, 2019-2021

MONTH	% INCREASE	\$ INCREASE (\$M)
JANUARY	31.6	319.2
FEBRUARY	23.6	207.3
MARCH	24	239.6
APRIL	24	238.1
MAY	24	224.5
JUNE	25.2	227
JULY	34	317.3
AUGUST	30.7	304
SEPTEMBER	39.2	392.9
OCTOBER	34.2	352.8
NOVEMBER	20.3	225.4
DECEMBER	35.	554.4
TOTAL	29.1%	3,592.5

Over the past three years, alcohol retail turnover has consistently increased in all states and territories (see Figure 2 and Table 3).

FIGURE 2: AUSTRALIAN ALCOHOL RETAIL TURNOVER (\$ MILLION), BY STATE, ABS



Although New South Wales (NSW), Victoria and Western Australia (WA) recorded the highest turnover levels, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) recorded greater increases, with both reporting more than 50% increases in retail turnover from 2019 to 2021 (see Table 3). Western Australia was the only state experiencing a slight decrease in turnover from 2020 to 2021 by 4.3 million, but remained elevated throughout the two years.

TABLE 3: YEARLY ALCOHOL RETAILER TURNOVER, BY STATE, ABS

STATE/TERRITORY	2019	2020	2021	% INCREASE, 2019-2021	\$ INCREASE (\$M), 2019-2021
NSW	3687.7	4861.2	4962.6	34.6	1274.9
VICTORIA	2587.9	3448.6	3534.1	36.6	946.2
WA	1559.7	1939.7	1935.4	24.1	375.7
TASMANIA	257.6	400.9	411.8	60	154.2
ACT	153.1	198.1	230	50.2	76.9

*Note that alcohol retail turnover for Tasmania is recorded from April 2019 onwards.

About the data

Packaged alcohol retail turnover data in this report is sourced from the ABS *Retail Trade, Australia, cat no. 8501.0*.² The data is collected through barcode scanners and retailer surveys.

Analysis was conducted using Table 11 from the ABS release titled 'Retail turnover, state by industry subgroup, original'. It should be noted that the 'Total (State)' data used for the majority of the analysis has larger figures than the combined total of jurisdictional specific data, due to the fact that some smaller retailers don't report by jurisdiction.

Data is reported by monthly turnover of alcohol retailers. Alcohol retail includes alcohol sold at bottle-shops and online retailers and excludes alcohol sold for 'on-premise' consumption at licensed premises (e.g., pubs or clubs) and takeaway alcohol sold at these premises.

Data for Queensland, South Australia, and the Northern Territory is not available. Prior to 2021 state-specific data is incomplete for South Australia and Tasmania. Data recorded for Tasmania reflects alcohol retail turnover from April 2019 onwards.

Further detail on the ABS methodology can be found here - <https://www.abs.gov.au/methodologies/retail-trade-australia-methodology/dec-2021>.

About FARE

The Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) is the leading not-for-profit organisation working towards an Australia free from alcohol harms.

We approach this through developing evidence-informed policy, enabling people-powered advocacy and delivering health promotion programs.

Working with local communities, values-aligned organisations, health professionals and researchers across the country, we strive to improve the health and wellbeing of everyone in Australia.

To learn more about us and our work visit www.fare.org.au.

You can get in touch via email at info@fare.org.au

FARE is a registered charity, and every dollar you give helps fund projects keeping our communities healthy and safe. You can make a tax-deductible donation at: www.fare.org.au/donate.

References

- 1 Euromonitor International. Passport: Alcoholic drinks in Australia. August 2013.
- 2 ABS Retail Trade, Australia, cat no. 8501.0, Table 11, <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/industry/retail-and-wholesale-trade/retail-trade-australia/latest-release>