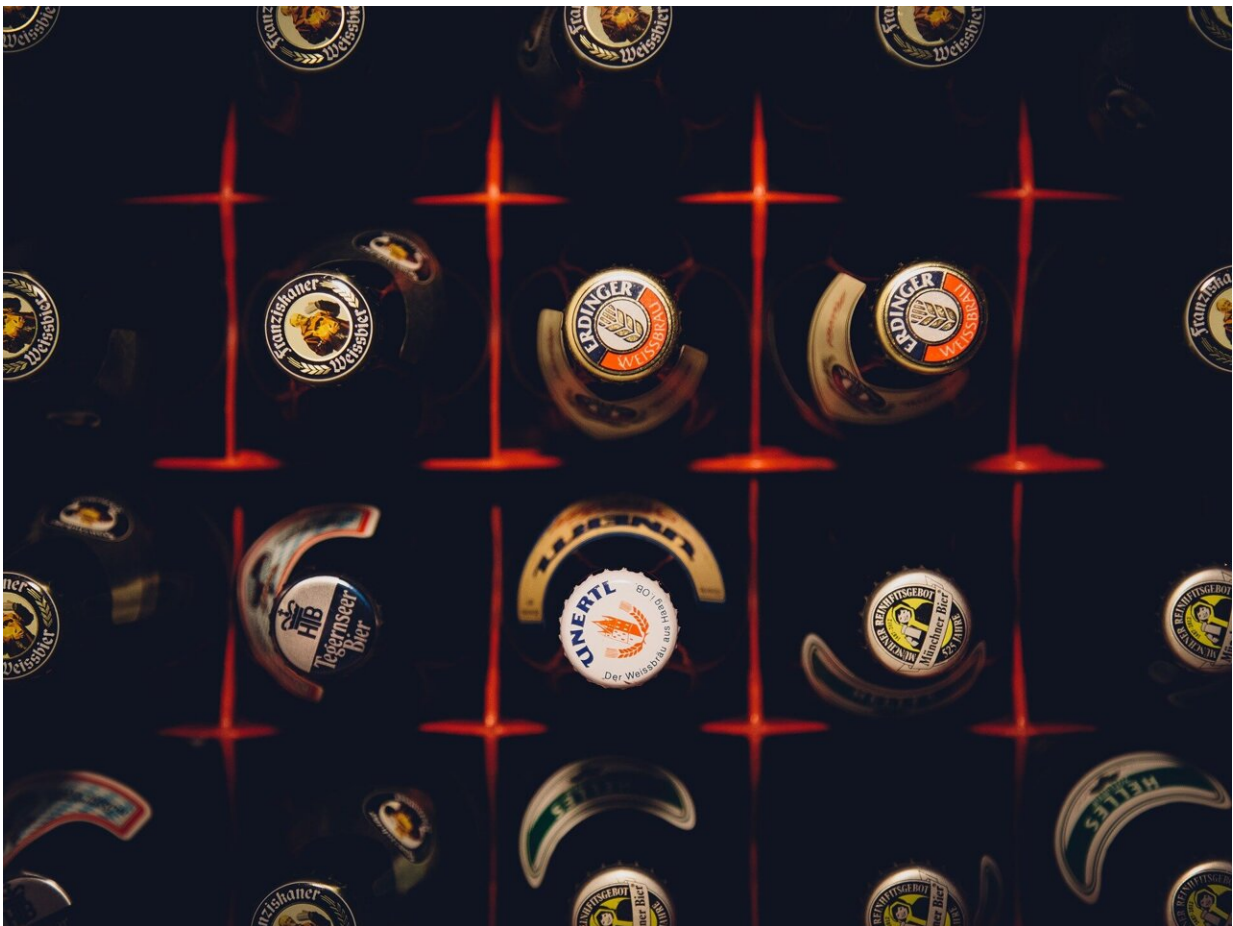


Boom in home-delivered alcohol opens the door to underage drinking

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A rapid expansion in online liquor delivery services is making it easier

for minors to obtain alcohol, due to regulatory holes and non-compliance with legal requirements, say the authors of a study published today.

Reporting in *Public Health Research & Practice*, a peer-reviewed journal of the Sax Institute, researchers from the Northern Sydney Health Promotion say the number of online [liquor](#) licenses in NSW increased five-fold from 2010 to 2018, reflecting a broader trend towards home [delivery](#) of [alcohol](#) that has only been further fuelled by the pandemic and associated lockdowns.

Their research looks at whether online alcohol delivery services operating during 2018 in NSW were compliant with regulations and adopted safeguards relating to underage access to alcohol. The authors found significant noncompliance among the 213 retailers they reviewed, and they call for tighter regulations both in NSW and in other Australian jurisdictions.

Included in the findings:

- 60 percent of services did not comply with the [legal requirement](#) to ensure purchasers provided their date of birth to confirm they were over 18.
- 15 percent of services did not mention on their website that it is illegal to sell, supply or obtain alcohol on behalf of someone under 18.
- Only 22 percent of services specified on their website that someone over 18 had to accept the delivery.

The authors also reviewed legal safeguards in NSW around underage access to alcohol, identifying several areas where the requirements were more ambiguous or less restrictive for holders of online liquor licenses, compared with physical outlets such as bottle shops. The authors' findings informed the drafting of new amendments to tighten controls

around same-day alcohol delivery, which came into force in NSW earlier this year. These include prohibition of same-day deliveries being left unattended; mandating age verification at both the point of purchase and delivery; and requiring all same-day delivery drivers to undertake responsible delivery of alcohol training.

However, the authors say there remain serious gaps in the legal safeguards preventing minors from ordering alcohol online, particularly as the new amendments only regulate same-day deliveries.

"A considerable risk of underage supply remains for any liquor order placed where delivery occurs on subsequent days," the authors write.

"Evidence is emerging, internationally and nationally, that growth in online liquor licenses has been accompanied by increased risk of supply to young people."

They say the need for tighter regulation of online liquor supply extends well beyond NSW. They note that alcohol is one of Australia's leading causes of drug-related death and was a contributing factor in 4,186 deaths in 2017.

Since 2015, the proportion of people in NSW aged 16 years or over drinking at levels posing long-term risk to health has been increasing, which has coincided with a spike in alcohol-attributable hospitalisations in NSW.

More information: Jonathon Noyes et al, Online liquor gets audited: a review of regulatory controls and supply practices of online liquor retailers in NSW, Australia, *Public Health Research & Practice* (2021).

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Provided by Sax Institute

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