

Reducing AlcoholRelated Harms and Costs in Alberta:

A Provincial Summary Report



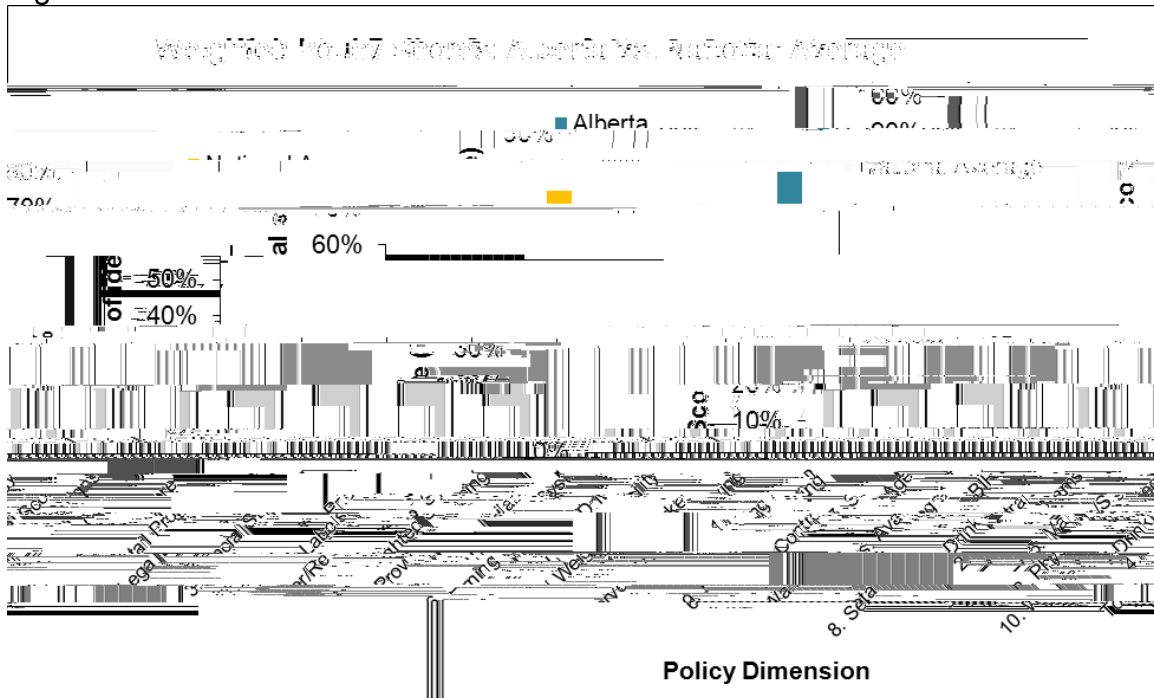
**University
of Victoria**

Centre for Addictions
Research of BC

Overview

- This report briefly summarizes the current state of alcohol policy in Alberta from a public health and safety perspective based on a comprehensive national study
- Alberta's alcohol policy strengths and weaknesses are highlighted in comparison with other provinces and specific recommendations for improvement provided.
- Ten alcohol policy dimensions were selected based on rigorous reviews of the effectiveness of prevention measures and weighted by their potential to reduce harm and reach the populations at risk. Data were collected from official sources and verified when possible by relevant agencies
- Alberta ranked 5th overall with 47.4% of the ideal score, but it fared relatively poorly on some of the more important policy dimensions of price/regulatory controls and drinking and driving as well as server training. There remains much unrealized potential for improving public health and safety outcomes by implementing effective alcohol policies in Alberta (see Figure 1)

Figure 1



¹ Giesbrecht, N., Wettlaufer, A., April, N., Asbridge, M., Cukier, S., Mann, R., McAllister, M., Plamondon, L., Stockwell, T., Thomas, G., Thompson, K., & Vallance, K. (2013). Strategies to Reduce Alcohol-Related Harms and Costs in Canada: A Comparison of Provincial Policies. Toronto: Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

Highlights of Recommendations

(Listed in order of potential for impact on harms and costs)

Pricing: Introduce minimum prices of at least \$1.50 per standard drink in all on-premise outlets. Adjust alcohol prices to keep pace with inflation and to reflect alcohol content

Control System: Consider implementing a moratorium on issuing licenses for new private liquor retail outlets. Reduce access to alcohol through other channels such as online sales and home delivery services. Increase spending on social responsibility messaging

Physical Availability: Restrict outlet density based on population and reduce the hours of sale for on and off-premise establishments

Drinking and driving: Implement all drinking and driving countermeasures recommended by MADD Canada, such as strengthening the Graduated Licensing Program, licensing suspensions and vehicle impoundment programs while also increasing administrative sanctions for new drivers

Marketing and advertising: Restrict the number of alcohol advertisements and intr

Results

1. Pricing

Summary: Alberta was ranked sixth out of the 10 provinces on the extent to which alcohol pricing policies were assessed as consistent with public health objectives. Systematic reviews identify alcohol pricing as having the strongest evidence of effectiveness. Increasing the price of alcohol reduces alcohol consumption (Stockwell et al., 2012) and alcohol-related harm at the population level (Wagenaar, Salois et al., 2009; Babor et al., 2010). Strong pricing policies include (1) setting minimum prices on alcoholic beverages to reduce economic availability of cheap alcohol, (2) regularly adjusting alcohol prices to keep pace with the cost of living to prevent alcohol from becoming cheaper relative to other goods over time, and (3) setting prices based on alcohol content to encourage consumption of lower alcohol content beverage.

Promising Practices Alberta has minimum prices for all beverage categories sold in on-premise outlets and the average minimum price is relatively close to the recommended ideal of \$3.00 per standard drink.

structure does not take into consideration alcohol content, meaning many higher strength products may be cheaper per standard serving than lower strength products.

Recommendations

- Set minimum prices for alcohol sold in off-premise liquor stores to at least \$1.50 per standard drink
- Increase minimum prices for alcohol sold in on-premise outlets to \$3.00
- Adjust alcohol prices at least annually to keep pace with inflation
- Adjust prices for alcohol content to make higher strength products more expensive

Figure 2

Promising Practices: The Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission (AGLC) government agency responsible for administering the Gaming and Liquor Act and its regulations and related policy, places strong emphasis on social responsibility messaging. There have been extensive social responsibility campaigns targeting a number of different demographic groups such as pregnant women and young adults and social responsibility messages are disseminated in many ways including: posters, pamphlets, print advertising, TV/radio advertisements and online.

Areas for Improvement: Alberta reached only a third of its potential for effective control system policy. Alberta's relatively poor score on this dimension is a reflection of the following: (1) 100% of retail outlets in Alberta are privately owned; (2) alcohol is available through various additional private channels including home delivery services, online sales and ferment at home kits, which increase the number of alcohol access points.

The Honourable the Minister of Finance (054-D-00246) (T.02474) (P.4) (A.1) (C.1) (J.50.04) (au)

3. Physical Availability

Summary: Alberta tied for second place with BC on policies that restrict the physical availability of alcohol. Reducing access to alcohol by restricting the number of alcohol outlets and limiting the hours and days when these outlets are open decreases the likelihood of experiencing alcohol-related harm including assaults and alcohol-related crashes as well as public disturbances (Wilkinson & Livingston, 2012).

National Ranking: Physical Availability		
Rank	Prov.	Weighted Score /15
1	ON	8.25
2	AB	7.50
2	BC	7.50
4	NS	6.75
5	MB	6.00
6	SK	5.25
6	NB	5.25
8	QC	4.50
8	PEI	4.50
10	NL	0.75

Promising Practices: The hours of operation for on-premise and off-premise outlets are provincially regulated. Regulations in Alberta also provide opportunity for citizen input with regard to the placement of certain alcohol outlets, including licensed establishments.

Areas for Improvement: Alberta is still only reaching half of its potential for physical availability policies. Alcohol outlet

Figure 3

4. Drinking and Driving

Summary: Alberta ranked eighth out of the 10 provinces on drinking and driving policies. Alcohol-related collisions remain one of the leading sources of alcohol-related deaths and injuries in Canada (Lim, Vos, Flaxman, Danaei et al., 2012). To effectively reduce alcohol-related collision rates, provinces should implement comprehensive three year graduated licensing programs, sanctions for impaired drivers and remedial programs for repeat offenders (Solomon, Cardy, Noble et al., 2012).

National Ranking: Drinking and Driving		
Rank	Prov.	Weighted Score /12
1	BC	6.20
2	ON	5.86
3	MB	5.47
4	SK	4.32
5	PEI	4.13
6	NS	

Note: Data is based on information provided by MADD Canada in their recent report entitled [Mapping Our Progress to Safer Roads: The 2012 Provincial and Territorial Legislative Review](#).

Promising Practices: Alberta has a three year Graduated Licensing Program (GLP) that includes restrictions on night time driving and number of passengers. Alberta also has some other promising practices such as keeping a record of licence suspensions on individuals driving records. At the time of data collection Alberta had a number of pending changes to the province's drinking and driving policies which have since been implemented

5. Marketing and Advertising

Summary: Alberta is tied with Saskatchewan and New Brunswick for fifth place for policies that regulate alcohol marketing and advertising. Alcohol advertising encourages drinking, reinforces positive attitudes about alcohol and associated drinking behaviors and is linked with increased drinking, particularly among young people (Anderson, De Brujin, Angus et al., 2009). Alcohol advertising regulations should control the content of ads, the placement of ads (reduce exposure to minors) and the number of ads in circulation to reduce overall exposure. Moreover, regulations need to be enforced to hold alcohol advertisers accountable for advertisements that violate the regulations

Promising Practices: Alberta's advertising content regulations include restrictions on the placement of ads (i.e. ads cannot be placed in any medium targeted specifically at minors), as well as restrictions on advertising price (cannot advertise ')

Recommendations:

- Introduce restrictions on the quantity of alcohol advertisements
- Introduce a formal process for complaints and violations of advertising regulations
- Consider extending advertising content regulations beyond those required by the CRTC, such as implementing specific restrictions on alcohol advertising at community events.

6. Legal Drinking Age

Summary: Alberta is tied with Manitoba and New Brunswick for seventh place on legal drinking age policies. Minimum legal drinking age laws play an important role in reducing alcohol use and related harm among younger populations (Babor et al., 2010). There are two minimum legal drinking ages in Canada, 18 and 19, depending on the province. A comprehensive review of the evidence concluded that a legal age of 21 is the most effective for reducing related problems among younger drinkers (Wargo and Toomey, 2002). However, the effectiveness of a minimum legal drinking age is also strongly influenced by the level and consistency of law enforcement efforts.

National Ranking: Legal Drinking Age		
Rank	Prov.	Weighted Score /8
1	BC	6.40
1	SK	6.40
1	ON	6.40
1		

providers has not been supported by practical guidelines or a position paper issued by a credible health professional association and there is no fee for service code in Alberta that primary care providers can use to conduct SBIR activities.

Recommendations:

- Consider issuing SBIR guidelines for primary health care providers to encourage uptake and support consistency of implementation.
- Consider introducing a fee for service code specific to SBIR activities to increase utilization of SBIR protocols by primary health care providers
- Alberta is encouraged to make use of the [SBIR-based resource](#) released in November 2012 by the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA) and the College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC)

8. Server Training and Challenge and Refusal

Summary: Alberta ranked seventh out of the 10 provinces on server training and challenge and refusal programs. Much work remains to improve the quality of such programs in the province. The goal of server training programs is to reduce service of alcohol to minors and intoxicated patrons. Research suggests that the effectiveness of such programs is greatest when the programs are mandatory, comprehensive, valued by provincial alcohol management authorities, actively enforced and periodically evaluated (Babor et al., 2010).

criteria including challenging those who look under age who appear to be intoxicated. The training uses a face-face training protocol and is based on evaluated server interventions and managers and staff required to take periodic retrain

Promising Practices: Alberta has an alcohol-specific provincial strategy document called "Alberta Alcohol Strategy" which recognizes the importance of nine out of 10 of the priorities in the World Health Organization Global Strategy on Alcohol.

- 9 leadership, awareness and commitment
- 9 a health services response, mobilizing community action
- 9 drunk-driving policies and counter measures
- 9 availability of alcohol
- 9 marketing of alcoholic beverages
- 9 pricing policies
- 9 reducing negative consequences of drug and alcohol intoxication
- 9 monitoring, surveillance and evaluation activities

Areas for Improvement: While Alberta's alcohol-thol

Promising Practices: The AGLC produces warning signs that licensees can voluntarily display in their establishments. These warning signs include messages about drinking and driving, drinking during pregnancy and messages indicating that individuals who appear to be under the age of 25 will not be served without proper government issued identification. Licensees can download printable versions of these warning signs from the AGLC website.

Areas for Improvement: Alberta is reaching a third of its potential to reduce alcohol related harms and costs in this policy area. Alberta, along with all other provinces, does not have mandatory warning labels about the health risks of alcohol on beverage containers or alcohol packaging. Further, Alberta does not have mandatory warning signs for on- and off-premise establishments, leaving it up to individual private retailers to post social responsibility messages. Current warning signs made available by the AGLC do not make reference to the risks of chronic diseases associated with alcohol or how to reduce these risks (i.e. the low risk drinking guidelines). For example, messages offering concrete advice on daily and weekly drinking limits, as well as specific advice on how to drink for alcohol-related disease prevention (e.g. 4-6 drinks per day for men, 2-3 drinks per day for women).

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Conclusion

Extensive international and national research has pointed to alcohol policies as being

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