



ALCOHOL ORDERING AND DELIVERY REFORMS: A SUMMARY REPORT ON CONSUMER EXPERIENCES AND IMPACTS

April 2026

Bosco Rowland, Rachel Petukhova, Victoria Manning,
and Michael Savic

Introduction

In 2022, reforms to the *Liquor Control Reform Act 1998* introduced provisions that apply to licensees that supply alcohol via an off-premises request (e.g., orders by phone, an app or website, etc.) and to the person who delivers the order. The reforms were designed to minimise potential harm arising from this form of supply and delivery and included the following:

- No alcohol deliveries can be made after 11pm;
- It is an offence to deliver alcohol to an intoxicated person or someone you think is intoxicated;
- A same day alcohol order cannot be left at an unattended address;
- Customers are to confirm they are over 18 at time of order;
- For a first-time customer order, the customer's ID must be checked at point of delivery and it must match the customer ID used to order;
- Licensee must display licence number and other notices required by the regulator on ordering platform.

In addition to these reforms, under a Ministerial Order issued on 21 September 2022, any licensee who delivers packaged liquor via off-premises request, must keep and supply records regarding any failed deliveries (e.g., if the recipient was a minor or intoxicated, reason for failed delivery).

Aims

This study set out to understand consumer experiences of alcohol deliveries, the reforms, and its impacts. In particular, the study aimed to address the following research questions:

1. What are the circumstances, characteristics, and trends in relation to alcohol ordering and delivery?
2. What are consumer experiences (motives) of alcohol ordering and delivery?
3. How have consumers understood and experienced the implementation of reforms?
4. How have the reforms impacted consumer behaviour (if at all)?

This study is part of a joint review of the online reforms undertaken by the Department of Justice and Community Safety and the Department of Health.

Methods

We utilised a mixed-methods research design involving: 1) An online quantitative survey of consumers; and 2) Qualitative interviews with consumers. The study comprised a convenience sample, and responses were collected between December 2023 and February 2024. Participants were recruited via social media and needed to meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Be aged 18 or over
- Live in Victoria

- Have ordered alcohol from a licensee in the past six-month period prior to the research (and ideally prior to the reform implementation in September 2022); and
- Have received an alcohol delivery in Victoria.

Survey results

A total of 149 individuals completed the online survey, which included 21 individuals who themselves delivered alcohol made through online orders. From the 149 respondents; 129 respondents (87%) completed every question (not including demographics).

Consumer characteristics

Respondents' ages ranged between 18 to 70+ years. The majority (88%) were aged between 20 and 49 years. There were slightly more women (46%) than men (36%), and the majority resided in metropolitan Melbourne (63%). The salary range for the majority of respondents was between 52K and 156K. Many drank alcohol at levels above the NHMRC recommended drinking guidelines, consuming usually more than 4 standard drinks (35%) in a sitting, at least once a week; 19% reported consuming more than 10 standard drinks over a week, on a weekly basis. The majority of respondents used alcohol home delivery services monthly (30%) or more than fortnightly but less than monthly (37%) (approximately 3 times a month).

Consumer experiences

Uber Eats (40%) and Dan Murphy's (29%) were the predominant companies used for alcohol home delivery. Convenience (52%), promotional offers (24%), ease (23%) and better value for money (22%) were cited as the most common reason for using online delivery.

Respondents indicated that they were highly likely (36%) or somewhat likely (31%) to use alcohol delivery services in the next month. When asked about their last online order, respondents predominantly ordered bottled wine (47%), beer (30%), spirits (25%) and pre-mixed drinks (21%).

Consumers' understanding of reforms and impact on behaviour

Consumers were not asked specifically about their knowledge of reforms, but were asked whether they had observed behaviour that was consistent with the reforms (e.g., no deliveries after 11pm), or whether their home delivery purchasing behaviour had been impacted in the 18 months after the reforms were introduced (e.g., asked for proof of identification with first order).

Since the implementation of the reforms, 60% of respondents indicated they were not intoxicated when receiving an alcohol delivery. In contrast 40% of respondents indicated they had received alcohol while intoxicated. A total of 11% of the sample reported being 'unsteady on their feet' (11%) or 'light-headed' (11%), when receiving an alcohol delivery. A

small proportion of individuals had received a delivery after 11pm (9%) or had a same day online delivery left on their doorstep (16%). However, respondents also noted that recently it was more likely they would be asked for identification (63%) and proof of age (39%), and less likely to have alcohol left on the doorstep (43%) and not having alcohol delivered after 11pm (35%). Deliverers also noted having mostly asked for proof of age (52%) for younger looking recipients, and some asked for proof of identification (19%) for first time purchasers. From twenty-one deliverers surveyed, when asked if keeping a record of failed deliveries, the majority reported keeping records of failed deliveries to minors (75%); a smaller proportion reported keeping a log of intoxicated recipients (25%).

Qualitative interview results

A total of 15 consumers took part in qualitative interviews. As illustrated in Table 1, we identified themes in relation to 1) Experiences of alcohol ordering and delivery; 2) Views and experiences of reforms; and 3) Suggestions on improvements.

Table 1: Qualitative Themes

1. Experiences of alcohol ordering and delivery	2. Views and experiences of reforms	3. Suggestions on improvements
1.1 Reasons and contexts of alcohol ordering and delivery	2.1 Awareness and impressions of reforms	3.1 Caps on ordering
1.2 Perceived benefits of alcohol ordering and delivery	2.2 Implementation of reforms	3.2 Increasing awareness of support services
1.3 Harms of alcohol ordering and delivery	2.3 Impacts of reforms	3.3 Restricting promotions advertising 3.4 Delivery driver measures

1. Experiences of alcohol ordering and delivery

Practical considerations, such as convenience and cost, were the most cited reasons for alcohol ordering. Other participants also mentioned that vouchers or promotions received from retailers and delivery services also enhanced the appeal of alcohol ordering.

Alcohol ordering and delivery in the context of socialising, or being with other people, was more common than ordering in the context of drinking alone. In these situations, some participants felt that alcohol ordering and delivery afforded opportunities for prolonging social connection and pleasure. Alcohol ordering was also perceived by some participants as reducing harm by avoiding drink driving.

While these perceived benefits of alcohol ordering and delivery were noted, participants more commonly mentioned the potential negative impacts of alcohol ordering in terms of alcohol-related harms. Some participants believed that alcohol ordering and delivery was

particularly harmful for certain people, such as those who have alcohol problems, and people who are in recovery or trying to maintain sobriety.

2. Views and experiences of reforms

Most participants were unaware of the reforms. However, once the interviewer explained the details of the reforms, most participants indicated that they were generally supportive of the changes.

While participants were generally supportive of reforms, they were sceptical about how well they would be implemented, and thus how effective they would be. Participants' accounts suggest that reform measures were not consistently implemented. Being asked for ID was the most implemented reform measure according to participant accounts, but a couple of participants mentioned not having their ID checked as first time customers. Contrary to reform measures, a few participants mentioned receiving alcohol after 11pm and had received alcohol despite being intoxicated. Some interview participants were concerned about whether delivery drivers were able to effectively police intoxication and whether it was fair and safe for them to hold such a responsibility.

These implementation challenges and concerns were perceived as barriers to the reforms having major impact, with only a couple of participants reporting that the reforms have had, or would have, an impact on their own ordering and alcohol consumption behaviour. Another reason the reforms were thought to have limited impact was because some participants did not view their drinking as problematic. On the contrary, many enjoyed the convenience of alcohol ordering and were determined to be availed of the benefits noted. While participants did not view the reforms as having a major impact on their own alcohol consumption, many thought the reforms might have an impact on specific groups and issues, such as addressing underage drinking and heavy drinking.

In contrast, some participants also believed that there may be some negative impacts beyond the issue of driver safety, including the potential for withdrawal symptoms if people who have addiction concerns are unable to access alcohol, and inconvenience or unfairness for shift workers and people with disabilities who may find alcohol delivery easier or preferable to in-person purchasing.

3. Suggestions on improvements

Many participants offered suggestions for how reform measures could be bolstered to facilitate greater impact and further mitigate potential harms of alcohol ordering and delivery, including: 1) Caps on ordering; 2) Increasing awareness of support services, especially for people experiencing alcohol issues; 3) Restricting promotion advertising to prevent feeling pressured to order; and 4) Measures to better equip delivery drivers in assessing intoxication and ensuring driver safety.

Policy implications and suggestions:

Based on the findings, the following suggestions are made:

1. As there is no safe level of alcohol consumption, that a card with the NHMRC low risk drinking guidelines and harm reduction messages, and Alcohol and Drug support helplines, such as Directline/Lifeline be included with each alcohol delivery.
2. As a public health measure, NHMRC low-risk drinking guidelines be posted in prominent positions on alcohol home delivery websites (e.g. on main page, and prior to point of sale).
3. To promote awareness and support healthy behaviour, customers be required to accept with checkboxes, before the checkout, that they understand the laws around alcohol home delivery (e.g., not allowed to deliver after 11pm, licensees are not allowed to deliver to a perceived intoxicated person or a minor).
4. That enforcement of alcohol home delivery laws be augmented with mystery shopper programs.
5. As a harm reduction strategy, that no alcohol promotions be made at the online checkout, or relating to items left in the online shopping cart.
6. Alcohol deliverers should be trained in Responsible Service of Alcohol (RSA) skills, so they can recognise intoxication and develop skills to refuse service to an intoxicated customer.
7. Continual monitoring and review of existing provisions be undertaken and the need for further reforms if loopholes are identified in alcohol home delivery space.