



A rapid review of the evidence

Online sales and home delivery of alcohol

Date published: August 2026

Executive Summary

Background

Alcohol home delivery services have expanded rapidly, raising concerns about their impact on alcohol consumption and related harms. A rapid systematic review was undertaken to examine the relationship between alcohol home delivery services and alcohol consumption patterns, related harms and regulatory compliance across Australia and comparable jurisdictions.

Methods

A systematic search was conducted across four databases, which resulted in 21 included studies, including 13 cross-sectional and two longitudinal investigations. All studies were reviewed, with data extracted using Covidence and formal appraisal of study quality carried out using JBI quality assessment tools.

Findings

Use of alcohol delivery services was consistently associated with higher overall alcohol consumption, as well as greater likelihood of heavy episodic and high-risk drinking compared to people who did not use alcohol delivery services.

Rapid delivery services were linked to extending a drinking session and receiving deliveries while intoxicated, with many users reporting they would have stopped drinking if this form of delivery had not been available. Compliance with age verification requirements was often poor, with 20% to 93% of deliveries occurring without ID checks. Unattended deliveries were also a feature in some studies. Limited research explored alcohol-related harms; one study associated extended availability of delivery by one hour with increased domestic violence assaults, while other studies noted greater negative consequences among delivery users. During the COVID-19 pandemic, alcohol delivery use rose substantially and was associated with heavier drinking patterns.

Conclusion

These findings, highlight how alcohol delivery services, especially rapid delivery, may increase consumption and undermine existing public health protections. Evidence suggests that strengthening regulatory measures, such as robust age and intoxication verification, limits on delivery hours, and controls on targeted marketing could have harm minimisation benefits in an evolving alcohol retail environment.

Declarations

This report was developed by the Alcohol and Drug Foundation (ADF). No funding, financial support or other resourcing was received from the alcohol and other drugs industry for any component of the report, rapid review design and delivery, evidence appraisal or interpretation of findings.

The authors have not received funding, via ADF employment or otherwise, from the alcohol and other drugs industry or affiliates, and have no other conflicts of interests to declare.

Acknowledgements: The ADF thanks external experts Prof Simone Pettigrew, Dr Kerri Coomber and Dr Claire Wilkinson for their insightful recommendations and guidance in developing the search strategy, and review of the final report.

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