# Rapid alcohol delivery services appealing to younger risky drinkers

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### Australian-first study finds younger, risky drinkers the biggest users of rapid alcohol delivery services.

An Australian-first study into who and how people use online delivery to buy alcohol has found younger, risky drinkers are the biggest users of rapid delivery services.

With this new data, the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) is calling for governments across Australia to ban on-demand delivery of alcohol within two hours of purchase and introduce mandatory ID checks at point of delivery. FARE’s submission to the NSW review into same-day delivery, says the burgeoning online sales and delivery market has outstripped Australia’s inadequate system of alcohol regulation, creating significant risks for younger Australians.

The research study from the Centre for Alcohol Policy Research (CAPR) at La Trobe University corroborates this market disruption.

The report *Alcohol home delivery services: An investigation of use and risk* was based on a ‘convenience survey’ of 528 participants aged 18 to 69 who used an online alcohol delivery service in the past month.

The researchers found that on-demand delivery services were most popular among the youngest age group of 18- to 29-year-olds.

The study indicates that while a wide range of people use online alcohol delivery services, there is a cohort of young risky drinkers who are using on-demand delivery services to prolong their drinking occasions.

One in five participants (22 per cent) who ordered alcohol via an on-demand delivery service did so because they were over the blood alcohol limit to drive. Meanwhile, almost one third who used on-demand services (28 per cent) reported that the delivery enabled them to continue drinking when they would otherwise have had to stop.

Participants who received their most recent order within two hours were categorised as ordering from an on-demand delivery service provided by both bottleshops and specialised fast delivery services.

The study also found that around half of all respondents receiving on-demand deliveries had ordered from traditional bottle shops like Woolworths’ Dan Murphy’s and BWS that offer specific on-demand services, rather than from specialised and newer fast delivery services like Jimmy Brings.

Although not a representative population sample, this study is nonetheless significant in as much as it provides the first detailed information on people who order online alcohol in Australia.

The CAPR study also highlights the brand prominence and market strength of established players, notably Woolworths.

There are several other concerning findings. The convenience of ordering alcohol through on-demand delivery services appears to facilitate a pattern of heavy, risky drinking by these younger Australians.

Sixty-nine per cent of respondents who had alcohol delivered within two hours reported consuming five or more standard drinks during the same session, while 28 per cent consumed 11 or more drinks on the same occasion.

It is also concerning that more than one-third of respondents aged 25 years and under (36 per cent) didn’t have their ID checked when receiving their alcohol order, which increases the risk of underage drinking.

It is a simple equation: inadequate age verification at point of sale plus inadequate age verification at point of delivery equals children accessing alcohol.

FARE agrees with the study’s conclusion that both existing government regulation and industry self-regulation are not adequate.

Governments are responsible for protecting communities and the CAPR research has emphasised significant regulatory gaps in our existing system of safeguards against alcohol harm.

For example, age verification is only sporadically used, concerns around rapid delivery and delivery late at night have not been addressed, and there are no requirements to reduce the delivery of alcohol to people already intoxicated. This puts vulnerable people at even greater risk, including dependent drinkers and people at risk of harm from someone else’s drinking.

The call to ban on-demand alcohol delivery has to be urgently considered by the federal and all state and territory governments who have jurisdictional responsibility for keeping their communities safe from the harm of alcohol, which is known to kill 6,000 people and leads to 144,000 being hospitalised every year.

Online sales and delivery of alcohol must be regulated, and compliance must be monitored and enforced by governments as a matter of public interest, otherwise this market disruption will undermine alcohol controls in Australia.

To strengthen our capacity to apply pressure on governments, FARE has worked with the Public Health Association of Australia and the Public Health Advocacy Institute of WA to develop seven principles that should guide the development of strong, proactive policies for online sales and home delivery that are focused on preventing alcohol harm to the community.

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