

Canadian Alcohol Policy Evaluation (CAPE) 3.0

Results from Alberta

The Canadian Alcohol Policy Evaluation (CAPE) provides rigorous assessments of how well each level of government in Canada is implementing policies proven to reduce harm from alcohol use. This is the third edition of the CAPE project; a project which has a track record of strengthening Canada's response to alcohol harm. Policy data for CAPE 3.0 were collected between June 1 and December 1, 2022.

Why it Matters: Annual alcohol consumption, harms and costs in AB

Alcohol consumption, 2020/2021

AB: 528 standard drinks per person aged 15+

Canada: 487 standard drinks per person aged 15+

Source: Statistics Canada. Table 10-10-0010-01 Sales of alcoholic beverages types by liquor authorities and other retail outlets, by value, volume, and absolute volume.

Alcohol health harms, 2020

127,787 ER & hospital visits in AB

2,049 deaths in AB

Source: Canadian Substance Use Costs and Harms. www.csuch.ca

Alcohol deficit, 2020/2021

+ \$1.305 B alcohol revenues

- \$3.11 B alcohol harm costs

= -\$1.805 B total alcohol deficit

Which is equal to -\$0.95 per standard drink sold.

Sources:

- Statistics Canada. Table 10-10-0010-01 Sales of alcoholic beverages types by liquor authorities and other retail outlets, by value, volume, and absolute volume.
- Canadian Substance Use Costs and Harms.
- Statistics Canada. Table 10-10-0012-01 Net income of liquor authorities and government revenue from sale of alcoholic beverages (x 1,000).

What can be done: an alcohol policy approach

Evidence-based alcohol policies are the most effective way to reduce harm from alcohol. The scores presented in this summary represent the degree to which best practice policies have been implemented.

CAPE 3.0 results: how does AB compare?

- BC: 36%
- AB: 34%
- SK: 36%
- MB: 44%
- ON: 40%
- QC: 42%
- NB: 35%
- NS: 38%
- PE: 37%
- NL: 41%
- YT: 33%
- NT: 32%
- NU: 34%

AB's CAPE scores: what's possible?

If Alberta implemented all the best existing policies across Canada's provinces and territories, their score could change from 34% (F) to 80% (A-). If we graded AB against best existing policies across provinces and territories, their score would still only be 42% (F).

CAPE policy domains: do they all have the same impact?

The 11 policy domains in this assessment form part of a comprehensive and synergistic approach to preventing and reducing different types of alcohol harms. Policies examined fall under provincial or territorial control, and each domain reflects the current evidence and is weighted based on its effectiveness and scope of reach. This results in a ranked order from one (i.e., highest overall impact) through 11 (see next page). However, all the domains are necessary to create a health-focused alcohol policy environment. To read more, see Project Methodology.

What AB is doing well: selected examples

Policy domain 1: Pricing & Taxation

While lower than recommended, there are minimum prices for on-premise alcohol sold in AB. In general, prices for beer and spirits sold from on-premise establishments are keeping pace with inflation.

Policy domain 4: Impaired Driving Countermeasures

AB has escalating administrative licensing suspensions and escalating interlock programs as a condition of relicensing, based on performance criteria, for federal impaired driving convictions with a blood alcohol content (BAC) of 0.08% or higher.

Policy domain 11: Monitoring and Reporting

AB conducts and supports provincial-level tracking of a number of alcohol-related indicators including morbidity and mortality, crime, costs, and policy changes; data are publicly reported, in most cases annually. AHS acts as a knowledge broker and actively produces related resources.

Where AB needs work: selected examples

Policy domain 1: Pricing & Taxation

There is no minimum pricing for off-premise alcohol sold in AB; on-premise minimum pricing is lower than recommended, not indexed to inflation or tied to ethanol content. There is no provincial sales tax in AB and no alcohol-specific sales tax.

AB Minimum Pricing in 2021/22

Note: Price per standard drink for a common container size and beverage strength, expressed in 2021 dollars.

Off-premise (e.g. liquor stores)

Recommended minimum price: \$1.83

Actual prices:

- Beer: None
- Wine: None
- Spirits: None
- Coolers: None

On-premise (e.g. restaurants, bars)

Recommended minimum price: \$3.66

Actual prices:

- Beer: \$2.01
- Wine: \$1.76
- Spirits: \$4.32
- Coolers: \$1.98

Policy domain 2: Physical Availability

There are no limits on outlet placement for any premises in AB. Hours of sale extend longer than recommended across all premises. AB permits alcohol home delivery, including by a third party (e.g. Uber Eats).

Policy domain 3: Control System

AB has no government owned or run off-premise retail outlets. There are no policies prohibiting online sales or alcohol sales alongside other goods and services. The alcohol regulator, AGLC, reports to the Treasury Board and Finance Ministry.

Steps AB can take to improve their CAPE policy scores

The policy domains below are listed in order of impact based on their effectiveness and scope.

Note: Grade ranges: A+ = 90-100%; A = 85-89%; A- = 80-84%; B+ = 77-79%; B = 73-76%; B- = 70-72%; C+ = 67-69%; C = 63-66%; C- = 60-62%; D+ = 57-59%; D = 53-56%; D- = 50-52%; F = 0-49%.

AB's overall CAPE 3.0 Score: 34% (F)

Policy domain 1: Pricing & Taxation

Score: 5% (F)

Recommendations

All recommended policies should be developed and implemented without alcohol industry involvement, without incorporating exceptions, and enacted in legislation or regulation where possible.

- Implement legislated minimum prices for all alcohol sold that is tied precisely (e.g. \$/L ethanol) to ethanol content. Set minimum prices at a rate per standard drink (e.g. 17.05mL ethanol) of at least \$2.04* for alcohol sold at off-premise retail outlets and increase to \$4.07* for alcohol sold at on-premise establishments, after taxes, and implement automatic indexation (*2023 price); on-premise minimum prices in AB have not been updated since 2008.
- Update general alcohol prices annually to ensure that all keep pace with AB-specific inflation, implement sales taxes for alcohol and tax alcohol at a higher rate than other consumer goods.
- Set off-premise minimum retail markups to be at least 100% of the landed cost for each beverage type and set on-premise markups at or above the off-premise retail price.

Policy domain 2: Physical Availability

Score: 39% (F)

Recommendations

All recommended policies should be developed and implemented without alcohol industry involvement, without incorporating exceptions, and enacted in legislation or regulation where possible.

- Reduce existing outlet density of all premises. Strengthen density limits for off-premise retail outlets and introduce density limits for on-premise establishments. Introduce placement limits for all premises.
- Reduce and legislate maximum trading hours allowed per week; restrict alcohol sales before 11:00am and after 8pm (off-premise retail outlets) and 1am (on-premise establishments). Prohibit on-premise alcohol takeout. Prohibit alcohol home delivery, including by a third party, from all premises.

Policy domain 3: Control System

Score: 14% (F)

Recommendations

All recommended policies should be developed and implemented without alcohol industry involvement, without incorporating exceptions, and enacted in legislation or regulation where possible.

- Appoint a health and/or safety-focused ministry to oversee alcohol regulation and distribution/retail. Require a government wholesaler or equivalent fee between the producer/manufacturer and retailer in all cases.
- Consider reinstating government-owned and operated off-premise retail outlets and move towards a full government monopoly. Prohibit alcohol sales beyond traditional channels such as in convenience and grocery stores, in other establishments such as spas and sporting facilities, and via online sales; phase out ferment-on-premise outlets and home-brew kits.
- Include protection of public health and safety as explicit mandate objectives for regulator and distributor/retailer; legislate earmarked funds for harm prevention, research, and treatment; require public health involvement in decision-making and legislative changes; require targeted health-focused public engagement.

Policy domain 4: Impaired Driving Countermeasures

Score: 58% (D+)

Recommendations

All recommended policies should be developed and implemented without alcohol industry involvement, without incorporating exceptions, and enacted in legislation or regulation where possible.

- Implement graduated licensing program (GLP) with minimum start age of 16 and a stage 2 night-time driving ban and passenger limit. Implement zero tolerance period with penalties for all new drivers with less than 5 years' experience.
- Impose increased penalties when presence of alcohol plus another drug is detected.
- Impose mandatory ALS and AVI that escalate according to BAC level.
- Implement interlock program enrollment incentives for $\geq 0.08\%$ BAC federal convictions to discourage unlicensed/uninsured driving.

Policy domain 5: Marketing & Advertising Controls

Score: 34% (F)

Recommendations

All recommended policies should be developed and implemented without alcohol industry involvement, without incorporating exceptions, and enacted in legislation or regulation where possible.

- Implement restrictions on advertising quantity (e.g. ad bans and volume restrictions) and placement (e.g. physical location) for all advertisers (e.g. non-licensees/third parties) and all media types.
- Appoint independent health-focused enforcement authority to conduct mandatory pre-screening of all alcohol ads, host responsive online complaint system.

Policy domain 6: Minimum Legal Age

Score: 13% (F)

Recommendations

All recommended policies should be developed and implemented without alcohol industry involvement, without incorporating exceptions, and enacted in legislation or regulation where possible.

- Increase minimum legal age to 21 for possession and purchase of alcohol, or at least 19 to be in line with other Canadian jurisdictions; consider granting graduated access (i.e. restrictions based on alcohol strength or hours of sale).
- Require proof of age identification for anyone purchasing alcohol and 2-staged verification (i.e. when ordering and receiving orders) for alcohol sales made remotely (e.g. online, via phone, etc.).

Policy domain 7: Health & Safety Messaging

Score: 37% (F)

Recommendations

All recommended policies should be developed and implemented without alcohol industry involvement, without incorporating exceptions, and enacted in legislation or regulation where possible.

- Implement enhanced alcohol labelling as a manufacturer requirement and mandatory onsite health and safety messaging (e.g. signage, posters) in all premises. Labels, signage, and messaging should include a variety of evidence-based warning messages (e.g. cancer risk, standard drinks, national alcohol guidance, calories), be prominently displayed and accompanied by pictorials, rotate across all products, and support consumers in making informed decisions about product use.

Policy domain 8: Liquor Law Enforcement

Score: 47% (F)

Recommendations

All recommended policies should be developed and implemented without alcohol industry involvement, without incorporating exceptions, and enacted in legislation or regulation where possible.

- Apply risk-based licensing and enforcement criteria to outlet and license holder characteristics to determine risk level licensing conditions and enforcement schedules across all premises. Conduct more frequent off-premise compliance checks based on risk level, and on-premise follow-up for failed compliance within 3 months and based on severity or number of violations. Introduce a dedicated police inspection program for on-premise establishments. Strengthen existing tracking and public reporting by listing disaggregated violations with establishment name and violation type.
- Strengthen the existing alcohol sale and service training program by adding an evidence-based public health focus and requiring recertification at least every 2 years.

Policy domain 9: Screening and Treatment Interventions

Note: Treatment indicators measure existence of services only, not quantity or quality.

Score: 97% (A+)

Recommendations

All recommended policies should be developed and implemented without alcohol industry involvement, without incorporating exceptions, and enacted in legislation or regulation where possible.

- Formally adopt the most recent evidence-based national alcohol guidance with an official statement of support.

Policy domain 10: Alcohol Strategy

Score: 17% (F)

Recommendations

All recommended policies should be developed and implemented without alcohol industry involvement, without incorporating exceptions, and enacted in legislation or regulation where possible.

- Implement a standalone government-endorsed alcohol strategy that includes a wide range of evidence-based public health policies (such as pricing and physical availability) and is developed independently of the alcohol industry. Allocate dedicated government funding to the strategy with an identified public health leader, an implementation timeline, reoccurring public-facing implementation assessments and updates at least every 5 years.

Policy domain 11: Monitoring & Reporting

Score: 80% (A-)

Recommendations

All recommended policies should be developed and implemented without alcohol industry involvement, without incorporating exceptions, and enacted in legislation or regulation where possible.

- Implement systematic and comprehensive tracking of all alcohol-related indicators (e.g. add consumption and drinking patterns to existing indicators)
- Report annually on all indicators through centralized public database or reporting system (i.e., website).

More CAPE products

Provincial/Territorial

- Other P/T Results Summaries
- Policy Domain Results Summary
- Policy Scoring Rubric
- Methodology and Evidence
- Best Practice Policy Leaders

Federal

- Federal Results Summary
- Policy Domain Results
- Policy Scoring Rubric
- Methodology and Evidence
- Evidence-Based Recommendations for Labelling of Alcohol Products in Canada

To learn more about the Canadian Alcohol Policy Evaluation or to join our Community of Practice, visit alcoholpolicy.cisur.ca or email cisur@uvic.ca

Suggested citation

Naimi, T., Stockwell, T., Giesbrecht, N., Wettlaufer, A., Vallance, K., Farrell-Low, A., Farkouh, E., Ma, J., Priore, B., Vishnevsky, N., Price, T., Asbridge, M., Gagnon, M., Hynes, G., Shelley, J., Sherk, A., Shield, K., Solomon, R., Thomas, G. & Thompson, K. (2023). Canadian Alcohol Policy Evaluation 3.0: Findings from Alberta. Victoria, BC: Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research, University of Victoria.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to all federal, provincial and territorial stakeholders who provided valuable feedback for this project as well as assisting with data collection and validation activities. Thanks also to our three external expert reviewers, all the extended members of the project team, and our CAPE Community of Practice.

Funding

This project was funded primarily by Health Canada's Substance Use and Addictions Program. Additional funds were provided by the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of Health Canada or the other organizations acknowledged.