

The effect of enforcement upon service of alcohol patrons of bars and restaurants

Author(s)

McKnight AJ, Streff FM.

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Abstract

Laws prohibiting the service of alcohol to already intoxicated patrons of bars and restaurants are seldom enforced. Following introduction of an enforcement effort in Washtenaw County, Michigan, observed refusals of service to "pseudopatrons" simulating intoxication rose from 17.5% to 54.3%, declining eventually to 41.0%. At the same time, the percentage of those arrested drunk drivers coming from bars and restaurants declined from 31.7% to 23.3%. In a comparison county, refusals of service rose to a significantly smaller extent, from 11.5% to 32.7%, while the percentage of DWIs coming from bars and restaurants showed no significant changes. Service refusals were related to volume of business and numbers of intoxicated patrons in an establishment at the time of observation, while numbers of arrested DWIs was related to the nature of the establishment's clientele, policies, and practices. While enforcement of alcohol service laws offers a potentially cost beneficial means of reducing highway crashes, replication across additional jurisdictions is needed.

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