

The Impact of small changes in bar closing hours on violence. The Norwegian experience from 18 cities

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Abstract

Aims: To estimate the effect on violence of small changes in closing hours for on-premise alcohol sales, and to assess whether a possible effect is symmetrical. **Design, setting, and participants:** A quasi-experimental design drawing on data from 18 Norwegian cities that have changed (extended or restricted) the closing hours for on-premise alcohol sales. All changes were less or equal 2 hours. **Measurements:** Closing hours were measured in terms of the latest permitted hour of on-premise trading, ranging from 1 a.m. to 3 a.m. The outcome measure comprised police-reported assaults that occurred in the city centre between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m. at weekends. Assaults outside the city centre during the same time window should not be affected by changes in closing hours but function as a proxy for potential confounders, and was thus included as a control variable. The data spanned the period Q1 2000-Q3 2010, yielding 774 observations. **Findings:** Outcomes from main analyses suggested that each 1-hour extension of closing hours was associated with

a statistically significant increase of 4.8 assaults (95% CI 2.60, 6.99) per 100 000 inhabitants per quarter (i.e. an increase of about 16%). Findings indicate that the effect is symmetrical. These findings were consistent across three different modelling techniques. Conclusion: In Norway, each additional 1-hour extension to the opening times of premises selling alcohol is associated with a 16% increase in violent crime.

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