Alcohol Law in the '90s:
Where We've Been and Where We're Going

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Objective

Changes in patterns and trends of select state-level alcohol policies from 1988 through 1997
Selected State-Level Policies

- general BAC limits
- youth BAC limits
- excise tax
- server training laws
- keg registration
Data Sources

Primary legal sources

• baselines
  – current & obsolete state codes

• changes
  – session laws
General BAC Limits

When lowered:

- risk of crash involvement declines
  
  NHTSA, 1990

- risk of fatal crashes declines
  
  Zador, et al., 1991
General BAC limits:

1988

BAC Limits (g/dL)
- 0.08 (3)
- 0.1 (47)
- 0.12 (1)
General BAC limits:

1997

BAC Limits (g/dL)
- 0.08 (16)
- 0.1 (35)
Changes in general BAC limits: 1988-1997

- 0.08 g/dL
- 0.10 g/dL
- 0.12 g/dL
Youth BAC Limits

When lowered:

• youth are less likely to drive after drinking

  Wagenaar et al., under review

• risk of young driver fatalities in single nighttime vehicle crashes declines

  Hingson et al., 1994
Youth BAC limits:

1988

BAC Limits (g/dL)
- <= 0.02  (4)
- 0.04-0.05 (3)
Youth BAC limits:
1997

BAC Limits (g/dL)
- <= 0.02 (47)
- 0.08 (1)
Changes in reduced youth BAC:
1988-1997
Excise Taxes

When raise cost of alcohol:

• consumers buy less alcohol
  Manning et al., 1991;  
  Saffer & Grossman, 1987

• primary cause deaths due to alcohol decline
  Saffer & Grossman, 1987;  
  Rush et al., 1986;  
  Cook & Tauchen, 1982;
Change in beer excise taxes
1988-1997
Changes in beer excise tax
1988-1997

Server Training

When implemented by an establishment:

• servers more likely to intervene  
  • Geller et al., 1987
• customers more likely to leave with lower BAC levels  
  • Hennesey & Salz, 1990
• risk of single nighttime vehicle crashes declines  
  • Holder & Wagenaar, 1995
Server Training Laws
1988

Not Mandatory (7)
Mandatory (3)
Server Training Laws 1997

Not Mandatory (11)
Mandatory (11)

Year

Not Mandatory
Mandatory
Keg Registration

When required:
• ? (Need more empirical research)

However, we already know:
• kegs are a cheaper source of alcohol
  \[\text{Grossman, 1987}\]
• youth are particularly price sensitive
  \[\text{Wagenaar et al., 1993}\]
• kegs are often a main source of alcohol at parties with underage drinkers
States with Keg Registration 1988

- Has Keg Registration Law (3)
States with Keg Registration 1997

- States with Keg Registration Law (12)
Changes in Keg Registration
1988-1998
Conclusions: BAC

• Trend continues toward 0.08 for general BAC

• Youth 0.02 BAC laws in place; need publicity & enforcement
Conclusions: Taxes

• Overall, states failed to keep up with inflation

• Real cost to consumer is much lower now than in past
Conclusions: Server Training

• More states enacting server training

• Trend toward mandatory form
Conclusions: Keg Registration

• More states enacting keg registration

• Further research is needed
www.epi.umn.edu/alcohol