

Public consultation: Alcohol and late night refreshment licensing statistics, England and Wales – IAS response

Home Office statisticians have launched a consultation on the 'Alcohol and late night refreshment licensing' statistical releases. This consultation is being run to gather insight and seek your views on the presentation and timing of the Government Statistical Service's 'Alcohol and late night refreshment licensing' statistics and specifically why you use the data, what information is used, how frequently you use the information and any concerns over quality. The consultation also provides an opportunity for you to comment on any aspect of the 'Alcohol and late night refreshment licensing' statistics.

The consultation is open to everyone, including members of the public. Consultation process Responses to this consultation should be sent to FLPOAU@homeoffice.gov.uk by 17 January 2019.

We plan to publish a summary of responses to the consultation, and decisions made, in due course. Please indicate if you do not wish for your replies to be made public.

About the Institute of Alcohol Studies (IAS)

The Institute of Alcohol Studies is an independent institute bringing together evidence, policy and practice from home and abroad to promote an informed debate on alcohol's impact on society.

Our purpose is to advance the use of the best available evidence in public policy decisions on alcohol.

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Questions

1) Please describe how and why you use these statistics. Please be as specific as possible; for example, if you use the statistics to provide briefing and further analysis to others, it would be helpful to know what the end use is.

The statistics are used to provide briefing and further analysis to others and as a primer to local research. It is very important to understand trends in the licensing landscape and the landscape of licensing enforcement and licensing policy approaches nationally, regionally and locally. Perhaps the most important use is in the ability to track trends at a local authority level and in neighbouring authorities. This can act as a flag as to the need for further qualitative investigation into the meanings of the trends; ie. to gain an understanding of the local 'drivers' of trends in licensing that underlie the statistics. It is also important to be able to compare local areas with similar, or divergent, demographic and licensing landscapes, allowing for the identification of 'control' areas.

In some cases, the statistics might form part of the context for the evaluation of particular local project interventions in enforcement and public health, or as a context to research underpinning a local authority Statement of Licensing Policy. There may also be uses in helping to identify, target and allocate resources (such as police and public health) towards particular local issues of need, as flagged by the statistics and other contextual measures and indicators.

In the wider sphere, the statistics flag areas of debate as to shifts in licensing policy nationally; eg. the Alcohol Policy UK website/blog reported and investigated the declines in the numbers of Reviews by interviewing key experts and professionals to gain their interpretation of this trend. Similarly, there has been media reporting and debate as to the efficacy and uptake of particular powers, such as Late-Night Levies. Trends can flag issues in legislation that may inform and stimulate calls for further development and reform of key licensing powers, as has occurred in the case of LNL.

2) Which parts of the publication have you used? (Please tick all that apply):

- Commentary**
- User guide**
- Data tables**

3) Which data tables have you used, if any?

All. Tables on Reviews (all), Expedited Reviews, Temporary Events Notices, Cumulative Impacts Areas and Late-Night Levies are especially useful.

4) Do you have any concerns on the quality of the data submitted by the licensing authorities (LA)?

Concerns as to how to interpret certain significant shifts, such as the dramatic falls in the number of Reviews (up until rises in 2018); could Local Authorities be surveyed as to their interpretation of trends?

Late-Night Refreshment (LNR) premises that do not serve alcohol are a subset of Premises Licences that often get lost in the data; in practical terms we are mostly referring to fast-food takeaways serving hot food that open beyond 23:00 hours. It would be very useful to have this category of licences given further weight and analysis in the tables and commentary, eg. how many in each LA? Number of Reviews, how many Cumulative Impact Areas and Late-Night Levies include LNR premises? LNR often plays a key role in night-time economies and improved statistical analysis would allow for wider recognition of this. Clearly, LNR premises have been identified as worthy of licensing, but there is little information available as to how to measure, weigh and target potential crime risks etc. vis-à-vis the approaches adopted in other types of licensed premises.

5) Do you use the imputed estimates reported in the headline figures data for individual LAs, or both?

Yes, but with the caveat that the most important and useful data is local, non-estimated, data.

6) If you use the imputed estimates, do you think the methodology used is suitable?

I'm not sure there is a practical alternative to using LA licensing records. The inaccuracies inherent in these should be addressed by detailed guidance to LAs on collating and presenting data. One important concern is the number of premises listed as 'Restaurants' on licensing records that, in reality, operate as bars, generating most of their income from alcohol sales. This is currently a challenge for LAs, as in the case of negative cumulative impacts surrounding clusters of 'restaurants', they often have to unpick and query their own records on an ad hoc and responsive basis.

7) Is your response your views as an individual user or on behalf of an organisation?

- Own views
- Organisation** (please specify)

8) What sector do you work in? (Please select 1 answer only)

- Central government department or public body
- Local authority
- Other public sector
- Academic or research
- Charity and voluntary**
- Commercial or private sector
- Media
- International organisation
- Other (please specify)

9) May we contact you to discuss your response to this consultation? This may be to follow up on any specific points we need to clarify.

This consultation response was written by IAS expert advisor Dr Phil Hadfield, director of www.philhadfield.co.uk, an Independent Research Consultancy based in Leeds, UK.

For more information our response to the consultation, our contact details are as follows:

**Institute of Alcohol Studies
Alliance House, 12 Caxton St, London, SW1H 0QS
Email: info@ias.org.uk
Telephone: 02072224001**