

# 50 years experience with a comprehensive alcohol advertising ban

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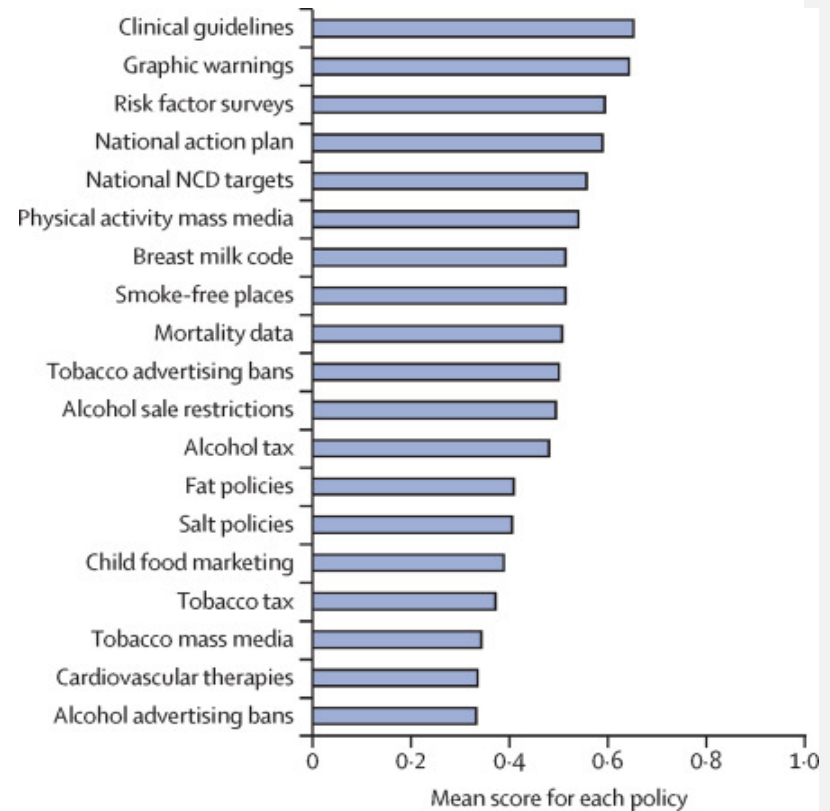
# WHO Best Buys to reduce Alcohol Related harm

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- Increase excise taxes on alcohol beverages
- **Enforce bans or comprehensive restrictions on exposure to alcohol advertising (across multiple types of media)”**
- Restrict the physical availability of retailed alcohol

# Alcohol advertising and alcohol policy

- “There is considerable research showing the impact of both traditional and digital marketing techniques (...) There are plausible mechanisms to explain how marketing impacts drinking behaviour via both simple exposure and building engagement, resulting in adverse impacts on young people and other vulnerable populations” (Babor et al. 2022)
- Restrictions on alcohol marketing is one of the least well-enacted strategies



Source: Allen et al. 2020

# Norwegian advertising ban

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Comprehensive alcohol advertising ban passed in 1973, (implemented 1 April 1975, a few months before the tobacco advertising ban)

- Had been discussed earlier, in 1947, but stopped due to concern over trade agreements w/wine countries
- Some pre-existing restrictions on wine and spirits advertising + self-regulation on beer

Already a comprehensive alcohol control policy in place:

- Alcohol monopoly (wine/spirits), licensing for bars/restaurants, high alcohol taxes, drink driving laws with random sobriety tests, municipal restrictions

Background: Concern over increasing alcohol advertising and increasing consumption:

«this unwanted development necessitates counter-measures from society»

«The advertising for various types of intoxicating drinks are one of the factors that contribute to the increase in and spread of the consumption and thereby also the misuse, and that [the ban] will have a positive effect on sobriety»

# A comprehensive ban

- Defines alcoholic beverages as beverages containing more than 2,5 vol % alcohol
  - from 1990: 0,7%
- Defines advertising as “mass communication for marketing purposes”
  - i.e. if the goal of the communication is to promote sales
  - Important who initiates the communication...
- Applies to all media channels (even those that did not exist at the time)
- Cannot use alcoholic beverages or drinking situations to advertise other products
- Covers all advertising targeted at a Norwegian audience
  - exception for intl. magazines etc that are sold in Norway
  - social media like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube etc. block alcohol advertising to Norwegian audiences
- Allows advertising from wholesalers to outlets - but not from wholesalers or outlets to end customers.

what's the  
opposite of  
comprehensive?



restricted, limited, incomplete,  
narrow, partial, specific,  
imperfect, exclusive,  
incomprehensive, needy



 Thesaurus.plus

# Ban on alibi marketing

- Bans advertising for the brand if «a non-negligible part of the audience will associate it with alcoholic drinks»
  - This interpretation was tried before the courts in 2000
- Cannot market non-alcoholic drinks with the same name as an alcoholic drink
  - i.e. separate brands for non-alcoholic beer
    - No «Heineken 0.0»
    - Ringes → Munkholm
    - Hansa → Clausthaler
- Cannot use «coded» language – e.g. use a familiar catchphrase or slogan and just modify one of the words etc.
  - «After work beer» → «After work cheer»



# Internet and social media

- Media neutral – i.e. applies to all media channels, including online
- Regulations liberalized in 2015:
  - Producers can present their products on their website with neutral pictures and restrained language – ie. channels that customers seek out themselves
  - No sales promoting language
- Social media more difficult
  - Important communication channel
  - Customers get info in their feed without seeking it out
  - A strict reading of the law severely limits activities on social media, since the purpose of their presence will often be to promote their products

«Carlsberg has a light yellow straw colour. The aroma is characterised by a light yeasty fruitiness with notes of hazelnut from the malt. The taste is clean and balanced, with light malt sweetness and bitterness.

Carlsberg is well suited to typical Norwegian everyday food, such as white meat, pasta dishes, pizza and salads»



TILBAKE TIL VARE DRINK

## Carlsberg

Kategori: Pilsner/Alkoholprosent: 4,5%

Mat: Svinn, Kjøtt, Fisk, Skaldyr

**Historie**  
I 1847 ble Carlsberg bryggeriet grunnlagt av filantropisten Jacob Christian Jacobsen. Bryggeriet ble oppkalt etter hans sønn Carl Jacob Jacobsen. I 1904 ble Carlsberg pilsner utviklet av Carl Jacobsen, og den kjente Carlsberg logoen i sitt-nouveau stil ble reintrodusert. Logoen har i moderne tid blitt logoen til hele selskapet, og Carlsberg pilsner har blitt en av Carlsbergs viktigste voremerker.

**Smak**  
Carlsberg har en lys strågul farge. Aromoen er preget av en lett gjærfruktighet med toner av eple, og høy og hoeselnett fra malt. Smaken er ren og balansert, med lett maltsedme og bitterhet.

**Mat**  
Carlsberg egner seg godt til lett norsk hverdagsmat som lyst kjøtt, pastaretter, pizza, salater, fisk og skaldyr. Bruk av alkohol kan gi ulike skadevirkninger. Nærmere informasjon finner du [her](#).

Finnes også på boks:

# Benefits of a comprehensive ban

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- Most comprehensive protection against exposure from alcohol advertising
- Covers all media (even those that do not yet exist)
- Clear rules:
  - Advertising is not permitted except for some narrowly defined exceptions
  - Clear definition of advertising that focuses on the *purpose* of the communication → covers many aspects of marketing
- Fewer loopholes and gray areas (though some still exist)

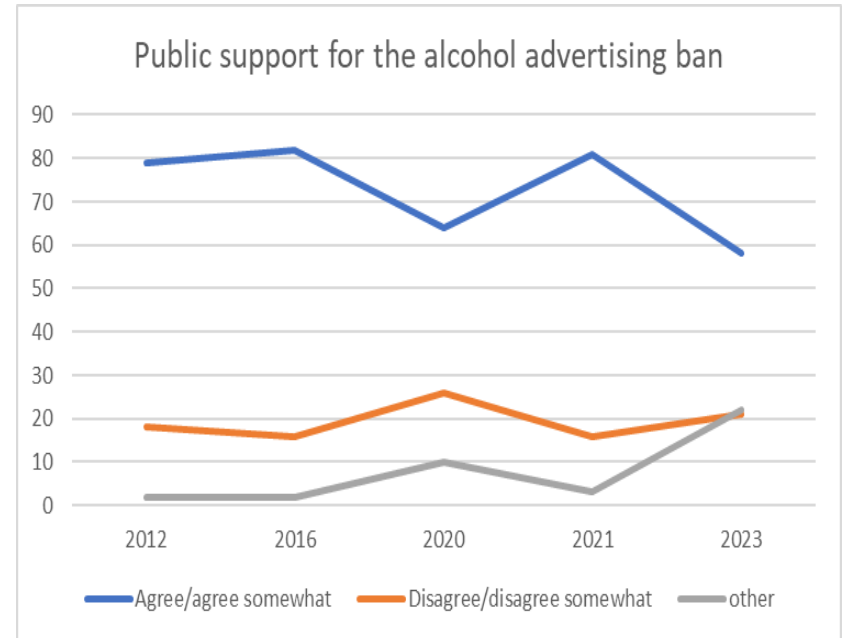


# Evidence

- Little evidence base when it was introduced (for both alcohol + tobacco)
  - Assumed that when industry paid for advertising to promote the sale of alcohol, it probably did
  - Motivated by concern for young people and people with alcohol problems
- Recent studies support the likely effect of advertising on alcohol and tobacco use (Babor et al. 2022)
- Some recent advertising bans were introduced as a part of a broader alcohol control strategy (cf. Lithuania)
  - Difficult to isolate effect
- In Norway, the advertising ban was added to existing alcohol policies
  - A good case to study the effect
- Methodological challenges - but a modelling study found that alcohol advertising ban reduced alcohol sales by 7 percent, beyond the effects of an already restrictive alcohol policy (Rossow, 2021)

# Public opinion

- Broad public support for the advertising ban
  - perhaps more importantly – not much support for alcohol advertising
- The «grey areas» are a challenge
  - Difficult to explain to the public (e.g. emoji use, Use of pictures)
- Alcohol industry supports the advertising ban
  - they want to promote their products
  - ...but they are primarily concerned about a level playing field
  - they want clear rules
  - they want «modernization» – to allow the use of social media, to present their products and advertise for 0% beer



Source: TNS/Sentio/Opinion for Actis

# Challenges to the ban

- Challenged by a wine magazine in 2003 – claimed to be a barrier to trade
  - Norwegian courts consulted the EU Court, but upheld the ban (unlike Sweden)
- Regular calls to «modernize» (i.e. loosen) the regulations
  - e.g. with regard to producers' websites and social media
- Lack of monitoring and enforcement in social media
  - informal norms have evolved
  - many violations, though mostly relatively minor
  - some unclarity w/regard to customer generated content
  - some grey zones that can be controversial
- Influencer advertising
  - Many influencers publish content that violates the law – important with monitoring and quick sanctions
- Broad support - an integral part of the comprehensive alcohol control policy in Norway



**actis**