

EVALUATING MALT LIQUOR POLICIES

Evaluation is an important, but often overlooked component of the policymaking process. Evaluating malt liquor policies can provide concrete evidence of policy effectiveness, which may be crucial for maintaining public and political support for the policies in the face of ongoing opposition. Evaluation can assess policy process as well as policy outcomes. In other words, it can determine how well the policy is being implemented as well as whether it is actually reducing the problems it was designed to address. Evaluation can also determine whether a policy is cost-effective and whether it has any unintended consequences.

A variety of methods and measures can be used to evaluate malt liquor policies, depending on what is being assessed. An outcome evaluation might assess pre- and post-policy levels of various quality of life measures in neighborhoods covered by the policy, comparing them with levels in similar neighborhoods not covered by the policy. For example, these measures might include alcohol-related crime rates gleaned from police reports, or the opinions of neighborhood residents collected via telephone surveys. Pre- and post-policy analyses of retail sales receipts and alcohol-related service costs may be useful in determining the economic impact of the policy.

Below are examples of **research questions, measures and data sources** that communities might use to evaluate malt liquor policies.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	MEASURES	DATA SOURCES
Is the policy being well-implemented?	Enforcement levels (e.g., number and outcome of retailer compliance checks, decoy purchase attempts)	Law enforcement records (police, sheriff, Alcohol Beverage Control); interviews with law enforcement personnel, retailers
	Public awareness of the policy	Surveys (phone, mail, web, street) of area residents, malt liquor consumers, retailers, local service providers, government officials; Media analysis
Is the policy achieving its goals?	Alcohol-related crime rates; number of police calls/complaints for alcohol-related incidents (e.g., drunk in public, trespass, car prowls, disorderly conduct)	Police department records
	Quality of life; levels of nuisance behaviors (e.g., panhandling, public urination, trespassing, property damage, broken glass, container litter); malt liquor consumption	Surveys (phone, mail, web, street) and focus groups with area residents, alcohol retailers, area businesses, malt liquor consumers; neighborhood trash pickups
What is the economic impact of the policy?	Malt liquor and other alcohol sales revenues	Retail sales receipts, distributor sales records; interviews with retailers and distributors
	Number of alcohol-related Emergency Medical Services (EMS) incidents; admissions to area detox facilities	EMS, hospital, fire, police, detox, and/or local government records
Did the policy have any unintended consequences?	Crime, quality of life, nuisance issues, consumption, sales revenues and EMS incidents in adjacent neighborhoods	Same as above, but for adjacent neighborhoods (i.e., police records, public surveys, sales receipts, EMS records, etc.)
	Number of new high-alcohol products or package types	Neighborhood trash pickups; observations in liquor stores; distributor inventories.
Did the policy encourage similar efforts in other cities?	Inquiries about the policy from other cities; number of policies considered or enacted in other cities	Interviews with city and Alcohol Beverage Control personnel