Support for alcohol policy in the community: Results from the Community Action on Alcohol Pilot Project in Ireland

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THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CORK
Community Action on Alcohol Pilot Project

• The National Community Action on Alcohol Pilot Project began in January 2015.
  • The project sought to reduce alcohol related harm, by supporting Drug and Alcohol Task Forces to adopt a ‘community mobilisation’ approach. The project fits into a national and international policy context, that promotes community mobilisation approaches to address alcohol related harms; namely the National Substance Misuse Strategy, The Healthy Ireland Framework (2013 to 2025) and the World Health Organisation Strategy on Alcohol (2010).
Context
Aim

• “public support for policies to reduce alcohol consumption and harms generally has an inverse association with policy effectiveness: policies with greatest evidence for effectiveness, such as pricing and availability, are often the least popular” (Buykx et al, 2016).

  • A recent review highlights that social support for evidence-based alcohol policy has fluctuated (Tobin et al, 2011)

As support for evidence-based alcohol policy remains in a constant state of flux and support for the public health alcohol bill has yet to be determined, the aim of this research was to examine the level of support for evidence-based alcohol control policy among the Irish population.
Method
51.3%  
48.7%  

14.8%  
50.4%  
33.9%  

29.4%  
54.2%
Evidence-based alcohol policy

Individuals were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the following public policy measures:

1. Random police check points to target drink-driving,
2. Banning alcohol advertising directed at young people,
3. Banning alcohol sales to under 18’s,
4. Banning price promotions,
5. Reducing the number of outlets selling alcohol,
6. Introducing minimum unit pricing and
7. Selling alcohol in separate premises to other products.
Level of support for evidence based public policy

- Alcohol sold in separate premises: 51.7%
- Minimum Unit Pricing: 62.4%
- Reduction in no. of alcohol outlets: 51.8%
- Ban on price promotions: 66.8%
- Ban on selling to under 18’s: 98.2%
- Ban on alcohol advertising to youth: 78.4%
- Random police checks: 90.8%
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Random driving check points</th>
<th>Ban alcohol advertising to youth</th>
<th>Ban on selling to under 18’s</th>
<th>Ban on price promotions</th>
<th>Reduce no. of alcohol outlets</th>
<th>Support Minimum Unit Pricing</th>
<th>Separate premises sales</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Had family problems</td>
<td>Random driving check points</td>
<td>Ban alcohol advertising to youth</td>
<td>Ban on selling to under 18’s</td>
<td>Ban on price promotions</td>
<td>Reduce no. of alcohol outlets</td>
<td>Support Minimum Unit Pricing</td>
<td>Separate premises sales</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>Been a passenger</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Harm to others

- Individuals who perceived societal issues in their local area (within a 15 minute walk from their home) were more likely to support evidence based alcohol policy
  - Teenagers drinking in public
  - Adults drinking in public
  - Public drunkenness
  - Alcohol related violence
  - Drink driving
Discussion

• A significant shift in public support for evidence-based public health alcohol policy

• Even though support is predominant, as the policy becomes more restrictive a reduction in public support is noted.
  • This complements recent research in the United Kingdom which noted that “support was strongest for policies increasing law enforcement and providing health information/treatment services and more divided for pricing and availability pricing policies” (Li et al, 2017).
Dialogue

• Dialogue on alcohol education and prevention has been framed in many forms. The alcohol industry framed their latest campaign as individuals, families and culture being the cause of alcohol related harm.
  • They downplayed or ignored “the role of industry in shaping that drinking culture” (Petticrew et al, 2016). Meanwhile, public health advocates have opposed “policy moves that were not supported by evidence” (Babor et al, 2010).
  • These conflicting messages may have impacted on support for national health policy intervention which focuses on intervention especially among hazardous alcohol users and those who drink to intoxication whose support for these policy measures is reduced.
Conclusion

• The current research signals that the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill is being implemented with the support of the general population.
  • As excessive alcohol consumption continues to cause harm to the user and others around them, the implementation of evidence based policy measures will facilitate the reduction of consumption and alcohol related harm in Ireland.