

ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC TOWARDS A MINIMUM PRICE POLICY FOR ALCOHOL IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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Introduction and Aims: Policies that raise the price of alcohol are important initiatives to reduce excessive alcohol consumption. While there is increasing evidence that introducing a minimum price policy for alcohol may be effective in reducing excessive alcohol consumption, public reaction is less clear. It is important to investigate people's attitudes towards the policy to allay potential negative reactions were the policy introduced.

Design and Methods: Twelve focus groups were conducted to investigate people's attitudes towards a minimum price policy in Western Australia. Participants were also asked what measures could be introduced to make the policy more acceptable. Transcriptions of discussions were analysed using qualitative inductive content analysis for key emergent themes.

Results: Three major themes emerged: *dislike for the policy*, *doubt over its effectiveness*, and *improving the acceptability*. Participants expressed negative attitudes toward the policy and thought that it would lead to increased crime, drug use, and financial strain. Participants identified the policy as unfair on disadvantaged groups. Suggestions to make the policy more acceptable included increasing alcohol education and directing the revenue toward alcohol reduction initiatives.

Discussion and Conclusions: Findings suggest that the general public have negative attitudes toward a minimum price policy and feel that it would not be effective. These findings mirror research conducted in the UK. Considerable campaign work to dispel misunderstandings and promote the effectiveness of the policy may be needed in order to divert public opinion toward accepting minimum price.

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