Reviewer's report

Title: A review of public opinion towards alcohol controls in Australia

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Reviewer: Wayne Hall

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It is important to assess public understanding of and support for alcohol control policies in Australia in view of increased public concern about alcohol abuse and recent proposals by the Australian National Preventive task Force to increase alcohol taxes and reduce its availability. Lack of public support for the latter type of policies is often cited by politicians as a major reason for failing to act on these recommendations.

National household health and drug surveys in Australia have routinely asked the public about their attitudes towards these issues but comparatively very few analyses have been reported of levels of support for different alcohol policies. Fewer still have examined changes over time in public attitudes towards these policies.

The authors have systematically identified and described the major Australian population surveys and the questions included in each of them to assess public attitudes towards various alcohol policies. They describe the results of the surveys in a clear and accessible way. The result confirm similar findings from surveys of public attitudes in other developed countries, namely, that the public gives its strongest support to the least effective policies, those that target problem drinkers, while opposing the most effective population strategies, namely, increasing taxes, setting a minimum or floor price for alcohol, and reducing the availability and promotion of alcoholic beverages.

My only comments are two minor essential revisions namely, to provide a little more detail in the Discussion as follows:

1. A more systematic comparisons, if possible (assuming similar questions were used), of the Australian survey results and results of similar surveys in Canada and the USA.

2. Some discussion of the implications for public alcohol policy. I assume that the authors do not think that public health advocates should abandon their advocacy of these policies. If this is the case, how might they seek to build more public support for more effective population level alcohol policies by explaining their rationale or the evidence for their effectiveness?

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests
Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
I have no competing interests of any kind.