AN EXAMINATION OF PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARDS ALCOHOL POLICIES: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Alcohol consumption is believed to be responsible for approximately 12,800 cancer cases annually in the UK and is linked to seven types of cancer, including two of the most common, breast and bowel. If current alcohol consumption trends continued, it will lead to a further 135,000 cancer deaths over the next 20 years and cost £2bn in cancer costs to the NHS.

This is the second report following on from Buykx et al., 2015 which explored public knowledge of alcohol as a risk factor for cancer. This report, based on cross-sectional survey data of 2100 people representative of the English adult population, investigates public support of alcohol policies and the link to cancer awareness.

KEY FINDINGS

Support for alcohol policies varied depending on a number of varying factors:

• Non-drinkers were the most supportive of all policies (>50% support for alcohol policies).

• Respondents aware of alcohol as a risk factor for cancer were more supportive of policies than those that were not aware of this.

• Alcohol unit labelling for cans and bottles was the most highly supported policy (74%).

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• Limiting advertising for alcohol on TV after 9pm was the second most highly supported policy (67%).

• Prevention-based (i.e screening and brief interventions) health service response policies were more supported than treatment-based policies (i.e increasing funding for treatment).

• There was overall support of drink driving counter measure policies.

POLICY AND PUBLIC HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

This report indicates current levels of support for different policy options is likely to be associated with health knowledge, in particular awareness that alcohol is a risk factor for cancer.

Policy support is also linked to how much a person drinks with those who drink more alcohol being less likely to be supportive of alcohol policies than those who drink less.

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CANCER RESEARCH UK

Cancer Research UK is the world’s largest independent cancer charity dedicated to saving lives through research. We support research into all aspects of cancer through the work of over 4,000 scientists, doctors and nurses. In 2014/15, we spent £434 million on research institutes, hospitals and universities across the UK – including a £41 million contribution we made to the Francis Crick Institute. We receive no funding from the Government for our research. This project has been commissioned by the Cancer Research UK Policy Research Centre for Cancer Prevention. For more information on this study please contact PRCP-team@cancer.org.uk

Cancer Research UK is a registered charity in England and Wales (1089464), Scotland (SC041666) and the Isle of Man (1103).