

Substance misuse and public policy considerations of relevant frontline professionals

Introduction and aims

The intention of this survey is to establish the views of professionals who work to support people who misuse a range of substances.

The results have been presented in an appropriate format and will be made widely available.

Aston Manor Cider (AMC) is a responsible organisation that is serious about working with interested parties to address issues created by misuse. And it is an organisation that is insistent that action on misuse and policies on alcohol and licensing are evidence-based, effective and proportionate.

It is hoped that this survey and related work will support a robust and, critically, an informed debate around the issue of misuse, so that progress towards effective interventions and approaches can be developed.

What is important to Aston Manor is that policies and approaches in place or suggested are not prohibitively punitive to the interests of responsible consumers, retailers and producers.

In light of the results, there might be merit in creating a forum of relevant people and organisations such as the Portman Group, along with government representatives, drug and alcohol service professionals and other interest groups. This purpose of this forum would be to generate productive discussion across presently entrenched positions in order to inspire effective action on a complex issue so that the situation of people in crisis can be improved and alcohol harm reduced.

To be clear, it is not the place of Aston Manor Cider to develop solutions.

As a responsible producer the business is keen to ensure that all interested parties have an open approach and consider the evidence.

Methodology

Working with an independent and accredited market research organisation ([OnePoll](#)) an online survey was created.

OnePoll confirmed that the questions were balanced, i.e. not leading respondents.

In light of feedback from a homelessness charity, a few small changes in the wording of a couple of questions was made from the previous study (October 2010). This reflected the terminology used to describe those who misuse substances.

A researcher was engaged to identify relevant organisations that support people who misuse a range of substances.

The researcher contacted the organisations identified so that the survey was presented to as many drug and alcohol/homelessness professionals as possible.

The researcher explained the purpose of the study, the process, confirmed the confidentiality of respondents and also confirmed the independence of the research organisation.

An email was then sent to confirm the purpose and the process that included a link to the survey on the OnePoll website – though not visible to others.

Substance misuse and public policy considerations of relevant frontline professionals

All responses were confidential and not attributed to individual respondents (or their organisation).

Every respondent had the option to provide an email address in order to receive a copy of the aggregated data. It was made clear to all respondents that their email address would not be used for any other purpose.

Executive summary

The full set of results is available.

Respondents:

Respondents were split relatively evenly between drug and alcohol workers (48%) and those engaged in the homelessness sector (52%)

People in crisis and reasons for misuse:

1. 69% agreed that there are not 'problem drinks' rather people who have a problem with alcohol.
2. 78% agreed that the most important thing to people in crisis is their use of any substance as a coping mechanism given challenging circumstances or events in their lives.
3. 69% agreed that people who seriously misuse alcohol misuse cheap alcohol for economic reasons - for many, problems started with other forms of alcohol.
4. 76% also agreed that once these people are in crisis with serious alcohol misuse they inevitably move towards cheap/strong alcohol because it is more affordable.

Availability of substances:

1. When asked what would occur if the substance misused became more expensive/less easily available:
 - a) 55% believed misuse switches to another substance - either cheaper and/or more accessible.
 - b) 38% believed misuse continues with greater proportion of personal resources used to obtain substance, (i.e. pay more even if that means committing crime).
 - c) Only 7% believed that misuse would decline.
2. When asked whether action that affected responsible consumers, retailers and producers was 'a price worth paying' the response was:
 - a) 49% agreed
 - b) 27% disagreed
 - c) 19% were neutral.
3. 68% disagreed that if retailers stopped selling high strength beer, lager and cider, those with serious alcohol misuse issues would consume fewer units of alcohol or stop drinking all together.
4. When considering whole-population measures, 57% agreed that legislation had a negligible impact on levels of misuse.

Substance misuse and public policy considerations of relevant frontline professionals

Measures/legislation to reduce harm:

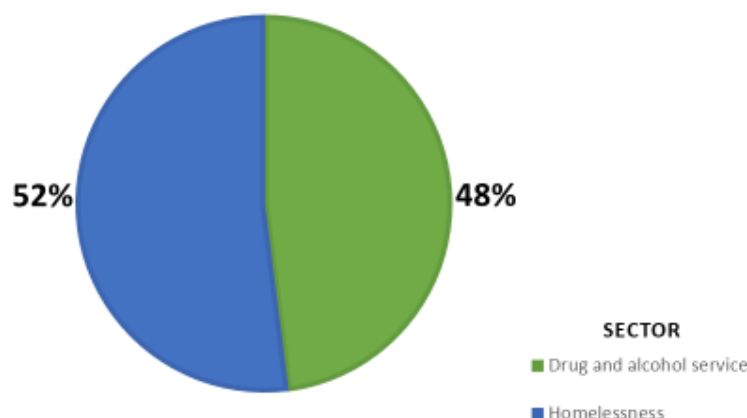
1. 83% agreed that the reasons people seriously misuse substances are complex and the focus on one or two policies that target specific substances will not address the problem successfully.
2. 50% agreed that a focus on a policy that targets specific substances at the expense of a broader based approach will be less effective at tackling misuse.
3. 69% agreed that policy on drug and alcohol misuse should only ever be evidence based and 66% agreed that it should be devoid of Party politics.
4. When asked what measures would be the most effective in tackling substance misuse:
 - a. 81% of respondents believed that direct work with people in crisis was vital.
 - b. 72% identified improved education/early intervention for those who have started to use substances at a troubling level.
 - c. 43% wanted a more coherent approach involving retailers, law enforcement and relevant professionals.
 - d. Only 10% believed that an introduction of whole-population measures such as MUP would reduce the harm of people in crisis.

Full results of survey

Frontline professionals

onepoll.

What sector are you most directly involved in?



2

Substances misused

onepoll.

What substances are typically being misused by the people that you support in your line of work?

(All substances considered relevant selected)

Choice	%
Cider (cheap/high strength)	82%
Heroin	80%
Spirits (cheap)	72%
Prescription drugs	71%
Psychoactive substances, previously termed legal highs	68%
Lager (cheap/high strength)	66%
Other substance(s)	63%
Crack cocaine	58%
Wine	43%
Lager (mainstream)	35%
Bitter/Beer (cheap/high strength)	34%
Spirits (premium)	32%
Lager (premium/high strength)	32%
Cider (mainstream)	31%
Fortified wine	26%
Bitter/Beer (mainstream)	25%
Cider (premium/high strength)	25%
Bitter/Beer (craft/high strength)	19%
Alcopops	14%
I don't know / I prefer not to say	2%

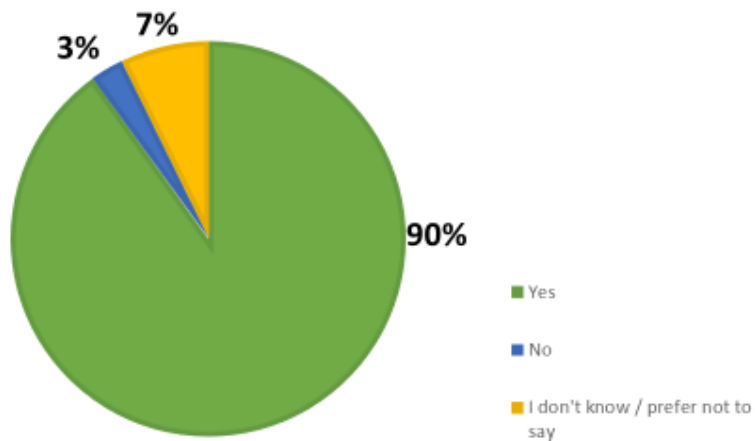
NOTE: Acknowledged by researchers that omission of cocaine was an oversight

3

Certain substances a particular issue?

onepoll.

Are any substances a particular issue or problem in your view for the people that you support in your line of work?



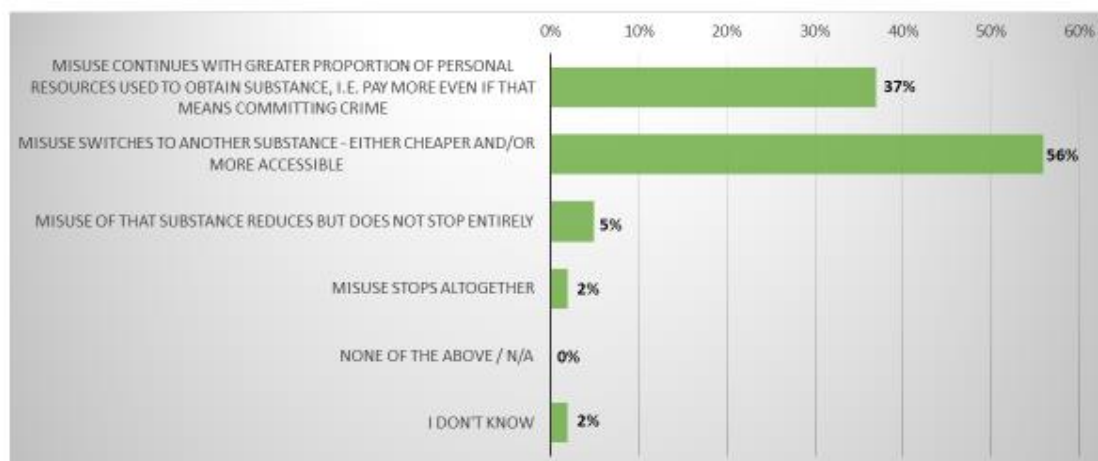
NOTE: When asked to identify substance in free text, the substances reflected those in the previous slide

4

Substance misused – impact of increasing price

onepoll.

In your experience, if one substance being misused becomes more expensive, or supply is somehow restricted, what typically happens most often from the below?

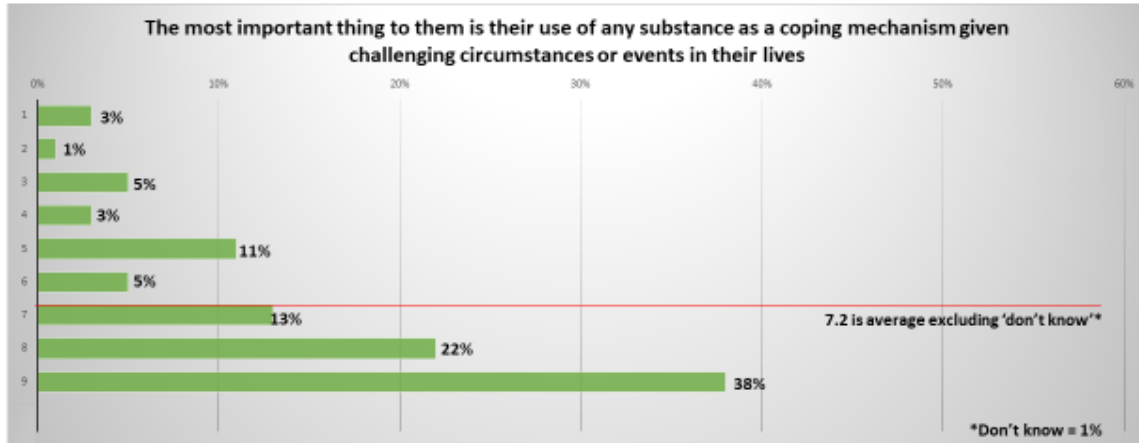


5

Importance of the substance misused

onepoll.

For people who misuse one or more substances, please select how far you agree or disagree with the following statements, where 1 = strongly disagree and 9 = strongly agree. 5 = neither agree nor disagree



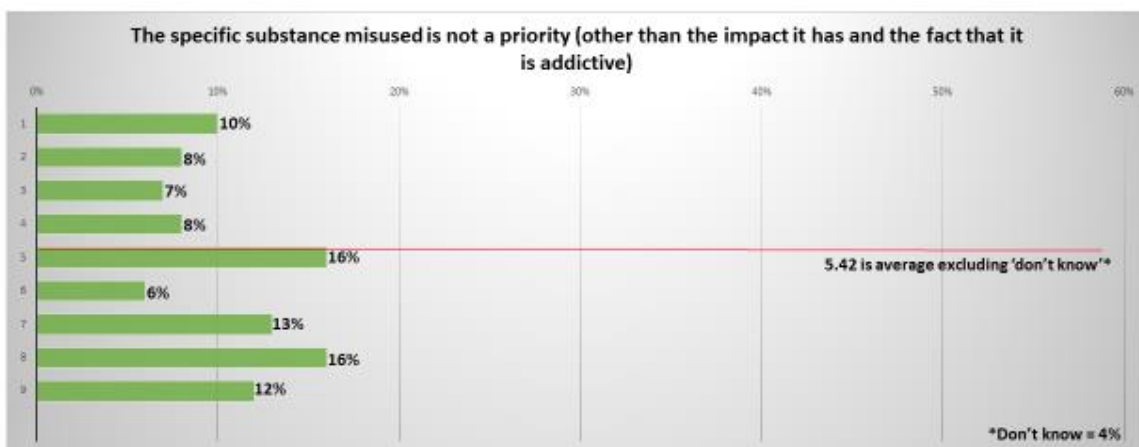
Composite result: Disagree 12%; Agree 78%; Neutral 11%

6

Specific substance misused

onepoll.

For people who misuse one or more substances, please select how far you agree or disagree with the following statements, where 1 = strongly disagree and 9 = strongly agree. 5 = neither agree nor disagree



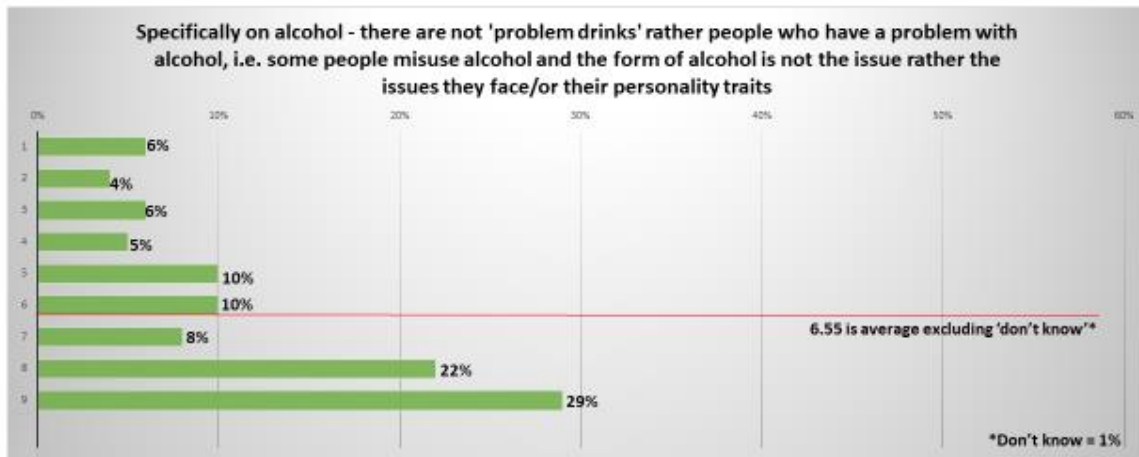
Composite result: Disagree 33%; Agree 47%; Neutral 16%

7

There are not 'problem drinks'

onepoll.

For people who misuse one or more substances, please select how far you agree or disagree with the following statements, where 1 = strongly disagree and 9 = strongly agree. 5 = neither agree nor disagree

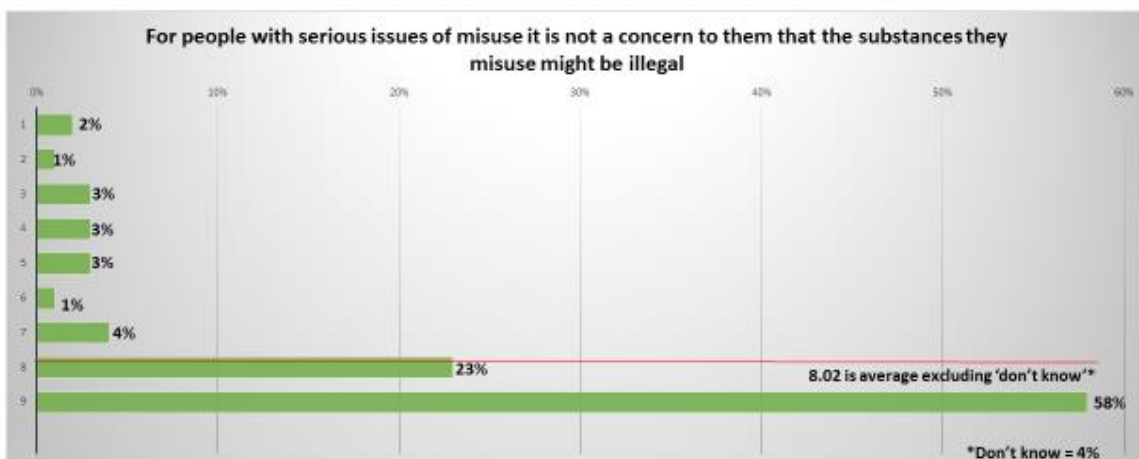


Composite result: Disagree 21%; Agree 69%; Neutral 10%

Legality not an issue

onepoll.

For people who misuse one or more substances, please select how far you agree or disagree with the following statements, where 1 = strongly disagree and 9 = strongly agree. 5 = neither agree nor disagree

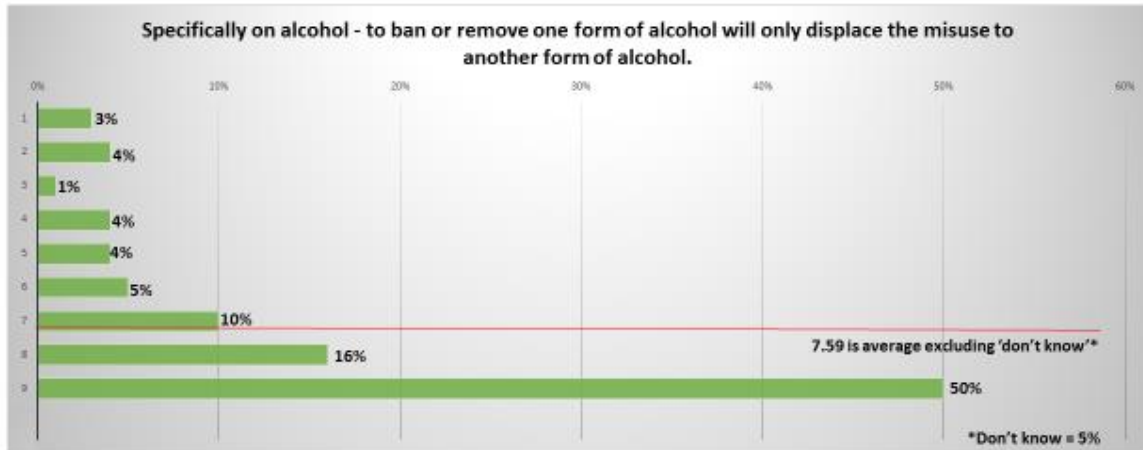


Composite result: Disagree 9%; Agree 86%; Neutral 3%

Bans only disperse misuse

onepoll.

For people who misuse one or more substances, please select how far you agree or disagree with the following statements, where 1 = strongly disagree and 9 = strongly agree. 5 = neither agree nor disagree



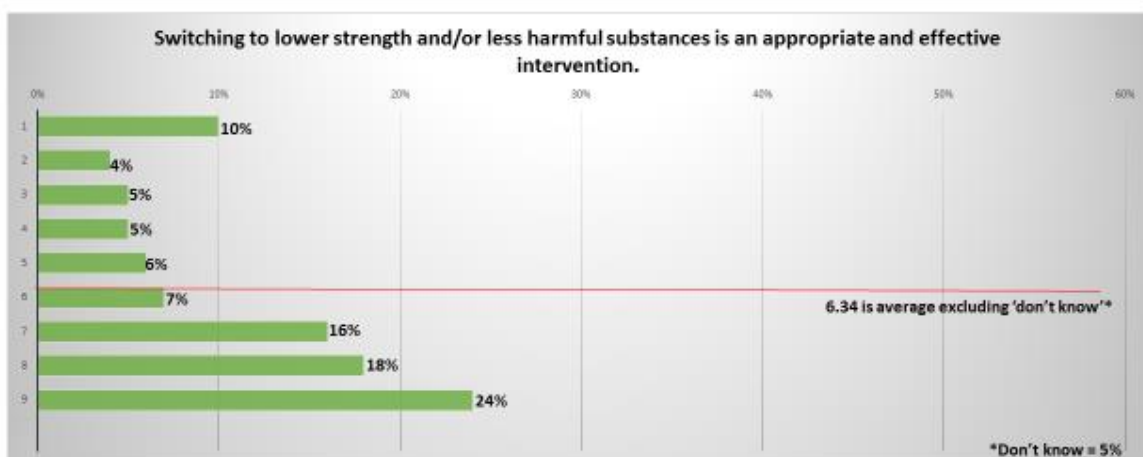
Composite result: Disagree 12%; Agree 81%; Neutral 4%

10

Switching to lower strength

onepoll.

For people who misuse one or more substances, please select how far you agree or disagree with the following statements, where 1 = strongly disagree and 9 = strongly agree. 5 = neither agree nor disagree



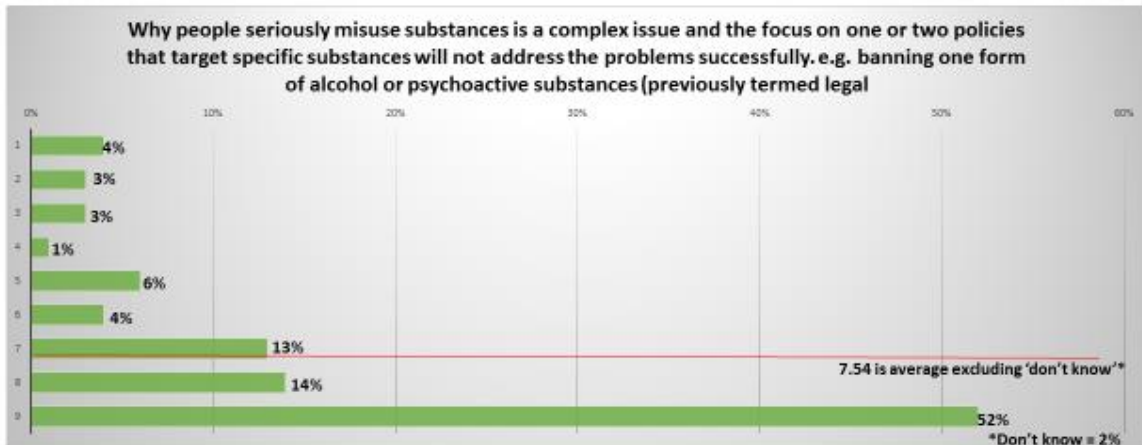
Composite result: Disagree 24%; Agree 65%; Neutral 6%

11

Reasons for misuse are complex

onepoll.

For people who misuse one or more substances, please select how far you agree or disagree with the following statements, where 1 = strongly disagree and 9 = strongly agree. 5 = neither agree nor disagree



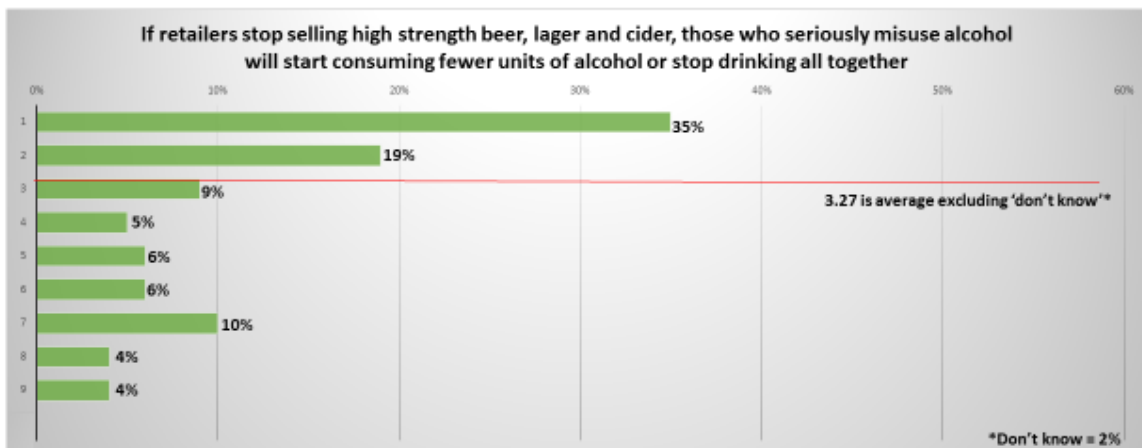
Composite result: Disagree 11%; Agree 83%; Neutral 6%

12

When retailers stop selling 'high strength'

onepoll.

For people who misuse one or more substances, please select how far you agree or disagree with the following statements, where 1 = strongly disagree and 9 = strongly agree. 5 = neither agree nor disagree



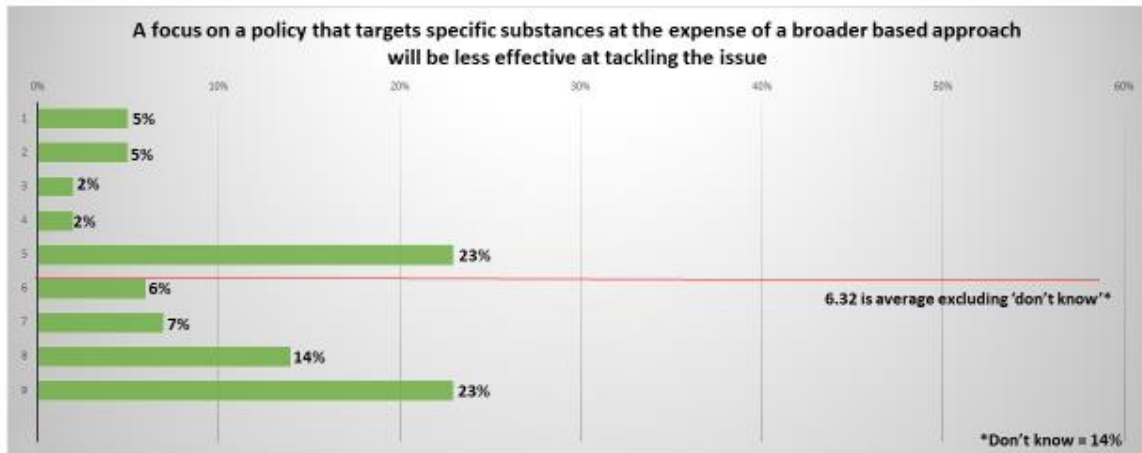
Composite result: Disagree 68%; Agree 24%; Neutral 6%

13

Specific substance policies or a broader based approach

onepoll.

For people who misuse one or more substances, please select how far you agree or disagree with the following statements, where 1 = strongly disagree and 9 = strongly agree. 5 = neither agree nor disagree



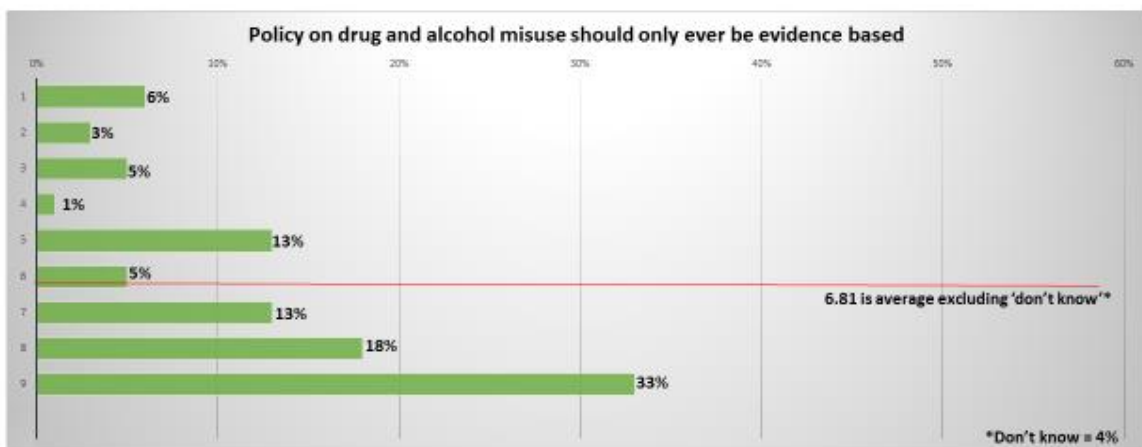
Composite result: Disagree 14%; Agree 50%; Neutral 23%

14

Policy should only ever be evidence based

onepoll.

For people who misuse one or more substances, please select how far you agree or disagree with the following statements, where 1 = strongly disagree and 9 = strongly agree. 5 = neither agree nor disagree



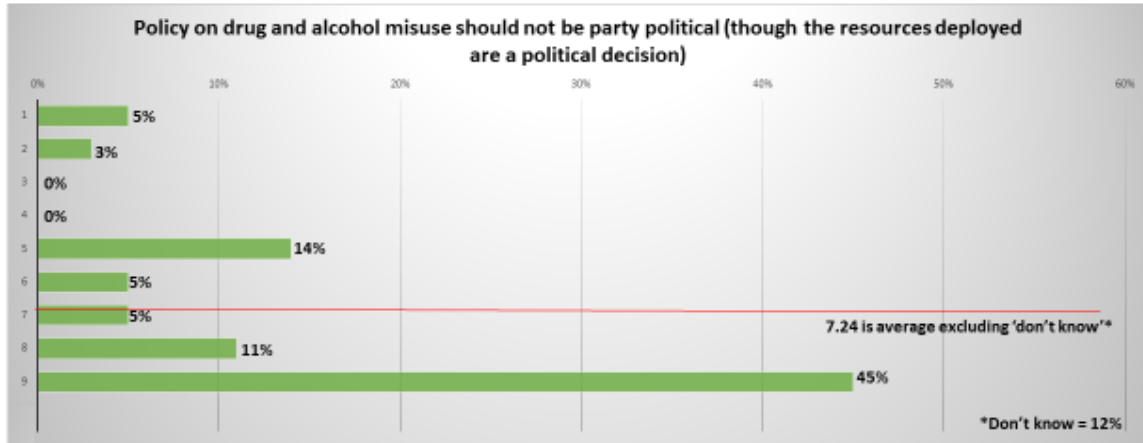
Composite result: Disagree 15%; Agree 69%; Neutral 13%

15

Policy should not be party political

onepoll.

For people who misuse one or more substances, please select how far you agree or disagree with the following statements, where 1 = strongly disagree and 9 = strongly agree. 5 = neither agree nor disagree



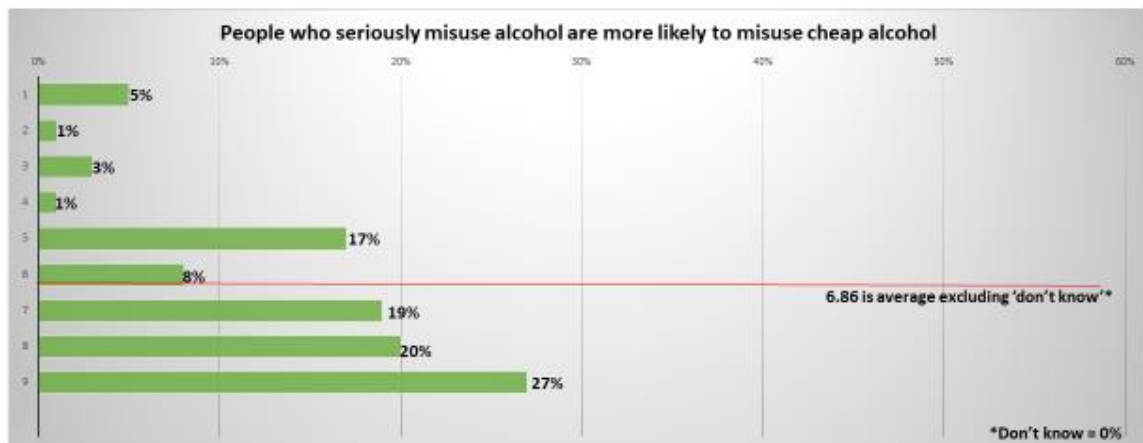
Composite result: Disagree 8%; Agree 66%; Neutral 14%

16

Misuse is more likely with cheap alcohol

onepoll.

For people who misuse one or more substances, please select how far you agree or disagree with the following statements, where 1 = strongly disagree and 9 = strongly agree. 5 = neither agree nor disagree



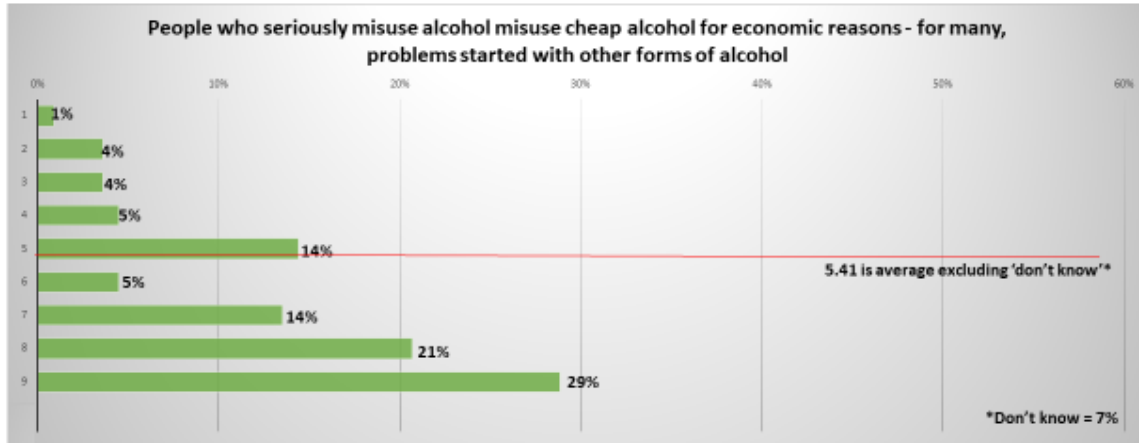
Composite result: Disagree 10%; Agree 74%; Neutral 17%

17

Misuse may start with substances other than cheap alcohol

onepoll.

For people who misuse one or more substances, please select how far you agree or disagree with the following statements, where 1 = strongly disagree and 9 = strongly agree. 5 = neither agree nor disagree



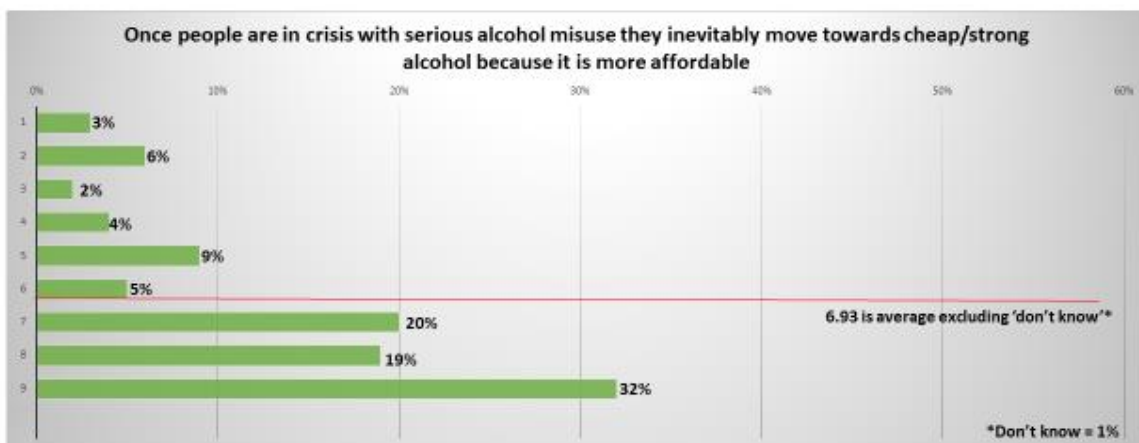
Composite result: Disagree 14%; Agree 69%; Neutral 14%

18

Decision to move to cheap/strong alcohol is economic

onepoll.

For people who misuse one or more substances, please select how far you agree or disagree with the following statements, where 1 = strongly disagree and 9 = strongly agree. 5 = neither agree nor disagree



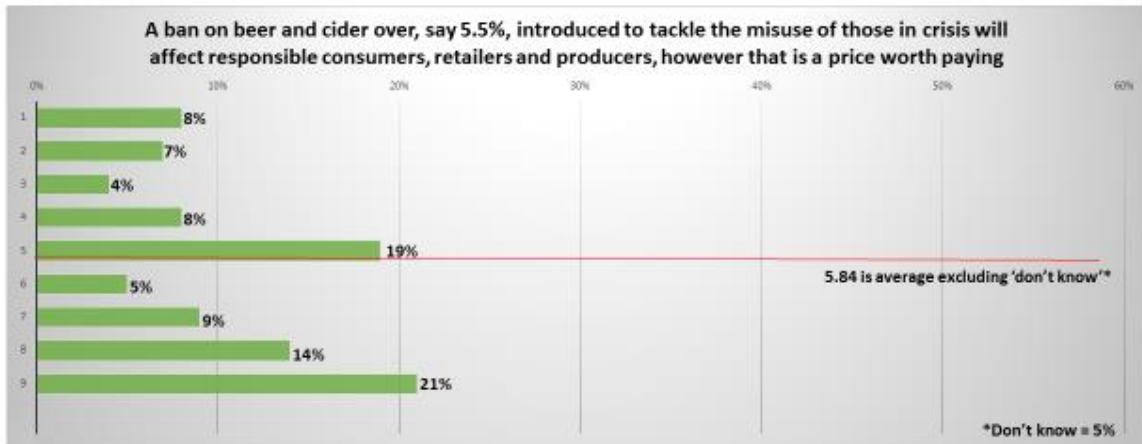
Composite result: Disagree 15%; Agree 76%; Neutral 9%

19

A price worth paying?

onepoll.

For people who misuse one or more substances, please select how far you agree or disagree with the following statements, where 1 = strongly disagree and 9 = strongly agree. 5 = neither agree nor disagree



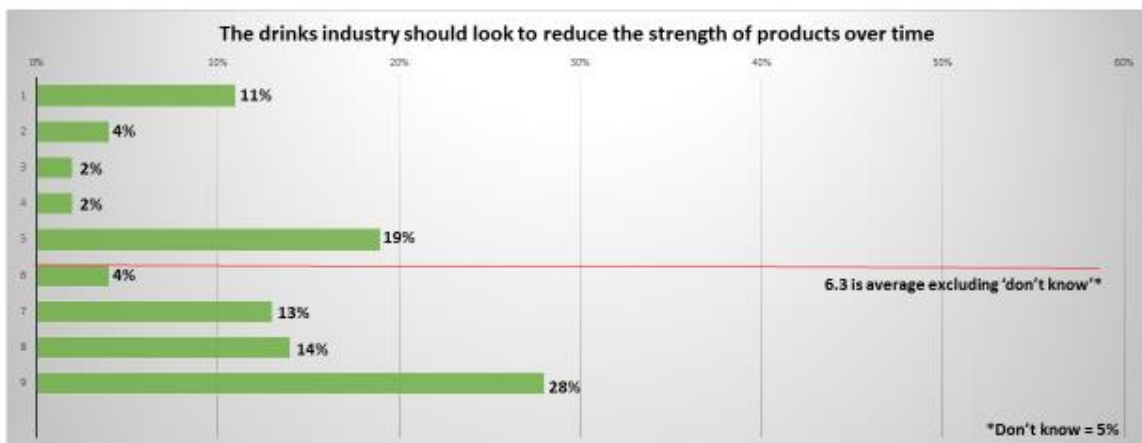
Composite result: Disagree 27%; Agree 49%; Neutral 19%

20

Industry should work to reduce strength

onepoll.

For people who misuse one or more substances, please select how far you agree or disagree with the following statements, where 1 = strongly disagree and 9 = strongly agree. 5 = neither agree nor disagree



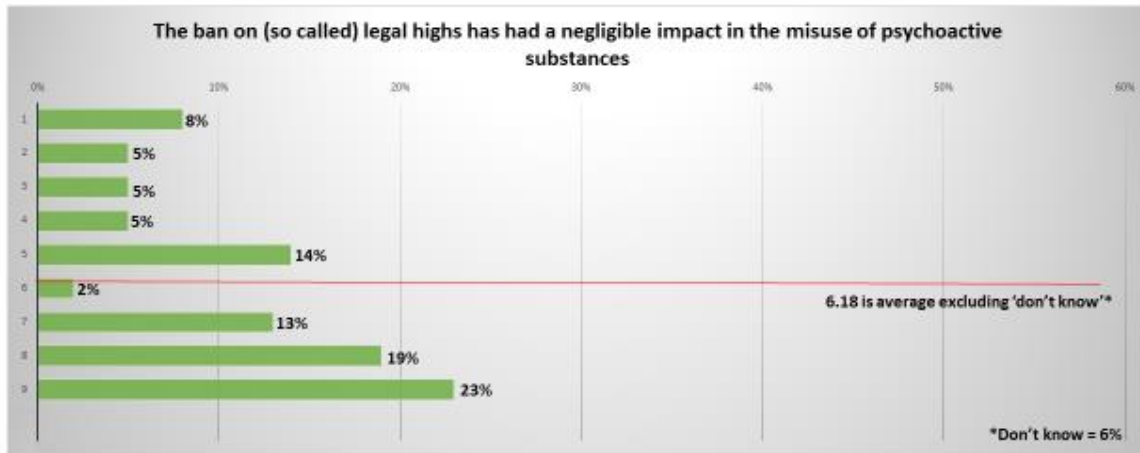
Composite result: Disagree 19%; Agree 59%; Neutral 19%

21

Ban on (so called) legal highs ineffective

onepoll.

For people who misuse one or more substances, please select how far you agree or disagree with the following statements, where 1 = strongly disagree and 9 = strongly agree. 5 = neither agree nor disagree



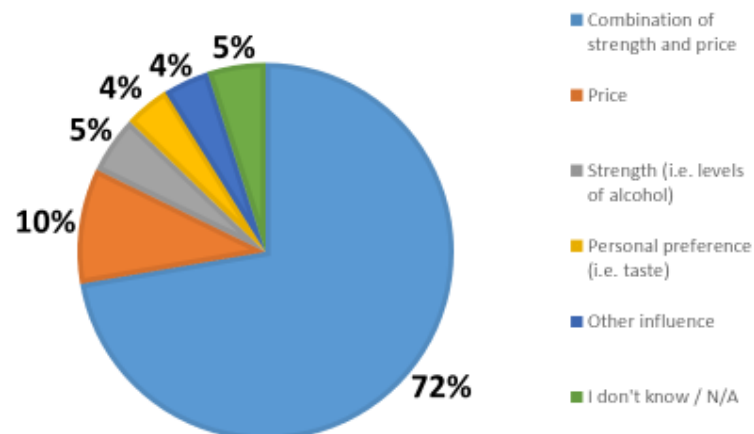
Composite result: Disagree 23%; Agree 57%; Neutral 14%

22

Rationale for choices

onepoll.

For people who seriously misuse alcohol, is their choice of alcohol primarily based on...?



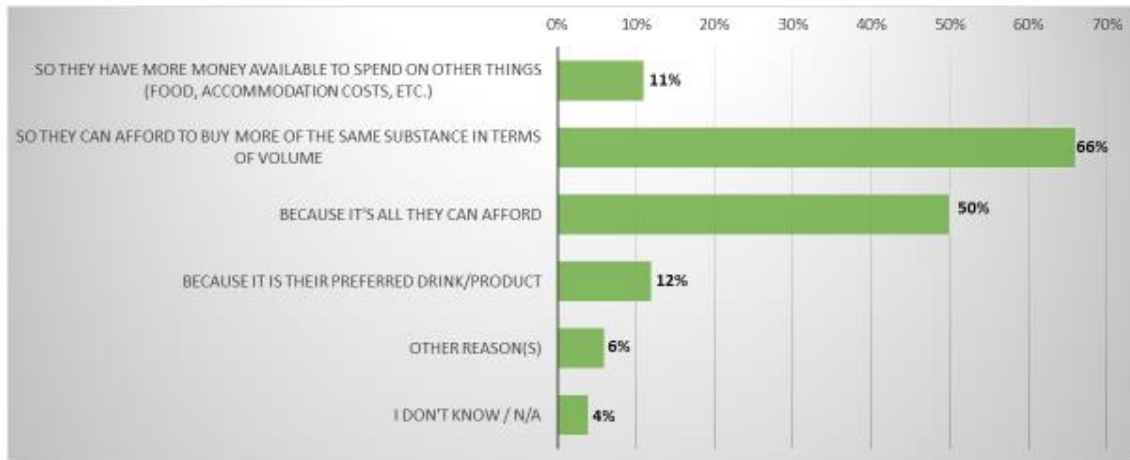
23

Reasons cheap alcohol is misused

onepoll.

If people are misusing cheap alcohol is it...?

(All options considered relevant selected)



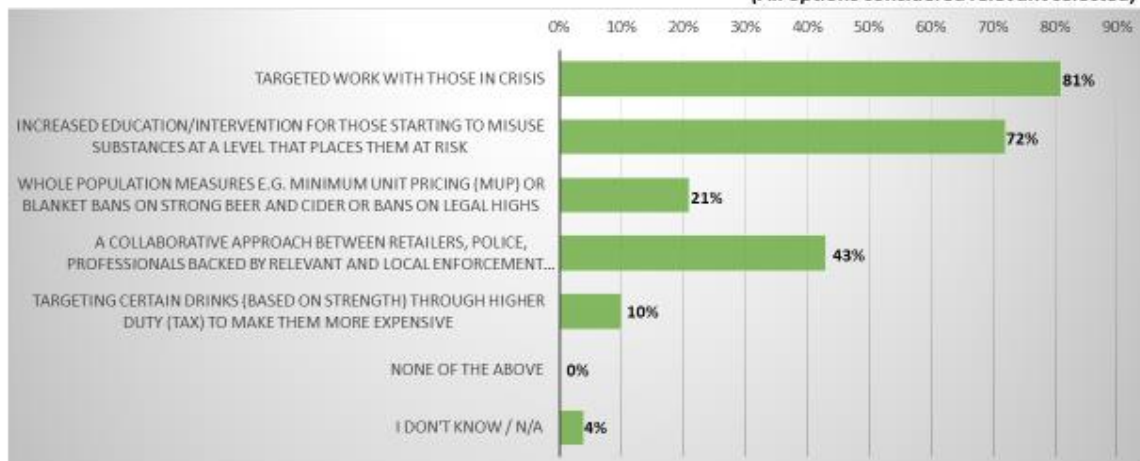
24

Most effective approaches?

onepoll.

In terms of approach, which do you think are the most effective from the below?

(All options considered relevant selected)



25

Additional comments made

Of the 18 respondents who left further comments, two agreed that MUP would help reduce harm to people in crisis.

Another pointed to the incredible complexity of the issue and felt that the questions had not managed to reflect this in an entirely effective way.

The other 15 respondents reinforced the results of the survey, highlighting the vital need for services to support people in crisis and to avoid targeting substances.

A representative selection of their comments:

"I believe that fewer people will be having issues with substances if they have access to fast and free therapeutic therapy such as counselling and psychotherapy."

"It would be against the liberty of the population as a whole to decide to ban 'x' alcohol or to ban a beverage at 'y' units. Likewise, it is against the liberty of those people suffering addiction to treat them as offenders or as if they have no awareness about their consumption."

"Provided we are discussing consenting adults that operate within the law, any blanket restriction is against the principles upon which society is built. Where there is a person in crisis, intervention should be offered for economic and moral reasons."

"There is a glaring lack of insight into mental health issues and dual diagnosis in this research; there is always a reason why people drink to excess, and - in my experience - it's never the taste."

"The media portray alcohol use as negative i.e. soap operas, often show main characters in crisis, 'turning to drink'. Until alcohol is accepted by society as a part of family life (with positive connotations) then it will continue to wreck lives."

"If we banned all alcohol, the street drinkers would go back to meths and the alcohol hand wash in hospitals. They pool their resources to buy the highest possible strength alcohol to get the best result for them all; they drink to numb how they feel, no other reason. They are often in denial about their own drinking, so have no critical attitude towards alcohol other than its power to render them senseless."

"The only permanent solution is therapy for the drinkers, but this takes high resource input and a great deal of time."

"Alcohol needs to be increased in price as there are no other drugs that are that cheap and easy to buy that give such a hit."