

Young peoples opinions on alcohol and other drugs issues

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Abstract

Background Research has largely focused on young peoples alcohol and drug use. However, the investigation of young peoples opinions and ideas about policies, programs and control measures aimed at reducing the harms caused by alcohol and other drugs has, to date, been limited. As in all policy areas, sufficient consultation with the relevant stakeholders is an important part of the process of effective policy making. The voices of young people are thus critical in helping to develop successful responses to alcohol and other drug issues in Australia. Aim This research was commissioned by the Australian National Council on Drugs (ANCD) in recognition of the limited examination to date of young peoples opinions about alcohol and other drugs. The aim of the study was to describe and better understand young peoples ideas on alcohol and other drugs issues. A survey was designed which aimed to elicit opinions about a comprehensive and large array of policies, programs and control measures. This included prevention measures such as drug education in schools and mass media campaigns; alcohol regulation including alcohol pricing, monitoring of licensed premises, and restrictions on late night trading; law enforcement activities such as police presence and drug detection (sniffer) dogs; treatment services including withdrawal, residential rehabilitation and pharmacotherapies; and harm reduction activities such as pill-testing services and needle and syringe programs. The survey design also allowed young people to generate their own suggestions about how to respond to alcohol and drug issues in their communities. Sample The survey was administered via the internet and young Australians aged between 16 and 25 years were eligible to participate anonymously. The views of 2335 young people were included in the final analyses. The sample included young people from all Australian states and territories, and 62 per cent of the sample was male. Eighty-one per cent had completed Year 12, and the sample was highly experienced in terms of alcohol and other drug use. The majority of young people who completed the survey reported having consumed alcohol at least once in their lifetime (95.1%). A substantial proportion of participants also reported having consumed illicit drugs including cannabis (71.9%), ecstasy (47.7%) and hallucinogens (41.3%).

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