

Poll results: Carbohydrate and sugar claims on alcohol products

August 2023

Objective

Two questions were placed in an online omnibus survey to assess Australians' perceptions of carbohydrate and sugar claims on alcohol products, and the potential impact of the claims on people's alcohol use. Respondents were shown images of three alcoholic ciders – standard, low carb, and low sugar – and asked to rate the 'healthiness' of each product from unhealthy to very healthy. They were then asked how low carb and low sugar messages on the label of an alcoholic drink would impact on the number of drinks they would have.

Sample

The nationally representative sample of 1,000 Australian adults aged 18 years and over were surveyed via an online omnibus survey (conducted by panel provider Pureprofile) on 27 and 28 August 2023. The data analysis was completed by the Food Policy team at The George Institute for Global Health.

Key findings

- Carbohydrate and sugar claims on alcohol products create a 'health halo' and mislead Australians about the 'healthiness' of alcohol:
 - Around one-third of people rated the cider products with low carb and low sugar claims as healthier than the identical cider product with no claim.
 - The proportion of people who understood that alcohol is unhealthy fell from 48% to 40% when a low carb claim was added, and to 37% when a low sugar claim was added.
- There is the potential for low sugar claims to lead to increased alcohol use. One in five people reported that if they saw a low sugar claim on an alcoholic drink, they would drink more of that product.

Note: These findings are likely to be conservative as they relate to the general adult population, including non-drinkers; and the images depicted subdued carbohydrate and sugar claims.