Public Support and Political Concerns Around Alcohol Policy Interventions in Scotland and England

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Overview

1. The UK policy context

2. International Alcohol Control Study in Scotland and England (the APISE project)

3. New analyses of minimum unit pricing using the Sheffield Alcohol Policy Model

4. Conclusion

England Background

- 2004: Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy for England
- 2007: Safe. Sensible. Social.
  - 2008: Changes to alcohol taxation
  - 2010: Mandatory code for alcohol retailers
- 2011: Public Health Responsibility Deals

HM Government's Alcohol Strategy 2012

- March 2012 – The Original Strategy
    - Introduce Minimum unit pricing (MUP)
    - Implement ban on below cost alcohol
    - Ban on multi-buy promotions in off-trade
    - Screening and Brief Interventions in NHS Health Checks
    - Review of the drinking guidelines
    - Introduce health as a licensing objective

- July 2013 – The Strategy after the consultation
    - Delaying MUP until government has "conclusive evidence"
    - Dropped ban on multi-buy promotions
    - Dropping public health licensing objective
    - Introducing ancillary sales licenses
    - Requirement to renew personal licenses will be abolished

- Public health approach

- 2005: Licensing Act (2005)
  - "Protecting and improving public health" added as a licensing objective

- 2010: Alcohol Act
  - Ban on quantity based discounts
  - Restrictions on location of drinks promotion (alcohol display areas)
  - Restrictions on supply of alcoholic drinks free of charge or at reduced price in off-sales

- 2012: Alcohol Minimum Pricing Act
  - Passed, but still to be implemented

APISE Survey

- AIM: Assess the impact and effectiveness of alcohol control policies in Scotland and England
  - UK arm of the International Alcohol Control Study
  - Natural experiment design allowing for between-country controls to evaluate key public health policy interventions

- METHODS: 2 wave telephone survey of a panel of 1749 drinkers from England and 1728 drinkers from Scotland

- KEY MEASURES:
  - Consumption: Quantity-frequency measure (beverage and location specific, e.g. a pint of beer once a week in pubs/bars or hotels)
  - Proximal/distal variables: perceived availability/costs, alcohol price, marketing awareness, policy attitudes

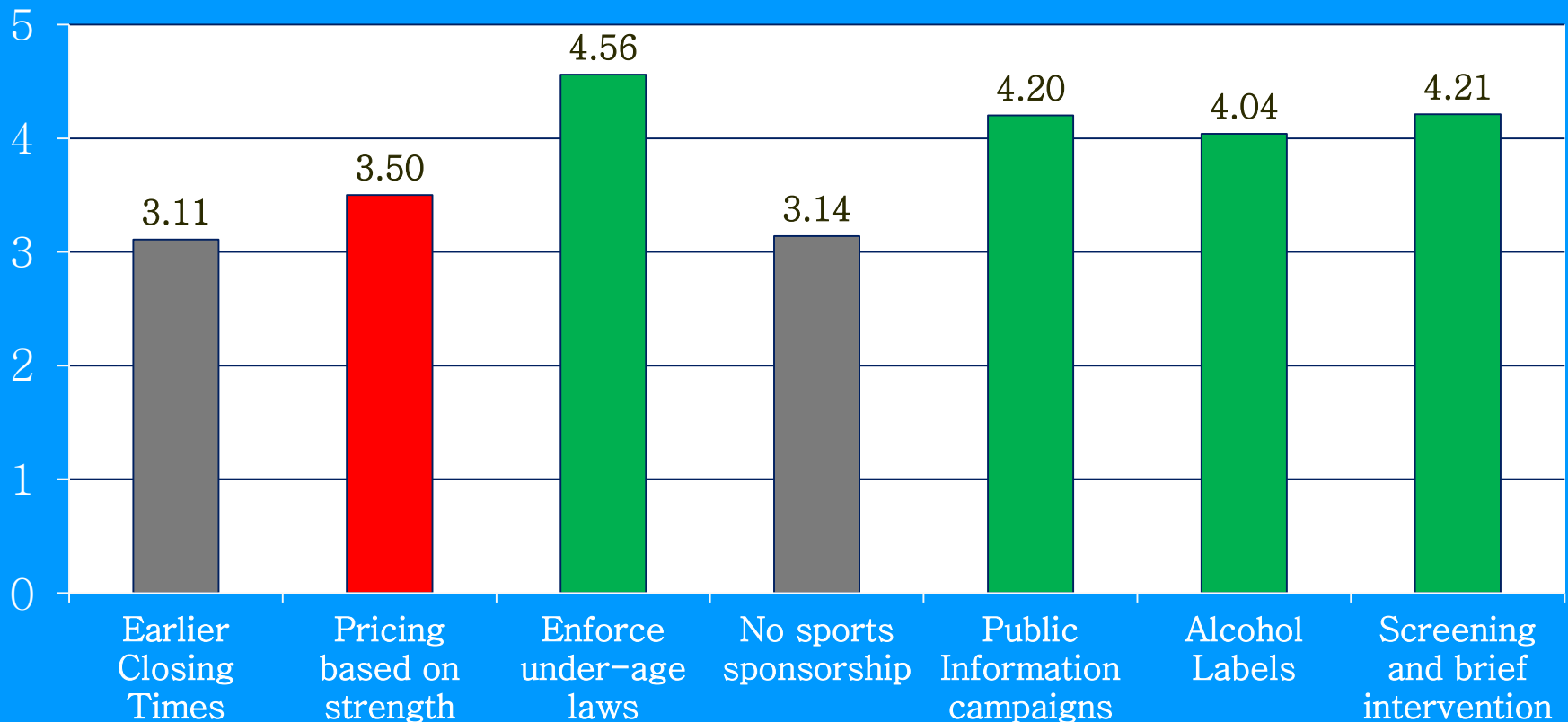|	
More treatment services to help dependent drinkers	Restrictions on number of places selling alcohol in your community
Labels on alcohol products warning of the harms from alcohol	Earlier closing times for buying alcohol from off-licenses and supermarkets
Public information campaigns to raise awareness of harms from alcohol	Pricing drinks based on alcohol strength so that the stronger a drink is the more it cost
Reducing the drink driving limit	An increase in the price of alcohol
Doctors/health professionals asking patients about their drinking habits	Greater enforcement of laws on under-age sales
More police patrolling streets when bars and nightclubs close	A complete ban on drinking on public transport
	Alcohol brands should not be allowed to sponsor sports

Public support for alcohol policies
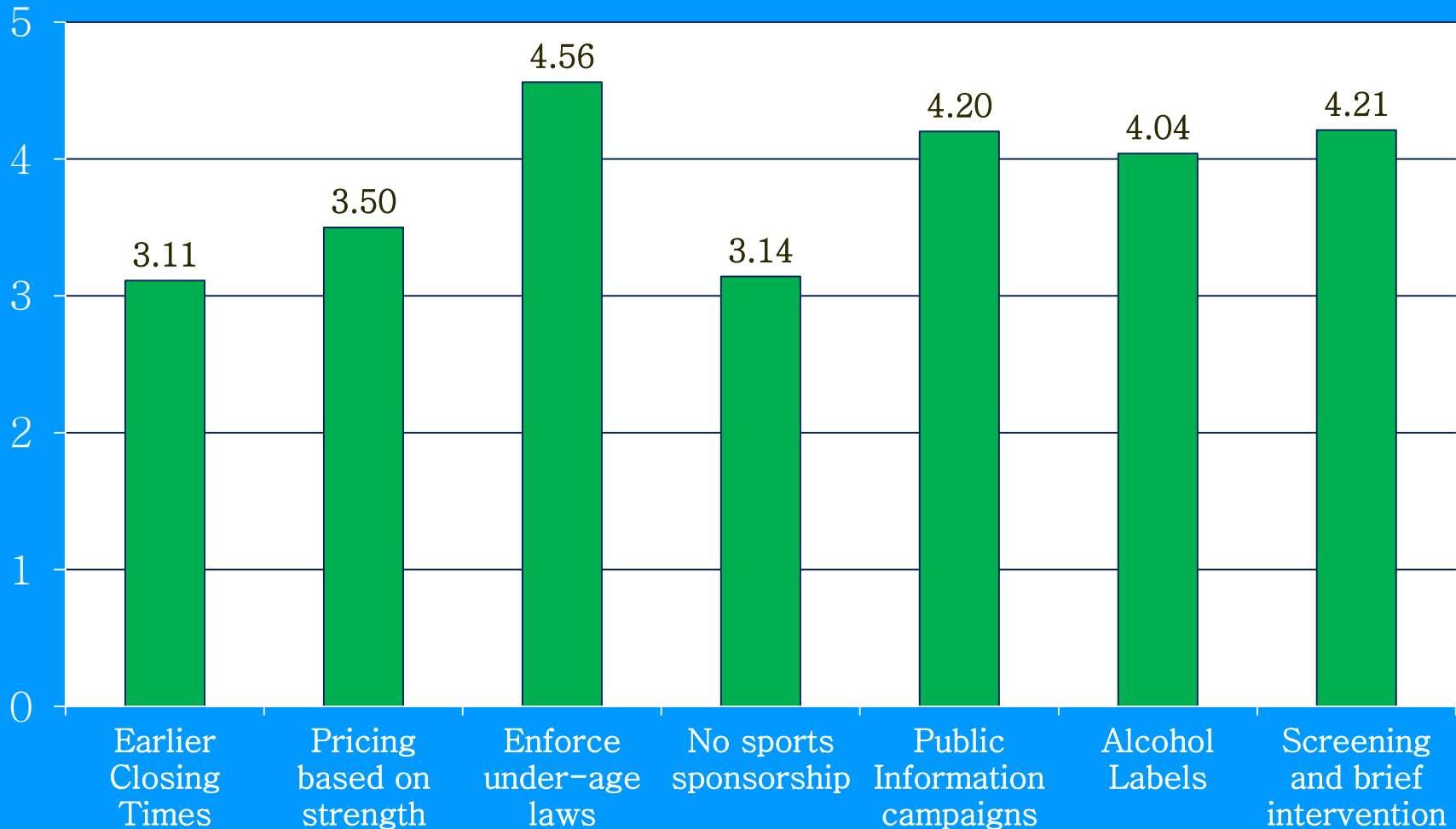
(1=Strongly oppose, 5=Strongly support)

Public support for alcohol policies

Legend: ■ In Alcohol Strategy ■ Not in Alcohol Strategy ■ Removed from Strategy after consultation

Policy	Value
Earlier Closing Times	3.11
Pricing based on strength	3.50
Enforce under-age laws	4.56
No sports sponsorship	3.14
Public Information campaigns	4.20
Alcohol Labels	4.04
Screening and brief intervention	4.21

(1=Strongly oppose, 5=Strongly support)

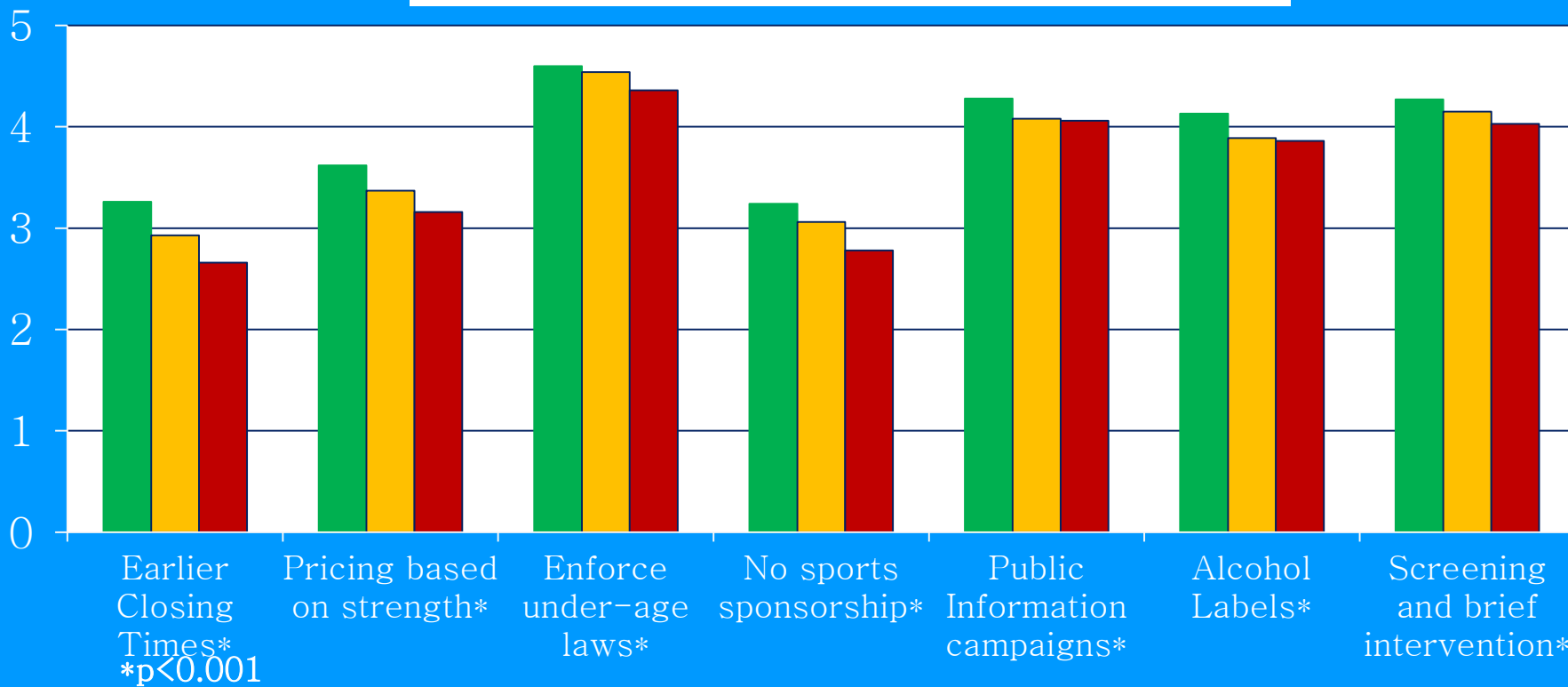# Public Opinion: Demographics
Alcohol Policies by Drinker
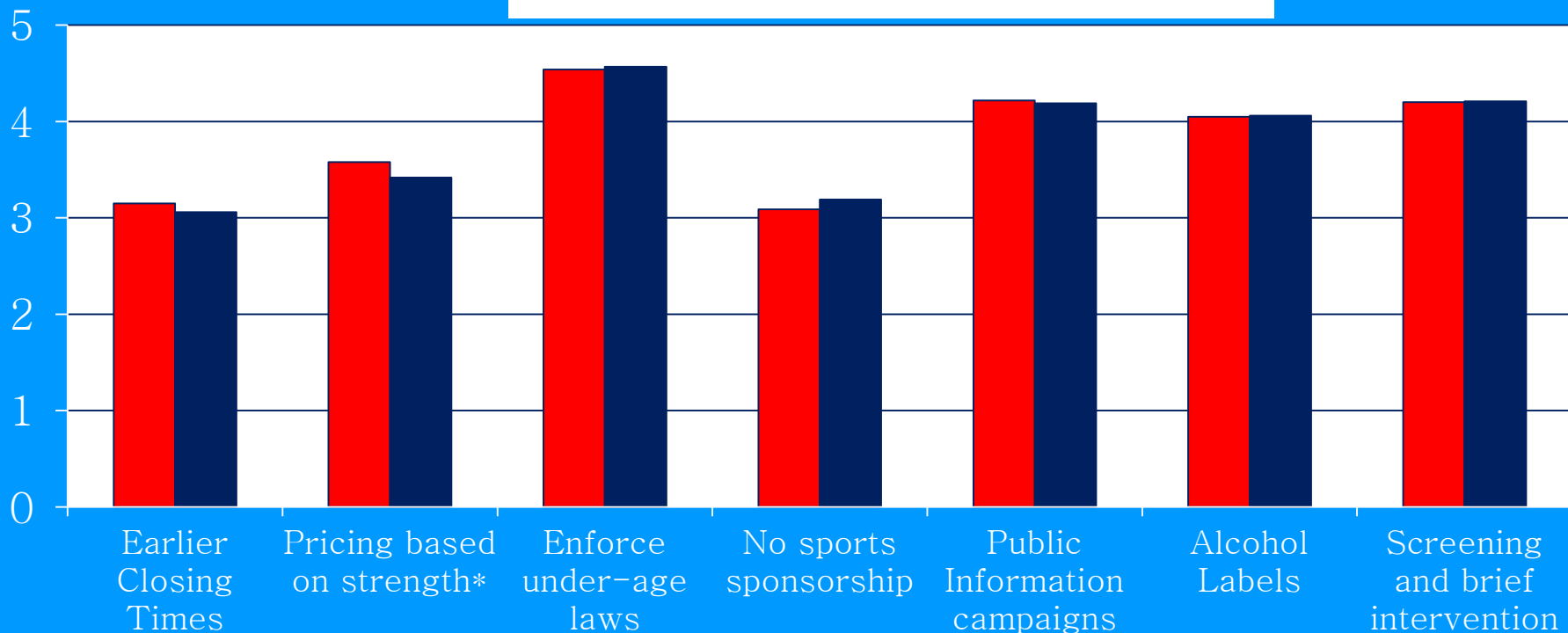(1=Strongly oppose, 5=Strongly support)

Moderate Hazardous Harmful

| | Earlier Closing Times* | Pricing based on strength* | Enforce under-age laws* | No sports sponsorship* | Public Information campaigns* | Alcohol Labels* | Screening and brief intervention* |

*p<0.001

Minimum Unit Pricing

" *We do not yet have enough concrete evidence that its introduction would be effective in reducing harms associated with problem drinking – and this is a crucial point – without penalising people who drink responsibly* "

Jeremy Browne,

Home Office Minister

Minimum Unit Pricing

"I think there are better ways of dealing with this. It's very regressive. It hits poorest people hardest." Boris Johnson, Mayor of London

1 unit = 10ml or 8g of pure ethanol

Beer (4% ABV)
1 pint ≈ 2 units

Wine (12% ABV)
175ml glass ≈ 2 units
750ml bottle ≈ 9 units

Whiskey (40% ABV)
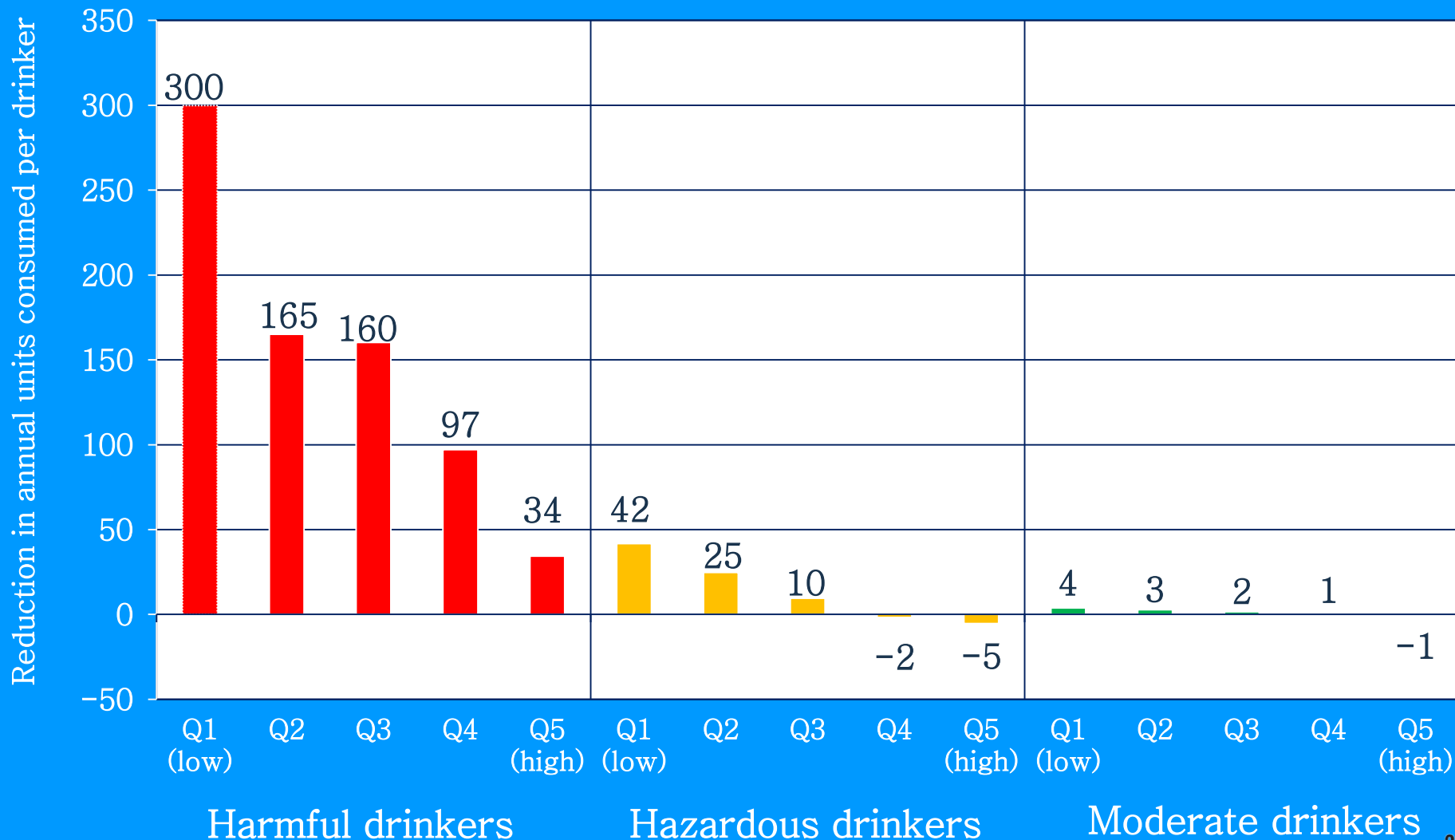25ml measure ≈ 1 unit

Drinker type	Units per week	
	Men	Women
Moderate	Less than 21	Less than 14
Hazardous	21 – 50	14 – 35
Harmful	50+	35+

Annual reduction in units consumed: 45p MUP England 2014/15

Harmful drinkers — Hazardous drinkers — Moderate drinkers

Harmful drinkers: Q1 (low) 300, Q2 165, Q3 160, Q4 97, Q5 (high) 34
Hazardous drinkers: Q1 (low) 42, Q2 25, Q3 10, Q4 −2, Q5 (high) −5
Moderate drinkers: Q1 (low) 4, Q2 3, Q3 2, Q4 1, Q5 (high) −1

Reduction in annual units consumed per drinker

Q = income quintile based on household income adjusted for family size and composition
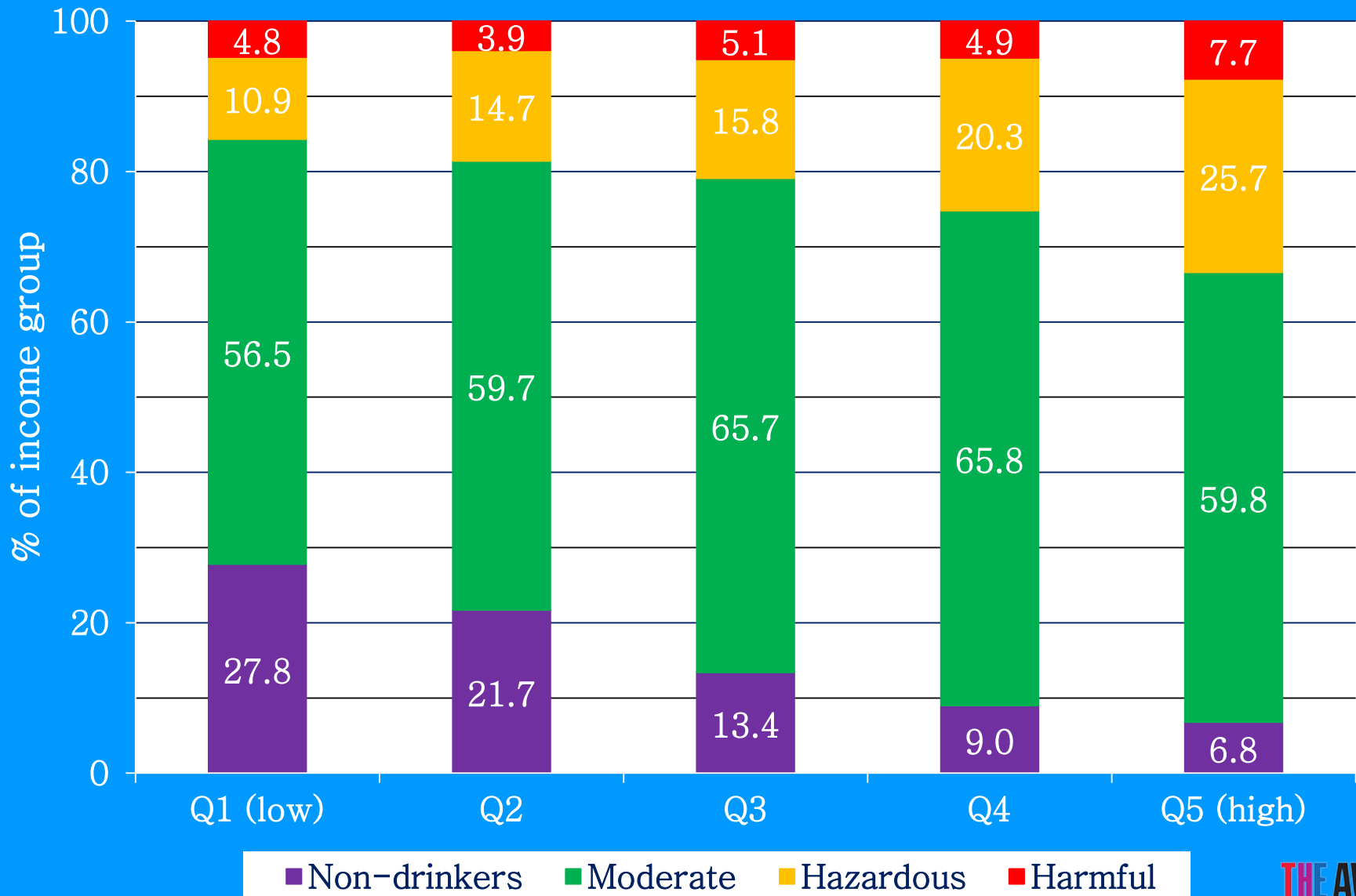
Estimated mortality rate reduction: 45p MUP England 2014/15
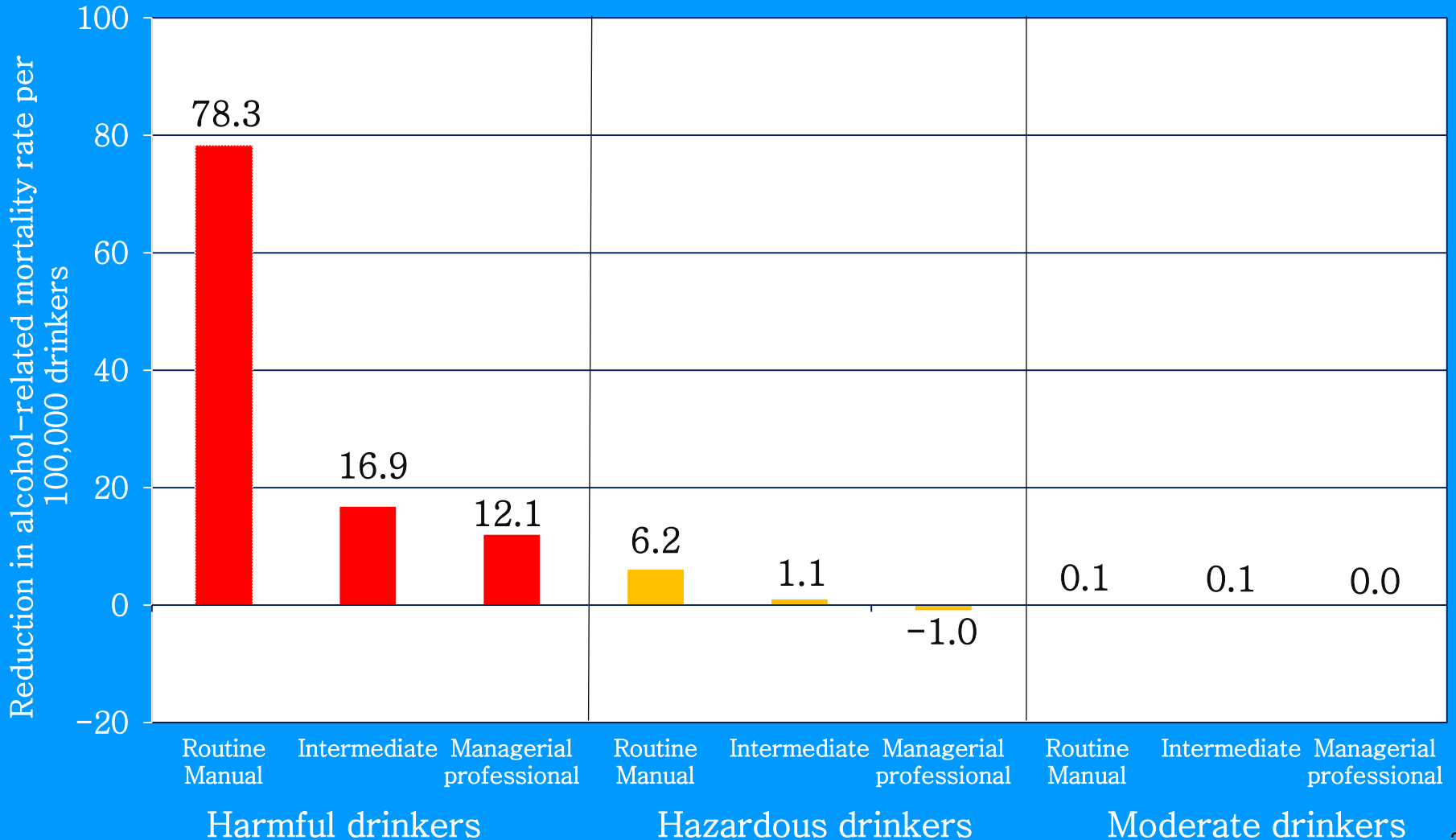
Consumption distribution by income group

Conclusions

- England and Scotland have followed very different approaches to alcohol policy

- Effective policies don't enjoy public support so Government decisions may be rational from a *political* perspective

- Arguments made to support those decisions should be evidence-based:
  - In the case of MUP – they aren't!