

# How palatable are government actions to reduce consumption of sugary drinks in Singapore?

Tan Jing Yuan<sup>1</sup>, Ong Siong Gim<sup>1</sup>, Teng Albert<sup>1</sup>, Ng Benedict<sup>1</sup>, Jiali Yao<sup>2</sup>, Luo Nan<sup>2</sup>, Salome A. Rebello<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, National University of Singapore, Singapore

<sup>2</sup> Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health, National University of Singapore, Singapore

## Introduction

- Developing effective policies to moderate the consumption of sweetened beverages (SSB) for Asia is critical to curb the rise of cardio-metabolic diseases in this region.
- Public support is an important determinant of policy implementation
- Consumer participation in policy design can provide complementary viewpoints and promote transparency
- Understanding public's support for, and opinions towards SSB policies is crucial to prioritize policy actions and to craft policy communications that effectively acknowledges and allays legitimate public concerns

## Methods



- Cross-sectional survey in 754 Singapore adults in 2017
- Participants were recruited from housing development board estates



Survey questions included:

- Perceptions about stakeholders responsible for solving obesity
- Opinions towards 10 hypothetical policy scenarios to reduce sugary drink consumption



- Univariate logistic analyses to examine demographic and attitudinal determinants of policy support
- Thematic analysis to examine open-ended responses about policies

## Results and Discussion

### Sample characteristics

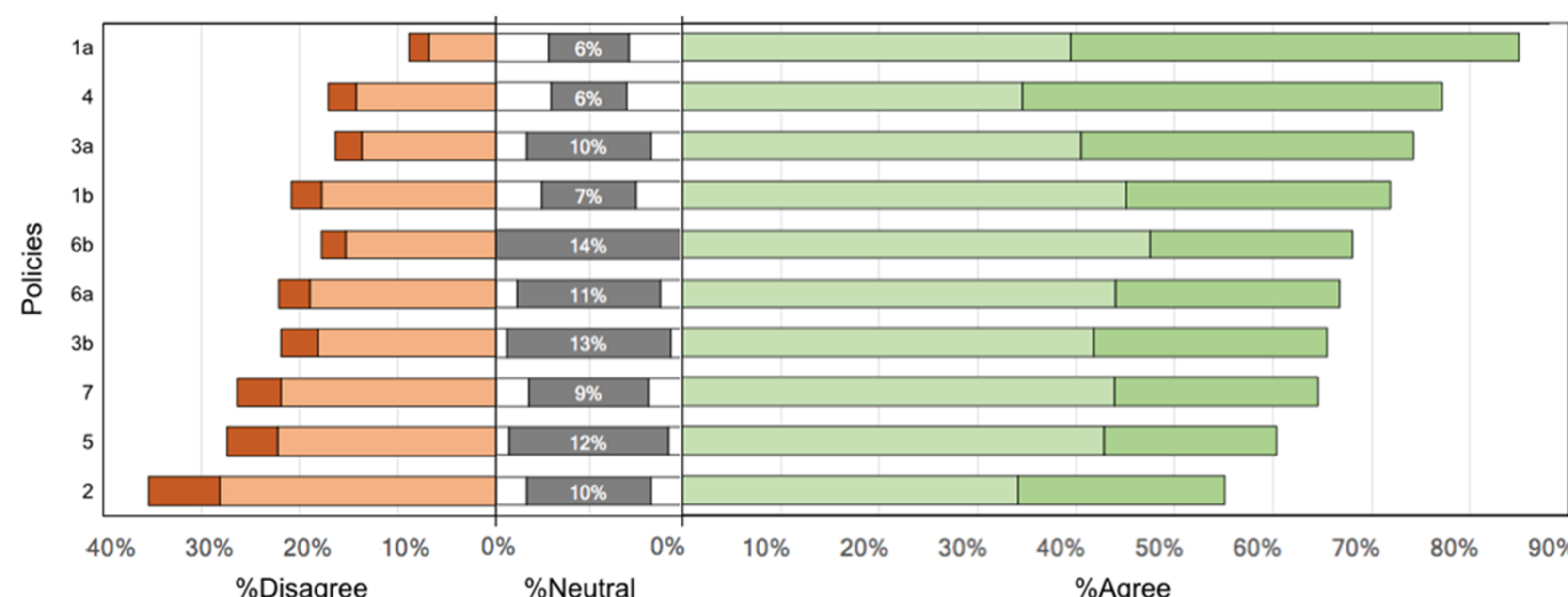
- Response rate: 44%
- Chinese : 78.4%
- Women : 58.6%
- Mean age (SD): 51.7 years (17.6)

### Knowledge and attitudes

- Majority perceived SSBs as causing health problems (88.6%)
- Many had good knowledge about diabetes (68.6%)

### Good support for most policies

- Majority (92.3%) supportive of at least 4 policies
- Stronger support for less restrictive policies
- Policy support was comparable across age, ethnicities, education, income, BMI categories, exercise categories and consumption level of SSBs
- Perceiving the family as an important stakeholder in solving obesity, and good diabetes knowledge were positive determinants of support for restrictive policies



- 1a SSB traffic light labels
- 1b SSB health warning labels
- 2 SSB tax
- 3a Prohibiting sales of SSB in government institutions
- 3b Prohibiting sales of SSB around schools
- 4 Increasing accessibility to water in hawker centres
- 5 Decreasing visibility of SSB by hawkers
- 6a Warning labels included in TV advertisements
- 6b SSB advertisement restriction around schools
- 7 SSB portion size restriction

Figure 1: Distribution of support for policies . Grey bars denote percentage of subjects who neither agree nor disagree with the policy. Dark and light green bars denote level of agreements with the policies while dark and light red bars denote level of disagreement with the policies.



- Open comment were provided by 394 (52%) participants
- Four themes identified: policy effectiveness, policy ineffectiveness, policy implementation and concerns



- Comments suggested perceived tensions around ideas of policy effectiveness, personal choice and economic interests

## Implications

Singaporean adults recognize the harmful effects of excessive SSB consumption and are supportive of government actions to limit their intake.

Public health communications that frame lack of healthier options as restricting personal choices and that emphasize the economic costs of the adverse health effects of excessive SSB intake may help balance perspectives around policies that are restrictive yet viewed as effective



Connect at: [ephsar@nus.edu.sg](mailto:ephsar@nus.edu.sg)

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