

# Warning labels might curb binge drinking in high-risk youth

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Warning labels may help curb binge drinking of "alcopops" or pre-mixed alcoholic drinks by high-risk young Australians, according to new research at The University of Western Australia.

Assistant Professor Wade Jarvis and Professor Simone Pettigrew, from the UWA Business School, examined the impact of brand, alcohol content, and warning statements on the pre-mixed alcoholic drink purchase choices of people aged 18 to 25 years old.

They found that, over time, alcohol warning statements could influence [buying habits](#).

"In the 2007 National Drug Strategy Household Survey, around 40 per cent of 14-19-year-olds and 60 per cent of 20-29-year-olds reported consuming alcohol at risky or high-risk levels at least once in the previous 12 months," Assistant Professor Jarvis said.

"Our study found that messages on drink labels can influence buying behaviour - but the impact varies."

The UWA study's 300 participants were each asked to make a series of decisions around their preferences for different alcoholic drinks. Each choice required participants to choose between various combinations of brands, alcohol content levels and warning statements.

Researchers used the results to divide responses into five clear classes, or

groups, each with certain preferences around brands, [alcohol content](#) levels and alcohol warning statements.

One clear trend was the deterrent effect of negatively framed messages around health.

"Given recent discussion about using positive statements to influence youth, our results actually showed negative messages worked better, particularly for three groups of heavier drinkers," Assistant Professor Jarvis said.

"We also found that moderate drinkers saw any statement positively, an important result because it suggests that warning statements can reinforce moderate behaviour.

"However, some warnings had unintended results with heavier-drinking females who used positive messages such as "make sure you're okay to drive" to reinforce riskier behaviour.

"This may be because if the context is not relevant, (eg: I'm not driving tonight) females may overcompensate by choosing higher-alcohol drinks.

"However, negative warnings about health consequences mostly had the desired outcome for both heavier drinkers and [moderate drinkers](#)." "The relative influence of [alcohol warning](#) statement type on young drinkers' stated choices", by Assistant Professor Wade Jarvis and Professor Simone Pettigrew, is published in the journal *Food Quality and Preference*.

**More information:** [www.sciencedirect.com/science/.../S095032931200167X](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/.../S095032931200167X)

Provided by University of Western Australia

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