

Broad support for alcohol pregnancy warning labels

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A new study examining the levels of support of various alcohol control policies across seven countries including Australia, has found broad support for the proposition that alcohol products should carry pregnancy

health warnings.

The findings—that 68% of Australians and 67% of New Zealanders surveyed are in favor—come at a critical time, with Australian and New Zealand Health and Food Ministers shortly to vote on recommendations by independent authority Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) to introduce long-awaited [alcohol warning labels](#).

Conducted by The George Institute for Global Health, the study measured the level of support for 14 [alcohol](#) control initiatives relating to a range of issues including alcohol labeling, pricing and promotion across seven countries—Australia, Canada, China, India, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States.

As part of a larger study examining attitudes and behaviors relevant to health [policy](#) support across the seven countries a minimum of 1,000 adults (18+ years) from each country completed an [online survey](#).

While previous research on [public attitudes](#) to alcohol policies has examined attitudes in higher-income countries, this is one of few studies to also examine support for such policies in China and India—two highly populous countries experiencing rapid economic growth and rising per capita alcohol consumption.

Across all policies, support was generally higher in India (80-86%) and China (57-85%), and lower in the United States (33-72%) and Canada (35-68%).

Support was highest for labeling requirements, in particular pregnancy warnings (67-85%) and standard drink quantity information (63-83%).

Professor Simone Pettigrew, Program Head, Food Policy at The George Institute and study co-author said the high level of public support for

alcohol control initiatives in the seven countries surveyed was helpful in providing governments with the impetus they need to introduce appropriate and effective public health measures.

"More broadly speaking, I would hope that these findings can act as a conversation-starter with policymakers. Of most significance for policymakers is the strong alignment between the alcohol policy measures proven to be most effective and the preferences of Australians and the respondents surveyed in the other six countries," she said.

Professor Pettigrew added that the message for Australia's State, Territory and Commonwealth leaders regarding support for health warning labels on [alcohol products](#) could not be louder or more timely.

"I would hope that when the Food Forum Ministers meet in the coming weeks to reconsider the expert advice of FSANZ, the combined weight of an evidence-based recommendation, together with majority support from the Australian community, will lead to a positive health outcome with the introduction of clear and visible health warnings on alcohol products," Professor Pettigrew said.

More information: Maria Roos Dekker et al. Public support for alcohol control initiatives across seven countries, *International Journal of Drug Policy* (2020). [DOI: 10.1016/j.drugpo.2020.102807](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2020.102807)

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