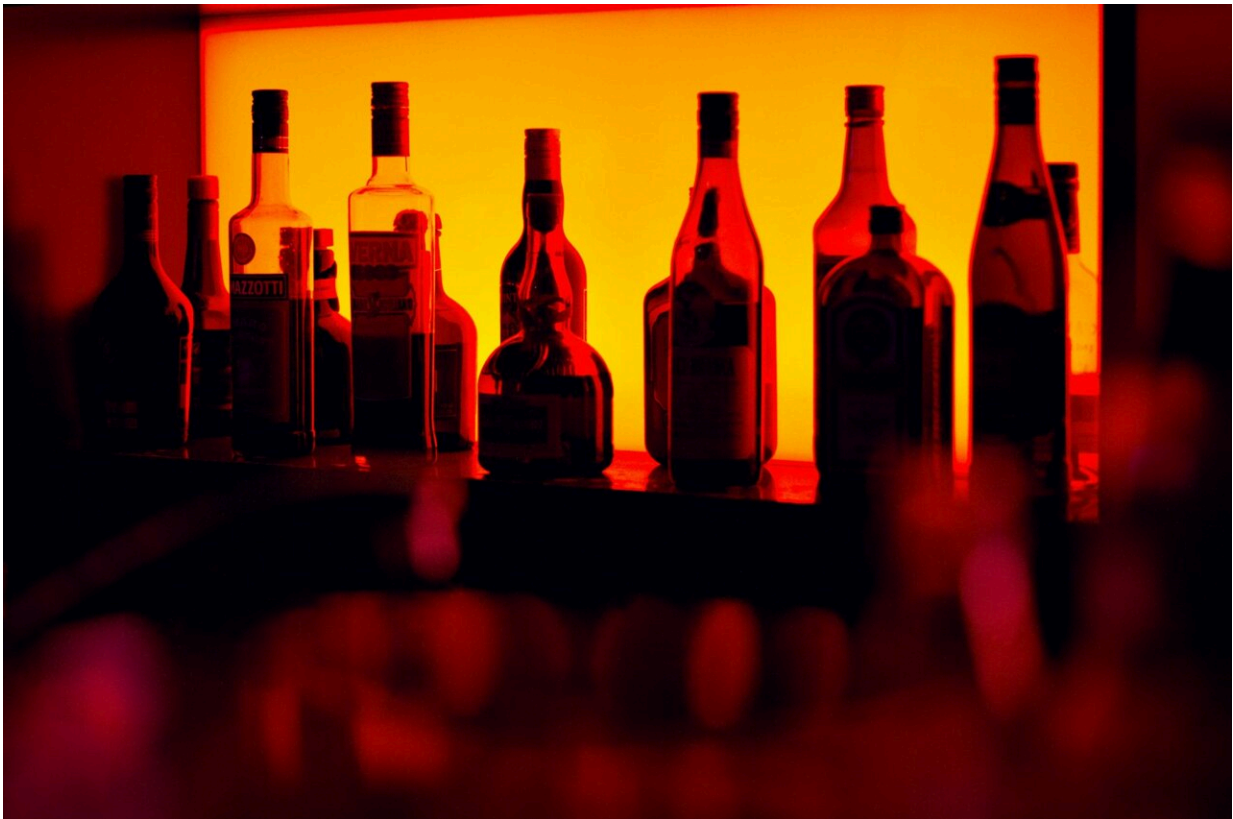


# Mandatory alcohol information virtually invisible online

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Online retailers are doing a "woeful" job of alerting consumers to alcohol health information and warnings, according to the results of a University of Auckland-led study.

The study examined the presence, type and location of mandatory and voluntary [health information](#) and warnings consumers are exposed to when shopping online for alcohol in the United Kingdom and Aotearoa New Zealand.

A total of 1407 randomly sampled alcoholic beverages (705 in Aotearoa and 702 in the UK) from 14 online alcohol retailers (seven per country) were reviewed.

"The study identified woeful inadequacies regarding the viewing of mandatory alcohol health [information](#) within an online retail setting, as well as a near absence of any voluntary health warnings on alcoholic beverages," says Business School Associate Professor Bodo Lang, one of the study authors.

"While consumers in both the UK and Aotearoa do not have sufficient opportunity to be exposed to health information and warnings, New Zealand consumers are particularly at risk because of low levels of information provision at the online point of sale."

Even though certain beverage information and health warnings are not mandatory in the UK, says Dr. Lang, consumers there have a far greater chance of being exposed to health information than in New Zealand, where such information is mandatory.

For example, despite the number of drinks per [bottle](#) being a mandatory display requirement for online alcohol sales in Aotearoa, the study found that just five percent of the beverages examined had the number of drinks per bottle displayed on either the product page or imagery. Meanwhile, displaying the number of drinks per bottle in the UK isn't required; however, the information was available for 69 percent of the drinks advertised.

Showing the alcohol by volume percentage of a drink is also mandatory in Aotearoa but not in the UK. However, the study found that online alcohol retailers in the UK were also more inclined to display this information than New Zealand retailers.

The alcohol percentage information was visible on the product page for 92 percent of alcoholic beverages sold online in the UK, compared to 31 percent in Aotearoa. It was displayed on the product imagery of 38 percent of the 705 New Zealand drinks sampled and 43 percent of the 702 UK drinks. Meanwhile, 69 percent of alcoholic beverages in New Zealand online stores did not display alcohol volume percentage at all, compared to eight percent of the UK sample.

Unfortunately, consumers are even less likely to be exposed to this health information than the numbers suggest, says Dr. Lang.

"Most consumers don't click on product images, and as such, they're limited to the information provided on the product page.

"When taking this into account, the opportunity to be exposed to mandatory information drops further. For example, the standard drinks per bottle were not visible for a single product on New Zealand retailers' product pages."

In a newly-published paper detailing the study findings titled "It's somewhere here, isn't it? The provision of information and health warnings for [alcoholic beverages](#) sold online in New Zealand and the United Kingdom," Lang and his co-authors say that the lack of clearly visible information online impacts the ability of [consumers](#) to make informed purchase decisions.

"In both countries, alcohol policy needs to stipulate that mandatory health information and warnings should be clearly viewable on the

product page and product imagery of online [alcohol](#) retailers."

**More information:** Vicky Shen et al, ' It's somewhere here, isn't it'? The provision of information and health warnings for alcoholic beverages sold online in New Zealand and the United Kingdom, *Drug and Alcohol Review* (2022). [DOI: 10.1111/dar.13570](https://doi.org/10.1111/dar.13570)

Provided by University of Auckland

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