



Northern Territories Alcohol Label Study: Baseline Report Executive Summary

Examining the impact of alcohol warning labels for increasing awareness of alcohol-related health risks and supporting more informed and safer alcohol consumption



December 2018

Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research - University of Victoria

The Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research (CISUR), formerly the Centre for Addictions Research of British Columbia, is a network of individuals and groups dedicated to the study of substance use and addiction in support of community-wide efforts to promote health and reduce harm. CISUR's research is used to inform a broad range of projects, reports, publications and initiatives aimed at providing all people in British Columbia and beyond with access to happier, healthier lives, whether using substances or not.

How to cite this document:

Hobin E, Shokar S, Schoueri-Mychasiw N, Vallance K, Stockwell T. Northern Territories Alcohol Label Study: Baseline Report – Executive Summary. Examining the impact of alcohol warning labels for increasing awareness of alcohol-related health risks and supporting more informed and safer alcohol consumption. Victoria, BC: Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research; 2018.

Authors

Erin Hobin, PhD

& ROODE SLEND LQJ

& DQDGLDQ , QVWLWXWH IRU 6XEVWDQFH 8VH 5HVHDFK

8QLYHUVLW\ RI 9LFWRULD

6FLHQWLW

+HDOWK 3URPRWLRQ & KURQLF 'LVHVVH DQG , QMXU\ 3UHYHQWL

3XEOLF +HDOWK 2QWDULR

Simran Shokar, MPH

Research Assistant

Health Promotion, Chronic Disease, and Injury Prevention

Public Health Ontario

North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC 27697-1074, USA
Phone: 919.973.7600, Fax: 919.973.7601, Email: shokar@ncsu.edu

About the Research Study

Alcohol is a leading risk factor for chronic disease and premature death among Canadians, and the top risk factor among those ages 15-49. Canada's Low-Risk Drinking Guidelines (LRDG), released in 2011, aim to help drinkers minimize alcohol-related harms. Yet Canadians remain largely unaware of the link between alcohol and health risks, and few have heard of the LRDG. Alcohol warning labels are one strategy to potentially increase awareness of alcohol-related health risks, and reduce intake by making the consequences of alcohol salient when purchasing and pouring alcohol.

The primary objective of the Health Canada-funded Northern Territories Alcohol Study is to conduct the first controlled pre-

Study Design

To test the impact of the warning labels, this study uses two key data sources: 1) surveys with a cohort of randomly selected liquor store patrons, and 2) liquor store transaction data. Using two data sources will allow us to triangulate our findings and have more confidence in the results.

Results will provide real-world evidence to inform regulatory efforts in Yukon and other

Figure 1. Current Warning Labels on Alcohol Containers in Yukon and Northwest Territories

a. Yukon
(actual size = 3.5cm x 2.2cm)

b. Northwest Territories
(actual size = 5.1cm x 3.2cm)

Methods -

Whitehorse (7.4%) self-reported drinking less alcohol as a result of the current warning labels. Given that individuals tend to underestimate their alcohol consumption in surveys, going forward, we will triangulate the self-reported survey data with the liquor store sales data to confirm the extent to which alcohol purchasing/consumption behaviours change over time.

Knowledge of Alcohol-Related Health Risks and Support for Labels with Health Messages

When asked about the link between alcohol and health conditions, results of the surveys indicate that more than 96% of participants in both Whitehorse and Yellowknife understand that alcohol can cause liver disease and harm to a fetus, but only about one quarter know the link between alcohol and breast cancer. The majority of participants in both Whitehorse and Yellowknife either agreed or strongly agreed that alcohol containers should be labelled with health warnings describing the link between alcohol and diseases, such as cancer. There were no significant differences in knowledge of alcohol-related health conditions between jurisdictions.

Knowledge of the Number of Standard Drinks per Container and Support for Standard Drink Labels

Overall, with the exception of wine, results indicate that more than 50% of participants had difficulty identifying the number of standard drinks in containers of alcohol. About half of participants in both jurisdictions at least agreed that alcohol containers should be labelled with the number of standard drinks per container, and that these labels would help them or someone else stay within Canada's LRDG. There were significant differences in ability to estimate standard drinks in spirits and beer containers between jurisdictions, but no significant differences in either ability to estimate standard drinks in wine or cider containers or support for standard drink labelling.

Awareness and Knowledge of Canada's Low-Risk Drinking Guidelines and Support for Labels

About one-third of participants in both Whitehorse and Yellowknife were aware of Canada's LRDG before participating in this study. In total, 1 in 10 males in both jurisdictions, and 1 in 4 females in Whitehorse and 1 in 6 females in Yellowknife were able to correctly report the number of standard drinks in a day recommended for their sex assigned at birth. Generally, there is support in both Whitehorse and Yellowknife for labelling alcohol beverages with

Canada's LRDG, and the majority of participants believe these labels will make them think about the number of drinks they consume.

Conclusion

The results of the baseline surveys indicate that the majority of participants in Whitehorse and Yellowknife noticed the current warning label on alcohol containers, yet label saliency was very low. Given that the current warning labels were first implemented in 1991 in Yukon and NWT, the low proportion of participants reading, thinking about, or talking about label messages may in part be due to “wear-out” or “overexposure”. One solution to the wear-out effect is to create new warning labels. Most participants know the health risks related to alcohol and FASD and liver disease, but only about 25% understand that alcohol can cause cancer. Generally, there is support for alcohol warning labels with a health message, Canada's LRDG, and standard drink information. Similar results were found among participants in Whitehorse and Yellowknife before the intervention alcohol warning labels are implemented on containers in the liquor 286(s)6-6.6(e)-6.6(eho)10ye