

2011

Alcohol health labelling:
Community perceptions of
the FARE and DrinkWise
model alcohol labels



Foundation for Alcohol
Research & Education

KEY FINDINGS

Comparison of FARE and DrinkWise pregnancy labels

People were shown the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) pregnancy warning label 'Drinking alcohol can harm your unborn baby' and the DrinkWise pregnancy silhouette as applied to alcohol products and asked to select the superior label against three criteria.

- 86% of people selected the FARE pregnancy warning label as being more likely to raise awareness of the harms of consuming alcohol while pregnant, while the remaining 14% of people selected the DrinkWise pregnancy label.
- 84% of people selected the FARE pregnancy warning label as being more likely to prompt conversations about the risk of drinking alcohol during pregnancy, while the remaining 16% of people selected the DrinkWise pregnancy label.
- 85% of people selected the FARE pregnancy warning label as being more effective in preventing women from drinking alcohol while pregnant, while the remaining 15% of people selected the DrinkWise pregnancy label.

Comparison of FARE and DrinkWise labels on alcohol misuse among young people

People were shown the FARE warning label 'Drinking alcohol damages the young developing brain' and the DrinkWise label 'Kids and alcohol don't mix' as applied to alcohol products and asked to select the superior label against three criteria.

- 83% of people selected the FARE young people health warning label as being more likely to raise awareness about the harms that can result from young people consuming alcohol, while the remaining 17% of people selected the DrinkWise young people label.
- 82% of people selected the FARE young people health warning label as being more likely to prompt conversations about alcohol consumption among young people, while the remaining 18% selected the DrinkWise label.
- 83% of people selected the FARE young people health warning label as being more likely to result in young people drinking less alcohol, while the remaining 17% selected the DrinkWise label.

Comparison of complete series of FARE and DrinkWise labels

People were shown the series of FARE warning labels and the series of DrinkWise labels as applied to alcohol products and asked to select the superior label against three criteria.

- 89% of people selected the FARE series of health warning labels as being more likely to raise awareness of alcohol-related harms, while the remaining 11% selected the DrinkWise labels.

- 88% of people selected the FARE series of health warning labels as being more likely to prompt conversations about alcohol-related harms, while the remaining 12% selected the DrinkWise labels.
- 88% of people selected the FARE series of warning labels as being more likely to result in people drinking less alcohol, while 12% of people selected the DrinkWise labels.
- 95% of people selected the FARE series of health warning labels as being more noticeable, while the remaining 5% selected the DrinkWise labels.
- 91% of people selected the FARE series of warning labels as easier to understand, while the remaining 9% selected the DrinkWise labels.
- 60% of people selected the FARE labels as telling them something they did not already know, while 10% of people selected the DrinkWise labels. People were also given the option to select 'neither' and a further 31% of people did this.

BACKGROUND

On 13 July 2011 DrinkWise released consumer information labels to be voluntarily applied to alcohol products. These labels are included as **Appendix A**. The DrinkWise labels included:

- A silhouette of a pregnant woman holding a wine glass with a line through it;
- A label with the message: 'It is safest not to drink while pregnant';
- A label with the message: 'Is your drinking harming yourself or others?';
- A label with the message: 'Kids and alcohol don't mix'; and
- A label with the message: 'Get the facts'.

The DrinkWise labels have received criticism from the public health sector because the labels are small, the messages on the labels are ambiguous, and the labels have been inconsistently applied to alcohol containers.

On 16 August 2011, the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) released its policy position on alcohol product labelling. The policy position outlined how alcohol health warning labels should be applied to products sold in Australia and examined the need to apply nutritional information to alcohol containers.

The policy proposed that health warning labels be mandated for application on all alcohol products in Australia. In applying the labels, the following specifications were made:

- There should be at least five different health warning messages, with one message relating to the risks of drinking alcohol during pregnancy;
- Health warning labels should comprise of both text and symbols;
- The size, font and application of health warning labels should be consistent across all products;
- Health warning labels should be applied to the front labels of alcohol products and be horizontally oriented; and
- Health warning labels should be preceded with the text 'HEALTH WARNING'.

Based on these specifications, FARE produced five sample health warning labels. These labels are included as **Appendix B**. In preparation for the development of these labels, FARE commissioned Galaxy Research to conduct focus group testing. Following the release of the health warning labels, FARE again commissioned Galaxy Research to conduct online market testing of the labels. The online testing was conducted to examine perceptions of the FARE labels compared to DrinkWise's proposed labels. The results of this market testing are included within this report.

METHODOLOGY

This questionnaire was conducted online among a sample of Australian adults aged 18 years and older. In total 504 questionnaires were completed between Wednesday 28 September and Friday 30 September 2011.

The sample was distributed throughout all states of Australia, including both capital city and non-capital city areas, in proportion to the population. All respondents were selected from members of a permission based panel, with quotas applied to ensure that the sample reflected the adult population.

The questionnaire was designed by Galaxy Research in consultation with FARE. The questionnaire was transferred into Quest format in order to be hosted online. The questionnaire examined people's perceptions of FARE's proposed labels compared to the DrinkWise labels.

In presenting the proposed FARE labels to participants, photographs were taken of each label affixed onto a generic wine bottle, beer bottle and ready to drink beverage bottle. These photographs were included in the online survey.

In presenting the DrinkWise labels to participants, photographs were taken of a wine bottle, a beer bottle and a ready to drink beverage bottle which had the DrinkWise labels affixed on them. These photographs were included in the online survey.

Throughout the questionnaire the labels were not attributed to FARE or DrinkWise. The labels were also rotated so that individuals were randomly assigned to be presented FARE or DrinkWise labels as the first set of labels for different question items.

Following the collection of data, the results were weighted by age, gender and region to reflect the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) population estimates.

Key demographic information was collected from all people surveyed including their gender, age, highest education level, and household income.

Age was categorised into four groups: 18 to 24 years, 25 to 34 years, 35 to 49 years and 50 years or older. Education level was categorised into three groups: high school; TAFE and university.

Household income was categorised into three groups: high income (\$90,000 or more per annum), middle income (between \$40,000 and \$90,000 per annum) and low income (less than \$40,000 per annum).

People who consumed alcohol were classified into three relatively even groups according to their frequency and level of alcohol consumption. These three groups were produced to ensure each had sufficient numbers of people within them to generate meaningful comparisons. The three groups were categorised as follows:

- Regular drinkers were people who consumed more than 10 standard drinks per week;
- Moderate drinkers consumed between 1.5 and 10 standard drinks per week; and
- Occasional drinkers consumed 1.5 standard drinks per week or less.

FINDINGS

Drinking characteristics of people surveyed

- 88% of people had consumed alcohol in the last 12 months. This included 37% that had consumed alcohol less than once per week, 20% of people had consumed alcohol one to two days per week, 24% of people consumed alcohol three to six days per week and the remaining 7% consumed alcohol daily.
- 57% of drinkers limit themselves to less than two standard drinks on any one occasion. 21% of drinkers will have more than five standard drinks and the remaining 22% will have three to four standard drinks.
- 37% of drinkers stated that they consumed alcohol with the intention of getting drunk. Of these, 20% stated that they did so at least once a month, while the remaining 17% did so less frequently. 63% of Australian drinkers stated that they never drink alcohol to get drunk.
- Australian drinkers mainly consume bottled wine (33%), followed by regular strength beer (24%), spirits (19%), cask wine (7%), light beer (6%), RTDs (5%), and cider (3%).

Comparison of FARE and DrinkWise pregnancy labels

People were shown the FARE pregnancy warning label 'Drinking alcohol can harm your unborn baby' and the DrinkWise pregnancy silhouette as applied to alcohol products. People were then asked to select which warning label would be most likely to:

- Raise awareness of the harms that can result from drinking alcohol during pregnancy;
- Prompt conversations about the risk of drinking alcohol during pregnancy; and
- Stop women from drinking alcohol while pregnant.

86% of people selected the FARE pregnancy warning label as being more likely to raise awareness of the harms, while the remaining 14% of people selected the DrinkWise pregnancy label.

84% of people selected the FARE pregnancy warning label as being more likely to prompt conversations about the risk of drinking alcohol during pregnancy, while the remaining 16% of people selected the DrinkWise pregnancy label.

85% of people selected the FARE pregnancy warning label as being more effective in preventing women from drinking alcohol while pregnant, while the remaining 15% of people selected the DrinkWise pregnancy label.

FINDINGS

The table below illustrates the proportion of people who selected the FARE pregnancy label and those that selected the DrinkWise pregnancy label as being most likely to raise awareness, prompt conversations and stop women from drinking alcohol.

	FARE pregnancy label (%)	DrinkWise pregnancy label (%)
Raise awareness	86	14
Prompt conversations	84	16
Prevent drinking during pregnancy	85	15

Comparison of FARE and DrinkWise labels on alcohol misuse among young people

People were shown the FARE warning label 'Drinking alcohol damages the young developing brain and the DrinkWise label 'Kids and alcohol don't mix' as applied to alcohol products. People were then asked to select which warning label would be most likely to:

- Raise awareness of the harms that can result from young people drinking alcohol;
- Prompt conversations about alcohol consumption among young people; and
- Result in young people drinking less alcohol.

83% of people selected the FARE young people health warning label as being more likely to raise awareness about the harms that can result from young people consuming alcohol, while the remaining 17% of people selected the DrinkWise young people label.

82% of people selected the FARE young people health warning label as being more likely to prompt conversations about alcohol consumption among young people, while the remaining 18% selected the DrinkWise label.

83% of people selected the FARE young people health warning label as being more likely to result in young people drinking less alcohol, while the remaining 17% selected the DrinkWise label.

FINDINGS

The table below illustrates the proportion of people who selected the FARE young people label and those that selected the DrinkWise young people label as being most likely to raise awareness, prompt conversations and result in young people to drink less alcohol.

	FARE young people label (%)	DrinkWise young people label (%)
Raise awareness	83	17
Prompt conversations	82	18
Reduce consumption	83	17

Comparison of complete series of FARE and DrinkWise labels

People were shown the series of FARE health warning labels and the series of DrinkWise labels as applied to alcohol products and asked to select the series which was:

- Most likely to create greater awareness of the harms;
- Most likely to prompt conversations about alcohol-related harms;
- Most likely to result in people drinking less alcohol;
- More noticeable;
- Easier to understand; and
- Told them something they did not know.

When viewed as a series, people were more likely to select the FARE labels over the DrinkWise labels as meeting all of the above criteria.

- 89% of people selected the FARE series of health warning labels as being more likely to raise awareness of alcohol-related harms, while the remaining 11% selected the DrinkWise labels.
- 88% of people selected the FARE series of health warning labels as being more likely to prompt conversations about alcohol-related harms, while the remaining 12% selected the DrinkWise labels.
- 88% of people selected the FARE series of warning labels as being more likely to result in people drinking less alcohol, while 12% of people selected the DrinkWise labels.
- 95% of people selected the FARE series of health warning labels as being more noticeable, while the remaining 5% selected the DrinkWise labels.

FINDINGS

- 91% of people selected the FARE series of warning labels as being easier to understand, while the remaining 9% selected the DrinkWise labels.
- 60% of people selected the FARE labels as telling them something they did not already know, while 10% of people selected the DrinkWise labels. People were also given the option to select 'neither' and a further 31% of people did this.

The table below shows the proportion of people who selected the FARE series or the DrinkWise series of labels as best meeting each of the above criteria.

	FARE series of labels (%)	Drinkwise series of labels (%)
Raise awareness	89	11
Prompt conversations	88	12
Reduce consumption	88	12
More noticeable	95	5
Easy to understand	91	9
Tell something they did not know ^a	60	10

a= note 31% of people indicated on this item that neither series of labels told them something they did not know. Some people selected more than one option in answering this question.

People were also asked if these labels should explicitly use the words 'health warning'. 72% were in favour of explicit use of the words "health warning" on the label, 16% opposed this and a further 12% remained unsure. The table below provides a breakdown of support for the use of the words "health warning" on health labels.

	Total (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
Yes, labels must explicitly use "health warning"	72	68	75
No, labels should not explicitly use "health warning"	16	19	14
Unsure	12	13	11

APPENDIX A: DRINKWISE LABELS



DrinkWise labels as shown to survey participants



APPENDIX A: DRINKWISE LABELS

DrinkWise labels applied to alcohol containers



APPENDIX B: FARE LABELS



FARE labels as shown to survey participants



APPENDIX B: FARE LABELS

FARE labels applied to alcohol containers



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