

ALCOHOL WARNING LABELS + PREGNANCY

POLLING SNAPSHOT



HEALTH WARNING
Alcohol can cause lifelong
harm to your baby

KEY FINDINGS

The majority of Australians (70%) support an improved pregnancy warning label that is mandatory and would take action on the issue.

Almost a quarter (23%) of Australians aren't aware that drinking alcohol when pregnant is harmful to an unborn baby.

Less than a third (31%) of Australians recall seeing warning labels on alcohol products about the risk of drinking alcohol when pregnant.

Awareness of the specific health conditions caused by alcohol consumption during pregnancy is low. Almost one third (30%) of Australians are unaware alcohol can cause Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and almost one half (46%) of Australians are unaware of the risk of stillbirth.

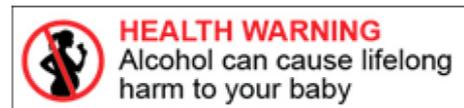
ABOUT THE POLLING

The Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) commissioned YouGov Galaxy to conduct polling of Australians to understand their awareness of the risks of alcohol consumption during pregnancy.

The polling was conducted online between 20 January 2020 and 1 February 2020. The sample comprised 2,264 respondents aged 18 years and over, residing in Australia. To ensure statistical validity, the sample was boosted in smaller states/territories to ensure a minimum base size of 200 respondents. After data collection, results were weighted by age, gender and location according to the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) population estimates.

FINDINGS

AUSTRALIANS DEMAND ACTION ON PREGNANCY WARNING LABELS



FARE polled Australians as to their support and willingness to take action on pregnancy warning labels. Respondents could view the proposed label from Food Standards Australia New Zealand* and were told the intention was for this to replace the current label and make it mandatory. The majority (70%) of Australians said they support this change and would be willing to take action on the issue.

As Table 1 shows, support for improving pregnancy warning labels was similar across the board but was highest in New South Wales (73%), Australian Capital Territory (73%) and Northern Territory (71%).

TABLE 1. WILLINGNESS TO SUPPORT AND TAKE ACTION ON PREGNANCY WARNING LABELS, BY STATE/TERRITORY

	AUSTRALIA (%)	NSW (%)	ACT (%)	VIC (%)	TAS (%)	QLD (%)	SA (%)	WA (%)	NT (%)
Proportion who are willing to support and take action	70	73	73	68	70	69	67	69	71

*The label shown was as originally proposed by FSANZ in October 2019, which was under consideration when the poll was undertaken.

TOO FEW AUSTRALIANS UNDERSTAND THAT NO AMOUNT OF ALCOHOL SHOULD BE USED WHILE PREGNANT

Almost a quarter (23%) of Australians aren't aware that drinking alcohol when pregnant is harmful to an unborn baby, either incorrectly identifying the amount of drinks a pregnant woman can consume or answering 'don't know'.

As Table 2 shows, the lack of awareness is particularly high in Victoria (26%), Queensland (25%) and New South Wales (24%).

TABLE 2. PROPORTION OF PEOPLE STATING WHAT THEY THINK IS THE SAFEST NUMBER OF STANDARD DRINKS A PREGNANT WOMAN CAN CONSUME ON ANY ONE OCCASION TO AVOID HARM TO THE FETUS, BY STATE/TERRITORY*

	AUSTRALIA (%)	NSW (%)	ACT (%)	VIC (%)	TAS (%)	QLD (%)	SA (%)	WA (%)	NT (%)
Zero	77	76	82	74	81	75	84	84	79
One	7	8	7	10	6	6	4	4	7
Two	6	5	4	5	6	8	5	5	2
Three	2	2	1	2	1	3	1	2	1
Four	1	2	0	1	1	2	0	0	1
Five or more	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Subtotal - one or more standard drinks***</i>	17	19	12	19	14	19	10	10	12
Don't know	6	5	5	7	6	6	5	6	9

** This question was asked of a reduced sample of 1,499 respondents as it was only asked of those who were aware of the NHMRC guidelines. Results are still representative with a minimum sample size of 100 for each state and territory.

*** Note that due to rounding, the subtotal may appear more or less than what is displayed in the table.

TOO MANY AUSTRALIANS ARE UNAWARE OF THE RISKS OF USING ALCOHOLIC PRODUCTS WHEN PREGNANT

When asked to identify the health conditions associated with alcohol consumption during pregnancy, Australians' level of awareness is low. Almost one third (30%) of Australians are unaware that drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause FASD, a permanent and irreversible brain injury.

As Table 3 shows, lack of awareness is particularly high in Victoria (33%) and New South Wales (32%).

Australians' awareness that alcohol consumption during pregnancy can cause a failure to thrive for a newborn (lack of normal weight gain) is low at 53%. Similarly, awareness that stillbirth is a potential consequence of drinking during pregnancy is only at 54%.

TABLE 3. AWARENESS OF WHICH HEALTH CONDITIONS ARE ASSOCIATED WITH ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION DURING PREGNANCY, BY STATE/TERRITORY

	AUSTRALIA (%)	NSW (%)	ACT (%)	VIC (%)	TAS (%)	QLD (%)	SA (%)	WA (%)	NT (%)
Low birthweight	64	65	62	59	68	67	65	64	62
Stillbirth	54	58	56	52	60	55	51	50	52
Miscarriage	62	65	60	60	66	61	62	58	64
Brain damage	69	70	63	67	71	69	66	71	70
Organ damage	62	62	61	61	66	66	59	60	61
FASD	70	68	75	67	79	74	71	77	81
Failure to thrive	53	54	53	50	56	57	53	53	62
None of the above	6	6	7	8	6	3	7	6	4

WARNING LABELS ARE INVISIBLE TO MOST AUSTRALIANS

The poll also asked if people recalled seeing warning labels on alcohol products about the risks of alcohol consumption during pregnancy. Of concern, only 31% of Australians recalled any labels. This indicates that current labelling is not being seen by consumers, leaving them uninformed of the significant risks.

As Table 4 shows, recall is particularly low in Western Australia (25%), Tasmania (27%) and South Australia (30%).

TABLE 4. RECALL OF SEEING WARNING LABELS ABOUT THE RISK OF CONSUMING ALCOHOL DURING PREGNANCY IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS ON ALCOHOL PRODUCTS, BY STATE/TERRITORY

	AUSTRALIA (%)	NSW (%)	ACT (%)	VIC (%)	TAS (%)	QLD (%)	SA (%)	WA (%)	NT (%)
Proportion of those who recalled seeing pregnancy warning labels	31	31	37	32	27	33	30	25	38

**STOPPING
HARM**
CAUSED BY
ALCOHOL

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