

Poll snapshot: Pregnancy health warning on alcoholic products

JULY 2023

Key findings

From 31 July 2023, alcoholic products sold in Australia and New Zealand will be required by law to display a visible pregnancy health warning. Since this decision in July 2020 for these warnings to be mandated, they have been appearing on alcoholic products. This national poll asked Australians to recall whether they have seen the pregnancy health warning on alcoholic products and found:

- » Just over half of Australians (56.4%) reported that they have seen the pregnancy health warning on alcoholic products.
- » People were more likely to recall seeing the warning if they had an alcoholic drink in the last 12 months (59.2%), than if they had not (38.2%).
- » Recall of the pregnancy health warning was highest among people aged 18–25 years (79.1%) and 26–41 years (72.9%).

About the polling

The Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) commissioned Pure Profile to conduct polling of Australians to understand recent recall of the pregnancy health warning on alcoholic products. The polling was conducted online between 14 June 18 and June 2023. The sample comprised 1,004 people aged 18 years and over, residing in Australia. The sample is nationally representative for age, gender and jurisdiction. In reporting analysis by gender, only male and female respondents have been included, due to low sample size for respondents answering 'Non-Binary'.

Visible pregnancy health warnings on alcoholic products

We all want our families to have access to clear information about the health and safety of the products they buy – especially products that may harm our children. However, in Australia, alcoholic products have never been legally required to carry a health warning about the risks alcohol can cause during pregnancy including miscarriage, stillbirth, low birth weight, pre-term birth and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). This is changing.

From 31 July 2023, alcoholic products sold in Australia will be required by law to display a visible pregnancy health warning (image below). The evidence-based label was carefully designed to have high visibility and impact, in order to increase Australians' awareness of the risks of drinking alcohol while pregnant.

Image: Visible pregnancy health warning required to be displayed on alcoholic products from 31st July 2023.



Why is a visible pregnancy health warning on alcoholic products needed?

The *Australian guidelines to reduce health risks from drinking alcohol* make it clear that no alcohol should be consumed during pregnancy.¹ Yet, in 2020, almost a quarter (23%) of Australians weren't aware that drinking alcohol when pregnant is harmful to an unborn baby. Moreover, less than a third (31%) of Australians recalled seeing warning labels on alcoholic products about the risk of drinking alcohol when pregnant.²

Alcohol consumed at any stage of pregnancy passes directly to the baby via the placenta and can damage their developing brain, body, and organs. Drinking alcohol while pregnant also increases the risk of miscarriage, stillbirth, and babies being born prematurely, small for gestational age, or with low birth weight. Drinking alcohol while pregnant can also result in FASD.

FASD is the leading preventable developmental disability in Australia. People with FASD can experience challenges such as physical and emotional developmental delay, impaired speech and language development, learning problems, such as issues with memory and attention, and difficulty controlling behaviour. Not drinking any alcohol during pregnancy will prevent FASD.³

Current recall of the pregnancy health warning on alcoholic products

Australian respondents were shown an image of the pregnancy health warning and asked whether they have seen the warning about alcohol and pregnancy on alcoholic products.

A majority of Australians (56.4%) reported that they had seen the pregnancy health warning on alcoholic products.

There was no statistically significant difference in reporting seeing the label between males and females. People aged 18–25 years (79.1%) and 26–41 years (72.9%) were more likely to recall seeing the warning than people aged 42 years and above (43.2%; Table 1).

1 National Health and Medical Research Council. [Australian guidelines to reduce health risks from drinking alcohol](#). 2020.

2 Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education. [Alcohol warning labels and pregnancy, polling snapshot](#). 2020.

3 For more information about the harms of alcohol use during pregnancy, visit www.everymomentmatters.org.au.

Table 1. Proportion of Australian respondents (N=1,004) that have seen the alcohol pregnancy health warning on alcoholic products.

	YES HAVE SEEN THE LABEL		NO HAVE NOT SEEN THE LABEL		UNSURE IF SEEN THE LABEL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
	Total	566	56.4%	343	34.2%	95
Gender						
Male	292	59.6%	152	31.0%	46	9.4%
Female	274	53.3%	191	37.2%	49	9.5%
Age						
18–25 years	102	79.1%	18	14.0%	9	7.0%
26–41 years	212	72.9%	62	21.3%	17	5.8%
42–57 years	124	48.1%	108	41.9%	26	10.1%
58+ years	128	39.3%	155	47.5%	43	13.2%

People were more likely to recall seeing the warning if they had an alcoholic drink in the last 12 months (59.2%), than if they had not (38.2%; Table 2).

Trends in recall among sub-populations were similar for people that had an alcoholic drink in the last 12 months and those that had not. Among people that had an alcoholic drink in the past 12 months, there was no statistically significant difference in reporting seeing the label between males and females. People aged 18–25 years (78.5%) and 26–41 years (75.9%) were more likely to recall seeing the warning than people aged 42 years and above (46.8%; Table 3).

Table 2. Proportion of Australian respondents (N=1,004) that have seen the alcohol pregnancy health warning on alcoholic products by alcohol use in past 12 months.

	YES HAVE SEEN THE LABEL		NO HAVE NOT SEEN THE LABEL		UNSURE IF SEEN THE LABEL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
	Have had an alcoholic drink over the past 12 months					
Yes	510	59.2%	270	31.3%	82	9.5%
No	52	38.2%	73	53.7%	11	8.1%

Six respondents reported that they 'maybe' had an alcoholic drink over the past 12 months and are not reflected in the above table.

Table 3. Proportion of Australian respondents that have had an alcoholic drink in the past 12 months (N=862) that have seen the alcohol pregnancy health warning on alcoholic products.

	YES HAVE SEEN THE LABEL		NO HAVE NOT SEEN THE LABEL		UNSURE IF SEEN THE LABEL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
	Total	510	59.2%	270	31.3%	82
Gender						
Male	271	62.2%	126	28.9%	39	8.9%
Female	239	56.1%	144	33.8%	43	10.1%
Age						
18–25 years	84	78.5%	15	14.0%	8	7.5%
26–41 years	189	75.9%	46	18.5%	14	5.6%
42–57 years	117	51.5%	86	37.9%	24	10.6%
58+ years	120	43.0%	123	44.1%	36	12.9%



Further information

For more information about alcohol free pregnancies, visit everymomentmatters.org.au.

For more information about the introduction of the pregnancy health warning on alcoholic products, visit: fare.org.au/labelling-campaign.

About FARE

The Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) is the leading not-for-profit organisation working towards an Australia free from alcohol harms. We approach this through developing evidence-informed policy, enabling people-powered advocacy and delivering health promotion programs.

FARE has been working with communities across the country to improve the health and wellbeing of Australians for 20 years. To learn more about us and our work visit fare.org.au.

