DO ALCOHOL WARNING LABELS WORK?
FINDINGS FROM A REAL-WORLD EXPERIMENT

WHAT DID WE DO?
The Northern Territories Alcohol Labels Study placed new rotating colourful warning labels on alcohol containers in a government liquor store in Whitehorse, Yukon. Three waves of surveys were conducted in Whitehorse, and Yellowknife served as the comparison site. Shortly after the launch of the new labels, Canadian alcohol industry lobby groups interfered with the study, forcing a pause in the labelling and removal of the cancer warning.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?
Brightly coloured alcohol warning labels with a cancer warning, national drinking guidelines, and standard drink information help consumers make more informed and safer alcohol choices. Policies mandating alcohol warning labels should be a priority for alcohol control strategies in Canada and globally.

WHAT HAPPENED?

PEOPLE REMEMBERED WHAT THE LABELS SAID.
Consumers exposed to the new labels had 10% greater odds of knowing the link between alcohol and cancer, were 3X more likely to be aware of Canada’s Low-Risk Drinking Guidelines, and had 50% greater odds of remembering “daily” low-risk drinking limits.

PEOPLE TALKED ABOUT THE LABELS.
Consumers reported noticing, reading, thinking about, and talking with others about the new labels, and consumers exposed to the new labels were more likely to report cutting back on drinking because of them.

PEOPLE DRANK LESS.
The Whitehorse liquor store saw a 6.6% decrease in sales of labelled products during the intervention period relative to two comparison sites. The 3% of Whitehorse liquor store products that *didn’t* have labels saw a 6.9% increase in sales.

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References