

# Health Warning Labels

## LARGER HEALTH WARNING LABELS ARE MORE EFFECTIVE

Article 11 of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control states that warning labels should cover at least 50% of the principal display areas of the tobacco package (*i.e.*, both the front and back), but at a minimum must cover at least 30%.

Article 11 Guidelines recommend that Parties consider warning labels that are even bigger than the 50% recommended in the Treaty itself, stating “Given the evidence that the effectiveness of health warnings and messages increases with their size, Parties should consider using health warnings and messages that cover more than 50% of the principal display areas and aim to cover as much of the principal display areas as possible.”

### Scientific Evidence

- A major study which compares warning label data from four countries with widely varying health warning labeling policies (Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States), found that larger, more comprehensive warnings were more likely to be noticed and rated as effective by smokers.<sup>3,4</sup>
- Findings from a Canadian study show that after Canada went from 25% text-only health warning labels to 50% pictorial health warning labels, both current and former smokers thought that the larger pictorial labels were more effective than smaller text-only labels in discouraging people from starting to smoke, motivating people to quit, motivating people to not start smoking again, and causing people to worry about the health effects of smoking.<sup>5</sup>
- A Chinese study found larger, pictorial health warning labels were more likely to be noticed than smaller labels.<sup>6</sup> Participants were asked to rank 10 different types of labels. Four labels were 50% pictorial, four labels were 50% text, and two labels were 30% text-only. The 30% text-only labels were least effective in motivating smokers to quit, convincing youth not to start smoking, and informing the public about the harms of smoking.
- In 2010, Uruguay increased pictorial health warning labels from covering 50% to 80% of the front and back of tobacco packaging. A survey of smokers in Uruguay found that the larger images were more effective than the smaller images. The larger labels were more noticeable, caused smokers to think more about the health harms related to smoke, increased thoughts about quitting and caused smokers to forgo smoking a cigarette more than the smaller labels.<sup>7</sup>

### Key Messages

- **Tobacco use causes serious health harms and death.**
- **Countries should require that pictorial health warning labels occupy as much of area on tobacco product packaging as possible, in compliance with the requirements and recommendations of the WHO FCTC.**

### LARGER HEALTH WARNING LABELS

- **Are more noticeable to youth and smokers, forcing them to pay attention to the warning and think about its message.**
- **More effectively communicate and increase knowledge about the risks of tobacco use and influence plans to quit smoking.**
- **Decrease the amount of space available for the industry to market their product.**<sup>1,2</sup>



80% pictorial  
(Uruguay, 2012)



90% pictorial  
(Nepal, 2016)

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