

The impact of price and nutrition labelling on sugary drink purchases: Results from an experimental marketplace study

The objective of this study was “to examine the effect of front-of-package nutrition labelling and sugary drink taxation on consumer beverage purchases.” This experimental study included 675 respondents aged 16 years and older, where participants were randomised to one of four groups: (i) no label; (ii) star rating; (iii) high sugar symbol; and (iv) health warning.

The results of this simulation study showed that as price increased, participants were significantly less likely to select a sugary drink, and they selected instead beverages with fewer calories and less sugar. The overall effect of labelling was not statistically significant, although there was a trend for the ‘high sugar’ label to reduce the likelihood of selecting a sugary drink and encourage participants to select drinks with less sugar.

These findings contribute to the growing evidence that taxation strategies may be an effective and important tool to reduce purchasing and consumption of sugary drinks. The effects of a “high sugar” label placed on the front of sugary drinks, though non-significant, suggest promising results for the reduction of sugary drink consumption, and future research should investigate similar labels with larger sample sizes. The results for both price and labelling represent important contributions to the body of evidence around nutrition policy strategies in the Canadian context.

Reference: Acton & Hammond. The impact of price and nutrition labelling on sugary drink purchases: Results from an experimental marketplace study. *Appetite*. 2018;121:129–137.

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