## **Britainthinks**

Insight & Strategy —

July 2017

## Royal Society for Public Health / Portman Group Alcohol labelling research

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### **Key insights**

#### Alcohol is thought of predominantly through the frame of having fun

- This means it is disassociated from health-related behaviours like diet and exercise
- And that when buying and consuming alcohol, people are less likely to think about the volumes they are drinking
- And are resistant to thinking about the health impact

#### Of the information currently provided on labels, ABV is both the most familiar and the most used

- 75% name ABV as being part of an alcohol label, compared to 29% who name units (the second most known component of an alcohol label)
- 58% say that they look at ABV before purchasing alcohol in a shop, compared to 5% who say they look at units

#### There is not currently a spontaneous appetite amongst those who took part in the research for changes to the way information is presented

- 70% feel the balance between health information and product / brand information is about right
- However, when asked to consider the information on labels, there are criticisms about its placement and presentation

#### Thinking about what information should be available, there is a clear preference for ABV and units

- 81% say that it is important to include ABV and 68% say it is important to include units on the label
- In the focus groups, discussion also led to the view that calorie information might be helpful too

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## **5** principles for the presentation of information on alcohol labels emerged from the research



# **Objectives and methodology**

### **Background and objectives**

- The Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH) and the Portman Group have been working together to understand the most effective method of communicating alcohol health information to the public
- To inform this work, RSPH and the Portman Group commissioned BritainThinks to conduct research with the public to understand:
  - Awareness and familiarity with current alcohol labelling
  - Behaviour in relation to current alcohol labelling
  - Preferences for the types of information received
  - How information preferences vary by alcohol types
  - How information preferences vary by key demographic groups

### **Methodology**

- BritainThinks conducted 4 focus groups, each with 6 members of the public
  - 2 in London (7<sup>th</sup> September 2016)
  - 2 in Manchester (15<sup>th</sup> September 2016)
- Groups were run using a discussion guide drawn up by BritainThinks in collaboration with the RSPH and the Portman Group
- All participants in the groups consumed alcohol at least once a month
  - Participants who may be classified as dependent drinkers were screened out from the research using behavioral and attitudinal screening questions, as these participants were not the target of the research

| Group 1: London                       | Group 2: London     | Gro       |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------|
| Male                                  | Female              | Male      |
| • ABC1                                | • C2D               | • C2D     |
| <ul> <li>25 – 50 years old</li> </ul> | • 25 – 50 years old | • $25-50$ |
| 2 BAME participants                   | 2 BAME participants | • 2 BAME  |
|                                       |                     |           |

| roup 3: Manchester | Group 4: Manchester |  |
|--------------------|---------------------|--|
|                    | Female              |  |
|                    | ABC1                |  |
| years old          | • 25 – 50 years old |  |
| E participants     | 2 BAME participants |  |
|                    |                     |  |

### Methodology

- BritainThinks used the findings from the focus groups to design a quantitative survey
  - The aim of this survey was to test how far the findings from the groups are applicable to the wider public
- The survey itself was commissioned by RSPH and the Portman Group and run by Populus Data Solutions (PDS)
  - Questions were placed on PDS' online omnibus
  - 1,786 adults over the age of 18 who drink alcohol were surveyed
  - Fieldwork was delivered between 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> February 2017

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## Background attitudes and behaviour

# In line with other research, the groups demonstrated the extent to which alcohol is a part of British social interaction

- Participants' alcohol consumption varied considerably some only drinking once or twice a month, and others drinking three or four times a week
- However, almost all saw the consumption of alcohol integral part of having a social life in England
  - It helps distinguish between time at work, and leisure tim
  - Ritualised drinking helps to bond groups together
  - There are some occasions for example, weddings, or k – which just "wouldn't be the same" without alcohol

| y, with<br>s | <i>"When do I have a drink? As often<br/>as possible!"</i><br>Female, Manchester   |
|--------------|--|
| as an        |  |
| ıe           |  |
| birthdays    | <i>"It's just part of what you do, when you go to a football match or something, you might have one before, or during the break." Male, Manchester</i> |
|              |  |

## The perception of alcohol as part of 'having fun' means alcohol is conceptualised as distinct from other health-related behaviours



- For most, a healthy lifestyle is thought of primarily in terms of diet and exercise
- Drinking alcohol is seen as separate to these behaviours
  - The 'having fun' frame that people are in when drinking means they do not want to consider the impact of their behaviour on their health or to moderate their drinking accordingly
- In part, this distinction is made possible because of a belief that the negative health consequences of alcohol are experienced primarily by alcoholics
  - By which participants meant chronic drunks, whose drinking has immediate and powerful consequences for their lives, e.g. by making them unable to hold down a job
  - This is too far removed from how most people feel about their drinking to feel relevant



#### The 'fun frame' means that most drinking is unstructured, with the volume of alcohol consumed driven by company and wider circumstances

- The volume of alcohol consumed is not planned in advance, but tends to be driven by the occasion, and who they are with Participants often felt they are more likely to drink heavily with friends

  - Or if celebrating a special occasion
- However, for some, the pressures of another part of their life can result in a conscious moderation of their drinking on specific occasions

  - For example, the need to get to work, or look after their children Or financial pressures which might cause them to feel they cannot afford to drink
  - In addition, for a small number of women, concern about their alcohol tolerance means they are more conscious of what they are consuming when they drink

"I like a beer in most cases, but it depends on the group of people that I go out with." Male, Manchester

"The only time [that I think about what I am drinking] is if I have something on the next day...If I have nothing on tomorrow, I literally don't care." Female, Manchester

## Most see lifestage as a key driver of drinking habits

#### **College / university**

Many drink heavily on a routine basis

- Lots of time to socialise
- Few responsibilities
- Little concern for long-term health impact





#### Early – mid 20s

#### Drinking drops off slightly, but many continue to drink heavily

- Starting work means less time to drink mid-week
- But busy social lives mean many continue to drink heavily routinely in clubs / bars
- Especially those who are single

Mid - late 20s

#### For many, heavy drinking becomes less routine

- As people meet long-term partners, they go out less to clubs / bars
  - This shift is less evident for those who are single
- Drinking remains a key part of "date nights" and nights with friends



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#### Late 20s – early 30s

#### For many, routine heavy drinking continues to fall

- Arrival of children means many have less time for drinking
  - Especially women
- And, for some, a concern about the amount they have drunk previously leads to an effort to "cut down"





#### Mid 30s +

#### **Drinking plateaus**

- A sense of their personal "limits" and settled lifestyle means many have established and consistent drinking habits
- Although, for some women, as their children grow up, there is less pressure on their time, and they feel able to drink slightly more again



## Most see lifestage as a key driver of drinking habits

*"When you're young, you have to prove you can drink, that you can hold it."* Female, London





*"Work's finished for the week, time for a drink."* Female, Manchester "I've started to drink less and less. I only really drink a lot on a special occasion." Male, Manchester



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"When you're younger, you don't think about consequences, but when you're older and you have children you need to be on form." Female, London





"15 years ago I went out almost every night, now I don't drink on a work night, I can't function." Male, London

## Perceptions and usage of current alcohol labelling

- Perceptions and usage of current alcohol labelling overall ightarrow

Perceptions and usage of specific elements of alcohol labels

## Perceptions and usage of current alcohol labelling

- Perceptions and usage of current alcohol labelling overall ightarrow

Perceptions and usage of specific elements of alcohol labels

## Findings from both strands of research demonstrate relatively low levels of familiarity with many elements of alcohol labelling



#### **BritainThinks**

Q5. In the box below, please write in all the information that you think you would currently find on a normal alcohol label. Please think about information provided on both the front and the back of the container, and include as many different types of information as you can think of. Base: All who drink alcohol (1,786). Chart shows mentions over 20%.

• Qualitatively, there is some passing awareness that bottles and cans containing alcohol have some information on them about the alcohol

 However, participants struggled to spontaneously identify the kind of information that is available Many immediately thought of information about branding, or the variant of alcohol (e.g. grape type

Although some did identify ABV and units

In the focus groups, most did not spontaneously make the connection between the information shown on alcohol labels and that shown on food. Just a couple of health-conscious women made this link – observing that there is much less information about the nutritional content of alcohol, and particularly its sugar content

## While a high proportion of the public say they do look at alcohol labels, this is rarely for health information



- alcohol label to identify the brand
- Health information is rarely sought

"To be honest with you, I just won't look at it. It's not something I would pay attention to all. It just wouldn't bother me." Male, Manchester

#### **BritainThinks**

Q6. When, if ever, would you typically look at the front or back labels of an alcohol container, or online for information about the alcohol? Base: All respondents who drink alcohol (1,786).

Qualitative participants say they predominantly use the

Because of the "fun" frame in which people approach drinking, health information is not front-of-mind when choosing between different alcoholic drinks



## The public are most likely to report that they look at alcohol labels in the shop before purchasing the alcohol



#### **BritainThinks**

Q6. When, if ever, would you typically look at the front or back labels of an alcohol container, or online for information about the alcohol? Base: All respondents who drink alcohol (1,786). Q7. And what kind of information would you look at on...? Base: All respondents who drink alcohol and... Read the label in the shop before purchasing the alcohol. Showing all answers above 5% (n=1,335)

#### Alcohol labels are read far less frequently after the alcohol has been purchased

When, if ever, would you typically look at the front or back labels of an alcohol container, or online for information about the alcohol?



#### **BritainThinks**

Q6. When, if ever, would you typically look at the front or back labels of an alcohol container, or online for information about the alcohol? Base: All respondents who drink alcohol (1,786). Q7. And what kind of information would you look at on...? Base: All respondents who drink alcohol and... Read the label in the shop before purchasing the alcohol. Showing all answers above 5% (n=1,335)

On these occasions, ABV continues to be the most sought piece of information

• 45% of those who say that they look at the label before drinking the alcohol say that they look at ABV, and only 11% say that they look at

• 29% of those who look at alcohol labels after drinking the alcohol say that they look at ABV, compared to 10% who say that they look at

# When shown existing information on lab participants felt it is not sufficiently atte

- It is often hard to read
  - Fonts are small
  - Colours do not stand out
  - It is sometimes printed side-on, exacerbating problems v reading
- It is also printed on the back of the container 'where r one looks'
- This led some to question whether consumers are ac intended to see it

| bels,  | focus   | group |
|--------|---------|-------|
| entior | n-grabl | bing  |

| no<br>ctually<br><i>"I can't even read this with my</i><br><i>reading glasses on, it's so</i><br><i>small."</i><br>Male, London | with    | <i>"It is designed to blend in. I don't think people like to be reminded how much they are drinking."</i><br>Male, Manchester |   |
|---|---------|---|---|
| reading glasses on, it's so small."   | no      |   | _ |
|   | ctually | reading glasses on, it's so<br>small."  |   |

## There was also a sense that this information is not relevant to most people

- Participants questioned who the target audience for health information is
  - Lots of alcohol is consumed in bars, clubs or restaurants, when the bottle – and therefore information – will not be visible
  - And worrying about what you are drinking is not part of this environment
- This led many to think that existing information is for "someone else"
  - For example, people who are watching their weight
  - Or those with a drinking problem

"I don't know who would look at this. Maybe someone who was worried about their drinking?" Male, London

"A lot of the time when I drink, I'm out and about, and then you don't see the bottle anyway." Female, London

## Perceptions and usage of current alcohol labelling

- Perceptions and usage of current alcohol labelling overall
- ightarrow

Perceptions and usage of specific elements of alcohol labels

## Of current information, ABV is the most widely understood and most likely to be sought out when buying alcohol

## Spontaneous awareness of ABV: 75%

Report looking at ABV...





#### **BritainThinks**

43%

 Across both strands of research, we heard that ABV is the type of information that is most commonly used

• In the focus groups, most felt that they have a good understanding of what ABV is, and what this means for them

 Most commonly, participants use ABV to ensure they are not inadvertently consuming drinks that are much stronger than they had

• However, a small number of younger participants also said that they use this information to ensure that they do not get "tricked" into buying drinks with a lower alcohol content than they would expect

"I've started drinking craft beer and it's a bit of an unknown. You can drink one that is 3.4% or another is 6% so I have been checking." Male, London

Q5. In the box below, please write in all the information that you think you would currently find on a normal alcohol label. Please think about information provided on both the front and the back of the container, and include as many different types of information as you can think of. Base: All who drink alcohol (1,786).

Q7. And what kind of information would you look at on...? Base: All respondents who drink alcohol (1,786).

## A widespread lack of understanding of units limits their utility

## Spontaneous awareness of units: 29%

Those aged 18-24 (42%) and 25-34 (37%) are significantly more likely than older adults to be aware of units

Report looking at units...

- Most focus group participants did not know what the recommended limits were
  - And, even if they did, felt they would not keep track on an evening out, because it would "ruin the fun"
- There is confusion about what the connection is if any between units and individuals' alcohol tolerance
  - For many, the idea that recommended allowances are the same, regardless of size, age or personal capacity for alcohol feels counterintuitive
- different drinks
  - Most were aware that one shot of spirits is one unit
    - Although it was noted that when drinking in home people may not think in terms of "shots"
  - There was considerable confusion about what a unit of beer or wine looks like A lack of consistency in serving sizes exacerbates this confusion

#### **BritainThinks**

4%

In the shop before purchasing the alcohol

Q5. In the box below, please write in all the information that you think you would currently find on a normal alcohol label. Please think about information provided on both the front and the back of the container, and include as many different types of information as you can think of. Base: All who drink alcohol (1,786).

1%

After drinking the alcohol

< 1%

Before drinking the alcohol

## And a lack of clarity regarding what constitutes a unit of

Q7. And what kind of information would you look at on...? Base: All respondents who drink alcohol (1,786).

### Few use CMO guidance, or are aware that it is present on alcohol labels



#### **BritainThinks**

Q5. In the box below, please write in all the information that you think you would currently find on a normal alcohol label. Please think about information provided on both the front and the back of the container, and include as many different types of information as you can think of. Base: All who drink alcohol (1,786).

Q7. And what kind of information would you look at on...? Base: All respondents who drink alcohol (1,786).

Including CMO guidance is seen as essential if alcohol labels are also going to include information on the units in the drink Without it, such information will be incomprehensible, and therefore unusable, for most

However, many felt the current guidelines are unrealistic in the context of people's lifestyles

• This was exacerbated by looking at the guidelines against the unit contents of some of the beer and cider we showed

#### There were questions about the authority of the CMO

• Some were aware that the guidance has changed, raising questions about its accuracy and how far it can be trusted

And some questioned whether the CMO is the right person to issue

A widespread lack of familiarity with the CMO role (and lack of awareness that the CMO is a medical doctor) raised concerns about their credentials – with some questioning why guidance does not come from a doctor, or an organisation with global credibility

This is part of a widespread current tendency to distrust authority figures that is currently seen in much research

## While many recognise the pregnancy warning, few mention it spontaneously or see it as an important element of current labelling

## Spontaneous awareness of pregnancy warning: 4%

Report looking at pregnancy warning...

- Whilst participants did not spontaneously identify this as an element of alcohol labelling, most felt they were familiar with it when they saw it on the label
- However, there was a widespread feeling that this is the least helpful part of current health information
  - Most said that people know women should not drink alcohol when pregnant - including this, therefore, felt "silly" to some
  - Whilst others felt including it is simply a case of alcohol manufacturers "covering themselves"

| 0%  | 0%                          | 0%                         | "I find it |
|---|-----------------------------|----------------------------|------------|
| In the shop before purchasing the alcohol | Before drinking the alcohol | After drinking the alcohol | there is   |

#### **BritainThinks**

hilarious. Because it's surely obvious. I don't think any harm in doing it though."

Female, Manchester

Q5. In the box below, please write in all the information that you think you would currently find on a normal alcohol label. Please think about information provided on both the front and the back of the container, and include as many different types of information as you can think of. Base: All who drink alcohol (1,786).

Q7. And what kind of information would you look at on...? Base: All respondents who drink alcohol (1,786).

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## Priorities for alcohol labelling

## There was agreement in both strands of research that ABV and units are the most important pieces of information to include

% respondents rating different types of information as important (7 + / 10) to include on alcohol labels:

|   | ABV % (alcohol volume)                                 | 81  | % |
|---|--|-----|---|
|   | Alcohol units  | 68% |   |
|   | Brand name/logo  | 63% |   |
|   | Best before date                                       | 60% |   |
|   | Ingredients  | 57% |   |
| Warni                                   | ing not to drink and drive                             | 57% |   |
|   | Place of origin  | 52% |   |
| W                                       | /arning not to drink while<br>pregnant                 | 51% |   |
|   | Health warnings  | 44% |   |
| Warning not to drink under legal<br>age |  | 43% |   |
| Dri                                     | nk responsibly' message                                | 43% |   |
|   | Nutritional information                                | 42% |   |
| т                                       | raffic light style labelling                           | 41% |   |
|   | Calorie content  | 41% |   |
| M                                       | anufacturing information                               | 39% |   |
|   | Medical Officers' alcohol<br>nsumption guidelines      | 39% |   |
| Detail                                  | s of where to find further<br>bhol health information… | 32% |   |

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Q8. How important, if at all, is it to you that each of the following pieces of information appear on an alcohol label? Please give your answers on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is not at all important, 10 is very important, and 5 is in the middle. Base: All respondents who drink alcohol (1,786)



### There was agreement in both strands of research that ABV and units are the most important pieces of information to include

% respondents rating different types of information as important (7 + / 10) to include on alcohol labels:

ABV % (alcohol volume) 81% Alcohol units 68%

- ABV is the most understood and used piece of information, and is therefore seen as most important to include moving forward
- Units are also seen as very important, because of their familiarity
  - However, participants felt that the public are not going to be able to interpret information about units without support. For that reason, despite low familiarity with the CMO guidelines, participants felt that these should be shown alongside information about units
  - Participants were also clear that units should be shown in a way that makes them easier for consumers to use
    - On balance, they felt that displaying the number of units in the bottle would be the most effective way to do this, as it would enable people to see how much of the bottle they had consumed, and to refer it immediately back to the CMO guidelines
    - Several participants also suggested having unit markers on the side of the bottle, to make it even easier for people to see what they have drunk
      - This was widely supported, as it was felt that it would help to address the confusion caused by the lack of consistency in serving sizes
      - And would help people avoid doing mental arithmetic if they had drunk, for example, a third of a bottle of wine

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"[ABV] just makes sense, and it tells you what you are drinking." Male, London

"Maybe they could have little markers, like you get on juice cartons sometimes, but showing how many units." Female, London

### Although less important than ABV and units, there is agreement that warnings about negative behaviours should ideally be on labels

- Focus group participants had question marks over the impact of pregnancy warnings, drink-and-drive and legal age purchase logos
  - It was generally felt that this is information that people will already be aware of
    - For example, participants felt that there is good awareness of anti-drink driving campaigns
  - And those who engage in these behaviours are unlikely to be deterred by these messages
- They therefore agreed with survey respondents that these elements are relatively less important than information about ABV / units



Q8. How important, if at all, is it to you that each of the following pieces of information appear on an alcohol label? Please give your answers on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is not at all important, 10 is very important, and 5 is in the middle. Base: All respondents who drink alcohol (1,786). Important defined as rated 7 + / 10

#### Calories are not a top-of-mind priority, but on consideration are seen as a potentially valuable tool CALORIE CONTENT

- The focus groups and survey both demonstrate that there is not currently strong demand for information about calories
- When suggested in the groups, the response was lukewarm
  - Most felt that they would not use it
  - And some women were actively hostile, because of the "fun" frame in which they consume alcohol, saying that this information would add a layer of guilt to drinking that they would not like to feel
- However, on further consideration in the groups, most came to think that calories might be an important element to include on labels
  - Most do not know how many calories are in alcoholic drinks
  - There are those who would use this information to inform their thinking
  - Calories, unlike units, are widely used and understood
- While not top-of-mind, or something that participants would consider doing themselves, there was some concern about people swapping to lower calorie / higher ABV drinks, or not eating in order to "save" calories for a night of drinking



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Q8. How important, if at all, is it to you that each of the following pieces of information appear on an alcohol label? Please give your answers on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is not at all important, 10 is very important, and 5 is in the middle. Base: All respondents who drink alcohol (1,786). Important defined as rated 7 + / 10

## Both "traffic light" warnings and health warnings were raised spontaneously by participants in the groups

- In London, some participants felt that a "traffic light" system would be a way to communicate the strength or calorie content of alcohol
  - It was the felt that the colours transcend associations with driving, and would be an effective way of delivering information quickly
- In contrast, in Manchester there was support for health warnings on alcohol labels
  - Participants felt this would be an effective way to encourage people to moderate their drinking
    - Suggestions ranged from the relatively mild "Alcohol harms your health", to much stronger cigarette-style warnings and images
  - There was less support for this idea in London where participants preferred to see messages that encouraged responsible behaviour e.g. "Know your limits" or "Drink responsibly"



Q8. How important, if at all, is it to you that each of the following pieces of information appear on an alcohol label? Please give your answers on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is not at all important, 10 is very important, and 5 is in the middle. Base: All respondents who drink alcohol (1,786). Important defined as rated 7 + / 10

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## **Presenting information about alcohol**

#### People are far more likely to use information if it is on the front label



#### **BritainThinks**

Q6. When, if ever, would you typically look at the front or back labels of an alcohol container, or online for information about the alcohol? Base: All respondents who drink alcohol (1,786).

## Most want to see information that they feel is most important (ABV & units) on the front alcohol label



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Q10. Where, if anywhere, should the following information be provided? Base: All respondents who drink alcohol (n=1,786)
## However, most are happy about the current balance of information provision and warn against overloading labels

#### How do you feel about the current balance between product information and health related information on typical alcohol labels

- There is too much information about the product and not enough health
- The balance between product information and health information is about right







#### **BritainThinks**

Q9. How do you feel about the current balance between product information and health-related information on typical alcohol labels? Base: All respondents who drink alcohol (1,786) Q12. Thinking about the health information on the labels of alcoholic drinks, which of the following do you think would be the most helpful to you when using this information? Base: All respondents who drink alcohol (1,786)

Thinking about the health information on the labels of alcoholic drinks, which of the following do you think would be the most helpful to you when using this information

As much health information as possible, even if the font and symbols were smaller/hard to read

A small amount of health information, but in bigger and clearer fonts and symbols

| )% | 80% |
|----|-----|
|    |     |

## Per serving and per container are seen as preferable ways of presenting information on calories and units to volume



#### **BritainThinks**

Q11. If the following information were to be displayed on an alcohol label, what in your view would be the most helpful format in which to show it? Base: All respondents who drink alcohol (1,786)

 Women are significantly more likely than men to want this information per serving

- 51% of women want units displayed per serving compared to 29% of men
- 50% of women want calories displayed per serving compared to 29% of men

This research does not show whether this preference between displaying information per serving or per container differs between different alcohol types; this would be an area for further research

These findings were reflected in the qualitative research where we asked participants to design their own alcohol labels, presenting the information in the way that they felt would be most helpful to consumers...



- Branding information prominently displayed on the front of the bottle
- Key health information in bold fonts on the front of the bottle
- Pregnancy, drink driving and legal age logos on the back of the bottle
- Along with additional information about the product / brand



- Branding information prominently displayed on the front of the bottle
- Information about ABV on the front of the bottle
- Additional health information (health warning, CMO guidance, calorie information and pregnancy warning) on the back

*"I've put ABV and calorie information on the front, so it's easy to compare when you are in a shop, and then the more detailed information on the back."* 

Female, London

"Most of the time, the brand is what you buy whether it is Peroni or a Carling. That's what draws you in. You're not drawn in by the CMO's guidelines, it's the colour, the aesthetics." Male, Manchester

*"It all needs to be a size that you actually notice and that you can read, rather than being hidden away."* 

Male, London

## 5 principles for the presentation of information on alcohol labels emerged from the research



# Switching based on calorie information

## In the survey we asked respondents to say what they would choose given\*:





\*Participants were either shown bottles of beer, wine or spirits, with these categories being allocated based on their stated preference in an earlier survey question

## Methodological note

These findings from this question should be treated only as indicative and not as necessarily reflecting the extent of actual behaviour change. These results are based on an artificial choice (an online survey in which respondents are making a decision based solely on ABV and/or calorie information). Without further research, we would caution making inferences based on these findings to actual behaviour and real life scenarios, where there are other uncontrolled variables (brand, taste, cost) to inform the public's decisions.

## When making a choice based purely on ABV, respondents are more likely to opt for a mid ABV lager and a high ABV spirit

Choosing based on ABV



#### **BritainThinks**

Q13. Imagine you were buying one of the three bottles of beer/spirit/ wine below. Based on the information available, which would you, buy? Please assume that the cost and taste of each option is the same. Base: All respondents who drink alcohol who saw each option (Lager, n=595), (Spirit, n=595), (Wine, n=596)

When choosing between different options for wine and spirits, men are more likely to opt for higher ABV options

- 39% of men opt for the high ABV wine opposed to 24% of women
- Similarly, 62% of men opt for a high ABV spirit compared to 43% of women

#### A similar pattern appears with younger adults when choosing between spirits

 Those aged 18-24 (65%) more likely than those aged 25-34 (47%) to opt for a higher ABV spirit

## Across all categories, respondents are most likely to choose lower calorie options when presented only with calorie information

## Choosing based on calories



#### **BritainThinks**

Q13. Imagine you were buying one of the three bottles of beer/spirit/ wine below. Based on the information available, which would you, buy? Please assume that the cost and taste of each option is the same. Base: All respondents who drink alcohol who saw each option (Lager, n=595), (Spirit, n=595), (Wine, n=596)

When choosing between wines and spirits, women are more likely to choose lower calorie options

• 73% of women opt for the low calorie wine opposed to 61% of men

• Similarly, 74% of women opt for a low calorie spirit compared to 53% of men

## When ABV and calories are both taken into account, men and women tend to both opt for mid calorie, mid ABV lagers, however, there is more of a divergence when selecting spirits and wine





#### BritainThinks

Q13. Imagine you were buying one of the three bottles of beer/spirit/ wine below. Based on the information available, which would you, buy? Please assume that the cost and taste of each option is the same. Base: All respondents who drink alcohol who saw each option (Lager, n=595), (Spirit, n=595), (Wine, n=596)

When choosing between spirits men (50%) are more likely than women (23%) to choose a high calorie, high ABV option

 In comparison, women (51%) are more likely than men (26%) to choose a low calorie, low ABV option

#### Similarly, when choosing between wine men (30%) are more likely than women (15%) to choose a high calorie, high ABV option

In comparison, women (48%) are more likely than men (28%) to choose a low calorie, low ABV option

## These findings provide some evidence for switching behaviour – however, they should be treated as indicative



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Across all categories, the proportion of respondents selecting a high ABV option decreases once calorie information is included

## Key insights

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## Alcohol is thought of predominantly through the frame of having fun

- This means it is disassociated from health-related behaviours like diet and exercise
- And that when buying and consuming alcohol, people are less likely to think about the volumes they are drinking
- And are resistant to thinking about the health impact

## Of the information currently provided on labels, ABV is both the most familiar and the most used

- 75% name ABV as being part of an alcohol label, compared to 29% who name units (the second most known component of an alcohol label)
- 58% say that they look at ABV before purchasing alcohol in a shop, compared to 5% who say they look at units

### There is not currently a spontaneous appetite amongst those who took part in the research for changes to the way information is presented

- 70% feel the balance between health information and product / brand information is about right
- However, when asked to consider the information on labels, there are criticisms about its placement and presentation

#### Thinking about what information should be available, there is a clear preference for ABV and units

- 81% say that it is important to include ABV and 68% say it is important to include units on the label
- In the focus groups, discussion also led to the view that calorie information might be helpful too

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## **5** principles for the presentation of information on alcohol labels emerged from the research





Insight & Strategy —

# Thank you

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