



TPackSS: Tobacco Pack Surveillance System Cigarette Health Warning Label Compliance



Mexico - 2013

As of July 2013, Mexico's health warning labels (HWLs) – which fulfill the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) Article 11 minimum requirements – included the following:

1. 30 percent coverage of the front of the pack, with color pictorial HWLs, and 100 percent coverage of the back of the pack
2. Text warning displayed on contrasting background color
3. Eight different tobacco use health warning messages, in Spanish



Front of pack



Back of pack

Mexico's HWL size ranked 3rd in the WHO Region of the Americas and ranked 7th globally in 2012.¹ However, FCTC guidelines recommend the use of pictorial warnings that cover 50 percent or more of the front and back of the pack, which Mexico's HWLs do not fulfill.

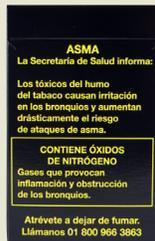
TPackSS assesses health warning label compliance as HWL requirements improve in countries. In July 2013, TPackSS collected cigarette packs in Mexico City, Guadalajara, and Mérida using a systematic protocol.² Cigarette packs were assessed for compliance with the current HWL policy in place at the time of data collection.³

Article 11 of the World Health Organization's (WHO) FCTC requires that Parties implement effective tobacco packaging and labeling measures to increase public awareness of the negative health impacts of tobacco products.

TPackSS systematically collected a sample of 72 unique cigarette packs that displayed the HWLs mandated by Mexico. Packs were assessed for compliance with four key requirements.³

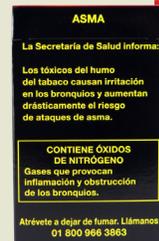
Warning Location

100 percent of packs had a pictorial health warning positioned on the upper portion of the front of the pack and a text warning on the back of the pack.



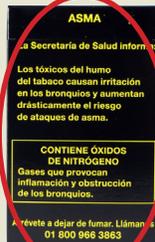
Warning Size

96 percent of packs had a health warning that covered 30 percent of the front and 100 percent of the back of the pack.



Warning Label Elements

100 percent of packs had yellow health warning text on the front of the pack and yellow text on a black background on the back of the pack.



Warning Text Size

99 percent of packs had health warning text size between 9-11 point font on the front, back, and side panels.



94% of the unique cigarette packs assessed were compliant with the four key HWL requirements.

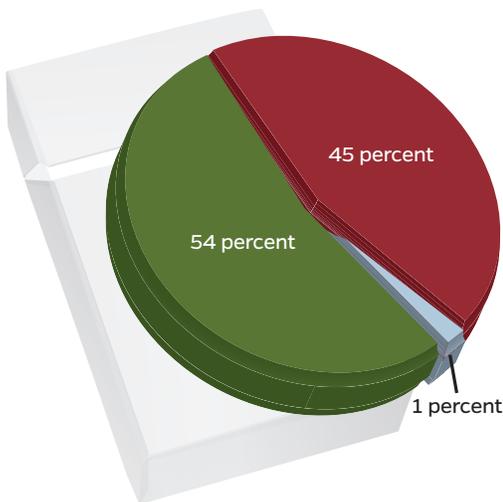
Area of Concern: Text Warning Visibility and Flavor Capsules

These packs are compliant with the four key requirements. The yellow text warning does not stand out on the white background. But when outlined with black the text is sufficiently visible, and this should be required in these instances.

Also, the flavor capsule imagery can draw attention away from the HWL.



Sufficiently visible text warning with black outlining



Breakdown of packs collected and presence of required HWLs

Total number of unique packs collected: 134

- **54 percent** of total packs had a current mandated HWL (n=72)
- **45 percent** of total packs had a previous Mexican HWL (n=60)
- **1 percent** of total packs had no HWL or a non-Mexican HWL (n=2)

Almost half of all packs collected in Mexico displayed a previous Mexican HWL. Mexico's health warning label policy should require the recall or removal of all packs with a previous HWL, and at a minimum, should require HWL coverage of at least 50 percent on both the front and back of the pack. Exposure to best practice HWLs can improve the effectiveness of HWLs in Mexico.

¹ Canadian Cancer Society. Cigarette Package Health Warnings: International Status Report, Third Edition. European Network for Smoking and Tobacco Prevention; 2012. http://www.ensp.org/sites/default/files/CCS_status_report_health_warnings_2012.pdf. Accessed May 25, 2016.

² Smith K, Washington C, Brown J, Vadnais A, Kroart L, Ferguson J, Cohen J. The Tobacco Pack Surveillance System: A Protocol for Assessing Health Warning Compliance, Design Features, and Appeals of Tobacco Packs Sold in Low- and Middle-Income Countries. *JMIR Public Health Surveill.* 2015;1(2). doi: 10.2196/publichealth.4616.

³ General Law on Tobacco Control, August 28, 2008, Mexico; Regulation of the General Law on Tobacco Control, June 30, 2009, Mexico; Ministry of Health Agreement on Health Messages and Information to Appear on Packaging and Labeling, September 24, 2014, Mexico.

About TPackSS

The Institute for Global Tobacco Control (IGTC) at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health developed the Tobacco Pack Surveillance System (TPackSS) project to monitor whether required health warnings on tobacco packages are being implemented as intended, and to identify pack features and marketing appeals that might violate or detract from country tobacco packaging laws in these countries.