



TPackSS: Tobacco Pack Surveillance System Cigarette Health Warning Label Compliance



Viet Nam - 2013

In June 2013, Viet Nam'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 and back of the pack
2. Text warning displayed on contrasting background color
3. Eight different tobacco use health warning messages, in Vietnamese



Viet Nam's HWL size tied for 11th in the WHO Western Pacific Region and tied for 97th 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 Vietnam's HWLs did not fulfill.

TPackSS assesses health warning label compliance as HWL requirements improve in countries. In June 2013, TPackSS collected cigarette packs in Ho Chi Minh City, Hanoi, and Danang 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 83 unique cigarette packs that displayed the HWLs mandated by Viet Nam. Packs were assessed for compliance with three key requirements.³

Warning Size

73 percent of packs had health warnings that covered 30 percent of both the front and back of the pack.



Warning Label Elements

100 percent of packs had black health warning text printed on a white background.



Warning Text Size

100 percent of packs had health warning text measuring at least 2mm in height.

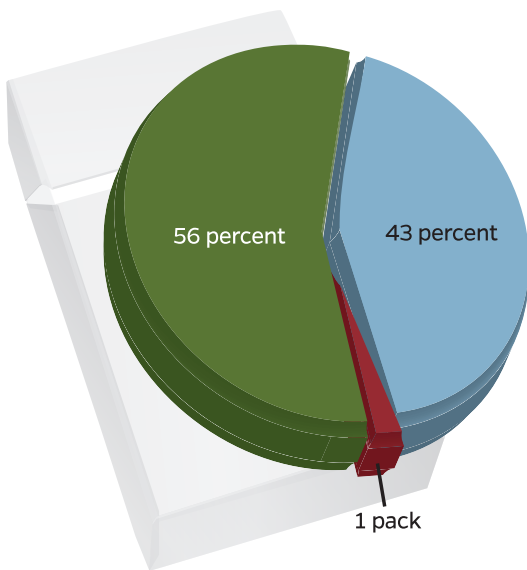


73%

of the unique cigarette packs assessed were compliant with the three key HWL requirements.

Area of Concern: Branding in Health Warning Label

This pack is compliant with the three key HWL requirements, but it displays the name “Agrex Saigon” in the background of the white portion of the packaging. The information is carried through the HWL, reducing the clarity of the warning. The superseding policy⁴ does not specifically restrict or prohibit branding within the background of the HWL, permitting information to be carried through in the new HWLs.



Breakdown of packs collected and presence of required HWLs^{*}

Total number of unique packs collected: 147

- **56 percent** of total packs had a current mandated HWL (n=83)
- **43 percent** of total packs had no HWL or a non-Vietnamese HWL (n=63)
- **1 pack** had a not yet required HWL, with a pictorial warning that covered 85 percent of the front and back of the pack

^{*}Percentages do not add to 100 percent because of rounding.

Approximately four in ten of all packs collected in Viet Nam displayed a non-Vietnamese HWL or no HWL.

At a minimum, Viet Nam’s health warning label policy should require a pictorial HWL and coverage of at least 50 percent on the front and back of the pack. Exposure to best practice HWLs can improve the effectiveness of HWLs in Viet Nam.

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 Ministry of Health Decision No. 2019/2000/QĐ-BYT Provisional Regulations on the Hygiene of Cigarettes (effective July 1, 2000) and Decree No. 119/2007/NĐ-CP on Tobacco Manufacturing and Trading (effective August 2, 2007).

⁴ Law on Prevention and Control of Tobacco Harms, No. 09/2012/QH13 (effective May 1, 2013), Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

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.