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HEALTH > MEDICAL

# Dermatologist Ritu Gupta demands ‘rigorous testing’ after sunscreen review

By JAMES DOWLING

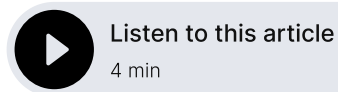


Some 75 per cent of tested sunscreens, including Ultra Violette Lean Screen SPF 50+, failed to meet their advertised SPF rating. Mecca Cosmetica To Save Body Hydrating Sunscreen and La Roche-Posay Anthelios Wet Skin Sunscreen passed the SPF testing.

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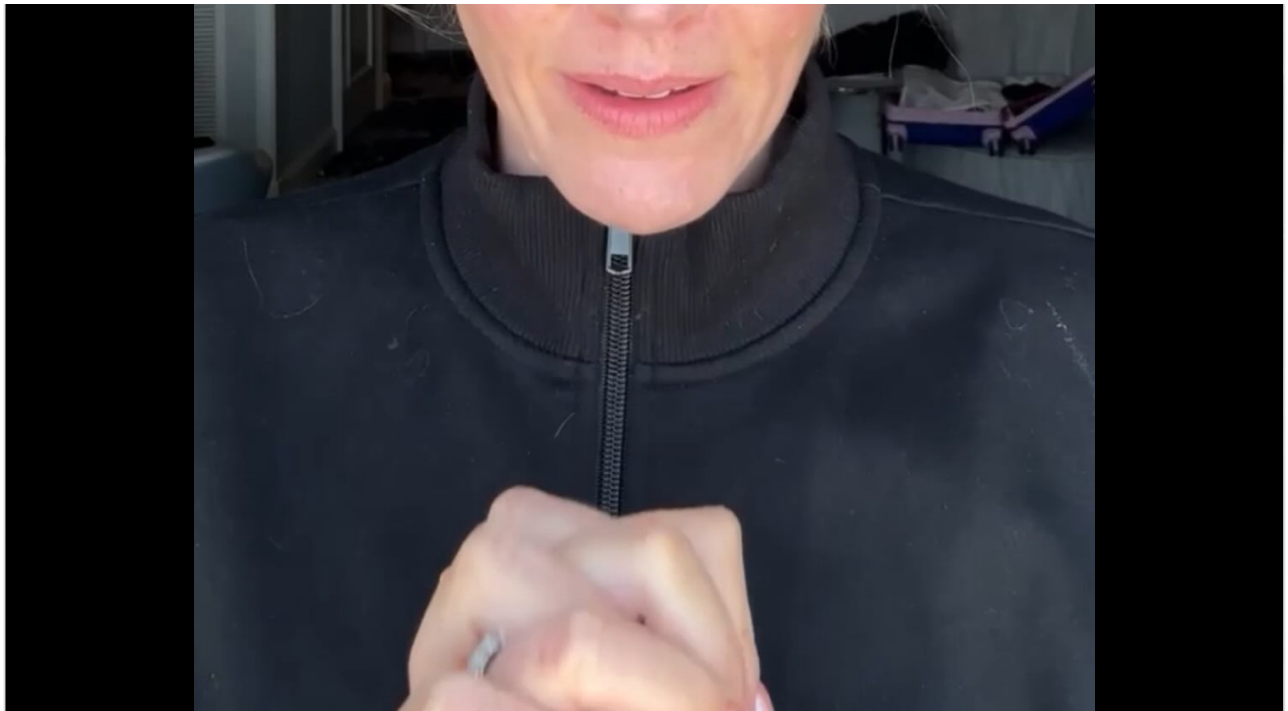


A leading dermatologist has warned that when it comes to sunscreen, pricier does not always mean better, after consumer group Choice defended testing that found 16 of 20 common products fell short of their advertised SPF ratings.

Choice was challenged by sunscreen makers after it revealed [testing of Australia's major sunscreen brands](#) showed significant differences between the coverage claimed and the test results. Sunscreens across a range of brands, retailers and prices underperformed and provided drastically less protection than advertised.

The worst offender was Ultra Violette's Lean Screen SPF 50+, which clocked a measly 4 SPF. Products by Neutrogena, Cancer Council, Aldi Ombra, Bondi Sands, Woolworths and Banana Boat were all ranked at about half of their purported sun protection factor.





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I know this one's long, but we want to make sure you have all the information you need. We understand that seeing Choice's claims may have shaken your trust, and we're here to reassure you, but please watch this through for a more in-depth explanation. We have our 3rd-party test (and re-test) results on our website in full. In this, we explain: how we responded when we heard Choice's claims, how the tests could be so different, and the team and I are here to answer your questions. This is not the time to run away from our own brand, we take this seriously and we have a very strong, regulated market. We're here to listen, to reassure you and to hear your concerns.

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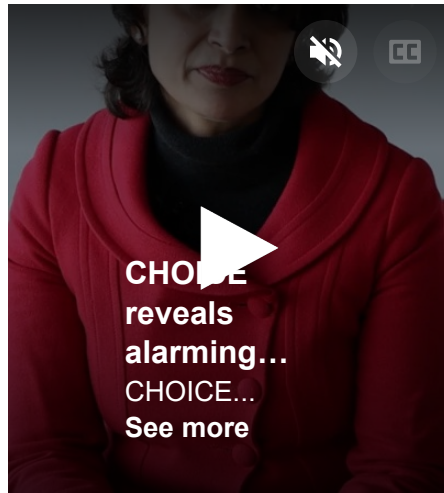
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Choice said on Monday that it had conducted double testing of the Ultra Violette brand to confirm the results.

Only four sunscreen products delivered at or above what they advertised. The best tested was La Roche-Posay Anthelios Wet Skin Sunscreen SPF 50+, which carried 72 SPF.

The test results were referred to Australia's medical regulator, the Therapeutic Goods Administration, and the Australian Competition & Consumer Commission.



Specialist dermatologist Ritu Gupta said health authorities would be wise to follow up on the findings.

“We need to be certain that if we’re buying a sunscreen that has an SPF of 50 or an SPF of 30, that that, in fact, is what it has,” Dr Gupta told The Australian.

“I don’t think there’s any clear giveaway that someone can look at a sunscreen and know (whether it) is a bad sunscreen or not. Hopefully what we can do, and hopefully what this article will have achieved, is that there’s more rigorous testing, there’s independent testing, and that we as consumers can trust in what the brands say on their packaging.

“The SPF that is found in testing is usually not replicated (in what) people actually achieve in the field, and that’s because people don’t put on enough.”

Dr Gupta said that when selecting a sunscreen, it was important to balance a range of additional attributes products may carry.

“More expensive sunscreens are not necessarily better, but they may contain additional ingredients that mean that they have better UV protection,” she said.

“Sometimes additional ingredients in



sunscreen that can mean they have a higher price point, (change) the consistency ... (or) that it doesn't leave a white tint on the skin.



Dermatologist Dr Ritu Gupta.

“(They could include) chemical absorbers and physical blocking sunscreens. The ones that contain both are the best sunscreens because they block the UV as it hits the skin. That’s what a physical blocker does, zinc or titanium, and then the chemical absorbers absorb the UV and neutralise its effect on DNA.

“Sometimes sunscreens can also contain a tint. A tint is important because it helps block visible light. Visible light contributes not to skin cancer and melanoma, but does contribute to skin ageing and pigmentation, and can be important in people who have conditions like melasma.

“If you’re going to spend more on a sunscreen, you might budget that and spend more on sunscreen that you use on your face and use a cheaper sunscreen on your body.”



Choice chief executive Ashley de Silva.

Dr Gupta said that regardless of which sunscreen you used, it was important to reapply it often and to use enough product, picking a brand with an [SPF at least more than 30](#).



The consumer testing group Choice defended its testing as being in the interest of consumers.

“We did this testing because it’s in line with our mission to work for fair, safe and just markets for Australian consumers. Millions of people rely on SPF ratings to understand the sun protection they’re paying for and expect these ratings to be as accurate as possible,” Choice chief executive Ashley de Silva said.

“Sunscreen testing is costly. Choice – an independent, member-funded non-profit – funded this work entirely ourselves due to its importance for consumers.

“We believe the discrepancy between our test results and those provided by manufacturers warrants further investigation by the TGA.

“We are calling for a compliance review, including independent testing of the mean SPF for, at least, the sunscreens that did not meet their label claims in our commissioned tests.”

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## JAMES DOWLING SCIENCE AND HEALTH REPORTER

James Dowling is a reporter for The Australian's Sydney bureau. He previously worked as a cadet journalist writing for the Daily Telegraph, Sunday Telegraph and NewsWire, in addition to this masthead. As an intern at The Age he was nominated for a Quill award for News Reporting in Writing.

✉ James Dowling



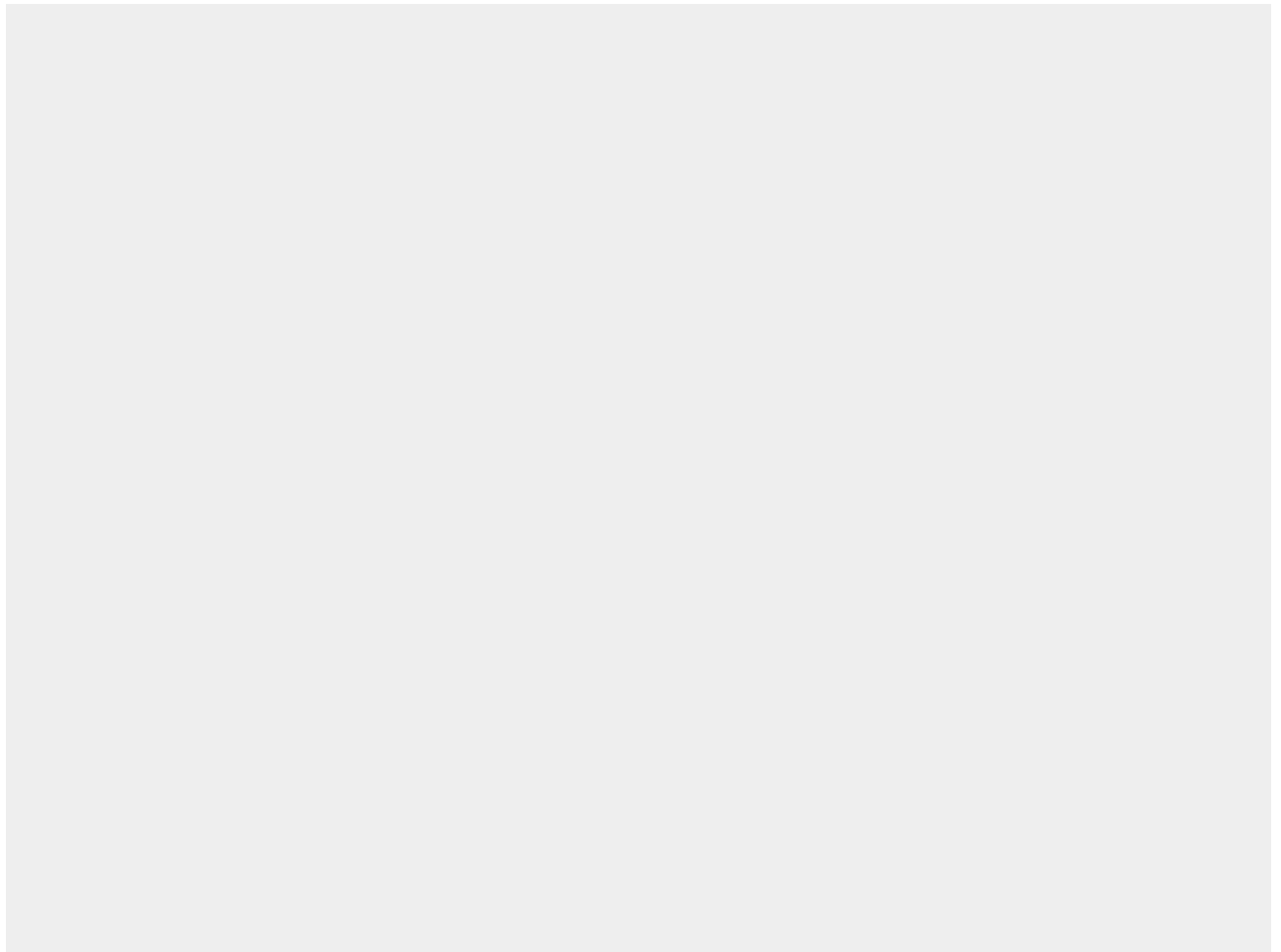
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By JAMES DOWLING

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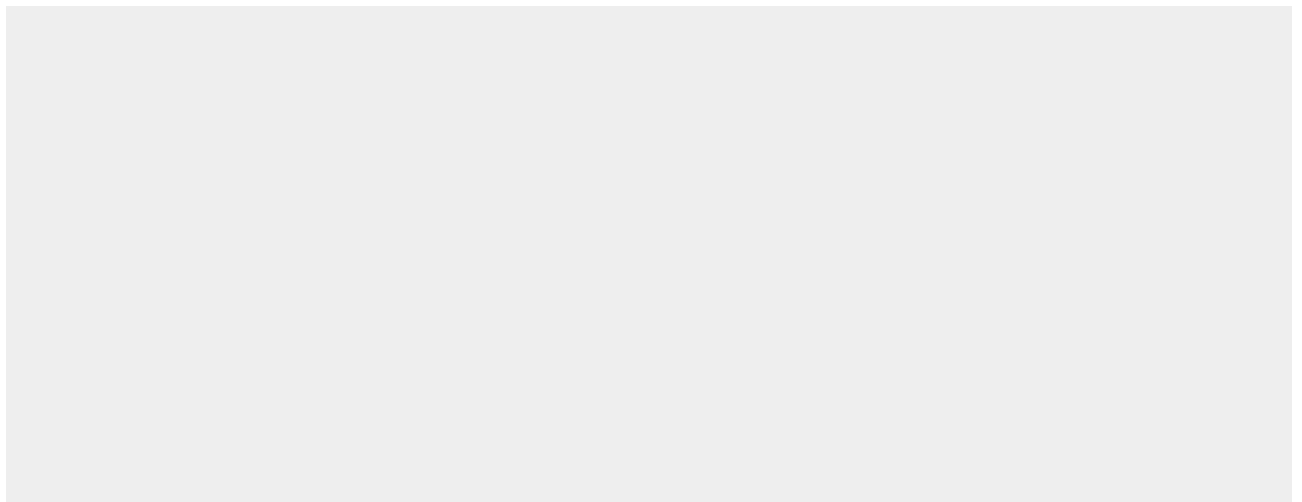


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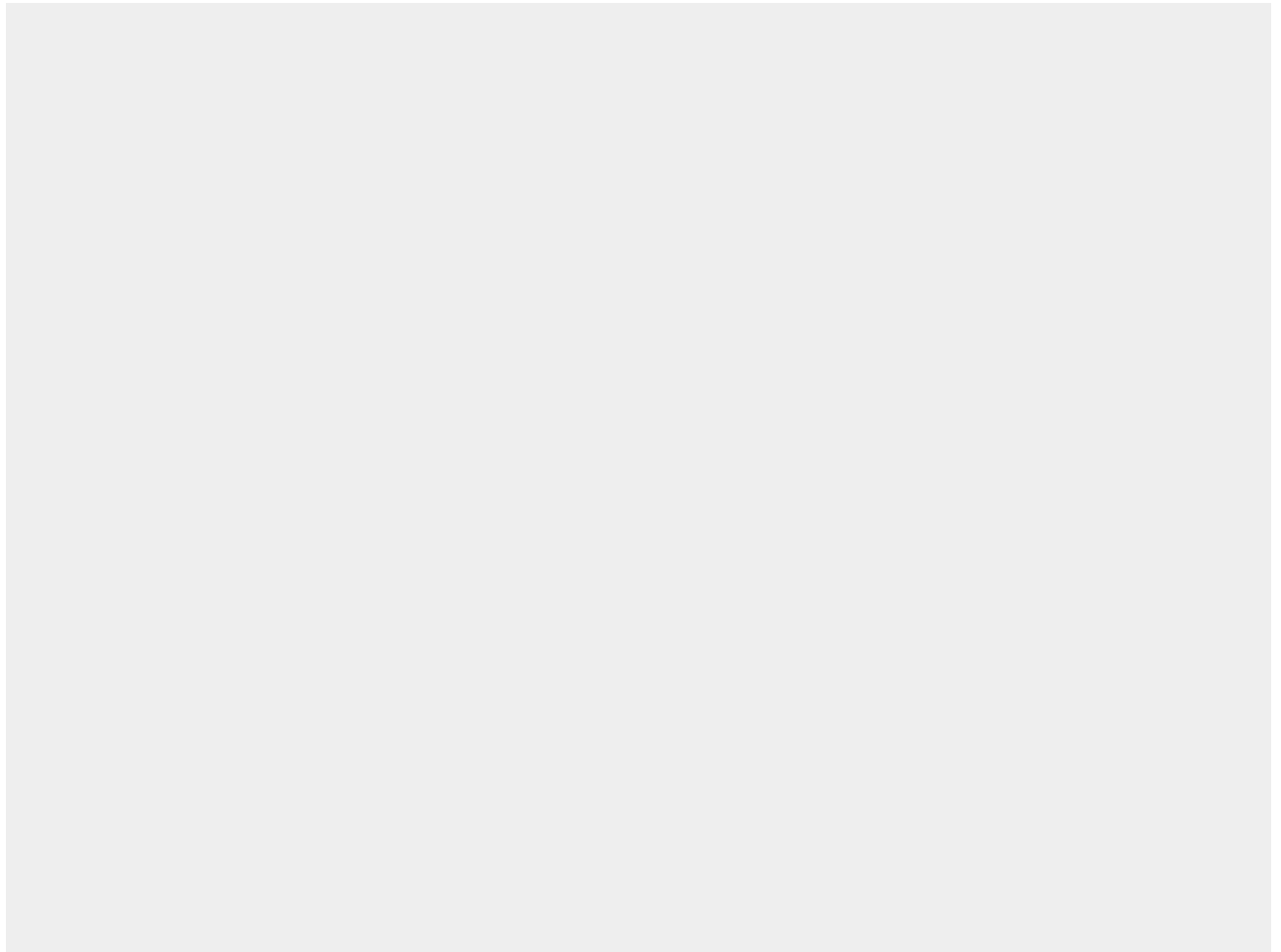


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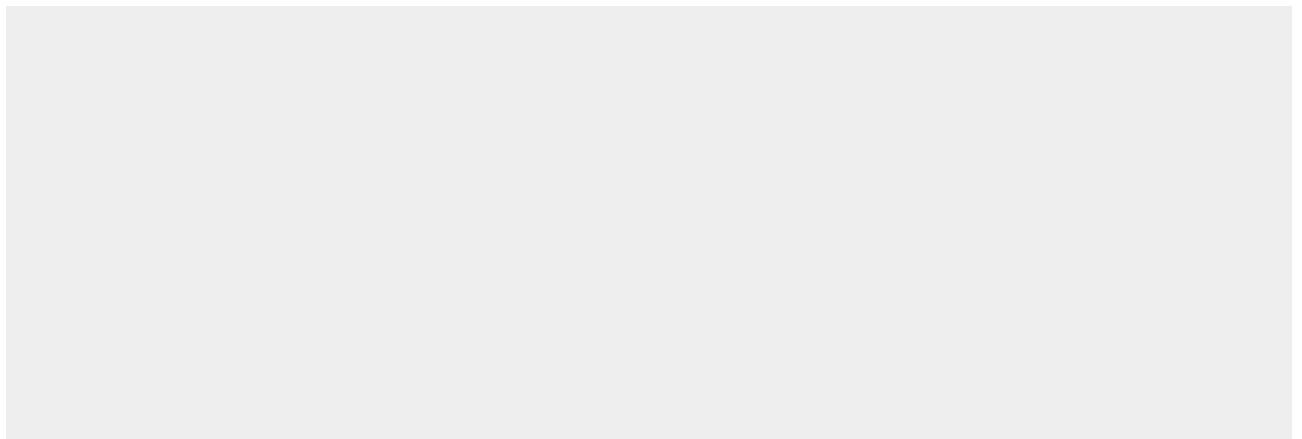


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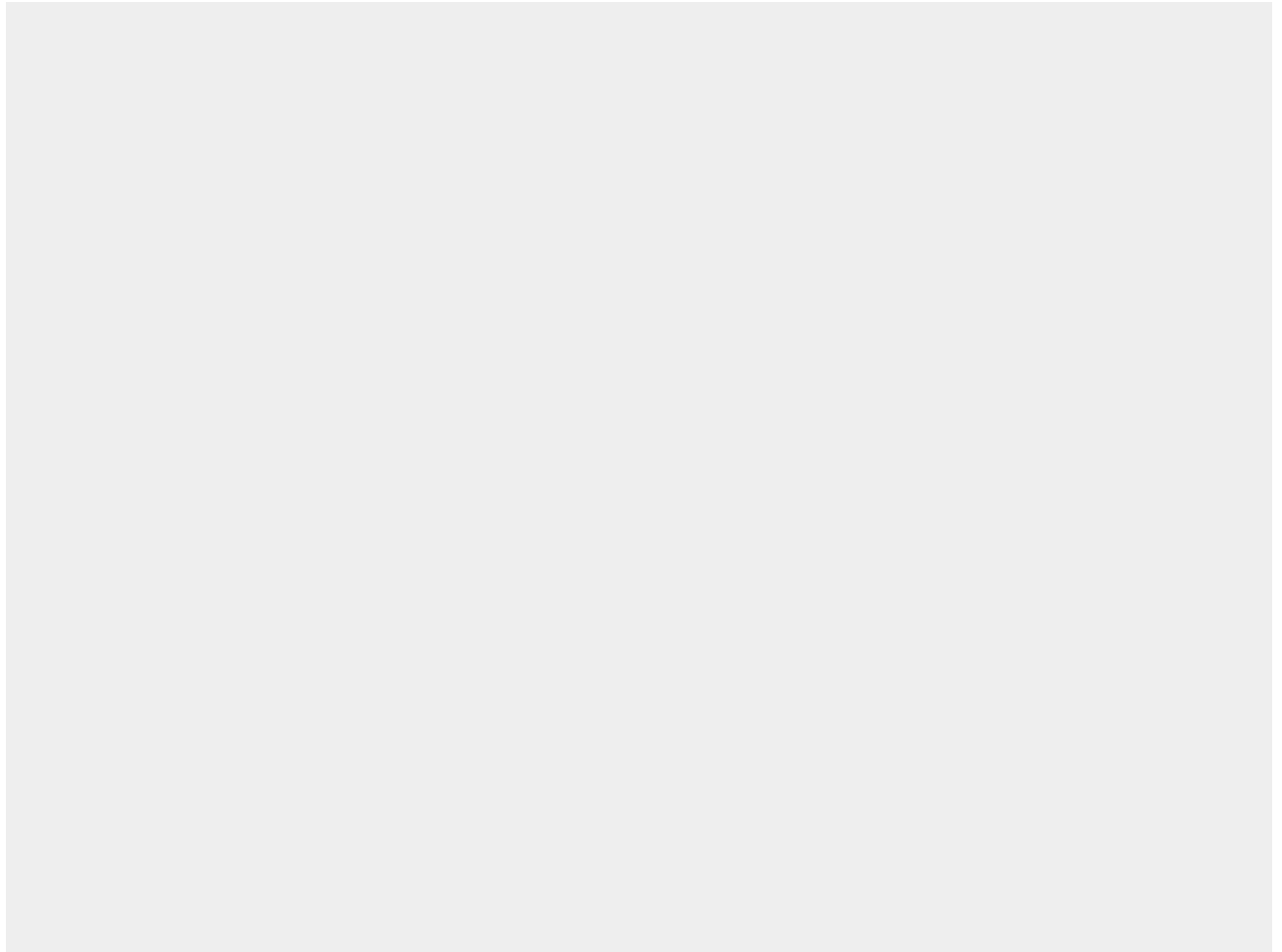


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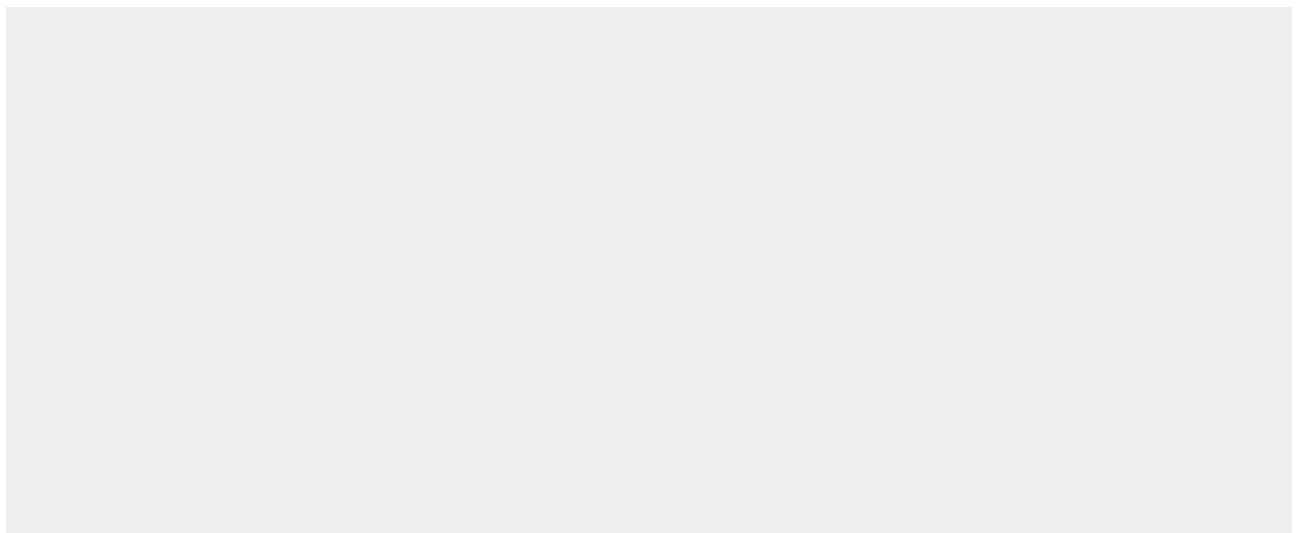


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By ROBERT GOTTLIEBSEN

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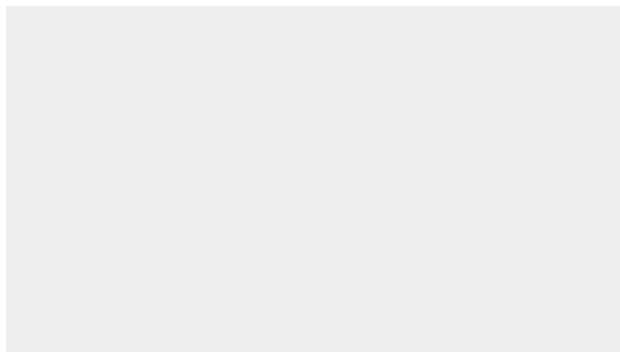
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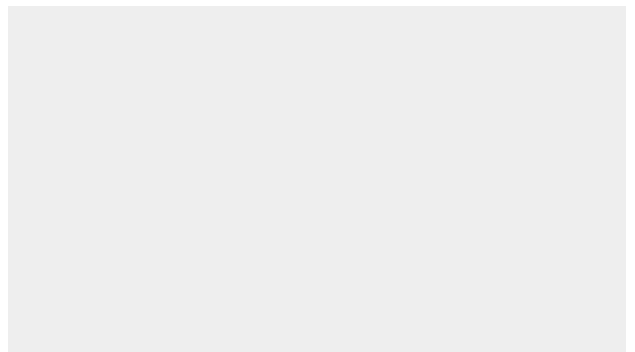
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