

Support for a tobacco endgame and increased regulation of the tobacco industry among New Zealand smokers: results from a National Survey

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Abstract

Aim To examine the prevalence of smoker support for a ban on cigarette sales in 10 years time and increased regulation of the tobacco industry and to investigate the independent associations of support for these measures.

Methods The authors surveyed opinions among adult smokers in two survey waves (N=1376 and N=923) from the New Zealand arm of the International Tobacco Control Policy Evaluation Survey during 2007–2009. The authors report prevalence of support stratified by age, gender and ethnicity. The authors carried out multivariate analyses to identify significant associations among potential determinants (demographics, socioeconomic status, mental health and smoking-related beliefs and behaviours) of support.

Results Most New Zealand smokers supported greater regulation of the tobacco industry (65%) and more government action on tobacco (59%). Around half (46%) supported banning sales of cigarettes in 10 years time, provided effective nicotine substitutes were available. In a fully adjusted model, significant associations with support for greater tobacco company regulation included Māori ethnicity, experience of financial stress and greater awareness about the harms of smoking. Significant associations with support for a ban on tobacco sales in 10 years time included increasing area-based deprivation level, increasing intention to quit and greater concern about the health effects of smoking.

Conclusions The findings suggest that most smokers will support stronger government action to control the tobacco industry and that many support radical 'endgame' approaches. Greater support among Māori, more deprived and possibly Pacific smokers, is an important finding, which could inform the design and implementation of new policies given the very high smoking prevalence among these groups and hence high priority for targeted tobacco control interventions. Perceived difficulties in gaining public support should not impede the introduction of rigorous tobacco control measures needed to achieve a tobacco-free New Zealand.

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