



Kiwi support for the end of tobacco sales: New Zealand governments lag behind public support for advanced tobacco control policies

The scale of harm from tobacco use in New Zealand has not been matched by appropriate government action to advance tobacco control. Since 1991, there has been a pattern of incremental and widely spaced changes, resulting in relatively small reductions in smoking prevalence. The major government policy-level action over the last 5 years, since the new Smoke-Free Environments Act, has been to introduce graphic warnings on tobacco packs. Both Labour and National led governments have hesitated over retail display bans, and since 2001 have failed to increase tobacco taxation over the rate of consumer price inflation.

The idea of the end of tobacco use in New Zealand by 2020 has been suggested.¹ To investigate the extent of support for more radical and rigorous government action, we examined the data from the Health Sponsorship Council's national *2008 Health and Lifestyles Survey*, conducted by the National Research Bureau.² This survey involved face-to-face interviews with 1608 people aged 15 and over, and included 422 smokers (26%), 392 Māori (24%), and 324 Pacific peoples (20%). Data were weighted to allow for the over-sampling of groups.

Support for the end of tobacco sales—For all ethnicities, about half or more people wanted an end to tobacco sales within 10 years, with significantly more agreeing to this than disagreeing (see Figure 1 and Table 1). Almost 60% of Pacific peoples, and two-thirds (67.4%) of those in households of six plus people supported this move.

- Half (49.8%) agreed that 'Cigarettes and tobacco should not be sold in New Zealand in 10 years time' and 30.3% disagreed (19.9% neither agreed nor disagreed).
- 47.9% of Māori agreed and 34.9% disagreed.
- 59.7% of Pacific peoples agreed and 19.7% disagreed.
- Even 26.2% of smokers agreed (55.3% disagreed), with 37.3% support from those who had made a quit attempt in the last 12 months (39.3% of them disagreed).

Table 1. Support for the end of tobacco sales within 10 years

'Cigarettes and tobacco should not be sold in New Zealand in 10 years time'

	Total	Parent/Caregiver Status		Ethnicity				Smoking Status			Quit attempts		
		PCG	Non PCG	Māori	Pacific	Asian	Other	Never	Current	Past	0	1	2+
Strongly agree	18.9	18.5	19.0	19.2	20.4	23.9	18.2	23.4	6.6	20.7	6.4	8.9	15.1
Agree	30.9	30.4	31.1	28.7	39.3	38.2	30.0	36.7	19.6	31.3	15.8	34.4	17.0
Neither agree nor disagree	19.9	20.2	19.9	17.3	20.2	15.9	20.7	18.0	18.4	23.1	10.5	15.7	29.9
Disagree	24.9	25.0	24.8	27.3	15.4	21.1	25.5	20.0	37.3	22.9	45.7	26.9	27.7
Strongly disagree	5.4	5.9	5.2	7.6	4.3	0.9	5.6	1.8	18.0	2.0	21.6	14.1	10.2
Don't know/Refused	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0
Unweighted n	1608	624	984	392	324	74	818	583	422	585	230	112	131

Table 2. Support for plain packs

'Tobacco companies should not be allowed to promote cigarettes by having different brand names and packaging'

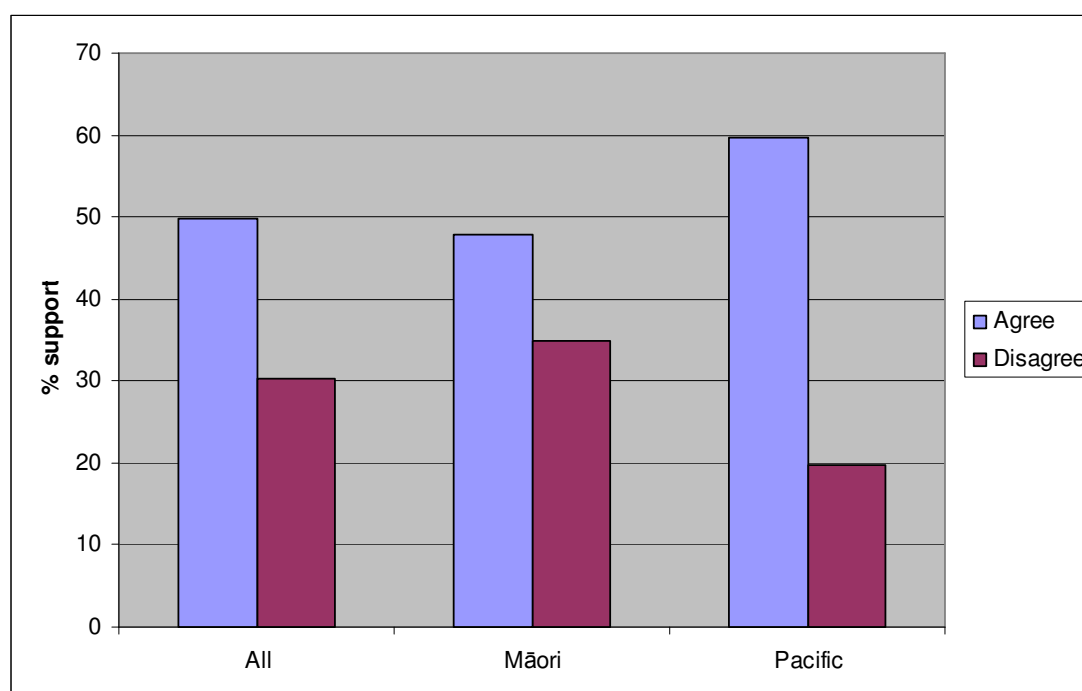
	Total	Parent/Caregiver Status		Ethnicity				Smoking Status			Quit attempts		
		PCG	Non PCG	Māori	Pacific	Asian	Other	Never	Current	Past	0	1	2+
Strongly agree	16.0	20.6	14.7	18.4	16.7	20.1	15.2	19.3	4.0	18.8	3.7	5.7	7.2
Agree	37.4	39.4	36.8	35.9	51.5	48.0	35.6	41.0	27.7	39.2	24.8	38.3	25.9
Neither agree nor disagree	23.7	20.4	24.7	19.4	18.0	24.4	24.7	23.6	27.4	22.2	25.9	19.6	31.2
Disagree	19.7	16.8	20.5	21.6	12.5	7.5	21.1	14.4	34.4	17.6	33.9	31.3	32.7
Strongly disagree	2.9	2.5	3.0	3.8	0.6	0.0	3.2	1.1	6.1	2.0	11.6	3.4	3.0
Don't know/Refused	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.9	0.7	0.0	0.3	0.5	0.5	0.1	0.0	1.7	0.0
Unweighted n	1608	624	984	392	324	74	818	583	422	585	230	112	131

Table 3. Support for fewer tobacco retailers

'The number of places selling cigarettes and tobacco should be reduced to make them less easily available'

	Total	Parent/Caregiver Status		Ethnicity				Smoking Status			Quit attempts		
		PCG	Non PCG	Māori	Pacific	Asian	Other	Never	Current	Past	0	1	2+
Strongly agree	22.5	25.6	21.6	22.9	23.0	33.6	21.3	28.7	6.8	23.5	6.7	7.6	14.5
Agree	43.1	41.5	43.6	37.7	50.6	52.5	42.4	49.8	28.6	44.4	30.6	32.4	27.8
Neither agree nor disagree	12.8	11.0	13.3	13.9	12.0	5.2	13.4	8.0	18.4	14.8	9.9	25.1	25.2
Disagree	19.5	20.4	19.3	22.5	13.1	7.8	20.7	12.6	39.8	16.2	46.1	29.8	26.3
Strongly disagree	2.1	1.3	2.3	3.1	1.2	0.9	2.1	0.8	6.3	1.1	6.6	5.0	6.2
Don't know/Refused	0.1	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0
Unweighted n	1608	624	984	392	324	74	818	583	422	585	230	112	131

Figure 1. Support for an end of tobacco sales within 10 years^{2*}



*Note: A moderate proportion of respondents neither agreed or disagreed (see Table 1).

Support for plain packs—Over half the respondents supported plain (unbranded) packs, with significantly more agreeing to this than disagreeing (see Table 2). Almost 70% of Pacific peoples, 67.6% of those in households of six plus people and 60% of parents and caregivers supported this move.

- 53.4% agreed that ‘Tobacco companies should not be allowed to promote cigarettes by having different brand names and packaging’ and 22.6% disagreed (23.7% neither agreed nor disagreed).
- 54.3% of Māori agreed and 25.4% disagreed.
- 68.2% of Pacific peoples agreed and 13.1% disagreed.
- 31.7% of smokers agreed and 40.5% disagreed.

Support for fewer tobacco retailers—Over 65% of the respondents wanted fewer retailers (see Table 3).

- 65.6% agreed that ‘The number of places selling cigarettes and tobacco should be reduced to make them less easily available’ and 21.6% disagreed (12.8% neither agreed or disagreed).
- 60.6% of Māori agreed and 25.6% disagreed.
- 73.6% of Pacific peoples agreed and 14.3% disagreed
- 35.4% of smokers agreed and 46.1% disagreed.

This survey data indicates that a majority of New Zealanders want major changes to improve the regulation of tobacco. At present, half want an end to the commercial tobacco supply within 10 years. We believe this proportion will grow, as public debate on the tobacco endgame progresses. The data should also be seen in the light of other national survey data indicating the high support by *smokers* for further tobacco regulation.³ In particular, when asked ‘if effective nicotine substitutes that are not smoked became available, the government should then set a date to ban cigarette sales in 10 years time’ 46% of Māori smokers and 44% of non-Māori smokers agreed.³

New Zealand political parties now need to engage with the idea of the *end* of commercial tobacco sales in a finite and predicable timetable, rather than using small steps to control the tobacco epidemic. All the businesses involved in tobacco supply, including retailers, transporters, and bankers, need to plan for different areas of business. The public needs to be aware that vested commercial interests will seek to delay the changes that the public supports.

In particular, the Māori Affairs Select Committee needs to consider such endgame approaches in its current inquiry into ‘the tobacco industry in Aotearoa and the consequences of tobacco use for Maori’.⁴

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Competing interests: Although we do not consider it a competing interest, for the sake of full transparency we note that the authors have undertaken work for health sector agencies working in tobacco control.

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