



High and increased support by Māori and non-Māori smokers for a ban on point-of-sale tobacco displays: National survey data

Considerations around advancing tobacco control are particularly relevant to New Zealand at present, given the current Inquiry by the Māori Affairs Select Committee into the tobacco industry.¹ While there are good arguments for a rapid endgame solution to the tobacco epidemic (involving a phase out of tobacco sales over 10 years²) other supplementary measures should also be considered to help lower demand for tobacco – regardless of the adoption of endgame policies.

There is international evidence,³ and evidence from New Zealand,^{4 5} that point-of-sale (PoS) tobacco displays encourage tobacco uptake among children and undermine cessation among smokers wishing to quit and who have recently quit. Other New Zealand research has identified that the arguments *for* tobacco displays are contradictory and flawed⁶ and that there is poor compliance with the current (albeit relatively weak) law on tobacco displays.⁷

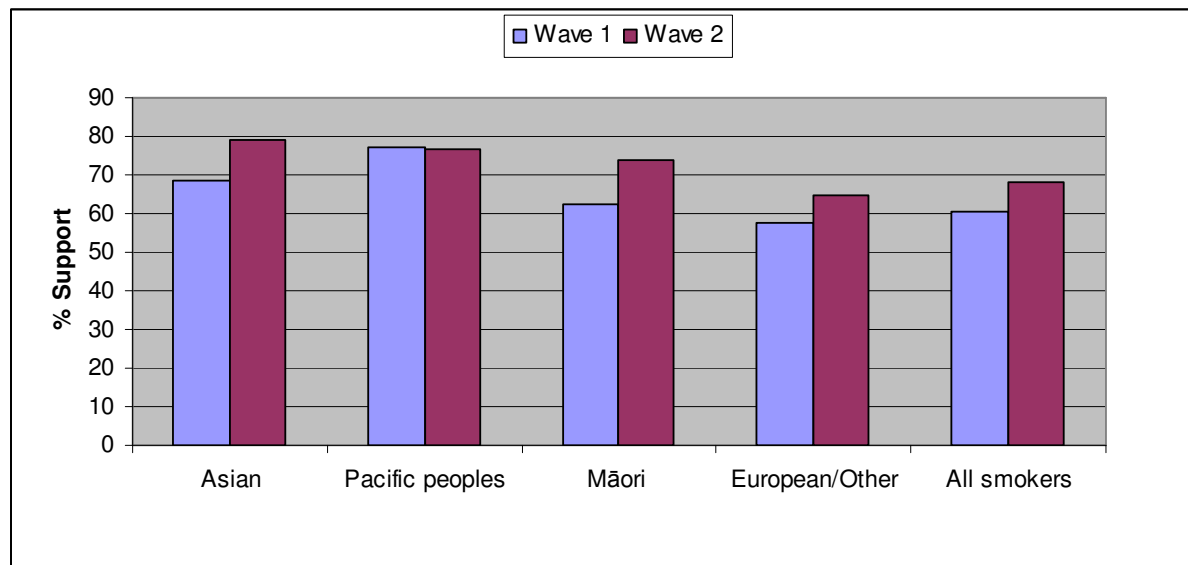
New Zealand data indicate majority public support for additional marketing restrictions on tobacco. Around half (53.4%) of respondents to a national survey agreed that “tobacco companies should not be allowed to promote cigarettes by having different brand names and packaging” (22.6% disagreed), and 65.6% wanted fewer tobacco retailers.⁸

We have previously reported that a majority (62.5%) of Māori smokers support a ban on PoS tobacco displays.⁹ Here we draw on additional survey data to examine this issue further.

Methods—The New Zealand arm of the International Tobacco Control Policy Evaluation Survey (ITC Project) derives its sample from the 2006/7 NZ Health Survey (a representative national sample). From this sample, we surveyed adult smokers in two survey waves (n=1376 and n=923) one year apart (wave 2 in 2008/early 2009). Further detail on the survey methods are available in an online *Methods Report*¹⁰ and in publications.^{11 12} All analyses were weighted and adjusted for the complex sample design.

Results—When we analysed the data for the 1376 smokers in wave 1 and 923 smokers in wave 2, there was majority support in both waves and the between-wave increase was statistically significant i.e., from 60.4% (95%CI = 56.9% – 63.9%) to 68.3% (95%CI = 64.3% – 72.3%) (Figure 1). For Māori, the increase was from 62.5% to 73.8% (n=607 respondents in wave 1 and n=370 in wave 2). This increase was statistically significant when we did the more rigorous analysis of just comparing the same Māori respondents who participated in both waves (p=0.005).

Figure 1. Smokers' support for a ban on point-of-sale displays of tobacco in two survey waves (by ethnic group)*



* Respondents were asked “do you support complete bans on displays of cigarettes inside shops” and results shown are for those responding either “somewhat” or “a lot”.

Discussion—The high and increased level of smoker support for a PoS display ban is consistent with other evidence that New Zealand smokers^{9 11 12} (including Māori⁹ and Pacific smokers¹³) and the general public,⁸ favour advances in tobacco control. The increased support over time for a PoS display ban coincided with media coverage and public debate of the issue (e.g., we counted over 40 relevant print media articles during March 2008 and February 2009).

Given the evidence (see introductory comments above) and the public support, the Māori Affairs Select Committee should consider making a clear recommendation for an immediate PoS display ban. This would provide a strong signal of their concern to reduce the serious impact of the tobacco epidemic on Māori health and development. It would also reduce the current “policy incoherence” present in New Zealand,¹⁴ where some forms of tobacco marketing are prohibited (i.e., advertising and sponsorship) while various others are permitted (including PoS displays and attractive tobacco packaging¹⁵). Nevertheless, a PoS display ban is ultimately only a modest advance in tobacco control and the Committee critically needs to focus on an endgame policy (e.g.^{2 16}) for phasing out tobacco sales in this country.

Nick Wilson^{1*}, Richard Edwards¹, George Thomson¹, Deepa Weerasekera¹, Heather Gifford², Janet Hoek³

¹ Department of Public Health, University of Otago, Wellington

² Whakauae Research Services, Whanganui

³ Department of Marketing, University of Otago, Dunedin

* nick.wilson@otago.ac.nz

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