

Pacific Smokers' Views on Major Tobacco Control Interventions: National Survey Data from New Zealand



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Background

An estimated 300,000 people of “Pacific peoples” ethnicity live in New Zealand, over 7% of the New Zealand (NZ) population. In the 2006 Census 30% of adult Pacific peoples in NZ reported being smokers, compared to 21% of the whole adult population. Tobacco use contributes significantly to the health inequalities between Pacific peoples and other New Zealanders. In a 2008 national survey (smokers and non-smokers) Pacific peoples gave much stronger support than average for tobacco regulation.¹ We describe the attitudes of Pacific smokers to a range of tobacco control policy options.

Methods

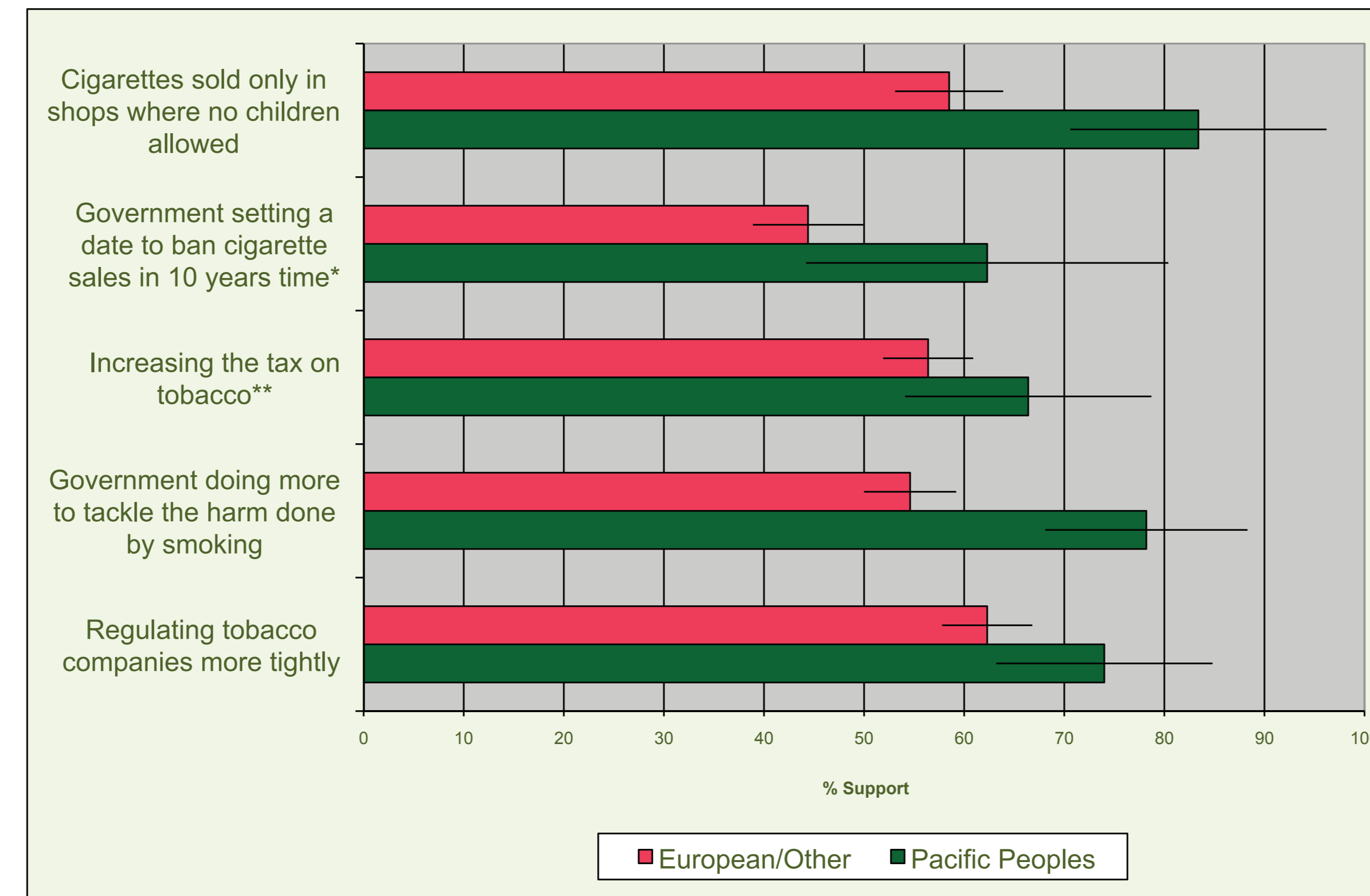
The NZ arm of the International Tobacco Control Policy Evaluation Project (ITC Project) uses as its sampling frame the NZ Health Survey, a representative national sample with boosted sampling of Pacific peoples. From this sample we surveyed adult smokers (n=1376) including 90 Pacific peoples respondents in Wave 1 (Wave 2 included 49 Pacific peoples). Further details of the methods, including response rates, attrition and weighting processes, are available in online reports available at <http://www.wnmeds.ac.nz/itcproject.html>.

In the analysis presented here we excluded Maori from the comparison group of “European/Other” but this group did include Asians. All results are for Wave 1 (unless otherwise stated) and were weighted and adjusted for the complex sample design to represent the national population of all Pacific peoples and non-Pacific smokers in NZ.

Results

There was strong majority support for key tobacco control interventions among Pacific smokers (see figure). Support was statistically significantly greater than among the European/Other ethnic group smokers for: greater government action on tobacco (p=0.001), and controls on where tobacco could be sold (only in shops where children were not allowed [p=0.009]). Support for more regulation of tobacco companies, support for a ban on cigarette sales in 10 years and support for higher tobacco tax (if the revenue is used for quitting support), was increased but not statistically significantly so.

Figure: Support for key tobacco control interventions by Pacific peoples and European/Other smokers in NZ



* If effective nicotine substitutes that are not smoked became available (Wave 2 data).

** If all the extra money was used to promote healthy lifestyles including helping smokers wanting to quit. But these differences by ethnicity were not statistically significant in a multivariate analysis.

Majority support by Pacific smokers was also voiced for:

- **New product laws:** That is for laws covering: reducing the toxins in cigarette smoke (81.8%), reducing the addictiveness of cigarettes (84.0%), and for factory-made cigarettes to be fire-safe (97.8%).
- **Marketing controls:** Banning all promotion of cigarettes by tobacco companies (73.3%), complete bans on displays of cigarettes inside shops and stores (77.1%).
- **New smokefree areas:** Proportion agreeing smoking *should be allowed* in playgrounds (25.3%), within 5 meters of the entrance to public buildings (38.4%), and in cars with children inside (4.0%).

For these interventions Pacific smokers usually had higher levels of support than European/other smokers but not at statistically significant levels. In contrast to the above list, only minority support was voiced for tobacco companies being required to sell cigarettes in plain packages (47.0%) and 50.0% thought smoking *should be allowed* on lifeguard patrolled beaches.



Conclusions

There was majority support among Pacific smokers for a wide range of tobacco control interventions – with these mostly exceeding that for the European/Other population in NZ. The high level of support for endgame approaches (e.g. banning tobacco sales in 10 years) and rigorous policy measures (e.g. banning sales in shops where children are present) is particularly striking given the lack of media coverage or public debate about these measures at the time of data collection.

Policy makers should take into account this high level of support when proposing tobacco control measures aiming to reduce smoking among Pacific peoples, to advance Pacific peoples health and to reduce health inequalities. Use of this type of survey could be considered elsewhere to better understand what ethnic minority populations want in terms of protection from the tobacco epidemic.

Acknowledgements

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Reference

1. Thomson G, Wilson N, Edwards R. Kiwi support for the end of tobacco sales: New Zealand governments lag behind public support for advanced tobacco control policies. *N Z Med J* 2010;123(1308):106-111.