

Part 8: Awareness of, and attitudes towards, the tobacco industry

Innovative campaigns have been launched internationally to counteract tobacco industry marketing of tobacco products, and address attitude-related risk factors for smoking uptake. The truth™ campaign in the United States was developed using youth-oriented advocacy messages in an attempt to build anti-tobacco and anti-industry attitudes (Hicks, 2001). A series of questions has been included in this survey to provide a measure of students' perceptions about tobacco companies (if any). Specifically, students were asked about whether they thought tobacco companies were legitimate businesses, trustworthy, and responsible for people smoking. Students were asked to indicate whether they *agree* or *disagree* with six statements; there also was a *don't know* response category.

Legitimacy of the tobacco industry

Almost one-half of students said they *support government laws that control what tobacco companies do* (48.2%, Figure 8.1). Just over one-third of students (34.6%) *did not know*.

A lower proportion of Māori students *agree* with this statement, compared with non-Māori students (37.8% and 51.1%, respectively). Students who attended high decile schools were also more likely to *agree* with this statement than students who attended low and mid decile schools (55.6%, 42.0% and 45.6%, respectively).

'Current smokers' were more likely to not to *support government laws that control what tobacco companies do*, compared with 'never smokers' (40.6% and 10.9%, respectively). Female students were more likely to be split between agreeing and not knowing (44.9% and 40.7%, respectively), compared with male students (51.3% and 28.9%, respectively).

Trust in the tobacco industry

Just over two in five students said that they *would trust what tobacco companies say about the harmful/health effects of smoking* (43.1%, Figure 8.1). However, 30.2% of students *did not know* whether they would trust what a tobacco company says about the harmful/health effects of smoking and just over a quarter (26.7%) said they would trust them.

Female students were more likely to *trust what tobacco companies say about the harmful/health effects of smoking*, compared with male students (47.0% and 39.4%, respectively). Male students were more likely to *disagree* (31.9%, compared with 21.2% of female students who disagreed). Students who attended low decile schools were also more likely to *trust what tobacco companies say about harmful/health effects of smoking*, compared with students who attended high decile schools (48.1% and 39.7%, respectively).

Only one in ten students said they *would believe it if a tobacco company said they had made a safer cigarette* (10.7%, Figure 8.1). New Zealand European/Pākehā students were more likely *not* believe a tobacco company if they said they had made a safer cigarette, compared with Māori and Pacific students (68.4%, 56.2% and 53.1%, respectively). Both Māori and Pacific students were more likely to answer *don't know*, compared with New Zealand European/Pākehā (30.8%, 31.0% and 22.0%, respectively).

Students who attended low decile schools were also more likely *not to be sure* whether to believe a tobacco company if it said it had made a safer cigarette, compared with those students who attended high decile schools (28.1% and 21.8%, respectively). However, 57.8% of them still would not believe (compared with 68.8% of high decile school students) the tobacco company if it said it had made a safer cigarette.

A higher proportion of 'current smokers' *agree* with this statement, compared with 'never smokers' (26.5% and 6.0%, respectively). However, 45.9% of 'current smokers' would still *not* believe tobacco companies if it said it had made a safe cigarette, compared with 71.1% of students who had never smoked.

Industry responsibility for people starting to smoke

Over two in five of students *agree* with the statement that *tobacco companies are responsible for people starting to smoke* (43.8%, Figure 8.1). However, 31.0% of students *disagree* with this statement and one quarter of them (25.2%) did not know.

A higher proportion of 'current smokers' *disagree* with this statement, compared with students who never had a smoke (46.7% and 28.2%, respectively). Whereas the reverse is true – a higher proportion of students who never had a smoke *agree* with the statement, compared with 'current smokers' (46.7% and 30.4%, respectively).

Over a third of students *agree* with the statement that *tobacco companies try to get young people to start smoking* (37.2%, Figure 8.1). Close to three-in-ten students (29.1%) *disagree* with this statement and close to a third of them (33.7%) *did not know*. A higher proportion of male than female students *agree* with the statement (41.0% and 33.1%, respectively) and a higher proportion of female students, compared with male students, were more likely not to know (36.2% and 31.3%).

New Zealand European/Pākehā students were more likely to *agree* that *tobacco companies try to get young people to start smoking*, compared with Māori and Pacific students (40.3%, 29.7% and 31.1%, respectively). Both Māori and Pacific students were more likely to answer *don't know*, compared with New Zealand European/Pākehā students (37.6%, 39.6% and 31.0%, respectively).

Students who attended low and mid decile schools were more likely not to be sure whether *tobacco companies try to get young people to start smoking*, compared with those students who attended high decile schools (36.0%, 36.1% and 29.6%, respectively). Students from high decile schools were more likely to *agree* with this statement than students from low and mid decile schools (42.6%, 32.9% and 35.0%, respectively).

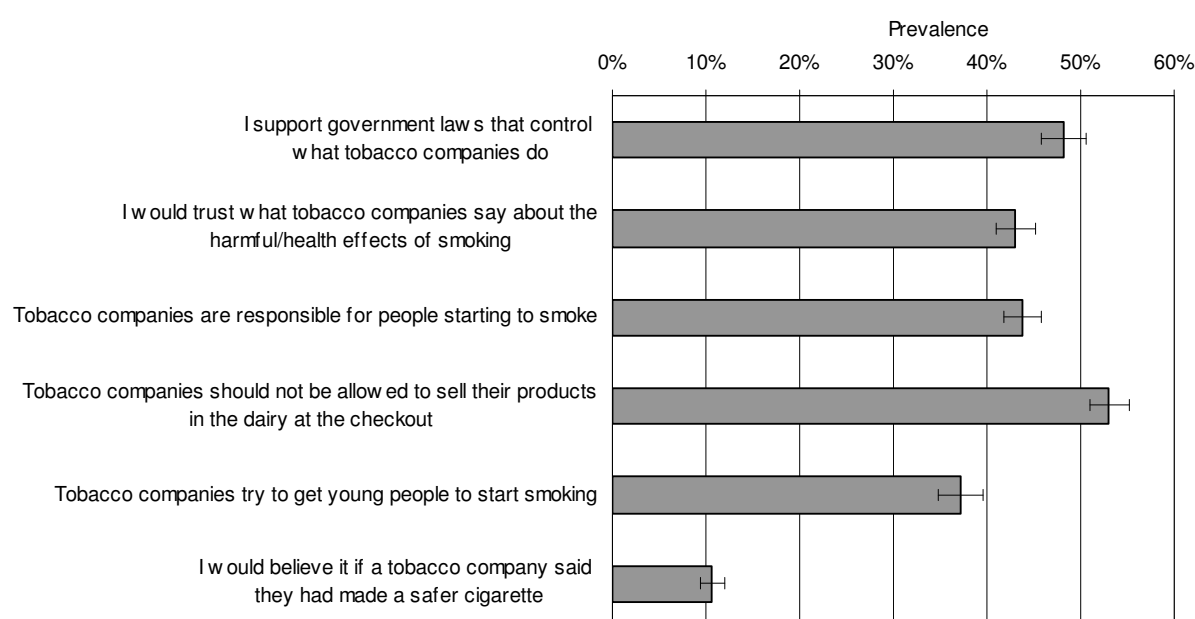
A higher proportion of ‘current smokers’ did not believe that *tobacco companies try to get young people to start smoking*, compared with ‘non smokers’ (50.2% and 23.6%, respectively). However, 22.3% of ‘current smokers’ *agree* with this statement, compared with 42.4% of students who had never smoked.

Tobacco companies should not be allowed to sell their products in the dairy at the checkout

Over one-half of the students *agree* with the statement that *tobacco companies should not be allowed to sell their products in the dairy at the checkout* (53.1%, Figure 8.1). Close to one in five students disagreed (21.1%).

A higher proportion of non-Māori students *agree* with this statement, compared with Māori students (39.3% and 29.7%, respectively), as did students who attended high decile schools, compared with students who attended low decile schools (57.8% and 47.9%, respectively). A higher proportion of ‘never smokers’ also *agree* that *tobacco companies should not be allowed to sell their products in the dairy at the checkout*, compared with ‘current smokers’ (63.3% and 22.0%, respectively).

Figure 8.1 Awareness of, and attitudes towards, the tobacco industry – all students



Bars indicate the prevalence of students who agreed with statement