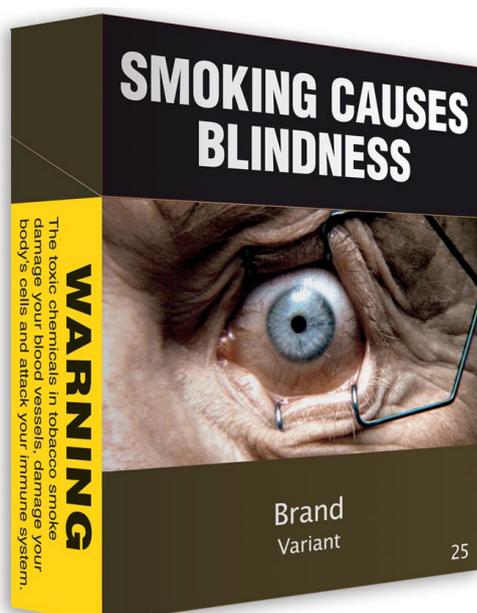


Public opinion about tobacco plain packaging

Background

Tobacco plain packaging refers to a tobacco control measure that removes all branding elements from cigarette and loose leaf tobacco packages. Tobacco products are instead packaged in a generic pack, with brands and variants distinguishable through text printed in a government-specified font type, colour, and size. Implementation of plain pack is supported by empirical research that shows plain packs reduce people's positive attributes of tobacco products¹⁻². In February 2013, the New Zealand Government announced that it agreed 'in principle' to introduce a plain packaging regime in alignment with Australia³. The New Zealand Government is currently in the process of developing legislation to detail the new requirement on tobacco packaging. It is planned to introduce the legislation to Parliament before the end of 2013.

Figure 1. The Australian tobacco plain packaging prototype



Source: Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

Methodology

Prior to the announcement of the Government's position on plain packaging, the 2012 Health and Lifestyles Survey (HLS) included a question that assessed people's opinion about introducing plain packaging of tobacco. Responses to this question were compared by smoking status (current smokers: those who smoked at least monthly, and ex-smokers: those who had ever smoked but did not smoke at the time of the survey, compared with never smokers), ethnicity, neighbourhood deprivation status, age, gender, and educational background. Statistically significant differences ($p < .05$) are reported.

Opinions about introducing plain packaging

Respondents were asked about their level of agreement with the statement that 'Tobacco companies should be required to have cigarettes and tobacco in government-specified packs like that in the showcard'. The showcard contained an image of a tobacco plain pack prototype produced by the Australian Government. To increase realism to respondents, the plain pack prototype contained a pictorial health warning that was used in New Zealand. Responses were collected on a five-point scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'.

About three-quarters (72%, 70-75%) of respondents either 'agreed' (50%, 47-53%) or 'strongly agreed' (22%, 19-25%) with the statement. About one in 10 (11%, 9-13%) 'neither agreed nor disagreed' with the statement.

Respondents who were more likely to 'agree' or 'strongly agree' with this statement were:

- Never smokers (82%), compared with current smokers (49%) and ex-smokers (72%).
- People with university qualifications (78%), compared with those with no formal qualification (65%).

Key points

- There was a high agreement (72%) with introducing plain packaging of tobacco products.
- Responses were significantly different by smoking status and educational background.

References

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Citation

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About the HPA

The HPA is a Crown entity that leads and delivers innovative, high quality and cost-effective programmes and activities that promote health, wellbeing and healthy lifestyles, and prevent disease, illness and injury. It also enables environments that support health and wellbeing and healthy lifestyles, and reduce personal, social and economic harm.

About the Health and Lifestyles Survey

- The HLS is a nationwide in-home face-to-face survey conducted every two years, starting in 2008. The 2012 HLS consisted of a sample of 2,672 New Zealanders aged 15 years and over, who provided information about their health behaviours and attitudes relating to tobacco, sun safety, healthy eating, gambling, and alcohol.
- In 2012, the main sample, with a response rate of 86.3%, included 1,539 people of European/Other ethnicity, 619 Māori, 387 Pacific peoples and 127 Asian people (prioritised ethnicity).
- The data have been adjusted (weighted) to ensure they are representative of the New Zealand population.
- For this analysis, proportions and 95% confidence intervals were produced. The significance level used for statistical analyses was set to $\alpha=0.05$.
- Comparison groups for these analyses were as follows:
 - Smoking status (current smokers and ex-smokers, compared with never smokers).
 - Ethnicity (Māori, Pacific and Asian compared with European/Other ethnicity).
 - Neighbourhood deprivation status (NZDep 8-10 and NZDep 4-7, compared with NZDep 1-3).
 - Age (25-34 years, 35-54 years, and 55+ years, compared with 15-24 years).
 - Gender.
 - Educational background (no formal qualifications, School Certificate/NCEA level 1, and UE/NCEA levels 2-3/trade certificates, compared with university qualifications).

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