

Tobacco Behavior and Public Opinion Survey: Results from Wave 1 and Wave II November, 2011

Background: This survey was developed to evaluate the Communities Putting Prevention to Work (CPPW) grant activities, assess smoking behaviors of current smokers, and assess awareness, attitudes, and social norms about tobacco control policy strategies.

Methods: The Tobacco Behavior and Public Opinion Survey (TBPOS) will be conducted three times during the course of the CPPW grant: July 2010, April 2011, and February 2012. The TBPOS is a Random-Digit-Dial cross-sectional phone survey conducted in English and Spanish. Participants are identified through landline (90% of sample) and cell-phone (10% of sample) numbers. At each wave of data collection, 1,440 adults (18 years and older), including 720 smokers and 720 non-smokers, are enrolled. Smokers are over-sampled and the results are weighted based on the City's current smoking prevalence of 15.8% (NYC CHS, 2009) for Wave I and a current smoking prevalence of 14.0% (NYC CHS, 2010) for Wave II.

Retail Prohibitions

More than half of New Yorkers surveyed favor limiting the number of tobacco retail licenses (Wave I (WI): 54%; Wave II (WII): 55%). Only one third of smokers favor limiting the number of tobacco retail licenses compared with 58% of non-smokers surveyed in both waves of the survey.

Overall 46% of those surveyed in Wave I favor not granting new licenses to sell tobacco, with smokers being half as likely to favor this idea compared with non-smokers (25% vs. 50%).

More than half of New Yorkers surveyed favor prohibiting pharmacies from selling tobacco (WI: 60%; WII: 58%). Two fifths of smokers (WI: 39%; WII: 43%) and three fifths of non-smokers (WI: 63%; WII: 60%) are in favor of prohibiting pharmacies from selling tobacco.

Prohibiting grocery stores from selling tobacco is favored by half of New Yorkers (WI: 50%; WII: 52%); approximately one third of smokers (WI: 30%; WII: 33%) and just over half of non-smokers (WI: 54%; WII: 55%) respectively.

When asked about prohibiting stores located near schools from selling tobacco, two thirds of respondents were in favor (WI: 66%; WII: 65%). More than half of smokers surveyed were in favor of prohibiting stores located near schools from selling tobacco (WI: 55%; WII: 57%), as were two thirds of non-smokers (WI: 68%; WII: 66%).

Requiring tobacco sales to be limited to stores that sell only tobacco products is favored by half of New Yorkers (WI: 49%; WII: 50%); just a quarter of smokers (WI: 27%; WII: 28%), but over half of non-smokers (WI: 53%; WII: 54%).

Price Increases

Overall, almost two thirds of New Yorkers surveyed favor increasing state or city taxes on a pack of cigarettes (WI: 63%; WII: 66%). The percent in favor jumps considerably if collected taxes are earmarked for programs to prevent and treat smoking (WI: 71%; WII: 75%; significant increase was seen between Waves I and II, $p=0.04$) or to fund health care programs (WI: 78%; WII: 80%).

While only a quarter of smokers surveyed favor increasing taxes on cigarettes (WI: 21%; WII: 25%), the numbers of smokers in favor more than double if collected taxes are earmarked for programs to prevent and treat smoking (WI: 48%; WII: 56%) and if used to fund health care programs (WI: 58%; WII: 60%). Support for cigarette taxes was high among non-smokers overall (WI: 71%; WII: 72%) and when the money raised is used for programs to prevent and treat smoking (WI: 76%; WII: 78%). Non-smoker support for cigarette taxes increased when the money raised would be used for health care programs (WI: 81%; WII: 83%).

More than two thirds of New Yorkers (WI: 69%; WII: 70%) favor increasing state or city taxes on tobacco products other than cigarettes, such as cigars, cigarillos, loose tobacco, and smokeless products. However smokers are less than half as likely to favor tax increases on other tobacco products as non-smokers (WI: 36% vs. 75%; WII: 39% vs. 75%).

Product Placement

Keeping tobacco products out of customers' view is favored by more than half of those surveyed (WI: 59%; WII: 61%); 42% of smokers and 62% of non-smokers in wave I and 43% of smokers and 64% of non-smokers in wave II, respectively.

Payments to Retailers

More than half of New Yorkers favor prohibiting tobacco companies from paying New York City retailers to display their products and advertisements (WI: 55%; WII: 53%); 42% of smokers and 58% of non-smokers in wave I and 42% of smokers and 55% of non-smokers in wave II, respectively.

Minimum Age

Support among New Yorkers to raise the minimum age to purchase cigarettes from age 18 to 21 increased between Waves I and II from 67% to 71%. About two-thirds of smokers (WI and WII: 66%) and non-smokers (WI: 67%; WII: 72%; significant increase was seen between Waves I and II, $p=0.0036$) favor raising the legal minimum age to purchase cigarettes from 18 to 21.

Price Promotions

Prohibiting price promotions such as coupons and two-for-one deals on cigarette packs are favored by half of New Yorkers surveyed (WI: 55%; WII: 49%; significant decrease between waves I and II, $p=0.0018$). More non-smokers favor prohibiting price promotions than do smokers (WI: 57% vs. 41%; WII: 50% vs. 40%; significant decrease was seen among non-smokers in Waves I and II, $p=0.0006$).

Secondhand Smoke

Over half of New Yorkers surveyed said that secondhand smoke is a problem in outdoor public places within a few feet of them (WI: 60%; WII: 62%). Non-smokers are twice as likely to find secondhand smoke a problem in outdoor public places in New York City when compared with smokers (WI: 66% vs. 30%; WII: 67% vs. 33%). However when asked about finding secondhand smoke a problem around hospital entrances or on hospital grounds, the difference between non-smokers and smokers decreases to less than one third (WI: 76% vs. 54%; WII: 77% vs. 63%).

Two thirds of New Yorkers agree that secondhand smoke is a problem in lines in outdoor waiting areas for a bus or taxi at New York City airports or Port Authority and George Washington Bridge Bus Terminals (WI: 64%; WII: 68%). Smokers are half as likely to agree that secondhand smoke is a problem in lines in outdoor waiting areas for a bus or taxi at New York City airports or Port Authority and George Washington Bridge Bus Terminals compared to non-smokers (WI: 36% vs. 70%; WII: 39% vs. 73%).

More than half of New Yorkers surveyed reported that secondhand smoke is a problem in outdoor areas on college campuses or facilities in New York City (WI: 56%; WII: 60%). Secondhand smoke is a problem in outdoor areas on college campuses or facilities in New York City according to almost two thirds of non-smokers (WI: 61%; WII: 65%) and one third of smokers surveyed (WI: 30%; WII: 33%).

Smoking Regulations

To evaluate related CPPW activities, we asked New Yorkers about their awareness of smoking regulations in various venues throughout the City. Only a quarter of New Yorkers surveyed know that smoking is prohibited in lines in outdoor waiting areas for a bus or taxi at New York City airports or Port Authority and George Washington Bridge Bus Terminals (WI: 26%; WII: 27%). One fifth are not sure if smoking is permitted or prohibited (WI: 19%; WII: 18%). Approximately a quarter of smokers and non-smokers are aware that smoking is prohibited in taxi lines (Smokers: WI: 31%, WII: 26%; Non-smokers: WI: 25%, WII: 27%)

The percentage of New Yorkers who know that smoking is prohibited in the areas around hospital entrances or on hospital grounds increased between wave I and wave II, from 48% to 53%, some respondents weren't sure (WI: 15%; WII: 13%). One quarter more smokers knew smoking is prohibited around hospital entrances and on hospital grounds than non-smokers during wave I (60% vs. 45%), compared with only one eighth during wave II (61% vs. 52%).

Over one fifth (22%) of survey respondents believed that smoking is prohibited in outdoor areas on college and university campuses or facilities in New York City at wave I compared with 26% at wave II, and a quarter weren't sure (WI: 26%; WII: 24%). One quarter of smokers believe smoking is prohibited in outdoor areas on college and university campuses (WI and WII: 25%), while the number of non-smokers who believe smoking is prohibited increased between waves, from 21% at Wave I to 26% at Wave II.

Signage

To evaluate related CPPW activities, we asked New Yorkers about their awareness of no smoking signs at different venues in the City. The percent of New Yorkers who did not notice any signs in the past three months prohibiting smoking in lines in outdoor waiting areas for a bus or taxi at New York City airports or Port Authority and George Washington Bridge Bus Terminals increased from 69% at wave I to 75% at wave II; some were not sure (WI: 16%; WII: 14%). Two thirds of smokers did not notice any signs in the past three months (WI: 66%; WII: 72%), however the percent of non-smokers who did notice any signs in the past three months increased from 70% at Wave I to 76% at Wave II.

Two fifths of New Yorkers noticed signs in the past three months prohibiting smoking in outdoor areas around hospital entrances or on hospital grounds (WI and WII: 39%). Smokers were more likely to notice signs in the past three months prohibiting smoking in outdoor areas around hospital entrances or on hospital grounds in New York City than non-smokers (WI: 59% vs. 36%; WII: 55% vs. 37%).

The percent of New Yorkers who reported not noticing signs in the past three months prohibiting smoking in outdoor areas on college and university campuses or facilities in New York City increased from 59% at wave I to 64% at wave II, and the percent not sure decreased from 28% at wave I to 23% at wave II. There was an increase among both smokers and non-smokers who reported not noticing signs in the past three months prohibiting smoking in outdoor areas on college and university campuses (Smokers: WI: 52%, WII: 61%; Non-smokers: WI: 60%, WII: 65%).

Potential No Smoking Areas

Support for prohibiting smoking in all outdoor areas on college and university campuses or facilities in New York City increased from 50% of respondents in wave I to 54% in wave II. Support for prohibiting smoking in all outdoor areas on college and university campuses or facilities in New York City remained consistent among smokers between Waves I and II (WI: 29%; WII: 34%), while support among non-smokers increased from 53% of respondents in wave I to 58% in wave II.

Forty eight percent of New Yorkers favored prohibiting smoking in all public parks at wave I and this increased to 54% at wave II. One third of smokers favored prohibiting smoking in all public parks at Waves I and II (WI: 30%; WII: 34%), while support for prohibiting smoking in all public parks increased among non-smokers from 52% at Wave I to 58% at Wave II.

Prohibiting smoking in recreational areas, such as basketball courts and baseball fields was favored by 59% of respondents at wave I and increased to 62% at wave II. Non-smokers are more likely to favor prohibiting smoking in recreational areas, such as basketball courts and baseball fields than smokers, but both groups showed increases in support between Waves I and II (Non-smokers: WI: 62%, WII: 64%; Smokers: WI: 40%, WII:48%).

Prohibiting smoking in outdoor markets or street fairs increased in favor among New Yorkers from 52% at wave I to 57% at wave II. Support among smokers and non-smokers did not vary between Waves regarding prohibiting smoking in outdoor markets or street fairs (Smokers: WI: 33%, WII: 39%; Non-smokers: WI: 56%, WII: 60%).

Prohibiting smoking on all public beaches is favored by more than half of respondents (WI: 52%; WII: 56%). Support for prohibiting smoking on all public beaches did not change between Waves among smokers or non-smokers (Smokers: WI: 30%, WII: 33%; Non-smokers: WI: 56%, WII: 59%).

Fifty five percent of respondents favored prohibiting smoking in front of the entrances to buildings at wave I compared with 61% at wave II. More smokers and non-smokers favored prohibiting smoking in front of the entrances to buildings between Waves I and II (Smokers: WI: 33%, WII:41%; Non-smokers: WI: 59%, WII: 64%).

The percentage of New Yorkers in favor prohibiting smoking on sidewalks increased from 39% at wave I to 47% at wave II. The percentage of New Yorkers in favor prohibiting smoking on sidewalks remained constant among smokers between Waves, but increased among non-smokers (Smokers: WI: 21%, WII: 24%; Non-smokers: WI: 43%, WII: 51%).

Electronic cigarettes

Three percent of New Yorkers have ever tried an electronic cigarette, also known as an e-cigarette; 12% of smokers and 2% of non-smokers. One third of respondents favor a proposal that would prohibit smoking electronic cigarettes or e-cigarettes in indoor public places (29% of smokers and 35% of non-smokers).

Social Norms

Wave I:

Sixty eight percent of New Yorkers agree that someone can be a good role model even if they smoke (smokers 89%, non-smokers 64%). When asked, “if I found out someone I like smokes, I would think less of him or her,” 90% of smokers and 65% of non-smokers disagreed (69% of New Yorkers overall disagreed). However, eighty percent of New Yorkers agree with the statement that “smoking is unattractive” (smokers 56%, non-smokers 84%).

Sixty four percent of New Yorkers think that smoking is an addiction, while one fifth think that it is a choice (WI: 19%; WII: 20%) and one sixth think that it is a habit (WI: 17%; WII: 16%). Three fifths of smokers and almost two thirds of non-smokers think that smoking is an addiction (Smokers: WI: 61%, WII: 60%; Non-smokers: WI: 65%, WII: 64%).

Wave II:

When asked how “most New Yorkers feel about smoking”, almost two thirds of New Yorkers (63%) strongly or somewhat disapprove of smoking, while non-smokers are more likely to say that New Yorkers strongly or somewhat disapprove of smoking compared with smokers (64% vs. 55%). Only 16% of respondents correctly estimated that the percentage of adult New Yorkers who smoke is between 10% to 24% (current smoking among adults in NYC is 14%, Community Health Survey 2010); 1% estimated the percentage of smoking to be less than 10%; 21% estimated the percentage at 25% to 39%; 28% estimated the percentage at 40% to 59%; 24% estimated the percentage of smoking to be 60% or more; and 11% don’t know what percentage of adult New Yorkers are smokers. Most respondents (82%) reported that people who are important to them, like family and friends, strongly or somewhat disapprove of smoking; 71% of smokers and 84% of non-smokers.