

Research Summary

What support is there for plain packaging?

1. Hoek, J., Gendall, P., Maubach, N., Edwards, R. (2012) [Strong public support for plain packaging of tobacco products](#). Aus NZ J Pub Health 2012; 36 (5) 405-407

What did we do and find?

Tobacco companies have described decisions to mandate the plain packaging of tobacco products as unconstitutional, in violation of their intellectual property rights, and likely to create a 'slippery slope' leading to regulation of other products. As 'nanny state' rhetoric may turn public opinion against policy interventions, we examined whether New Zealand smokers and non-smokers agreed with the tobacco industry's arguments.

An online survey of 936 respondents (evenly split between smokers and non-smokers) found majority support for plain packaging and the introduction of larger on-pack warnings, and little sympathy for the industry's argument that plain packaging would unfairly impede its ability to use its intellectual property. Although tobacco companies claim their stance protects civil freedoms, our findings suggest the public would welcome more progressive tobacco control policies, which they see as posing little or no threat to their freedoms. Tobacco companies could demonstrate their respect for public opinion by embracing plain packaging and working with governments to implement this measure

What does this mean?

There is strong public support for plain packaging and little sympathy for tobacco industry arguments that this policy is unfair. These findings are consistent with other public opinion surveys, which show strong support for measures that tobacco companies have argued impinge on individuals' rights.

Key Quotes

Although tobacco companies question the benefits of plain packaging, New Zealanders strongly support this measure and believe attractive packaging encourages smoking experimentation among young people.

2. Hoek, J., Healey, B., Gendall, P., Edwards, R. and Jaine, R. How do adolescents perceive plain packaging? *NZ Medical Journal* [letter], 27 September 2013, Vol 126 No 1383. <http://journal.nzma.org.nz/journal/126-1383/5849/>

What did we do and find?

We analysed data from the 2009 – 2012 ASH Year 10 surveys and examined how adolescents responded to statements regarding plain packaging. Support rose sharply over time and, by 2012, 64% reported that they supported plain packaging; opposition dropped from 21% to just 14%. Majority support was evident among all demographics examined (age, gender, ethnicity and SES).

What does this mean?

Adolescents are the potential next generation of smokers. Evidence that a clear majority supports plain packaging demonstrates the acceptance this policy will receive.

Key Quotes

We call on the New Zealand Government to act now; there is compelling experimental, qualitative and survey evidence that plain packaging will reduce smoking's appeal to young people, and widespread public support for the policy exists.