



Canadian Smokers' Support for Tobacco Endgame

Strategies: Findings from the ITC Canada Survey

**A report prepared for the 2016 Canadian Tobacco
Endgame Summit**

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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
THE ITC PROJECT	1
THE ITC CANADA SURVEY: METHODS AND SAMPLING DESIGN	2
ANALYTIC APPROACH	3
FINDINGS	5
CONCLUSIONS	20
REFERENCES	22

CANADIAN SMOKERS' SUPPORT FOR TOBACCO ENDGAME STRATEGIES: FINDINGS FROM THE ITC CANADA SURVEY

INTRODUCTION

This report presents evidence on Canadian smokers' support for various strategies to reduce the national prevalence of smoking. The data is based on a nationally representative cohort survey (The ITC Four Country Survey) of smokers conducted between 2002 and 2016 by The International Tobacco Control Policy Evaluation Project (the ITC Project). The preliminary findings of the 2016 Survey (as of 6 September 2016, based on 42% of the target sample) are released in this report for purposes of providing the most recent data on Canadian smokers' opinions to inform discussions at the Tobacco Endgame for Canada 2016 Summit.

THE ITC PROJECT

The ITC Project is the first-ever international cohort study of tobacco use and the only research project that focuses on evaluating the impact of tobacco control policies of the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC). The ITC Project was founded in 2002 by a research team led by Professor Geoffrey T. Fong at the University of Waterloo. The ITC Project is now a collaboration of over 150 researchers across 28 countries, inhabited by over 50% of the world's population, over 60% of the world's smokers, and over 70% of the world's tobacco users. In each country, the ITC Project is conducting prospective cohort surveys of tobacco users to assess the impact and identify the determinants of effective tobacco control policies in each of the following areas:

- Health warning labels and package descriptors
- Smoke-free legislation
- Pricing and taxation of tobacco products
- Communication and education
- Cessation
- Tobacco advertising and promotion

In addition, ITC Surveys include a set of more than 20 questions to assess smokers' perceptions on potential measures to reduce use of tobacco and e-cigarettes as part of endgame strategies. These questions evaluate smokers' support for more government action on tobacco, increased regulation of the tobacco industry, stronger policies to reduce the availability of tobacco products, and stronger regulation of e-cigarettes.

Survey questions are identical or very similar across all ITC countries, which allows for cross-country comparisons of smoking patterns and the impact of tobacco control policies. Since 2002, ITC has completed over 100 survey waves involving over 100,000 tobacco users across the 28 countries, including 9 waves in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia with Wave 10 fieldwork in progress and targeted for completion on 30 October 2016.

THE ITC CANADA SURVEY: METHODS AND SAMPLING DESIGN

Since 2002, the ITC Project has conducted longitudinal surveys of a nationally representative cohort of approximately 2,000 adult smokers (aged 18 years or older) in Canada, as part of the ITC Four Country (ITC4) Project which includes the US, the UK, and Australia. Nine waves of the ITC Canada Survey were conducted between 2002 and 2014. The most recent survey (Wave 10) was launched on 11 July 2016 and is targeted for completion on 30 October 2016.

The Wave 1 to 8 sample was recruited using a random-digit dialling (RDD) sampling design. In Waves 9 and 10, respondents were also recruited from a web panel (Leger). The survey sample in Waves 2 to 9 included cohort participants from the previous waves, with replenishment to replace respondents who were lost to follow up. In Waves 1 to 8, the households of these new participants were selected based on the same sampling design as Wave 1 (i.e., RDD); at Wave 9, new recruits were selected from the Wave 1 sampling frame plus the Leger web panel.

In 2016, respondents from the original ITC4 Project were asked to continue participating in an expanded Wave 10 Survey. The Wave 10 survey sample was expanded to include tobacco smokers, recent ex-smokers (within the past 24 months), and e-cigarette users. Survey respondents were recruited from the Wave 9 Survey and also from Leger's web panel. The survey was offered by web only in Canada. All past respondents from previous waves were eligible for the Wave 10 Survey, regardless of current smoking or e-cigarette use status.

Data for Waves 1 to 6 were collected using computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) software. Data for Waves 7 to 9 were collected using online web-based surveys, with respondents who did not complete the web survey within a set time frame being re-routed back into the telephone calling queue to complete the survey by CATI.

Table 1 provides a summary of the Wave 1 to 10 survey modes, fieldwork dates, sample sizes, and retention rates. Further information on the methods of the ITC Canada Survey can be found in the ITC4 Technical Reports available at www.itcproject.org.

Table 1. Description of ITC Canada Wave 1 to 10 Survey Modes, Fieldwork Dates, and Sample

Wave	Survey Mode	Fieldwork Dates	Total Sample Size	Sample Size for Endgame Analyses	Retention Rate (% continuing from previous wave) in Sample for Endgame Analyses
1	Telephone (CATI)	30 Oct 2002 - 30 Dec 2002	2,214	2,189	-
2	Telephone (CATI)	16 May 2003 - 28 Sep 2003	2,196	2,186	76.6%
3	Telephone (CATI)	10 Jun 2004 - 27 Dec 2004	2,108	2,096	74.2%
4	Telephone (CATI)	17 Oct 2005 - 30 Jan 2006	2,029	2,022	74.4%
5	Telephone (CATI)	17 Oct 2006 - 14 Feb 2007	2,022	2,016	70.5%
6	Telephone (CATI)	27 Sep 2007 - 13 Feb 2008	2,015	2,012	72.4%
7	Web and Telephone	17 Nov 2008 - 26 Jul 2009	1,846	1,825	82.9%
8	Web and Telephone	13 Jul 2010 - 27 May 2011	1,581	1,572	86.3%
9	Web and Telephone	28 Aug 2013 - 02 Oct 2014	1,592	1,579	71.3%
10	Web	11 Jul 2016 – 30 Oct 2016 (Anticipated completion date)	3,816 (Total target)	1,617 (Respondents as of 6 Sep 2016)	-

ANALYTIC APPROACH

The trend data from the Wave 1 to 9 Surveys (2002-2014) presented in this report are based on a dataset consisting of a total of 17,497 observations across the nine waves. These data come from 5,880 unique smokers participating in at least one wave of the ITC Canada Survey.

Trend estimates are adjusted for by wave, time-in-sample, survey mode, sex, age, income, education, marital status, ethnicity, region, and smoking status using binary and multinomial logistic regression models (estimated in SUDAAN using GEE). In cross-country comparisons, the same kind of adjustment was applied since country samples vary in their demographic composition.

Estimates from the Wave 10 Survey (2016) are based on a preliminary, unweighted, unadjusted dataset constructed from 1,617 respondents who completed the survey between 11 July 2016 (the Wave 10 Survey start date in Canada) and 6 September 2016. Table 2 provides the Wave 10 sample frequency by province compared against Canadian population estimates for 2016.

Table 2. Description of Wave 10 sample by province compared to Canadian population

Province	ITC Wave 10 Sample to Date		Canadian Census* Population	
	Frequency	%	(in millions)	%
Ontario	657	40.8	13.87	38.5
Quebec	316	19.6	8.29	23.0
British Columbia	192	11.9	4.71	13.1
Alberta	124	7.7	4.23	11.7
Manitoba	86	5.3	1.3	3.6
Saskatchewan	60	3.7	1.14	3.2
New Brunswick	51	3.2	0.75	2.1
Newfoundland and Labrador	43	2.7	0.53	1.5
Nova Scotia	43	2.7	0.94	2.6
Prince Edward Island	39	2.4	0.15	0.4

*Source for Canadian population data: *Statistics Canada. Table 051-0005 – Estimates of population, Canada, provinces and territories, quarterly (persons), CANSIM (database).*

FINDINGS

SUPPORT FOR STRONGER GOVERNMENT ACTIONS FOR TOBACCO CONTROL

From 2002 to 2014, the majority of smokers (57% to 62%) “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the government should do more to tackle the harm done by smoking (see Figure 1), with some regional differences in 2013-2014. Support was highest in the Atlantic provinces (63%), and lowest in the Prairie provinces (41%) (see Figure 2).

More than half of smokers (55% to 68%) also “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that tobacco products should be more tightly regulated between 2002 to 2014 (see Figure 1).

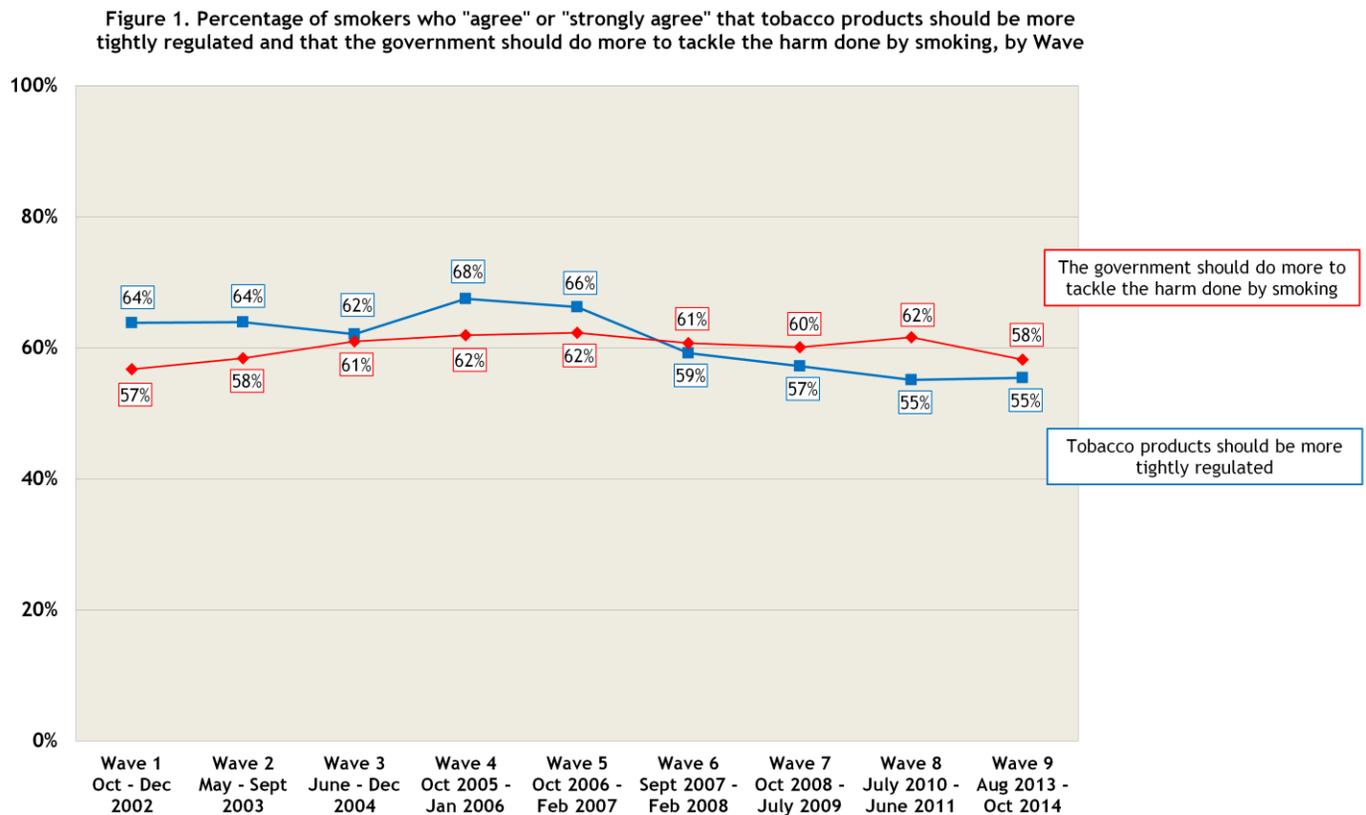
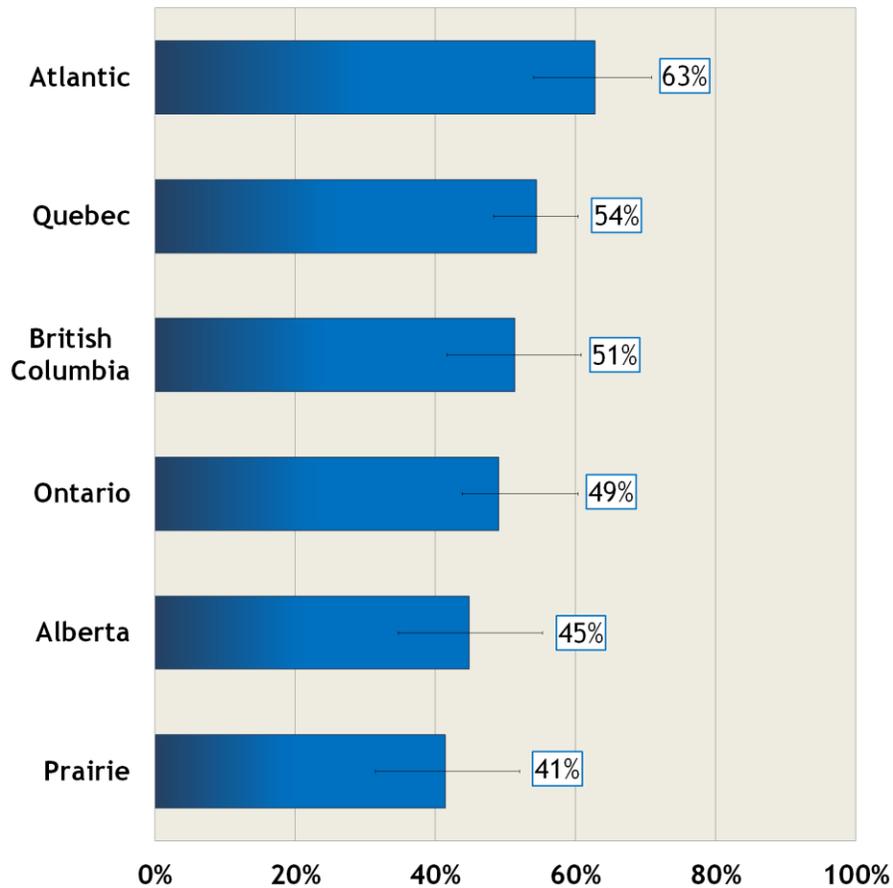


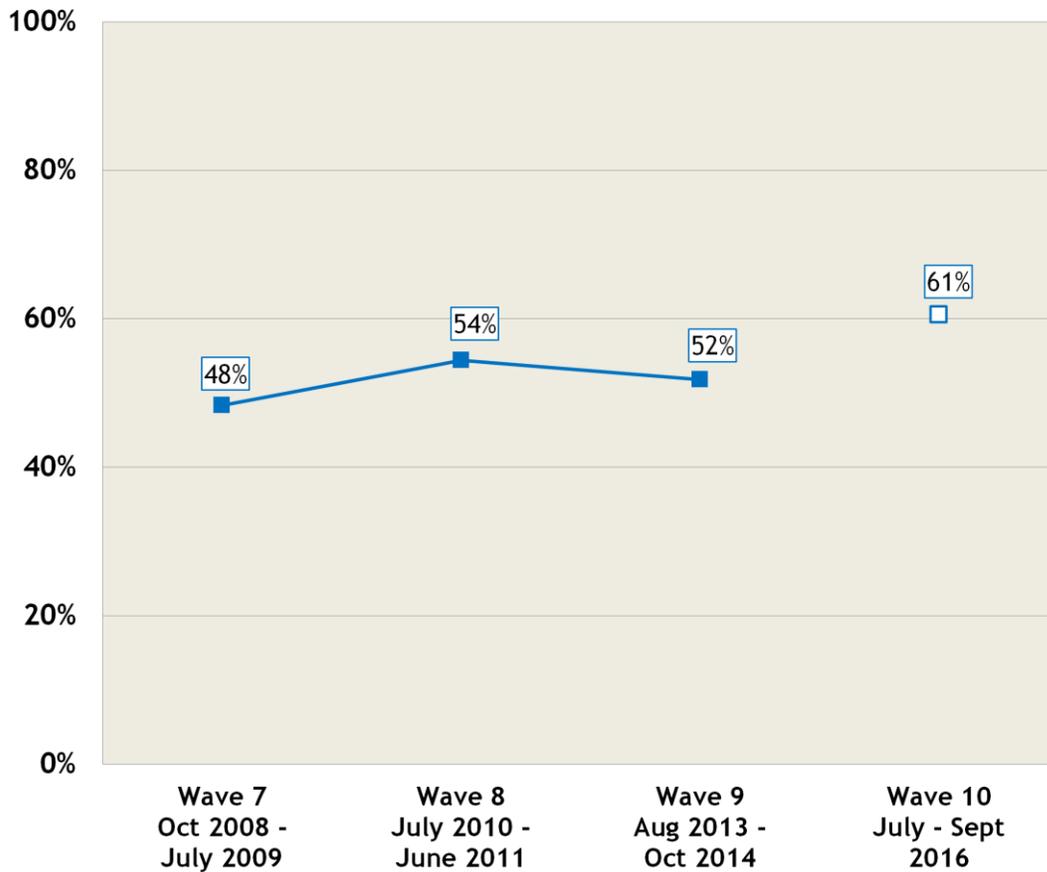
Figure 2. Percentage of smokers who "agree" or "strongly agree" that the government should do more to tackle the harm done by smoking at Wave 9 (2013-2014), by region



Note: Results significantly differed by region, $p < .05$

From 2008 to 2014, approximately half of Canadian smokers reported that they would “support” or “strongly support” the government suing tobacco companies to recover health care costs caused by tobacco use (48% in 2008-2009 and 52% in 2013-2014). Preliminary data indicate that support has increased to 61% in 2016 (see Figure 3).

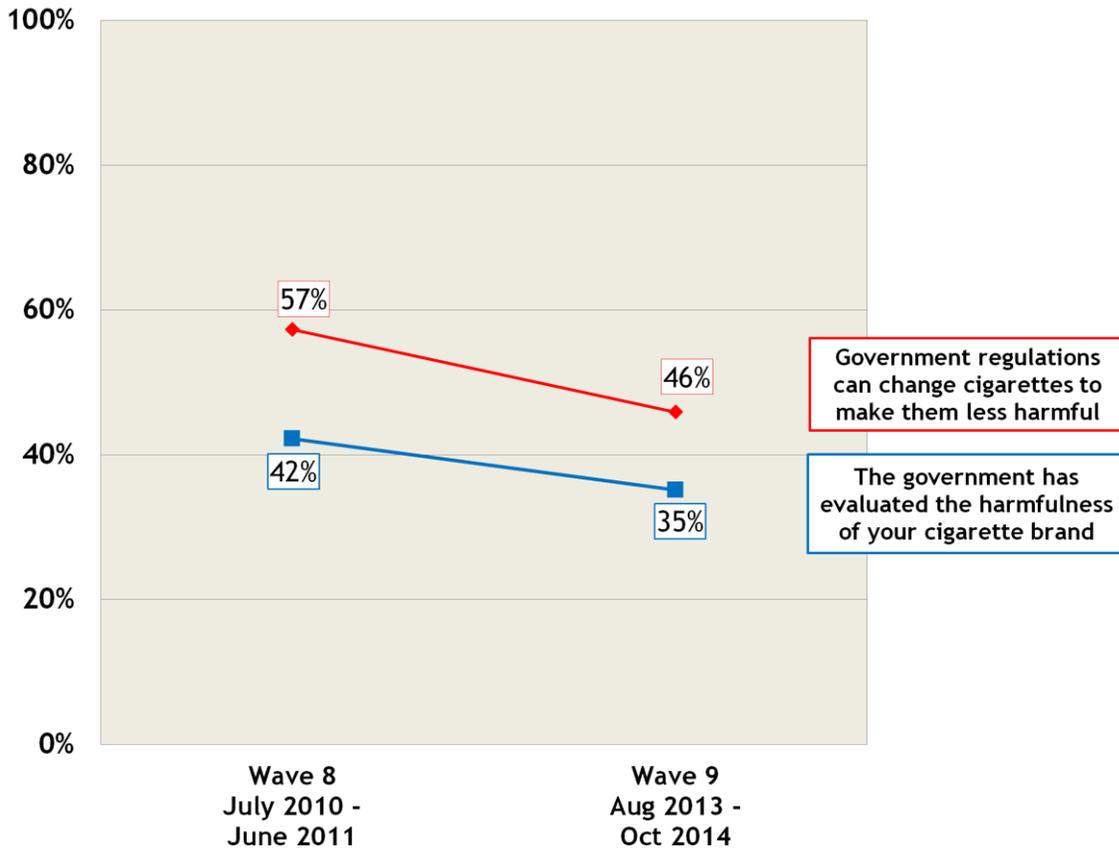
Figure 3. Percentage of smokers who "support" or "strongly support" the government suing tobacco companies to recover health care costs caused by tobacco use, by Wave



Note: The data for 2016 is partial and is based on a preliminary, unweighted and unadjusted dataset

In 2010-2011, more than half of smokers (57%) thought it was possible for government regulations to change cigarettes to make them less harmful, but this percentage decreased to 46% in 2013-2014 (see Figure 4). There was also a decrease in the percentage of smokers who thought the government has evaluated the harmfulness of their cigarette brand from 42% in 2010-2011 to 35% in 2013-2014 (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Percentage of smokers who think it is possible for government regulations to change cigarettes to make them less harmful and that the government has evaluated the harmfulness of their cigarette brand, by Wave

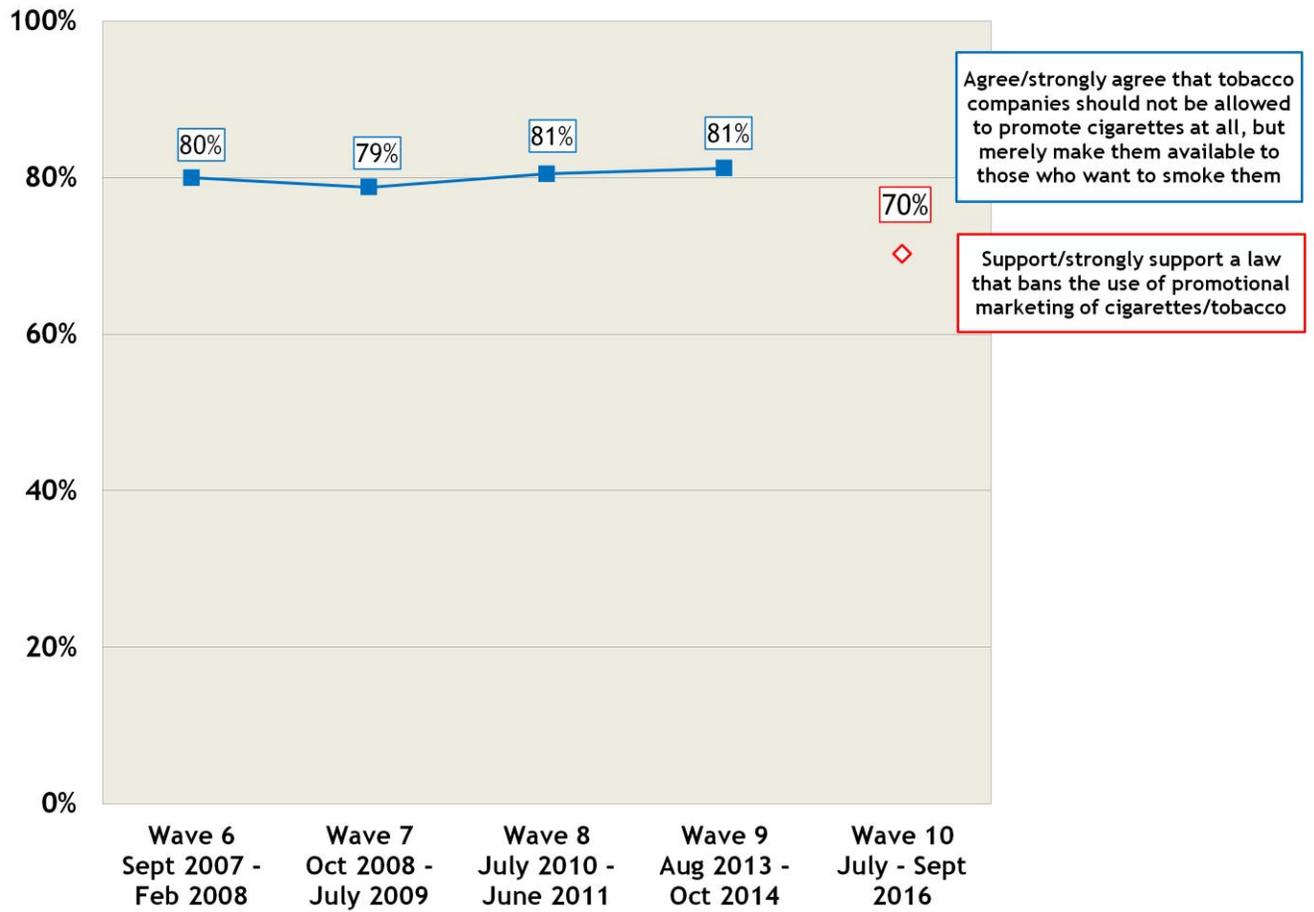


SUPPORT FOR SPECIFIC ENDGAME MEASURES FOR CIGARETTES AND TOBACCO

Measures to Reduce Product Visibility

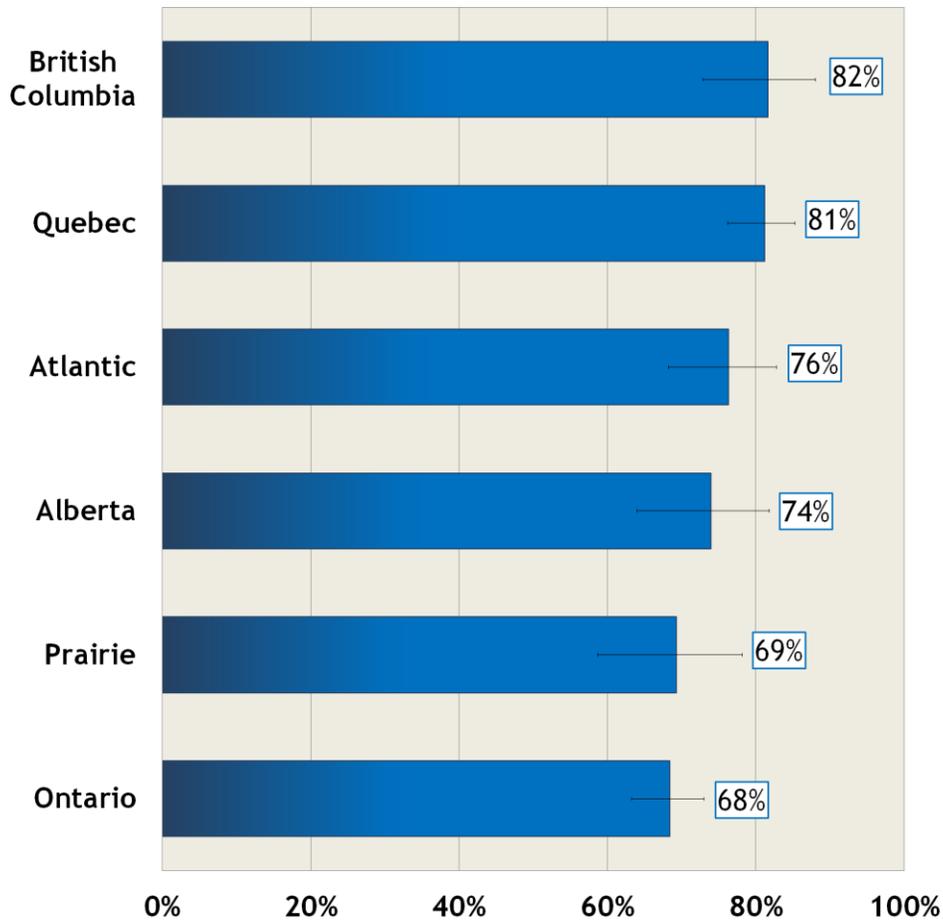
Between 2007 to 2014, more than three-quarters of smokers (79% to 81%) “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that tobacco companies should not be allowed to promote cigarettes at all, but merely make them available to those who want them (see Figure 5). There were some regional differences in 2013-2014, with the highest support in British Columbia (82%) and Quebec (81%), and lowest support in the Prairie provinces (69%) and Ontario (68%) (see Figure 6).

Figure 5. Percentage of smokers who support various measures to ban the promotion of cigarettes/tobacco products, by Wave



Note: The data for 2016 is partial and is based on a preliminary, unweighted and unadjusted dataset

Figure 6. Percentage of smokers who "agree" or "strongly agree" that tobacco companies should not be allowed to promote cigarettes at all at Wave 9 (2013-2014), by region



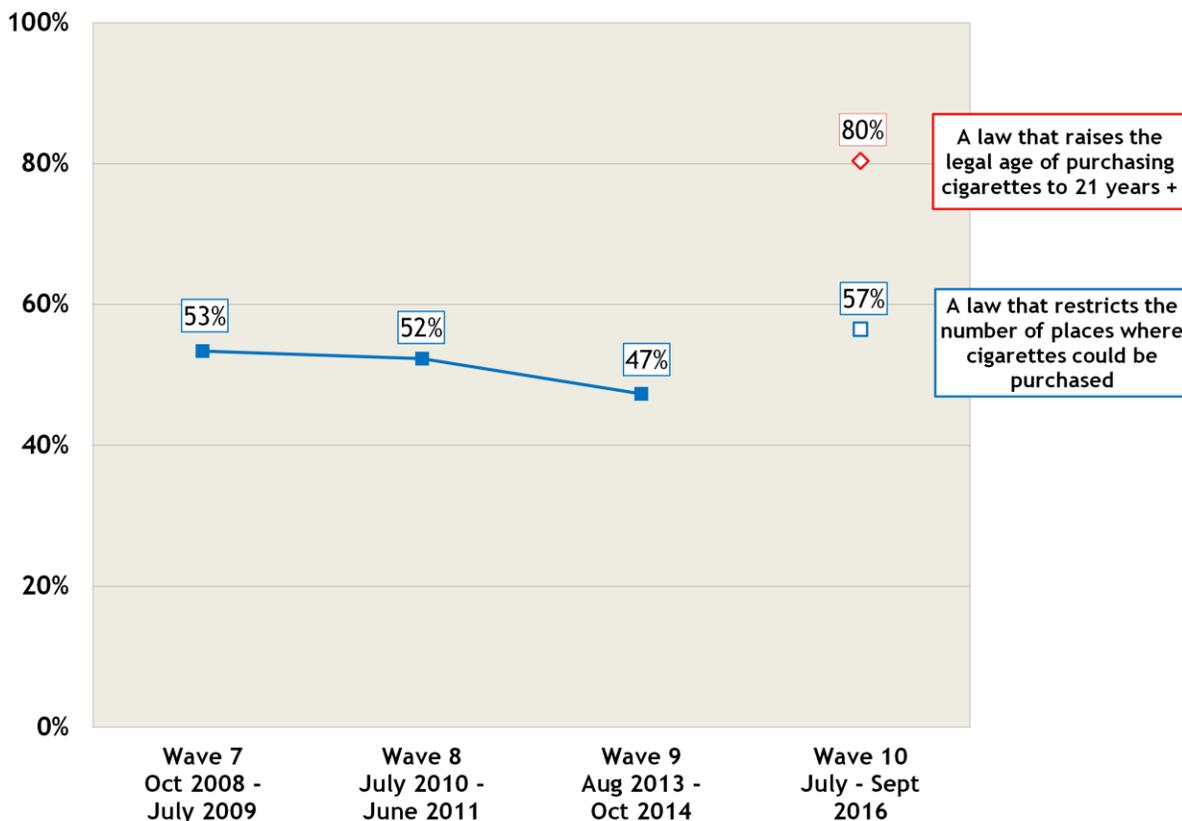
Note: Results significantly differed by region, $p < .01$

The Wave 10 Survey (2016) included a new question that asked smokers whether they would support a ban on the use of promotional marketing for cigarettes/tobacco. Preliminary data indicate that the majority of smokers (70%) would support such a ban (see Figure 5).

Measures to Restrict Product Accessibility

From 2008 to 2014, about half of smokers said that they would "support" or "strongly support" a law that restricted the number of places where cigarettes could be purchased (53% in 2008-2009 and 47% in 2013-2014). Preliminary data show a further increase to 57% of smokers in 2016 (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. Percentage of smokers who would "support" or "strongly support" various measures to restrict access to cigarettes/tobacco products, by Wave



Note: The data for 2016 is partial and is based on a preliminary, unweighted and unadjusted dataset

The Wave 10 Survey (2016) also included a new question that asked smokers whether they would support changes to the minimum legal age for the purchase of cigarettes/tobacco. Preliminary findings show that the vast majority of smokers (80%) would “support” or “strongly support” a law to raise the legal age for purchasing cigarettes/tobacco to 21 years and older (see Figure 7).ⁱ

Measures to Increase Cessation

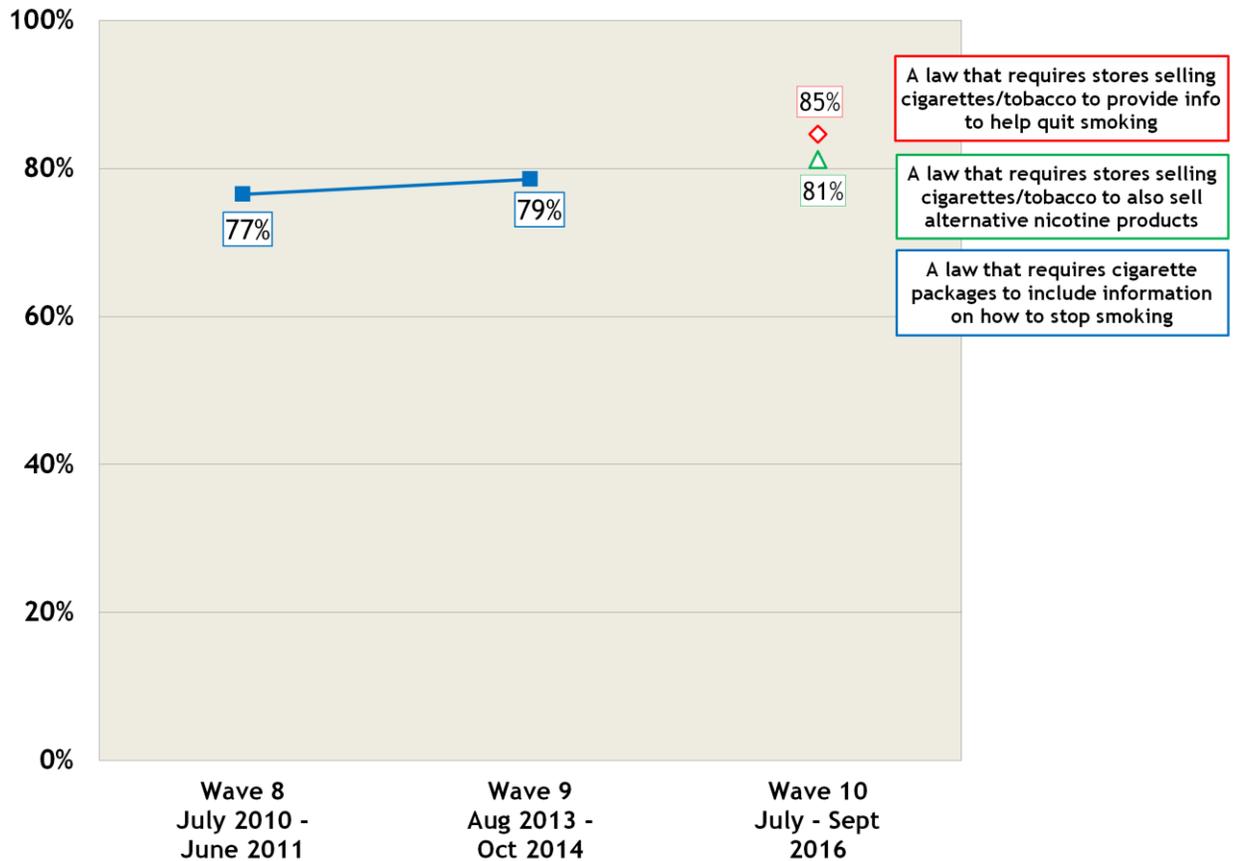
More than three-quarters of smokers said that they would “support” or “strongly support” a law that would require cigarette packages to include information on how to stop smoking in 2010-2011 (77%) and 2013-2014 (79%) (see Figure 8).

The Wave 10 Survey (2016) also included two new questions that asked smokers whether they would support measures to promote cessation at retail locations. Preliminary findings show that the vast majority of smokers said that they would

ⁱ In Canada, the legal age to purchase cigarettes is 19 years in all provinces, with the exception of Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Quebec, where the legal purchase age is 18 years.

“support” or “strongly support” a law that would require stores that sell cigarettes/tobacco to provide information/resources to help smokers quit (85%), and to sell alternative nicotine products like e-cigarettes (81%) (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. Percentage of smokers who would "support" or "strongly support" various measures to increase cessation, by Wave



Note: The data for 2016 is partial and is based on a preliminary, unweighted and unadjusted dataset

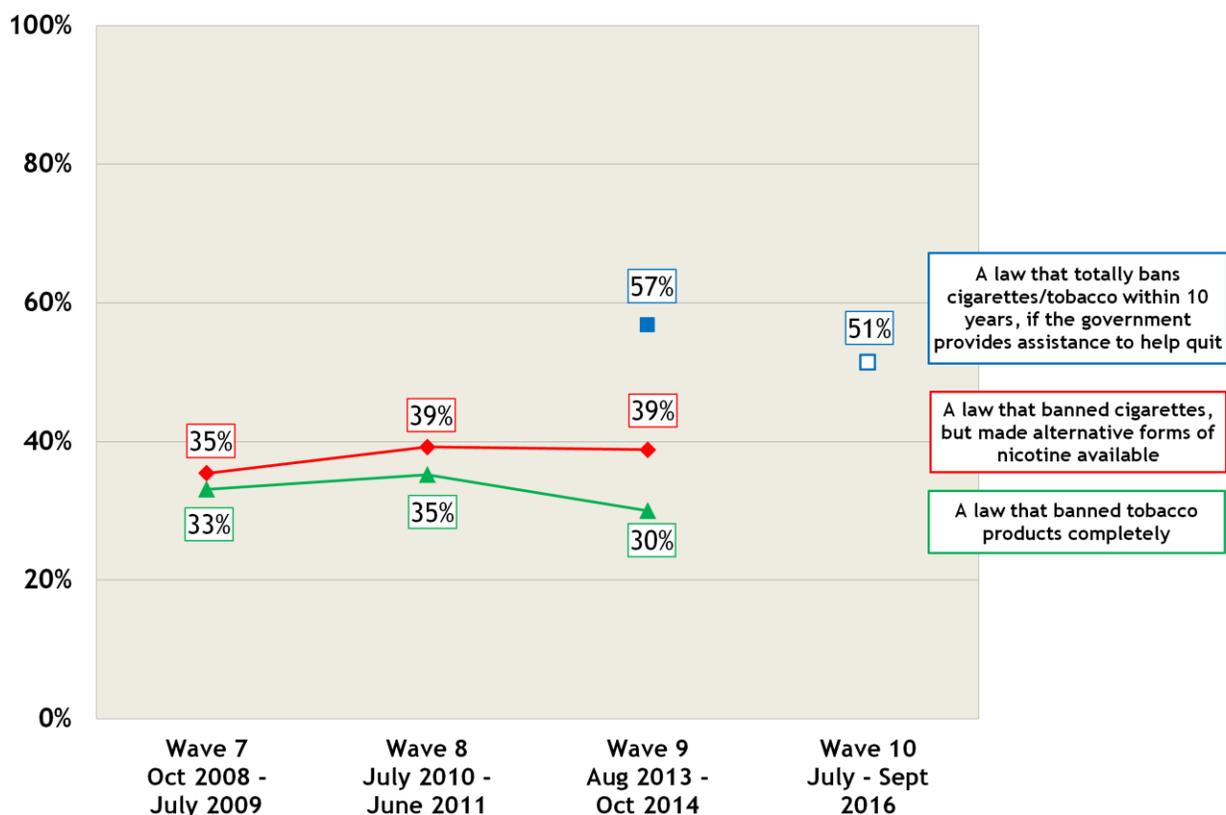
SUPPORT FOR A TOTAL BAN ON TOBACCO PRODUCTS

More than half of smokers would support a ban on tobacco products if the government were to provide services to help smokers to quit. In 2013-2014, 57% of smokers said that they would support a total ban on tobacco products within 10 years, if the government provided assistance such as cessation clinics to help smokers quit. Preliminary data show a decrease in support to 51% in 2016 (see Figure 9).

Between 2008 to 2014, more than one-third of smokers (35% to 39%) said that they would support a law that banned cigarettes, but made alternative forms of nicotine available (see Figure 9).

Finally, more than one-quarter of smokers (30% to 35%) said that they would support a law that banned tobacco products completely, if nicotine was made easily available in non-cigarette forms, between 2008 to 2014 (see Figure 9).

Figure 9. Percentage of smokers who would "support" or "strongly support" measures to completely ban tobacco products, by Wave



Note: The data for 2016 is partial and is based on a preliminary, unweighted and unadjusted dataset

RESTRICTIONS ON PRODUCT PACKAGING

Support for Plain Packaging

It is well-documented that public support for tobacco control policies increases after they are implemented, even among smokers. ITC data across many countries has shown for example, that comprehensive smoke-free laws have been strongly supported by smokers after they have been implemented, even though pre-implementation support among smokers was low.^{1 2 3 4}

The ITC Project has also measured support for plain packaging in a number of countries. Analyses of these ITC data demonstrates that support among smokers for plain packaging goes up after governments commit to the introduction of plain packaging legislation, with further increases after the policy is implemented.⁵

- **Australia** was the first country to introduce plain packaging in December 2012. Nearly half of smokers (49%) supported plain packaging in 2013 (1 year after policy was implemented), compared to 30% of smokers in 2008-2009 (3 years before the policy was implemented) (see Figure 10).
- In November 2010, the **UK** Government announced plans for the introduction of plain packaging. There was an increase in smokers' support for the policy from 24% in 2008-2009 (1-2 years before announcement) to 37% in 2013 (4-5 years after announcement) (see Figure 10).
- In **Canada**, about one-third of smokers said that they would support plain packaging from 2008 (34%) to 2014 (38%) (see Figure 10). Preliminary data show that approximately one-third (32%) of smokers support plain packaging in 2016 (see Figure 11).ⁱⁱ In November 2015, the Canadian Government announced plans to introduce plain packaging requirements for tobacco products, similar to regulations that have been adopted by Australia and the UK. Preliminary data indicate that 32% of Canadian smokers supported plain packaging in 2016, which is similar to the level of support seen in Australia before plain packaging was introduced. Based on ITC findings on support for plain packaging in Australia, and support for smoke-free laws across many countries, it is likely that there will be a significant and lasting increase in support for plain packaging among Canadian smokers as the government continues to move forward with plans to implement the policy.
- In the **US**, where plain packaging has not yet been considered, there was no change in smokers' support for plain packaging from 2008-2009 (20%) to 2013-2015 (23%) (see Figure 10).

ⁱⁱ Note that frequencies shown in Figure 10 for Canada in Waves 7 to 9 are slightly lower than those shown for the same waves in Figure 11. This is due to differences in adjustment based on the survey waves and other countries (for Figure 10) included in the analysis.

Figure 10. Smokers' support for plain packaging in Australia, Canada, United Kingdom, and United States

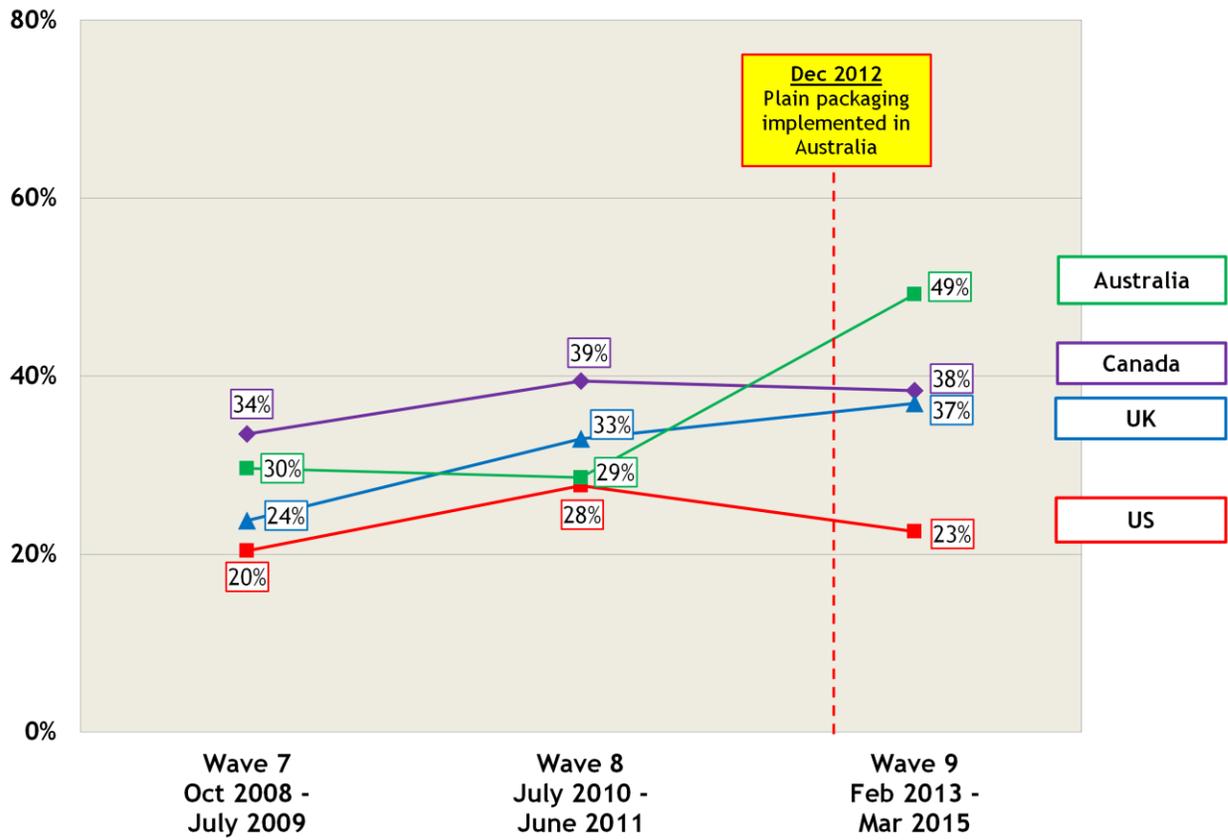
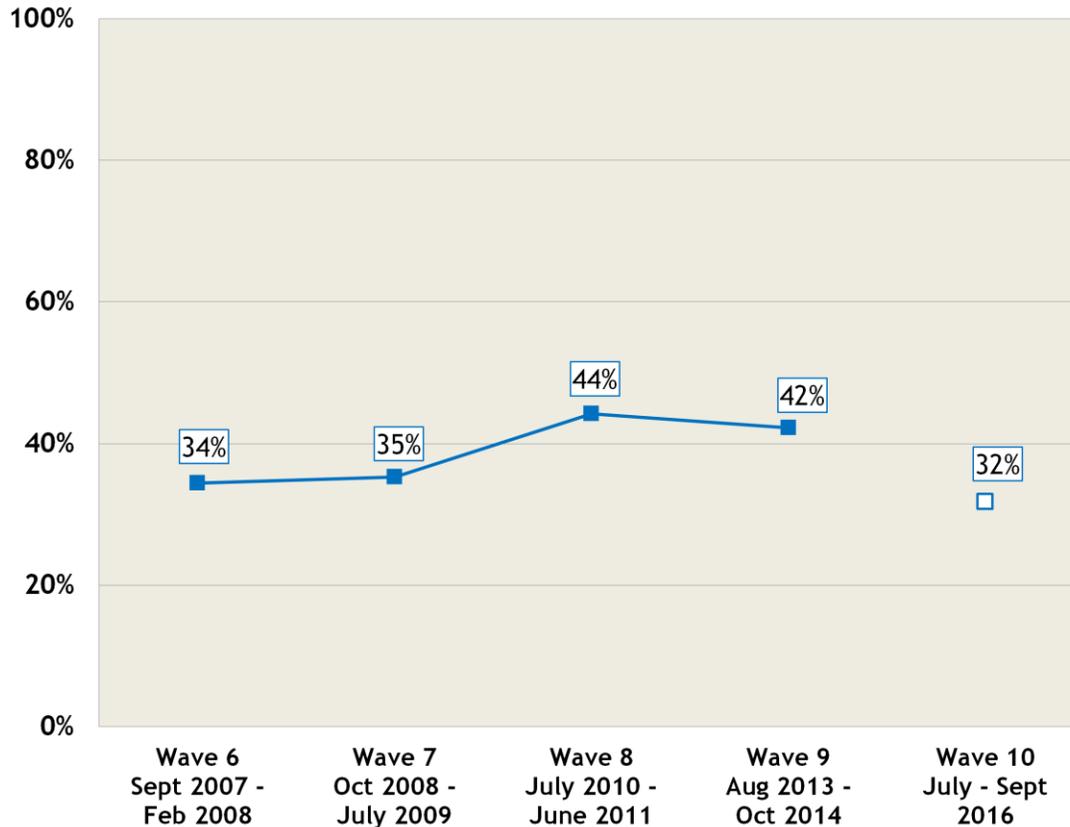


Figure 11. Percentage of smokers who "agree" or "strongly agree" that tobacco companies should be required to sell cigarettes in plain packages, by Wave



Note: The data for 2016 is partial and is based on a preliminary, unweighted and unadjusted dataset

RESTRICTIONS ON CONTENTS OF TOBACCO PRODUCTS

There was majority support among Canadian smokers to regulate the nicotine content of cigarettes from 2008 to 2014, with at least 80% of smokers reporting that they would “support” or “strongly support” a policy to reduce the amount of nicotine in cigarettes. Preliminary data indicate that support in 2016 has remained high at 81% (see Figure 12).

In July 2010, Canada became the first country to ban all flavourings (with the exception of menthol) in cigarettes, some little cigars, and blunt wraps. While a majority of Canadian smokers support a ban on flavourings in cigarettes, there was a decline in the level of support after the ban came into effect. There was a significant decreaseⁱⁱⁱ in the percentage of smokers who said that they would “support” or “strongly support” a ban on all additives from cigarettes from 81% in 2010-2011 to 76% in 2013-2014, with

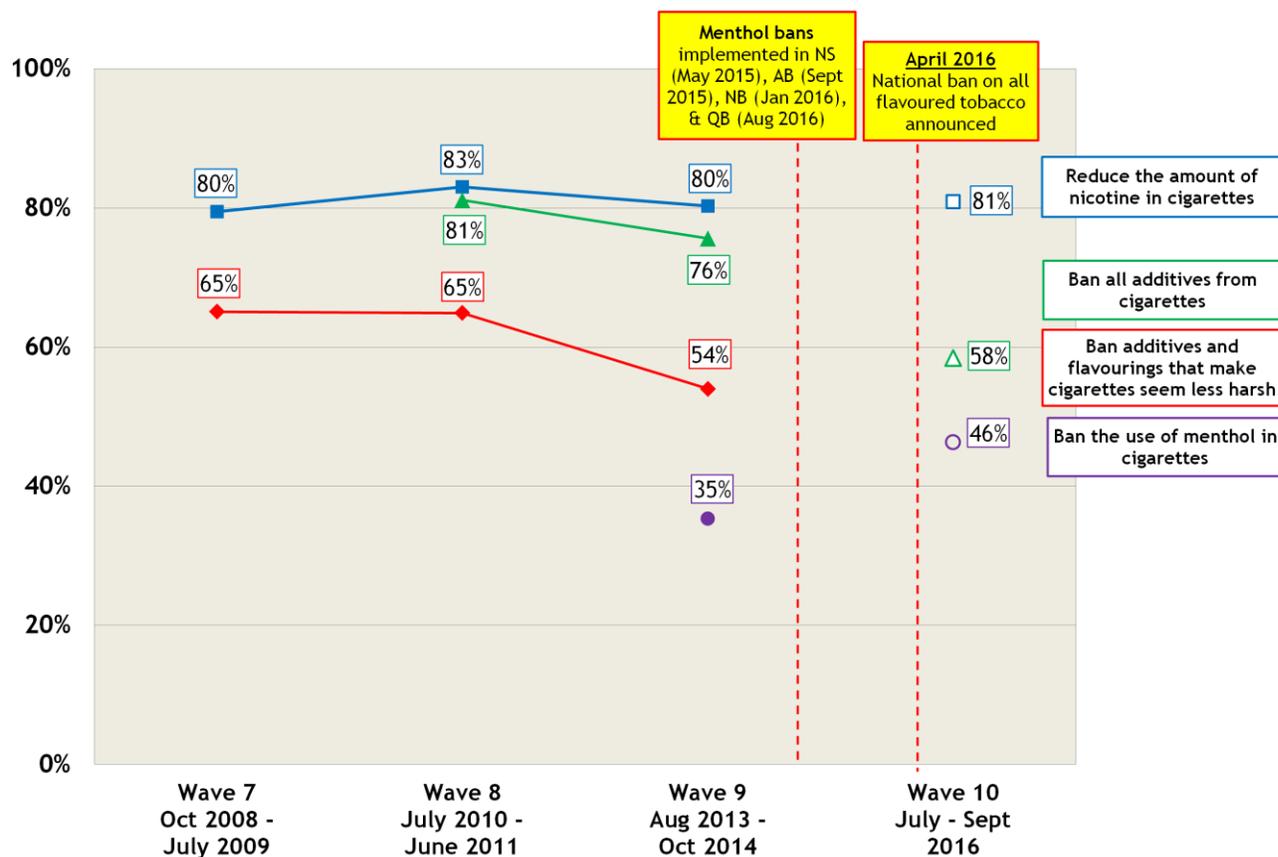
ⁱⁱⁱ Decrease was statistically significant ($p < .01$).

preliminary data showing a further decrease to 58% in 2016 (see Figure 12). There was also a significant decrease^{iv} in support for a ban on all additives and flavourings that make cigarettes seem less harsh from 65% in 2008-2009 to 54% at in 2013-2014 (see Figure 12).

In comparison to smokers' support for bans on additives and flavourings in cigarettes, support for a ban on menthol in cigarettes was lower, with just over one-third of smokers (35%) indicating that they would "support" or "strongly support" a menthol ban in 2013-2014. However, preliminary data show that support for a menthol ban increased to 46% in 2016 (see Figure 12). This increase in support may reflect the impact of policy changes that occurred between 2013 and 2016. In 2013-2014, no provinces had bans on menthol cigarettes. In contrast, four provinces (Nova Scotia, Alberta, New Brunswick, and Quebec) had implemented bans on menthol cigarettes by August 2016, and a national ban on all flavoured tobacco (including menthol products) was announced by the federal government in April 2016. The increase in support for menthol bans over time is consistent with ITC results showing that smokers' support for tobacco control measures, such as smoke-free laws and plain packaging, increases after the policy is implemented (discussed above).

^{iv} Decrease was statistically significant ($p < .0001$).

Figure 12. Percentage of smokers who would "support" or "strongly support" stronger tobacco control measures on the contents of cigarettes, by Wave



Note: The data for 2016 is partial and is based on a preliminary, unweighted and unadjusted dataset

SUPPORT FOR E-CIGARETTE POLICIES

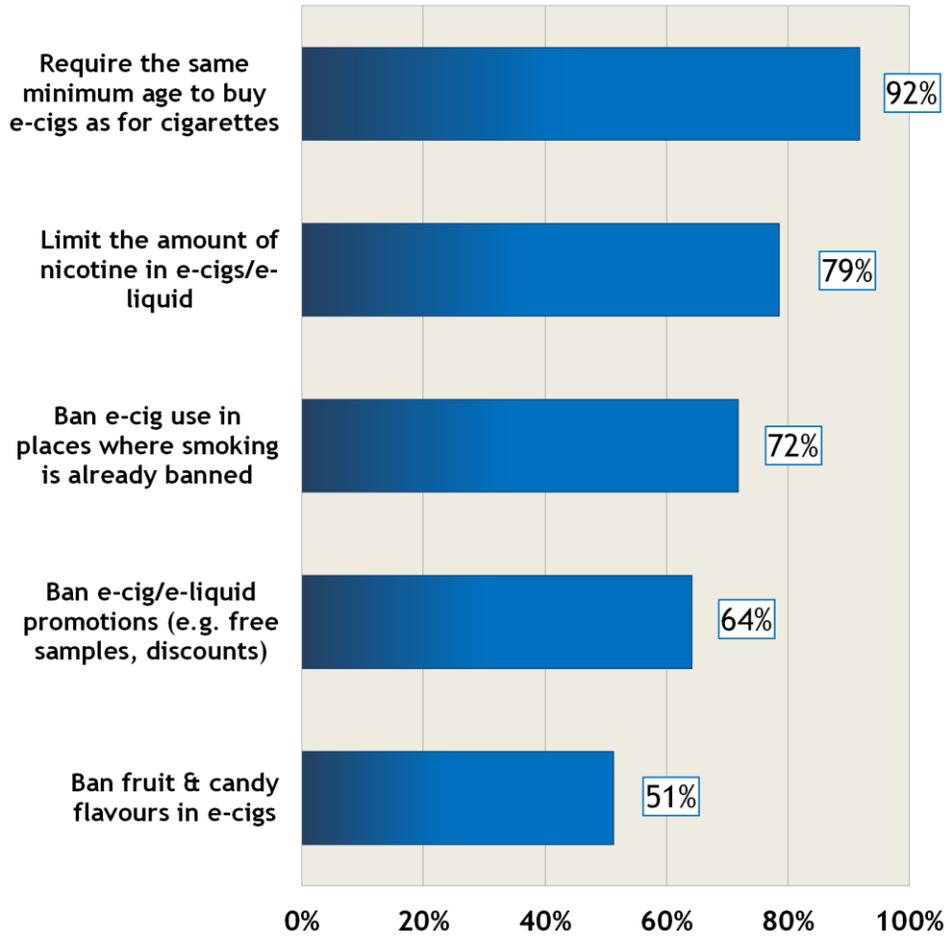
The Wave 10 Survey (2016) included several new questions that asked smokers to report whether they would support various e-cigarette policies.

Nearly all smokers (92%) said that they would “support” or “strongly support” a law that requires the same minimum age to purchase e-cigarettes as for cigarettes (see Figure 13).

Smokers also supported policies to regulate the contents of e-cigarettes, with more than three-quarters of smokers (79%) indicating that they would support a law that limits the amount of nicotine in e-cigarettes/e-liquid, and half of smokers (51%) reporting that they would support a ban on fruit and candy flavours in e-cigarettes (see Figure 13).

There was also majority support among smokers (72%) to ban the use of e-cigarettes in public venues where smoking is already banned. Finally, nearly two-thirds of smokers (64%) said that they would support a ban on e-cigarette/e-liquid promotions (see Figure 13).

Figure 13. Percentage of smokers who support/strongly support various possible laws around vaping and e-cigarettes at Wave 10 (July - Sept 2016)



Note: The percentages shown are partial and are based on a preliminary, unweighted and unadjusted dataset

CONCLUSIONS

Findings from the ITC Canada Wave 1 to 9 Surveys (2002-2014) and preliminary results from the Wave 10 Survey (2016) demonstrate that the majority of smokers support a set of new and stronger tobacco control policy measures that could be considered within a tobacco endgame strategy for Canada.

At least half of smokers support more government action to tackle the harm done by smoking (62% in 2014), regulate tobacco products more tightly (68% in 2014), and use litigation to hold the tobacco industry accountable for health care costs related to tobacco use (61% in 2016).

Smokers endorse various measures to restrict the visibility, accessibility, and supply of tobacco products. In 2016, more than half of smokers (57%) support restrictions on the number of places where cigarettes can be purchased, and more than three-quarters of smokers (80%) support a law to raise the legal age for purchasing cigarettes/tobacco to 21 years and older.

The vast majority of smokers are in favour of measures that can help them to quit. More than three-quarters of smokers support various measures to increase cessation, including requiring the display of information on how to stop smoking on cigarette packages (79% in 2014), and access to cessation materials (85% in 2016) and alternative nicotine products (81% in 2016) in retail locations where tobacco is sold.

Following an announcement for the implementation of plain packaging by the federal government in 2015, Canada is now on the path towards implementing a policy to prevent the tobacco industry from using product packaging to promote their products to consumers. In 2016, about one-third of smokers (32%) support plain packaging, which is comparable to the level of support seen in Australia before plain packaging was introduced in 2012. Support is expected to increase as the Canadian Government moves ahead with plans to implement plain packaging legislation, consistent with findings in Australia and other research showing increases in smokers' support for tobacco control policies once they are implemented.

Smokers are receptive to several radical endgame measures. In 2014, more than one-third of smokers support a ban on cigarettes (39%) provided alternative nicotine substitutes are made available. In 2016, half of smokers (51%) support a total ban on tobacco products within 10 years, if the government provides assistance to help smokers to quit.

There is growing support among smokers for measures to restrict some of the contents of cigarettes, including flavourings such as menthol. In recent years, several provinces have implemented legislation that specifically prohibits the use of menthol in tobacco products, which has been linked to smokers' reports of a "smoother" sensory experience and misperceptions of reduced harm.^{6 7 8} Following the introduction of provincial menthol bans, smokers' support for bans on menthol-flavoured cigarettes increased from 35% in 2013 (no menthol bans in any provinces) to 46% in 2016 (menthol bans implemented in four provinces and a national ban announced by the federal government).

E-cigarettes may play a role in the tobacco endgame, however the details of their role will depend on rapidly evolving research evidence on the role of e-cigarettes as a cessation aid and their overall impact on public health. Scientific consensus on the efficacy of e-cigarettes in smoking cessation has not been reached due to few high quality studies and shortcomings in study methodologies that fail to recognize the huge variability in the characteristics of e-cigarette users, the devices themselves, and patterns of use. For example, a January 2016 meta-analysis of 38 peer reviewed studies, which concluded that e-cigarettes are associated with significantly less quitting among smokers, has been highly criticized for treating all studies equally without regard to their scientific rigour.^{9 10} A more recent 2016 systematic review that did take quality into account concluded the following:

While inconclusive due to low quality, overall the existing literature suggests e-cigarettes may be helpful for some smokers for quitting or reducing smoking. However, more carefully designed and scientifically sound studies are urgently needed to establish unequivocally the long-term cessation effects of e-cigarettes and to better understand how and when e-cigarettes may be helpful.¹¹

Recent evidence also highlights the importance of rigorous measurement of frequency of use and product type in e-cigarette efficacy studies. For example, a longitudinal study of smokers in Great Britain demonstrates the importance of distinguishing among different kinds of nicotine delivery devices in assessing their effectiveness as a smoking cessation aid. Results indicated that daily users of refillable tank systems were more likely to have quit and non-daily disposable cigalike users were less likely to have quit compared to respondents not using e-cigarettes.¹²

Preliminary findings from the ITC Canada Wave 10 Survey (2016) show that Canadian smokers are highly supportive of various national policies to regulate e-cigarettes. Nearly all smokers (92%) support a law that requires the same minimum legal age for purchase of e-cigarettes as for cigarettes. More than half of smokers (51% to 79%) also support restrictions/bans that apply to e-cigarettes in terms of their contents, use in public places, and promotion.

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