

Canadian smokers support bold new approaches to end tobacco use

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Most Canadian smokers are in favour of novel policies to reduce tobacco use, according to a national survey by the International Tobacco Control Policy Evaluation Project (ITC) at the University of Waterloo.

Responding to the Canadian government's commitment to reduce tobacco use to less than five per cent of the population by 2035, the ITC study assessed baseline levels of [support](#) among Canadian smokers for potential endgame policies. The researchers found that most smokers in Canada support new and radical tobacco endgame strategies.

"Canada has taken strong actions to reduce tobacco use over the last several decades. Anti-smoking policies such as graphic warning labels on cigarette packs, smoking bans, [tobacco taxes](#), and bans on the display of [tobacco products](#) have driven smoking rates down to an all-time low," said Geoffrey Fong, Principal Investigator of the ITC Project and a professor of psychology and public health and health systems at Waterloo. "However, the decrease has levelled off in recent years, and 16 per cent of Canada's population (roughly five million people) continue to smoke—killing 45,000 smokers each year."

The survey of 3,215 smokers, conducted in 2016, found that 70 per cent support lowering nicotine levels in cigarettes to make them less addictive and raising the legal age for buying cigarettes to 21+ years. More than half (59%) of smokers support a ban on all marketing of tobacco products. Even the most radical policy proposed in the survey—a complete ban on the sale of cigarettes within 10 years, with smoking

cessation support—is favoured by 44 per cent of smokers.

On May 31, 2018, the Canadian government released a new federal tobacco control strategy to achieve a tobacco endgame target of less than five per cent tobacco use by 2035—or less than 1.8 million tobacco users. The study findings support the kind of new leading-edge policies needed to curb tobacco use in Canada and refutes typical [tobacco](#) industry claims that endgame policies will result in public backlash because they interfere with smokers' rights.

"This study provides evidence that Canadian smokers—those who would be most affected by any [policy](#) changes—would support further government action to reduce smoking rates," said Janet Chung-Hall of the ITC Project and lead author of the study. "The federal government's commitment to an endgame goal is an important step forward for public health. What we need now is to focus on innovative policies to make it easier for [smokers](#) in Canada to quit and to prevent youth from starting to smoke."

More information: Janet Chung-Hall et al, Smokers' support for tobacco endgame measures in Canada: findings from the 2016 International Tobacco Control Smoking and Vaping Survey, *CMAJ Open* (2018). [DOI: 10.9778/cmajo.20180025](https://doi.org/10.9778/cmajo.20180025)

Provided by University of Waterloo

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