

EM9018: *The Globe and Mail*, February 6, 1990, page A6

Perhaps if you rephrased the question

The Non-Smokers’ Rights Association has done this country a major service. Its influence has freed many non-smokers from having to breathe second-hand smoke and has persuaded many smokers to kick the habit. Long may its work continue.

It pains us, therefore, to toss cold water on the latest poll by Environics Research Group for the non-smokers group, the Canadian Cancer Society and the Heart and Stroke Foundation. The poll, intended to soften federal resistance to increasing taxes on tobacco, purports to show that 56 per cent of smokers themselves might either strongly or somewhat support increased taxes.

Alas, the ammunition is suspect. Consider the first question: "Some people have recommended that taxes on tobacco be increased – for example by 50 cents per pack – as part of an overall plan to reduce smoking. Other parts of the plan would include health warnings on cigaret packs, health promotion campaigns and restrictions on the sale of cigarets to children. Do you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose this idea?"

Support what idea? Restricting the sale of cigarets to children? An over-all plan to reduce smoking? Or, buried back at the beginning, a tax increase that might or might not be 50 cents per pack? The answers are meaningless because the question consists of several questions.

Another question asked whether respondents would support a tax increase of 50 cents a pack "if it were shown to greatly reduce smoking among young people." This is straightforward enough; if the groups can show that 50 cents will greatly reduce smoking among young people, they can cite the response with impunity. Good luck to them.

If smokers had simply been asked whether they would support a tax increase on cigarets, they would probably have said no; but the question should have been asked anyway, and followed by questions to determine in which circumstances their views would change. As it is, the survey is startling on the outside, but hollow at the core.

As a further point of interest, the *results* of the poll, which used the question discussed in *The Globe and Mail* editorial above, are summarized below; this brief article is from the *Kitchener-Waterloo Record* of February 8, 1990.

EM9019: **Smokers back anti-smoke tax**

TORONTO (CP) – A majority of smokers support a 50-cents-a-pack tobacco tax increase as part of an over-all plan to reduce smoking, a new poll suggests.

The survey by Environics suggests 29 per cent of smokers strongly support, and 27 per cent somewhat support, the idea of increased taxes to support anti-smoking education, *The Globe and Mail* reported.

The survey says 14 per cent somewhat oppose, and 27 per cent strongly oppose, an increase.

The poll was conducted for the Non-Smokers’ Rights Association.

The articles EM9018 and EM9019 reprinted above are used in Figure 8.8a of the STAT 220 Course Materials and in Figure 3.5a of the STAT 332 Course Materials; EM9018 is also used in Chapter 4 of the STAT 231 Course Materials.