
American Lung Association Key Opinion Leader Survey

Year One Report
June 2000

INTRODUCTION

Since the late 1980s, the state of California has aggressively challenged the social acceptance of tobacco use and tobacco industry marketing through a variety of anti-tobacco programs. Through funding made available by statewide ballot initiatives, most notably Proposition 99, these programs have been responsible for significant changes in the ways Californians live and work¹:

- Most California adults now live smoke-free.
- California smokers are now smoking fewer cigarettes than ever before.
- California workers are protected from secondhand smoke.
- California youth are protected from secondhand smoke.
- Lung and bronchus cancer rates have declined dramatically.
- Californians strongly support regulation of tobacco.

Despite these remarkable achievements, however, much work remains to be done. Efforts to curb the prevalence of environmental tobacco smoke must be strengthened and expanded, and measures to prevent tobacco use among youth must be increased. In the words of the California Tobacco Control Program:

Over the past decade, California has served as the incubator for new ways to address tobacco addiction among a large and diverse population. Every other state in the nation and many foreign countries have looked to California and learned from our experiences. Despite our remarkable achievements, much more work needs to be done. The next decade presents new challenges and opportunities that will test California's public health capabilities and political resolve. By sustaining our commitment to controlling tobacco use, California will become a

*healthier and more productive state and will remain on the cutting edge of innovative tobacco education programs.*²

The American Lung Association of California has made a commitment to carry on the fight to enact sensible tobacco control policies and further restrictions on the industry, as well as continued efforts to minimize the risks of secondhand smoke. In July 1999, the American Lung Association of California began its *Educating Key Opinion Leaders* project funded by the California Department of Health Services. This multi-year funding initiative is designed to increase the effectiveness of tobacco control across the state.

The project seeks to (1) increase the number of opinion leaders who support the maintenance and enforcement of existing social norm change policies related to tobacco issues, and, (2) increase the number of key opinion leaders who support the development of future community norm change strategies related to tobacco issues. Opinion leaders include local and state elected officials, such as county supervisors and state legislators, law enforcement professionals, school and clergy leaders, health officials, business and merchants associations, and bar owners and workers.

The “social norm change” approach aspires to influence tobacco users (and potential tobacco users) indirectly by creating a social climate in which tobacco becomes less acceptable and desirable. This approach assumes that the community can alter an individual’s actions.³ By increasing the number of opinion leaders who support and enforce tobacco norm change policies, the American Lung Association of California strives to change the social norms related to tobacco use.

The *Educating Key Opinion Leaders* project is a collaborative effort among the American Lung Association of California and its 11 affiliates and four branches. Each of these groups is organizing local resource teams to work within their

¹ *Battling the Tobacco Industry for the Benefit of All Californians*. Prepared by: California Department of Health Services, Tobacco Control Section, August 13, 1999.

² Ibid.

³ California Department of Health Services, Tobacco Control Section. “A Model for Change: the California Experience in Tobacco Control.” October 1998.

communities on various strategies intended to address opinion leader positions on enforcement and maintenance of norm change policies. Community-based education and media campaigns are some of the strategies that will be used by the resource teams to educate key opinion leaders regarding tobacco control policies and strategies. Support among key opinion leaders for enforcement and maintenance issues will then be monitored through resource team efforts, key briefings with opinion leaders, and polling and tracking of voting records of elected officials.

The survey found significant support among these opinion leaders for tobacco control policies that have been adopted both locally and statewide. In particular, efforts to reduce exposure to secondhand smoke, efforts to restrict youth access to tobacco products, and controls on industry advertising and sponsorships were overwhelmingly supported by the survey sample.

The survey results also suggest that opinion leaders are willing to support continued efforts to counter tobacco the tobacco industry by adopting new social norm change strategies and tobacco control policies. In particular, opinion leaders demonstrated solid approval for new smoking restrictions in college dormitories, increased restrictions in hotel lobbies, as well as increased controls over tobacco advertising that specifically targets youth.

THE STUDY

The American Lung Association of California contracted with Harder+Company Community Research, a private social research organization in San Francisco, to develop and conduct a statewide poll of key opinion leaders to determine their current position on enforcement and maintenance of community norm change strategies.

The Key Opinion Leader Survey was adapted from the 1996 Tobacco Control Section Independent Evaluation Opinion Leader Survey. It is an interviewer- administered questionnaire composed of six sections, each designed to measure a particular area of concern and interest to the American Lung Association of California. The sections were also constructed with the intention of providing important information to the fifteen

resource teams across the state that will be conducting various interventions and activities in their regions to solidify support for tobacco control policies.

The six areas studied included:

- Salience/issue involvement
- Support for community norm change strategies and tobacco control policies
- Youth initiation
- Attitudes and opinions
- Knowledge of community-level tobacco control efforts
- Recall of media

A total of 415 phone surveys were conducted among a variety of key opinion leaders throughout the state.

A Sample of California's Statewide Tobacco Control Laws:

1994: AB13 – Provides the most sweeping workplace smoking ban in the nation.

1995: AB686 – Prohibits the sale of tobacco products from all vending machines, except in establishments whose proprietors possess public premises liquor licenses.

1996: AB3037 - Assembly Bill 13's two-year exemption for bars, taverns and gaming clubs extended to three years, or January 1, 1998.

1997: AB752 – Bans outdoor tobacco billboards within 1,000 feet of elementary, junior high, and senior high schools and public playgrounds.

FINDINGS

In **Section I** of the survey, "Salience/issue involvement," key opinion leaders were asked to rate the severity of five tobacco-related problems in their communities:

1. Minors' access to tobacco products
2. Health problems of tobacco use
3. Secondhand smoke
4. Tobacco advertising
5. Enforcement of tobacco control policies

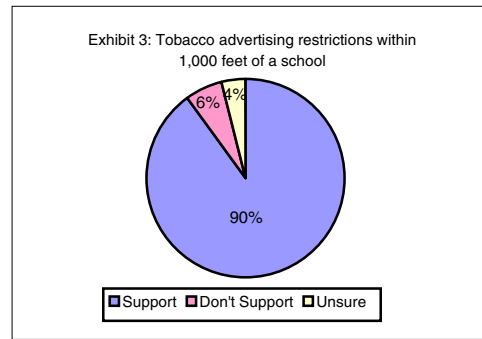
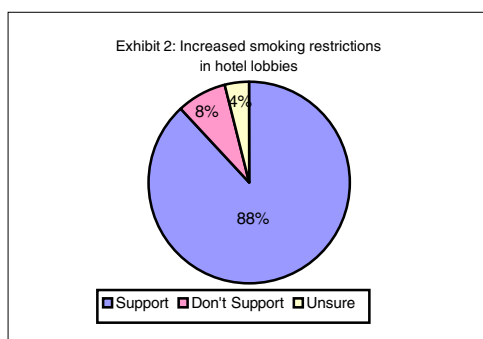
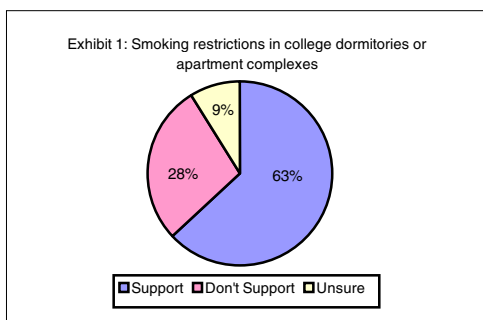
In general, opinion leaders rated each of the five areas as serious to very serious problems. The health problems of tobacco use and minors' access to tobacco were considered the most serious

among the group of statements, with over **70%** of key opinion leaders expressing concern for these issues.

In **Section II** of the survey, “Support for community norm change strategies and tobacco control policies,” opinion leaders were asked to rate the level of support for both community members and community leaders for several tobacco control issues. Again, there was strong agreement among key opinion leaders that both community members and community leaders were supportive of all tobacco control issues, particularly efforts to reduce tobacco use among youth. They also felt that community-wide changes around tobacco use, such as smokefree workplaces, are an effective way to reduce or prevent tobacco use. Section II also measured support for three specific tobacco control policies that could be enacted in the future. These included:

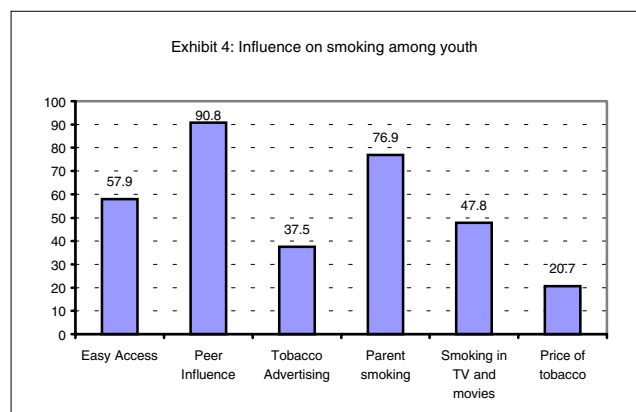
- Smoking restrictions in college dormitories or apartment complexes.
- Increased smoking restrictions in hotel lobbies.
- Tobacco advertising restrictions within 1,000 feet of a school.

Exhibits 1-3 illustrate the level of support for each of these initiatives.



As indicated, there is strong support for these initiatives, particularly for restricting tobacco advertising near schools. Key opinion leaders expressed some reluctance to restrict smoking in apartment complexes, feeling it would be an undue invasion of privacy. However, they indicated strong support for smoking restrictions in college dormitories.

Key opinion leaders were asked in **Section III** of the survey to rate six factors that might influence youth to start smoking: easy access to tobacco, peer influence, advertising, parent smoking, use of tobacco in movies and television, and the price of tobacco. As noted in Table 4, the greatest influence was believed to be peer influence, with the price of tobacco thought to have the least influence over whether or not youth would take up smoking.



Section IV of the survey measured key opinion leaders attitudes and opinions about a range of tobacco-related issues. Highlights of the findings from this section are detailed below:

Advertising and Promotion

- **Eighty-two percent** of opinion leaders support a ban on tobacco advertising in entertainment newspapers and magazines that target youth.
- In general, key opinion leaders agree that restrictions on tobacco advertising need to be strengthened and that local communities should reject tobacco industry sponsorship of sporting/cultural events, fairs, or community activities in their area.

Enforcement

- Key opinion leaders supported a variety of enforcement policies currently in place, including supporting fines for businesses that do not comply with the smoke free policy in bars and restaurants (**87.3%**).
- There was support for fines targeted to consumers as well, particularly for adults who buy tobacco products for youth. A full **96%** of all respondents support this type of enforcement.
- The strongest support related to enforcement was for fines levied against businesses that illegally sell tobacco products to minors, with **98%** of key opinion leaders supporting this type of financial penalty.

Financial

- Key opinion leaders believe funds from the Attorney's General Tobacco Settlement should be used for health care and to reduce tobacco use. There was also support for the Children and Families First Initiative, which directs funding to early childhood development programs in the areas of health improvement, family functioning, and school readiness for children under five years old.
- Divestment of government retirement and/or pension funds from tobacco stocks and investments was supported by a smaller majority than most other items in the survey, with law enforcement respondents expressing the weakest support.

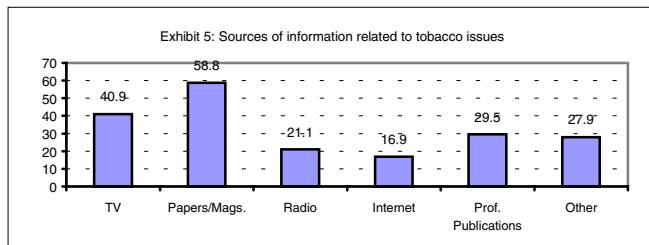
Restrictions

- **Eighty-five percent** of opinion leaders support protections from exposure to secondhand smoke in enclosed public areas. A vocal minority, however, expressed their concern that all that could be done is being done in this area, and that policies related to this issue are already strongly enforced across the state.
- Many disagreed that apartment complexes should be non-smoking areas, because this policy would be unacceptably intrusive into people's personal home lives. However, many agreed that college dormitories should be non-smoking areas, because they were subject to the control of the institution.
- Other smoking restriction policies that received wide support among all groups of opinion leaders included:
 1. Restrictions in hotel lobbies (**91%**)
 2. Licensing for businesses that sell tobacco products (**69%**)
 3. Restrictions on the location of tobacco specialty stores (**68%**)
 4. The amount of smoking shown on TV programs and in films (**64%**) (Some opinion leaders commented that there has been a noticeable decrease in the amount of smoking seen on television and in films due to self-regulation in response to public opinion and, therefore, no new policy was actually required. Others did not approve of censorship.)

Familiarity with community-level tobacco control efforts, measured in **Section V** of the survey, was inconsistent across key opinion leader groups and policies. For example, less than **20%** of all respondents know that minors can be fined if caught buying tobacco products, while the majority are aware of fines placed on businesses that sell cigarettes to minors. Tobacco advertising policies were unfamiliar to the majority of opinion leaders in two particular areas: policies that restrict tobacco advertising at sporting and community events and those restricting advertising in stores.

Familiarity with enforcement of smoke-free policies in bars and restaurants and policies that prevent youth from buying cigarettes or smokeless tobacco was generally high.

The final section of the survey, **Section VI**, assessed how opinion leaders receive information regarding tobacco issues and how aware they are of tobacco-related news and events happening around the country and in their local area. As noted in Table 5, the majority of opinion leaders receive information from traditional sources, such as newspapers and television, and consider themselves to be very aware of news and events related to tobacco.



CONCLUSION

There are several noteworthy findings from the survey. The most notable is the widespread support across the overall sample and among discrete groups of key opinion leaders for tobacco control policies that are currently in place. No one key opinion leader group was significantly distinct from any other in their support of these policies. In terms of enforcement, all groups of key opinion leaders feel that enforcement is not a serious problem in their community or district.

Support for new tobacco control policies was also high, with two thirds of the overall sample supporting each of three policy recommendations presented in the survey: 1) smoking restrictions in college dormitories or apartment complexes; 2) increased smoking restrictions in hotel lobbies; and 3) restrictions on tobacco advertising within 1,000 feet of a school. The policy restriction regarding college dormitories and apartment complexes received less support than the others (although it was still nearly two-thirds of the sample), and this may be due to the combination of two very different environments targeted for restrictions. Anecdotal reports from interviewers suggest that

there was significantly more support for smoking restrictions in college dormitories than in apartment complexes. In focus groups or individual interviews, further exploration of this issue would be useful to understand how key opinion leaders view each of these environments and why they would withhold support for restrictions in one and not the other.

There appeared to be less support for creating smoking restrictions in outdoor areas, such as parks and playgrounds. It is one area where key opinion leaders may be reluctant to impose regulations. Again, further inquiry in this area is necessary to understand the political and social barriers to support such a policy.

The knowledge about and familiarity with community-level tobacco control efforts were generally varied. Findings in this section suggest key opinion leaders, at least those that answered the survey, are not always aware of ongoing activities related to tobacco control in their communities or across the state. In particular, nearly 60% of key opinion leaders did not know that minors who are caught buying tobacco products can be fined.

The one departure from the overall theme of support and agreement throughout the survey was related to the issue of whether tobacco control policies are more effectively made at the local rather than the state level. There was tepid agreement with the issue, with the majority of respondents split between disagree and don't know. This suggests an area where further probing would be beneficial to the project.

For further information, or to obtain a copy of the full report, please call 1-800- LUNG-USA, or visit the American Lung Association of California website at www.californialung.org.

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