




# Tobacco Taxes

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## Overview of Public Support and Effective Messages

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### Key Findings

- There Is General Support For Increasing Tobacco Taxes
- **Smoking Habits Play The Largest Role In Determining Attitudes Toward Tobacco Tax Increases, Though Support Also Increases With Education And Income – Partisan Leanings Make Little Difference**
- **Support For A Tobacco Tax Increase Grows Dramatically When A Youth Prevention Component Is Added, With The Precise Wording Of That Component Making Little Difference**
- **Initially, Most Do Not Have Strong Feelings On Current Tobacco Tax Levels, But After Hearing Current Tax Levels In Their Own States, Most Favor An Increase**

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### Key Findings (Continued)

- **The Psychology Of Decision Is Problematic:**
  - Positive Outcomes Are Judged More Important Than Negative Results, But Much Less Likely To Occur
  - Americans Are Skeptical That Higher Tobacco Taxes Will Reduce Smoking
- **Nonetheless, Even A Small Reduction In Youth Smoking Is Judged A Worthy Goal**
- **Our Most Compelling Specifics Focus On Preventing Kids From Becoming Smokers, Fewer Smoking Deaths, And The Contrast Between The Support Of Health Groups And The Opposition Of Tobacco Companies**
- **Waste And Evasion Are The Strongest Arguments Against An Increase**

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## Methodology

POP

- 800 Likely Voters From A Nationwide Sample
- Oversamples of 36 Black Voters and 68 Hispanic Voters
- Interviews Conducted May 14-19, 2002
- Margin Of Error +/- 3.5% Overall, Higher For Subgroups

SEGMENTS

- 10 Focus Groups
- Conducted January 14-30, 2002
- Groups Included:
  - Louisville, KY: 1 Group of Male Voters & 1 Group of Female Voters
  - Houston, TX: 1 Group of Latino Voters & 1 Group of General Population Voters
  - Chicago, IL: 1 Group of Latino Voters & 1 Group of General Population Voters
  - St. Louis, MO: 1 Group of Black Voters & 1 Group of General Population Voters
  - Atlanta, GA: 1 Group of Black Voters & 1 Group of General Population Voters

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There Is General Support For Increasing Tobacco Taxes

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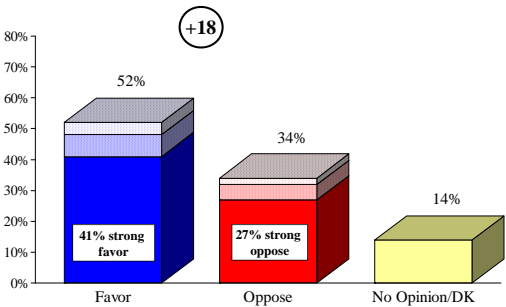
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### A Majority Favors Increasing State Tobacco Taxes

Would you favor or oppose an increase in [INSERT STATE]'s tobacco tax, or don't you have an opinion on this?



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**Support For A Tobacco Tax Increase Grows Dramatically When A Youth Prevention Component Is Added, With The Precise Wording Of That Component Making Little Difference**

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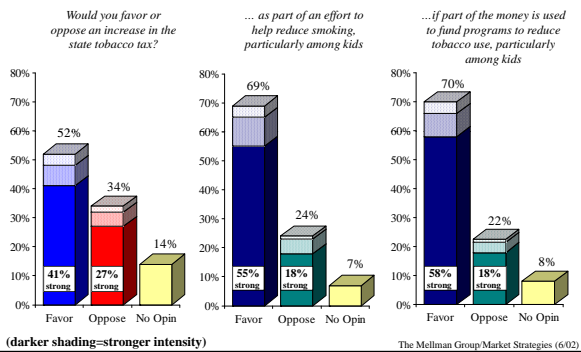
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**Including A Youth Smoking Prevention Component Increases Support For Tobacco Tax Hikes Substantially**  
The Exact Wording Of The Question Makes Little Difference




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**The Psychology Of Decision Is Problematic:**

- Positive Outcomes Are Judged More Important Than Negative Results, But Much Less Likely To Occur
- Americans Are Skeptical That Higher Tobacco Taxes Will Reduce Smoking

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**Nonetheless, Even A Small Reduction In Youth Smoking Is Judged A Worthy Goal**

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**Many In Our Focus Groups Thought Even Modest Decreases In Youth Smoking Would Make Tobacco Tax Increases Worthwhile**

- I believe if you can stop one person, if you can save one person's life it's worth it. *(St. Louis Black Male)*
- Even 15 percent of the smokers now. That's 15 percent better. And that also saves us money in healthcare. *(Illinois General Population Female)*
- Any help you can give, anything you do makes it worthwhile. If it does any one of those three for anybody I think is worthwhile. *(St. Louis General Population Female)*
- If it stopped one kid from smoking then it is okay. *(Houston General Population Female)*
- One teenager not smoking is not meaningless. I mean, you've got to start somewhere. *(Louisville Male)*
- It's a hard question to say no to because one life is enough for the whole program. So I have to answer yes. Certainly a number that I would think would be significant if there are no other issues on the table and really great would be ten to 15 percent. Absolutely great. *(Illinois General Population Male)*
- If raising the tax would keep one kid off the cigarettes, which you are going to have that influx of not so many kids are going to start because they are not available, then that is good. *(Houston General Population Male)*

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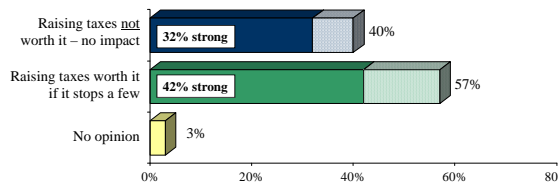
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**Despite The Widespread Skepticism That Raising Tobacco Taxes Will Reduce Youth Smoking, A Majority Believes The Tax Is Worth It, Even If It Only Stops A Few From Smoking**

Which of the following statements comes closer to your point of view?

- Raising tobacco taxes is not worth it because it won't have any impact on youth smoking rates
- Even if higher tobacco taxes stop only a few young people from smoking, it will be worth it



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**For Voters, Funding Prevention Programs  
And Deterring Youth Smoking Are  
Somewhat Stronger Thematics Than  
Raising Revenue**

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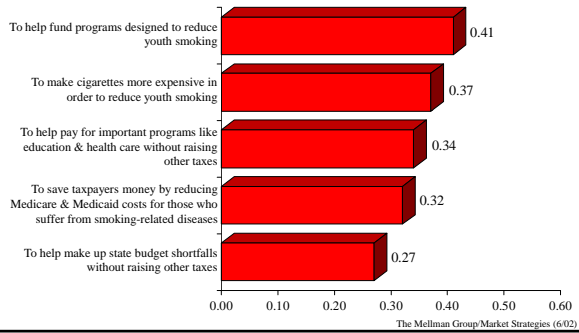
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**Conjoint Analysis Reveals That Funding Programs To Reduce  
Youth Smoking Is Viewed As The Best Reason To Increase  
Tobacco Taxes**

Raising Money Is Somewhat Less Powerful

*Conjoint Analysis (rank ordered by grand adjusted mean)*



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**Our Most Compelling Specifics Focus On Fewer  
Smoking Deaths, Preventing Kids From  
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**Waste And Evasion Are The Strongest Arguments Against An Increase**

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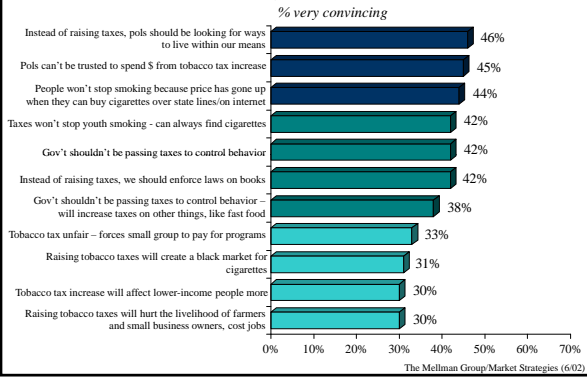
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**The Strongest Arguments Against A Tobacco Tax Increase Focus On Government Waste, And Crossing State Lines To Purchase Cigarettes**



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**The Amount of the Tax Makes Little Difference in Public Support (In for a Penny; In for a Pound)**

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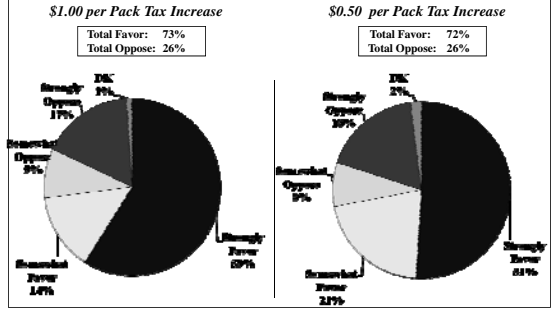
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**There is no difference in support for a one dollar or a fifty cent increase.**



GEORGIA STATEWIDE FEBRUARY 2010

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**Conclusions**

- Tobacco taxes are clearly viewed differently than other taxes. The biggest determinants of support for tobacco taxes are smoking habits, education and income, while partisan identification is of marginal importance.
- When talking about tobacco taxes, adding a prevention component to our argument is key.
- Americans are skeptical that tobacco taxes by themselves will reduce youth smoking. Because of this skepticism, arguing that "even a slight decrease in youth smoking makes a tobacco tax increase worthwhile" is more effective than arguing that higher taxes will result in a dramatic decline in youth smoking rates.

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**Conclusions**

- Other compelling arguments in favor of tobacco taxes increases focus on contrasting the support for tobacco taxes from health groups with the opposition of tobacco companies, and on the benefits to society from lower smoking rates.
- The fiscal benefits of higher tobacco taxes should not be ignored. When possible, our message should specify that tobacco tax revenues would be used for prevention programs, education and health care
- The amount of the tax means little in terms of public support; the politics are virtually the same
- Our biggest hurdles focus on potential waste of tobacco tax revenues and skepticism about whether higher taxes will reduce youth smoking.

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