

Smokers' and non-smokers' assessment of strategies to manage tobacco product waste

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Background

The trillions of cigarette butts littered each year cause serious environmental damage and impose significant clean-up costs on local authorities. Tobacco companies have framed smokers as both the cause of this problem and the source of its solution. However, an extended producer responsibility perspective challenges this view and holds tobacco companies responsible for the full life-cycle costs of tobacco product waste (TPW).

Methods:

An online survey of 396 New Zealand smokers and 414 non-smokers estimated support for ten interventions designed to reduce TPW. These interventions ranged from individually-oriented measures through to measures that held tobacco companies responsible for TPW.

Descriptive analyses and logistic regression models examined associations between demographic attributes and smoking behaviours, and perceptions of TPW and potential solutions to this problem.

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Conflict of interest statement

There are no conflicts of interest to report.

Contacts

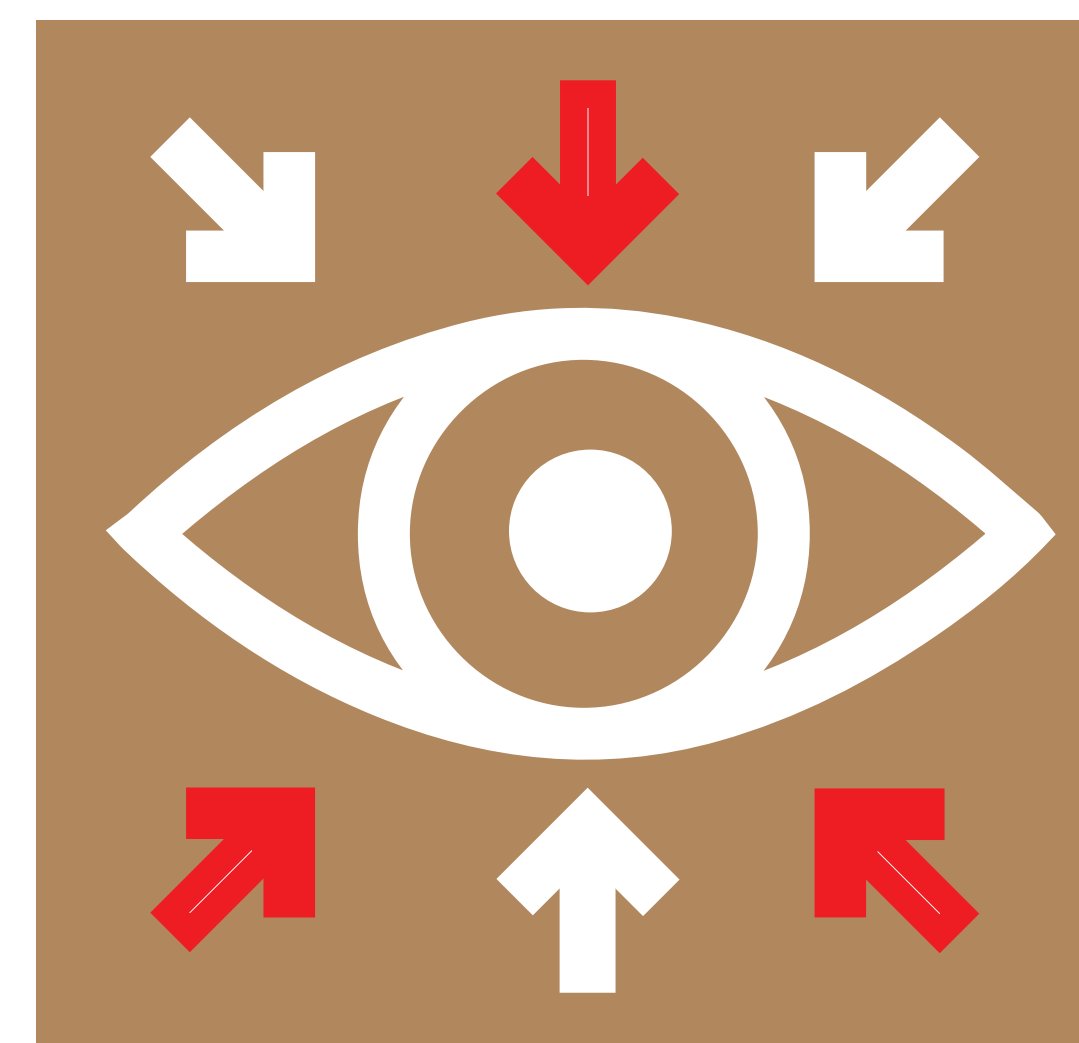
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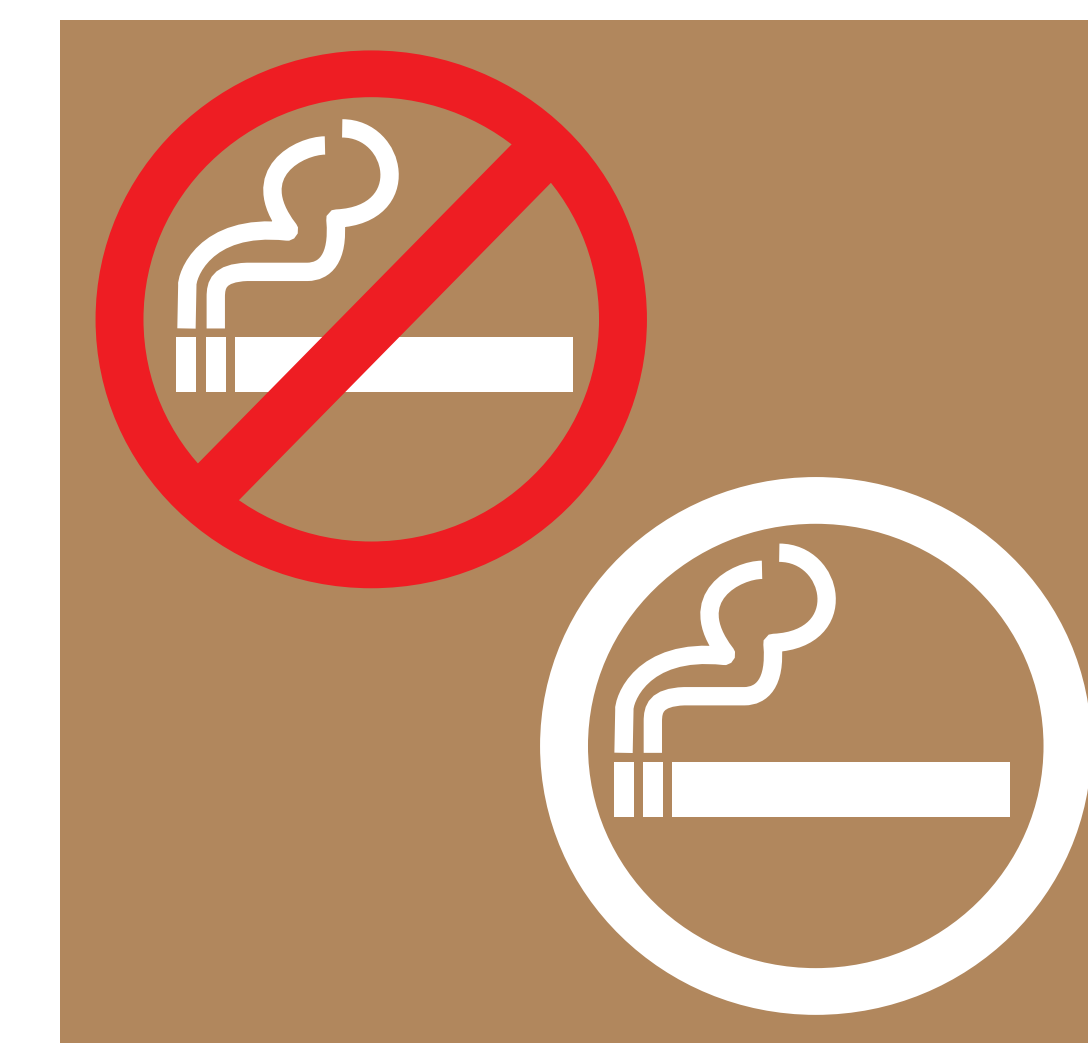
Results:



Smokers and non-smokers had different views on measures that could reduce TPW.



Smokers favoured educative approaches that targeted individual smokers, such as advertising campaigns or on-pack labelling. They were less likely than non-smokers to support increasing smokefree areas or introducing fines for people who discard cigarette butts.



Smokers and non-smokers showed similar support for bio-degradable butts; however, non-smokers were more likely than smokers to favour disallowing the sale of cigarettes with filters.



Non-smokers were significantly more likely than smokers to support financial measures that transferred the cost of managing TPW to tobacco companies via levies or other charges.

Figure 1: Determinants of perceived effectiveness of individually-oriented policies to reduce TPW

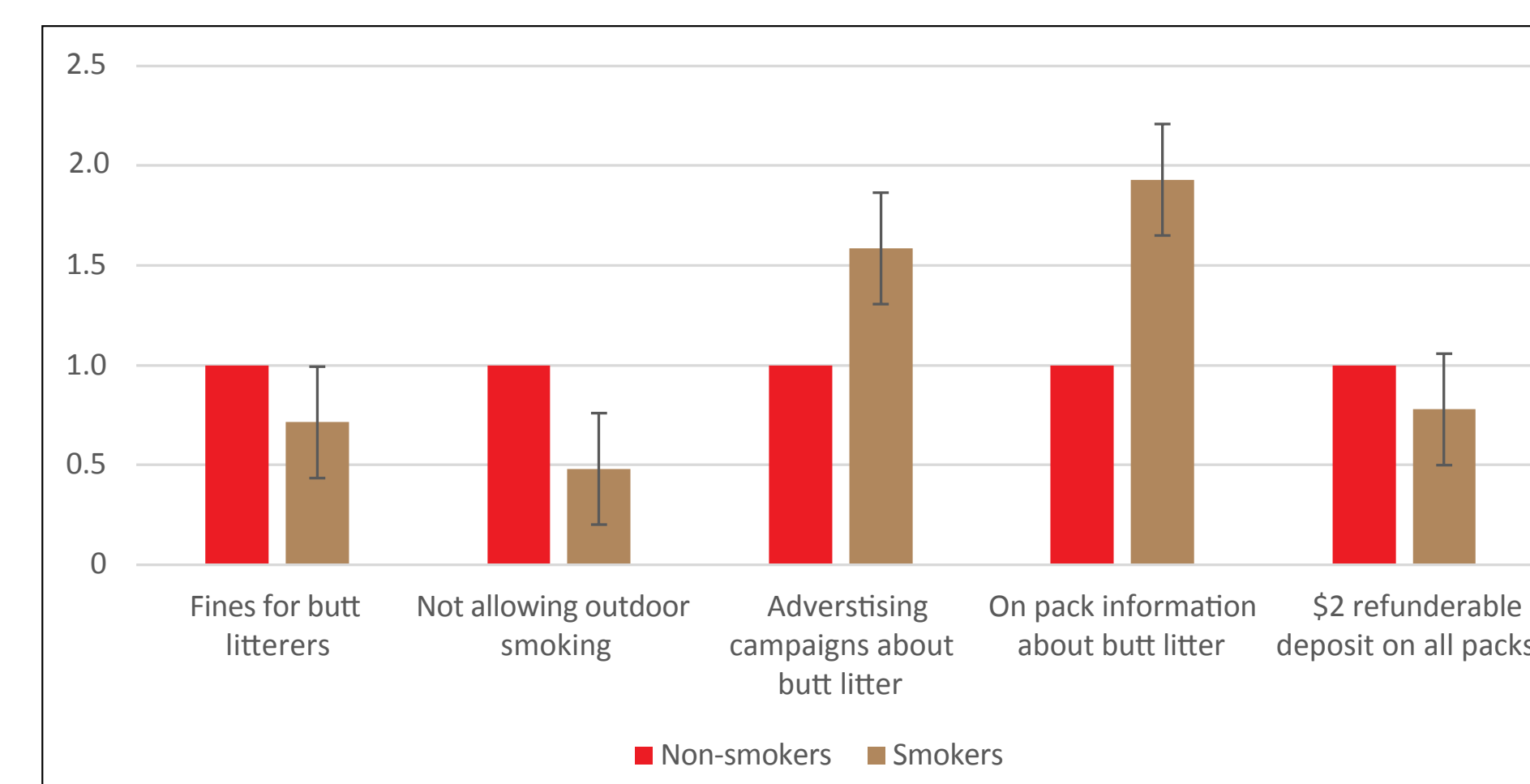
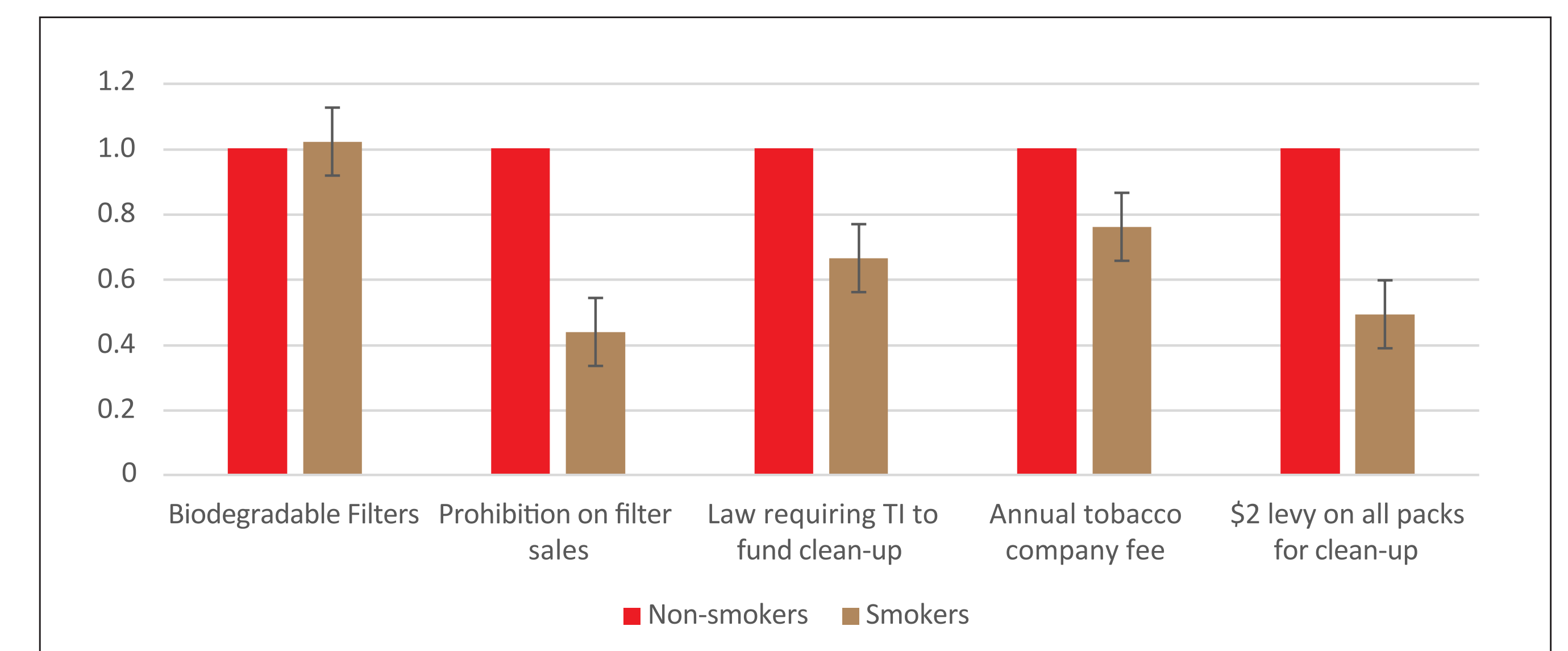


Figure 2: Determinants of perceived effectiveness of product-related and producer-oriented policies to reduce cigarette butt litter



Conclusions

Increasing awareness of TPW and how tobacco companies create this problem could foster support for product stewardship measures that hold the industry accountable for TPW costs. Nonetheless, policy measures should aim to increase smoking cessation and decrease uptake, as reducing smoking prevalence presents the best long-term solution to reducing TPW.