

# Should we pay people to stop smoking?

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# Should we pay people to stop smoking?

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FILE

Dr Doug Sellman said financial incentives do stop people smoking.

## **Online cross-sectional survey**

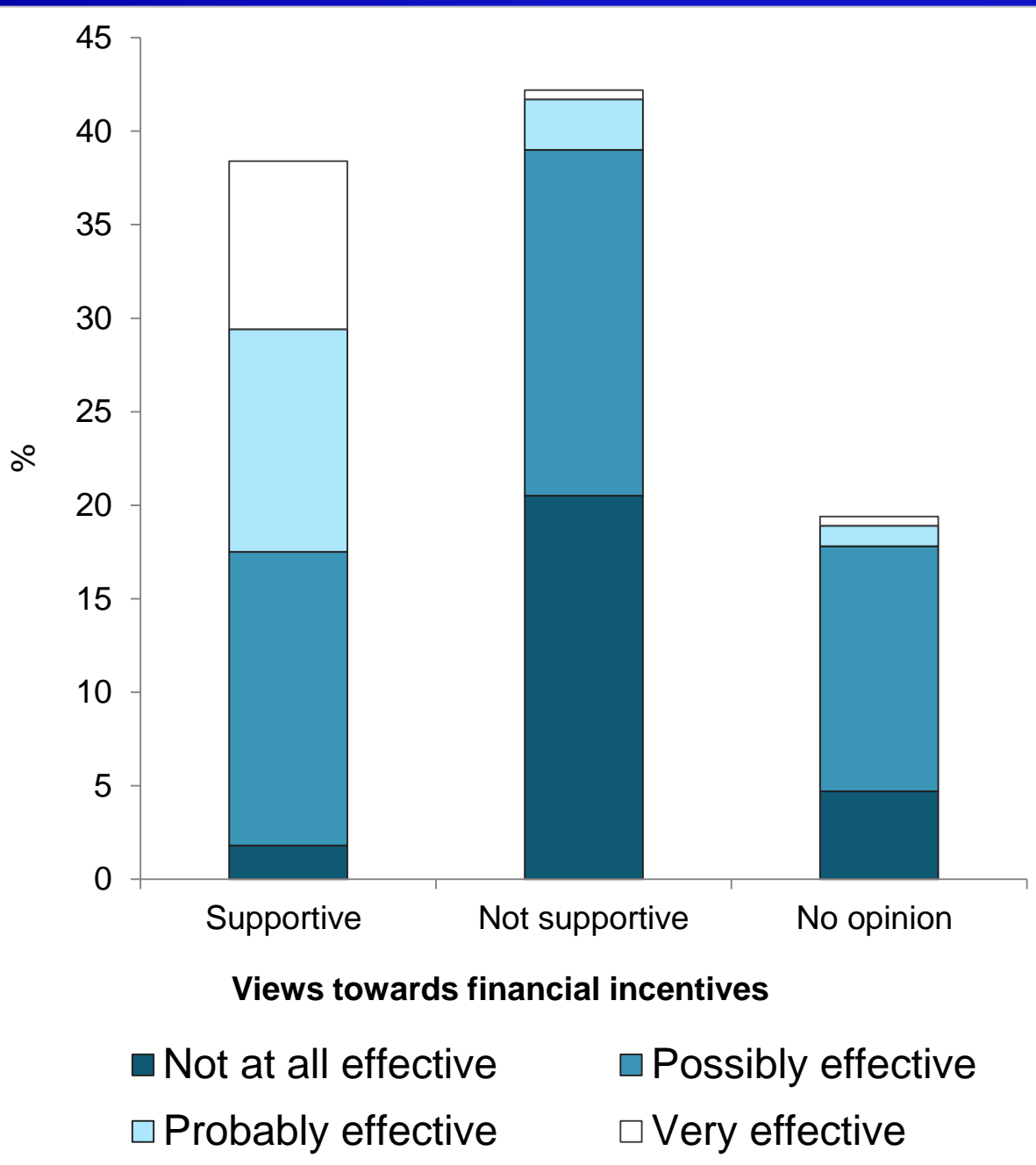
**Current smokers aged 18 years and older (N=623; 70% daily smokers).**

**Recruited via a commercial internet panel through ResearchNow, July 2015.**

*Robertson et al. Nicotine & Tobacco Research, 2016*

***“Some people have argued that because helping smokers to quit would save money on healthcare costs and reduce sick leave from work, we should pay smokers money as an incentive to quit smoking. Others argue that smokers should not receive any incentive for quitting. Which of these views best reflects your opinion on paying smokers to quit, or do you have no opinion?”***

***“How effective do you think an incentive scheme that paid smokers to quit would be?”***



**Figure 1.**  
**Support for**  
**financial**  
**incentives,**  
**by perceived**  
**effectiveness**

**Heavy smokers (OR 3.96, 95% CI 2.39 - 6.58) and moderate smokers (OR 1.68, 95% CI 1.13 - 2.49), had increased odds of supporting financial incentives, compared with light smokers.**

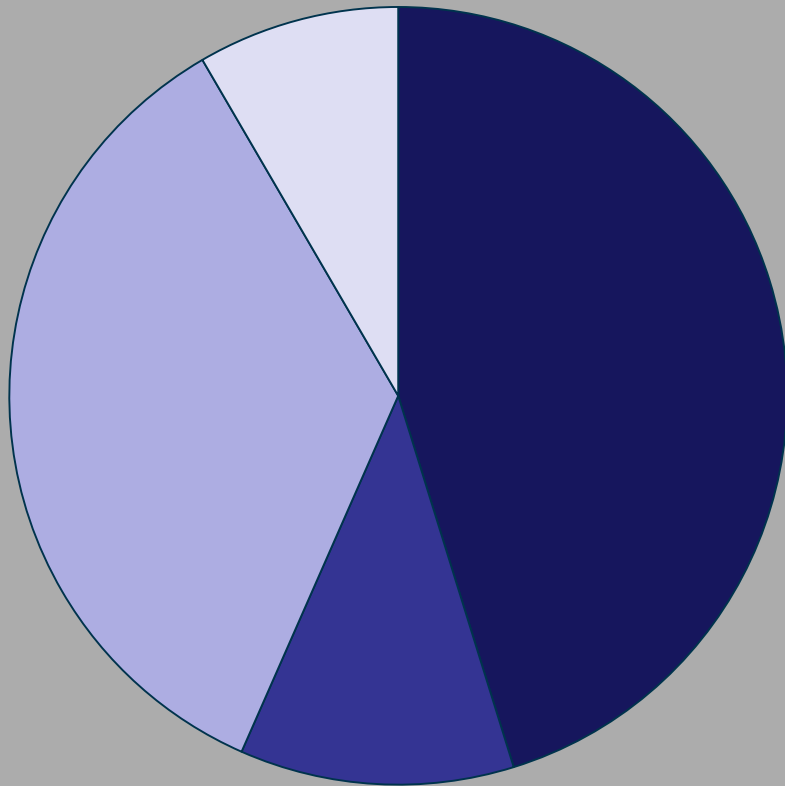
**Those who had made a quit attempt in the past 6 months were also more likely to support financial incentives (OR 1.47, 95% CI 1.04 - 2.07), compared to those who had not.**

***“Each year, about 4,500 smokers and 500 non-smokers die from an illness caused directly by smoking. The NZ government currently collects about \$1.5 billion in taxes from tobacco. This amount does not fully cover the healthcare costs to NZ of smoking, which are estimated at \$1.7 billion. It is estimated that employers lose over \$4000 per year in sick leave and lost productivity, for each employee who smokes.***

***If an incentive scheme that paid smokers to quit were to be introduced, how do you think it should be funded?”***



## How smokers think a financial incentive scheme should be funded



- Government should pay all smokers to quit
- Voluntary workplace scheme - smokers' employer to pay
- Smoker contribution, matched by government & total refunded if quit
- Smoker contribution, matched by employer & total refunded if quit

**How much money do you think it would be reasonable to pay a smoker who stayed quit for 6 months?**

**Of those willing to consider a payment scheme:**

**70% thought \$500 or more**

**42% thought \$1000 or more**

# **Qualitative themes associated with lack of support**

**Cessation is about individual responsibility**

**Money is irrelevant to addiction**

**How could it be monitored to avoid fraud?**

**Unintended consequences e.g. encourage uptake**

**Incentives seen as coercion**

**“A Far North programme is offering pregnant women financial rewards to quit smoking.**

**Te Whare Oranga O Kaikohe has had 14 women through their programme in the last year. Out of those 10 managed to quit after one month and five of those were smoke free after baby**

**The programme uses a breath carbon monoxide analyser to test whether the women have smoked. They can earn up to \$300 worth of vouchers to spend on groceries, petrol or at the Warehouse.”**

***Stuff NZ Oct 22<sup>nd</sup> 2015***





