

What is public opinion on "smoking and health"?

(and how is it changing?)

Public opinion surveys seem to show that although the public is almost universally aware of the "smoking and health" problem, it is barely aware of specific issues or government reports. What's more, a new poll indicates that most people feel a smoker has "himself to blame," not manufacturers, for any "ill effects of smoking."

How much of the public is actually aware of the smoking and health propaganda battle?

A number of polls have been conducted during the past few years that may give some indication. Ten Gallup Polls were conducted between 1954 and 1964 on a regular basis that give some indication of shifts of opinion in those years. The last Gallup Poll was conducted in February, 1964, the month after the Surgeon General's Report on Smoking and Health. (The first followed on the heels of the initial Hammond-Horn study statistically linking cigarette smoking with disease.)

In 1965, the Cigar Institute of America included a number of questions on smoking and health in a major study of smoking habits of American males. This study was conducted by Universal Marketing Research Inc., an affiliate of Alfred Politz Research, Inc.

Early this year Public Opinion Pollster Lou Harris in a copyrighted article in the Washington Post reported some trends in public opinion on smoking and health.

As part of the Federal Trade Commission Report to Congress this June some results of Public Health Service national attitude surveys were given for 1964 and for 1966, and a small poll conducted by FTC was also included.

Full results of the Public Health Service study comparing public opinion on smoking and cigarette smoking habits in 1964 and 1966, according to Dr. Daniel Horn, head of National Clearinghouse on Smoking and Health, should be tabulated and made available as a monograph (no commentary is to be included) by January 1, 1968.

Also, an unusual study was conducted by C. E. Hooper, Inc., in October.

Public Association of Smoking With Cancer

In answer to Gallup's question, "What is your opinion — do you think cigarette smoking is or is not one of the causes of cancer of the lung?" the number of affirmative answers increased almost steadily between 1954 and 1964. The percentage answering yes:

	1954	1964
All adults	39 per cent	62 per cent
Smokers	29 per cent	53 per cent

Importantly, the increase in affirmative answers was a gradual one that showed up continuously on the 10 polls conducted in the ten year period by Gallup. However, the increase in affirmative answers between June, 1963 and February, 1964, showed one of the largest jumps in the ten year period.

Answers to another Gallup question, "When you think of cigarettes, what comes to mind?" also showed a similar trend in this period. In May, 1962, some 15 per cent of the respondents answered "cancer." This increased to 25 per cent in the June, 1963, study and to 33 per cent in the February,

1964, study.

In 1965 the Cigar Institute study asked regular and occasional cigar smokers, "What specifically have you heard about smoking and health?" Some 61.5 per cent of the regular cigar smokers and 60.2 per cent of the occasional cigar smokers specifically named "cancer" or "lung cancer." More than 90 per cent of both groups answered "yes" when asked "Have you heard anything about smoking and health?"

When CIA study asked regular cigar smokers, "Do you believe that smoking (cigars, pipes, cigarettes) is very likely, somewhat likely, or not at all likely to be harmful?" responses looked like this:

	Cigars	Pipes	Cigarettes
Very likely	8.0 per cent	8.4 per cent	58.3 per cent
Somewhat likely	39.1 per cent	46.3 per cent	26.9 per cent
Not likely	52.9 per cent	45.3 per cent	14.8 per cent

It asked the same question of occasional cigar smokers, who are more apt to be heavier cigarette smokers, and got the following answers:

	Cigars	Pipes	Cigarettes
Very likely	16.2 per cent	17.2 per cent	57.4 per cent
Somewhat likely	45.9 per cent	45.4 per cent	29.2 per cent
Not likely	37.9 per cent	37.4 per cent	13.4 per cent

These results more or less bear out results of the Gallup polls, which show that in 1964, for example, while 53 per cent of cigarette smokers felt "cigarette smoking is one of the causes of lung cancer," that 77 per cent of the smokers of cigars, cigarillos or pipes felt this way and that 68 per cent of non-smokers felt this way.

Thus it appears that not only does whether or not a person smokes affect his awareness of the health question, but what he smokes affects it as well. It also appears that there has generally been a growing awareness of the health question over the past 10 or more years.

Levels of Awareness

In January of this year Public Opinion Pollster Lou Harris, in a copyrighted article in the Washington Post, refined the question further. Responses indicated that 40 per cent of the people he questioned felt cigarettes were a major cause of disease, 27 per cent said a minor cause and 33 per cent said science didn't know yet. He commented that the majority of people felt science had not proved the case against cigarette smoking or that it was a minor factor. He noted that those who showed the most concern over the health issue were largely non-smokers.

In May, June and July of 1966 the Public Health Service asked in a national poll, "Have you seen or heard about the health warning label that is required on the outside of each package of cigarettes?" (The label was first required in

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January, 1966.)

Responses were as follows:

	Total	Current Smokers	Former Smokers	Never Smoked
Yes	79 per cent	93 per cent	82 per cent	65 per cent
No	20 per cent	7 per cent	18 per cent	33 per cent

Such wide awareness of the warning label would logically also indicate an almost universal awareness of the "smoking and health" problem. But, whether or not the public was tuning in on the raging smoking and health war being waged by government and a number of Congressmen, or had awareness of the various government proposals, is another matter.

Hooper on Specifics

In October of this year C. E. Hooper, Inc., conducted just such a study for one of the advertising agencies handling a cigarette account. Some 1,996 interviews were completed by telephone.

When asked to cite specific laws that had been proposed to restrict sale or advertising of cigarettes, some 84.7 per cent questioned in the Hooper survey said they were not aware of any proposals. Only 0.2 per cent of those questioned mentioned proposals to print nicotine content on the packages (that was four respondents out of some 2,000), while the proposal mentioned by the greatest number (2.6 per cent or 52 of the 2,000 respondents) was restriction on advertising that would limit hours to when young people aren't watching.

Awareness of Surgeon General

In the same poll people were asked: "What people in government do you know of who are trying to do something about cigarette smoking?" Only 4.7 per cent specifically included the Surgeon General or Surgeon General's Office in responses to this question, although earlier in the same poll some 72.3 per cent had responded "yes" in answer to the question, "Have you ever heard of the United States Surgeon General's Report on Smoking?" (Incidentally, some 83.8 per cent of those people asked to name specific people in government trying to do something about cigarette smoking either didn't know or responded "no one.")

The two divergent answers regarding the Surgeon General from the same poll seem to indicate that although smokers are vaguely aware of such a Report, they are not familiar enough with the Report to actually name it. It might be expected that smokers would have a lower awareness of the Report than non-smokers for the following reason.

Immediately after the Surgeon General's Report Dr. James W. Swinehart, School of Public Health of the University of Michigan, did a study of retention of information from the report. He had a panel of 128 university students complete three questionnaires. One was completed two weeks after the Surgeon General's Report, another one month after the Report and a third three months after the Report.

At the time of the first questionnaire both smokers and non-smokers were fairly well informed about the major findings of the Report. Accuracy of information recalled did not differ significantly for smokers and non-smokers and within the smoking group, no association was found between amount smoked and accuracy of information.

Accuracy of responses generally decreased during the three-month period studied, and by the end of this period the smokers were significantly less knowledgeable than the non-smokers.

In the Hooper Survey smokers and non-smokers appeared equally likely to name Surgeon General. Also the percentage of people not able to cite specifically anyone in government who is trying to "do something about smoking" was about the same among smokers and non-smokers.

COMPARISON OF TWO POLLS

A comparison of several questions in the Federal Trade Commission poll with the Hooper poll is also interesting.

Importantly, although results of the FTC poll were given along with the Commission's report in June, apparently it was far from random. Indications are that the 245 people questioned by FTC were largely selected among those involved in government — employees and people involved in smoking and health.

The Federal Trade Commission asked: "Do you feel that cigarette advertising should be prohibited as to certain media, e.g. prohibited on television or in magazines whose principal appeal is to youth?" Response —

Yes	64.4 per cent
No	17.6 per cent
No opinion	18.0 per cent

Hooper stated, "Cigarette advertising should be eliminated from television."

In response:

Agree	44.9 per cent
Disagree	41.6 per cent
Not sure	13.5 per cent

Significantly here it appears in the FTC survey, which was cited in the FTC Report to Congress in June, that far more people feel cigarette advertising should be prohibited from television than oppose this. In the Hooper survey it appears that the number favoring and opposing this are similar. The Hooper poll was based on an adequate random sample, while the FTC survey included only a small sample and was not random.

Hooper's Findings

Among the more interesting findings of the Hooper study are the following.

- In response to the statement, "The smoker has himself to blame for any ill effects from cigarette smoking," some 91.2 per cent of people queried agreed. This was reinforced by responses to the statement, "Cigarette manufacturers should be blamed for any ill effects from cigarette smoking." Some 77.6 per cent of those questioned disagreed.

- Some 72.7 per cent of people interviewed disagree with the statement, "There should be a law against the sale of all cigarettes."

Conclusions

Some broad conclusions from this collection of studies of public opinion on smoking might indicate that although people over the past 10 years seem to have developed an almost universal awareness of the smoking and health problem, few are aware of the specific issues, bills, reports, or government spokesmen. Dr. Horn, in his address at the World Conference on Smoking and Health, expressed this by saying, "The level of awareness is high, but level of involvement is low."

On the other hand, it might also appear from the Harris poll that a surprising number of people — particularly smokers — are aware that science has not yet proved the case against cigarette smoking.

In some studies it appears that non-smokers and smokers of cigars and pipes are more aware of the case against smoking and tend to associate cigarette smoking more with harmful effects than cigarette smokers.

As for their own general feelings, although opinion appears divided on whether or not cigarette advertising should be prohibited on television, most people seem to feel that cigarette manufacturers are not to blame for any ill effects of cigarette smoking, and that the smoker has "himself to blame for any ill effects from cigarette smoking."