



Communicating Better Health: Bridging the Gap Between Public Health Policies and Health Communication

January 10, 2013

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Outline

- Public Health Legislation
- Health Communication Basics
- Utilizing HINTS in Policy Analyses
- Case Studies
- Lessons Learned & Suggestions for Future Analyses



The Issue

The public may not be aware of the evidence-based public health laws that exist to promote health.



Basics of Public Health Legislation

- Public health legislation is used to:
 - Influence norms for healthy behavior;
 - Identify and respond to health threats;
 - Set and enforce health and safety standards.
- Focus of current policy analyses is on strength of laws.



State Tobacco Activities Tracking and Evaluation System (STATE)

- Electronic data warehouse.
- Contains up-to-date and historical state level legislation on tobacco use, prevention, and control.



Health Communication Basics

- Goal: the use of communication strategies to inform and influence individual decisions that enhance health.
- Lack of legislation on health communication.



9 Steps for Health Communication

- What information is out there?
- What do we want to accomplish?
- *Who do we want to reach?*
- *What do we want to say?*
- Where do we want to say it?
- How do we want to say it?
- *How do we get it used?*
- *Practice of getting the message out.*
- *How well did we do it?*



Incorporation of HINTS Data Into Policy Analyses

- Missing piece of policy analyses is the public's awareness of existing policies.
- Use HINTS data to add information on general awareness of legislation.



Limitations

- Variation in questions asked for each survey iteration.
- Limited historical data to assess change over time.
- Lack of state-specific level data.



Case Studies

- General knowledge about the Food and Drug Administration's regulation of tobacco products.
- Knowledge about link between smoking cigarettes and cancer.



FDA Regulation of Tobacco

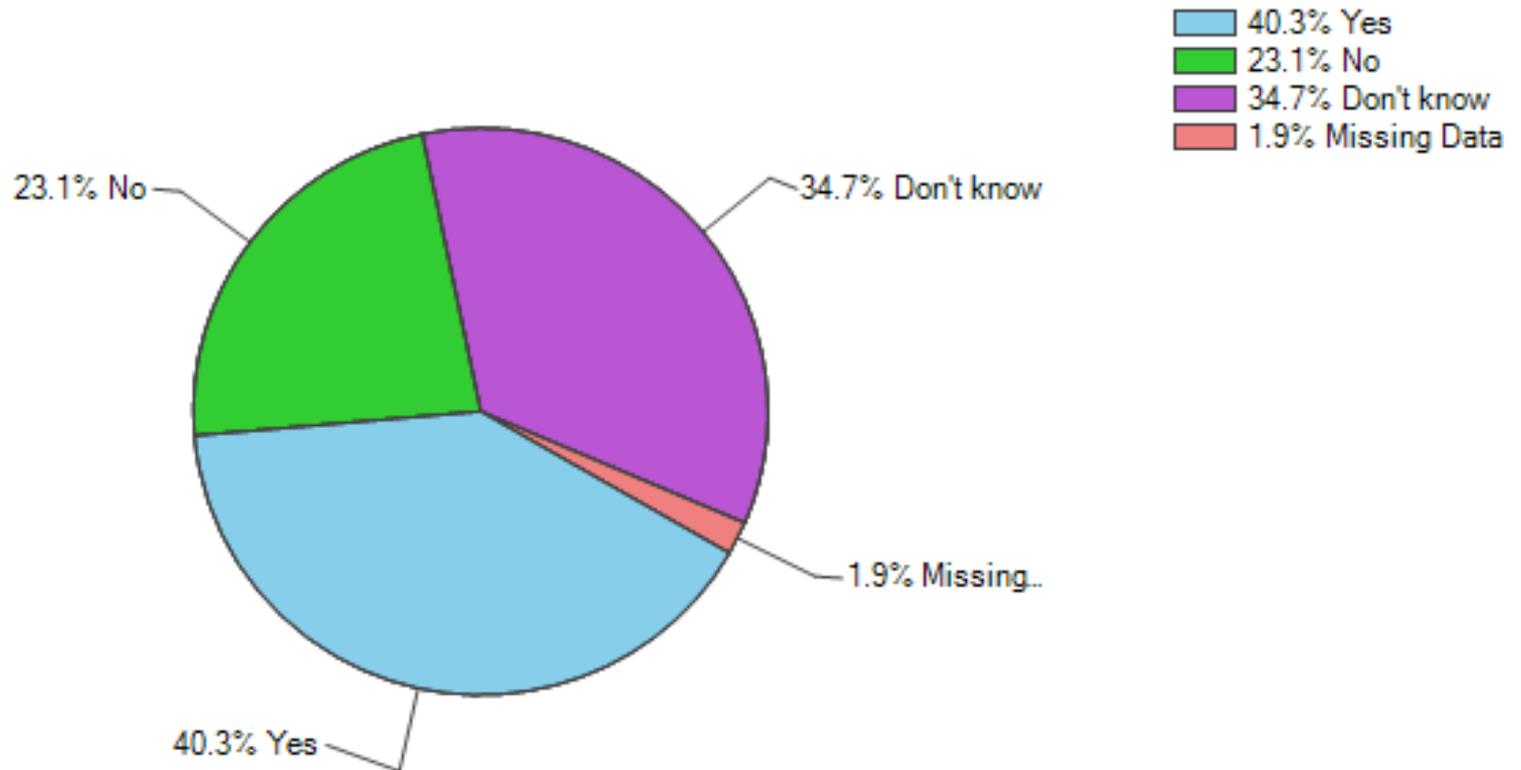
- Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act gave FDA regulatory authority for tobacco products.
- *Do you believe that the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulates tobacco products in the U.S.?*



FDA Regulation of Tobacco

Do you believe that the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulates tobacco products in the U.S.?

Estimated US Pop. Percentage





Analysis of FDA Regulation Query

- Results show gap in knowledge of FDA's expanded role in regulating tobacco.
- Timeframe:
 - Survey taken from October 2011 to February 2012.
 - FDA regulation of tobacco began in June 2009.
- Lack of media coverage and education.



Risk of Cancer Linked to Smoking

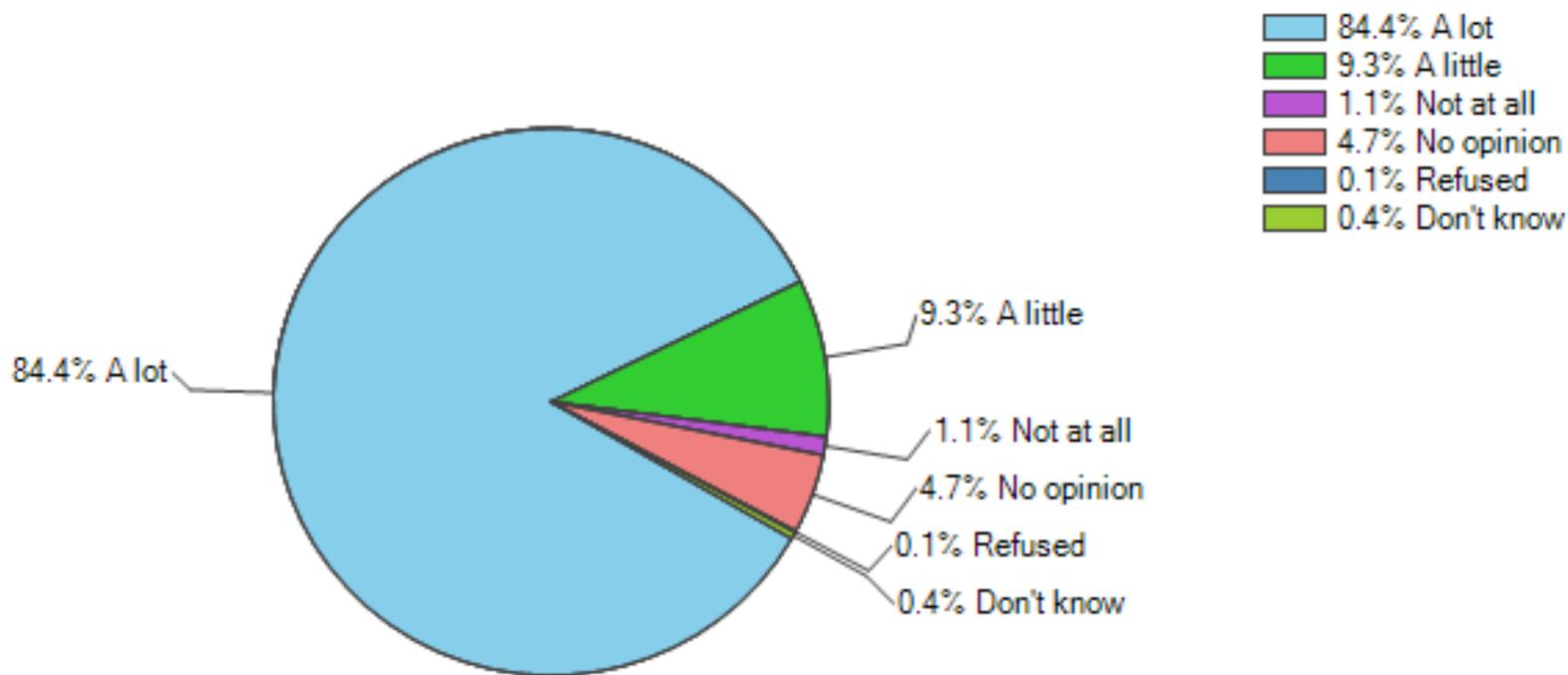
- Mandatory warning label: “Caution-Cigarette Smoking May Be Hazardous to Your Health”
- *Do you think that smoking increases a person's chances of getting cancer a lot, a little, or not at all, or do you have no opinion?*



Knowledge of Cancer Risk From Smoking

Do you think that smoking increases a person's chances of getting cancer a lot, a little, or not at all or do you have no opinion?

Estimated US Pop. Percentage





Analyses of Query on Cancer Risk from Smoking

- Majority of individuals surveyed recognized a link between smoking cigarettes and cancer.
- Media campaigns by public health agencies and advocacy groups effectively communicated this message.
- Length of time between law's implementation and data collection on public awareness.



Findings and Conclusions

- Two Key Takeaways:
 - More immediate public health risk leads to greater focus on health communication.
 - Public awareness following the enactment of legislation evolves over time.



Recommendations for Future Analyses

- Continue to collect uniform and consistent data on public perception of public health issues.
- Collect data stratified by state to allow for more detailed analyses with state legislative databases.
- Further study needed over longer time period to assess effects.
- Health communication should be a priority for legislatures and public health professionals.



Citations

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