

# BRITISH COLUMBIANS' VIEWS ON POLICY CHANGES TO REDUCE RISK OF CANCER



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## BRITISH COLUMBIANS' VIEWS ON POLICY CHANGES TO REDUCE RISK OF CANCER

**Vancouver, BC** – The Canadian Cancer Society commissioned Ipsos-Reid to undertake the province-wide survey on policy changes in British Columbia to reduce the risk of cancer. Following is a summary of the principal findings.

### *Views on Priority Given to Policy Issues Related to Prevention of Chronic Diseases*

More than 8-in-10 BC residents (82%) feel the provincial government should place a high priority (5, 6 or 7 on a 7-point scale) on developing policies and legislation to create environments that make it possible for the public to “choose healthy lifestyles”. Individuals residing on Vancouver Island (72%) are more likely to want the government to make this a top priority than those living in the Lower Mainland or the North Interior.

Nine-in-ten BC residents (91%) feel the provincial government should place a high priority on developing policies and legislation to “help prevent chronic diseases, such as cancer”. Residents from all regions of the province, and in all population subgroups share the same views to the same degree.

### *Public Views on Increasing the % of Health Care Budget Devoted to Chronic Disease Prevention*

Close to nine-in-ten BC residents (86%) strongly or moderately support increasing the percentage of the total health care budget directed at the prevention of chronic disease from 2.7% to 5%. And, a solid majority of those who support the increase (70%) still support it even if it means redirecting money from other areas of health care.

Lower Mainland, Vancouver Island and the South Interior residents are all fairly in line with overall provincial perceptions. Those living in the North Interior, however, are marginally less supportive of this increase in allocation towards the prevention of chronic disease.

A full 29% of British Columbians say they'd be “more likely” to vote for a political candidate in their local constituency in the upcoming election if he/she supported the idea of increasing the percentage of the health care budget allocated towards chronic disease prevention from 2.7% to 5%. Only 7% of the overall provincial population says this position would make them “less likely” to vote for the candidate. The majority of

BC residents (62%) claim that such support in a platform would make no difference to how these individuals would vote in the upcoming election.

### ***BC Public's Views on "Healthy Schools" Campaign***

Close to eight-in-ten British Columbians (79%) would strongly or moderately support the provincial government adopting a policy to make physical education compulsory for students in grades 11 and 12. South Interior residents are more supportive of this policy than those living in the North Interior.

Over eight-in-ten BC residents (84%) support the idea of requiring children to receive 150 minutes of physical activity per week as part of the overall physical education curriculum. A solid majority (53%) of those who support this idea still back it even if it means time for other subjects would be reduced as a result.

### ***BC Public's Views on Complete Ban on Smoking***

Close to three quarters of BC residents (73%) support a complete ban on smoking in public places, including the elimination of designated smoking areas. Residents in the North Interior are less supportive of a smoking ban than those living in other regions of the province. A solid majority in the region (65%) does back such a ban (including 50% who strongly support it).

Smokers strongly oppose a complete ban on smoking in public places. Fully 66% of current smokers oppose the idea (49% strongly); and 74% of those who smoke everyday also oppose such a ban (58% strongly). A third of smokers (34%) would "support" the ban.

Implementing a complete ban on smoking in public places could have a net positive effect on the frequency with which BC residents visit licensed public establishments. While most British Columbians (on average 7-in-10) say a ban would "make no difference" to the degree to which they would frequent licensed establishments, there is a good number who would visit certain establishments "more often": 25% say they would visit a licensed restaurant more often; 21% would visit pubs more often; 16% for bars; and 7% for bingo halls. On average, about 7% of residents would visit these places "less often".

Among smokers, the reverse is true: 20% say they would visit a licensed restaurant "less often"; 35% for pubs; 34% for bars; and 13% for bingo halls. On average, about 5% of smokers say they would visit these places "more often".

## ***BC Public's Views on Prohibiting Smoking on School Grounds***

British Columbians strongly back the idea of a regulation prohibiting smoking on school grounds. Just under eight-in-ten BC residents (79%) would strongly support such legislation. This figure climbs to almost 9-in-10 residents (88%) who live on Vancouver Island.

## ***BC Public's Views on Prohibiting the Sale of Cigarettes in Pharmacies***

Close to seven-in-ten BC residents (69%) support regulations that would prohibit the sale of cigarettes in pharmacies. Greater support exists among residents of Vancouver Island than those living in the North Interior. Close to half of current smokers in BC (46%) would support banning cigarette sales in pharmacies.

## ***A Smoke-Free 2010 Olympics***

Fully seven-in-ten BC residents (71%) support the idea of a smoke-free 2010 Winter Olympics. Weaker support exists among residents of the North Interior, while higher support exists among those living on Vancouver Island and in the South Interior. Current smokers are not as receptive (40% support, 59% oppose) to the idea of creating a smoke-free Olympic setting, while non-smokers are very receptive to the idea (76% support, 51% strongly).

*These are the findings of an Ipsos-Reid telephone poll conducted on behalf of the Canadian Cancer Society from March 9<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup>, 2005 with a randomly selected sample of 1,028 adult British Columbia residents. The results are considered accurate to within  $\pm 3.1$  percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire BC adult population been polled. The margin of error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population. These data were statistically weighted to ensure the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual BC population according to the 2001 Census.*

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