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Original Investigation

Tobacco Retailers' Support for Point-of-Sale Tobacco Control Policies in England: Association Study of Retailers' Perceived Importance of Tobacco Sales, Contact with the Tobacco Industry, and the Perceived Impact of the Policy

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Abstract

Introduction: Political acceptability and successful implementation of tobacco control policies at the point of sale may depend on, among other factors, tobacco retailers' level of support for these policies. This study quantified the level of support among small tobacco retailers for four point-of-sale tobacco control policies and its association with three predictors.

Methods: We used cross-sectional telephone survey data (August 2019) of 508 small tobacco retailers in England. Weighted logistic regression analyses examined associations between support for the product display ban, price display ban, minimum pack size, and standardized packaging, and self-reported importance of tobacco sales for a business, contact with the tobacco industry, and the perceived impact of the policy on their overall business.

Results: A majority of retailers support minimum pack size (66%), product display ban (65%), price display ban (54%), and standardized packaging (55%). The importance of tobacco sales was not associated with support for the policies. More frequent contact with the tobacco industry was associated with higher odds of support for minimum pack size (OR: 2.01, 95%CI:1.25–3.21), but not with the other three policies. The negative perceived impact of the policies, compared with neutral, was associated with 1.5 to three times lower odds of support for all four policies.

Conclusion: In England, small retailers' support for the four point-of-sale tobacco control policies varied between 54% and 66%. Support seems unrelated to the perceived importance of tobacco sales, and contact with the tobacco industry, but seems strongly related to the perceived impact of tobacco control policies on their business.

Implications: This study shows that small independent retailers' support for point-of-sale (PoS) tobacco control policies is fairly high and that the lack of support voiced by retail trade organizations is not representative of the views of retailers in England. Support rates may be further improved by addressing retailers' perceptions of the impact of policies on their business. Support was not related to retailers' perceived importance of tobacco sales for their business and their contact with the tobacco industry. The industry rhetoric is not supported by our findings, as the majority of small independent retailers in England support tobacco control regulations.

Introduction

Since the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) came into force in 2005, an increasing number of countries have implemented tobacco control policies.[1] Between April 2012 and May 2017, the United Kingdom has implemented several tobacco control policies at the point of sale (PoS). Four of these are (1) the product display ban, which prohibits the visibility of tobacco products inside and outside tobacco outlets, (2) the price display ban, which restricts the display of prices for tobacco products, (3) standardized packaging, which means that every tobacco pack has the same color and range of picture warnings with brand and variant names in standard font, and (4) the minimum pack size policy, which sets a minimum number of cigarettes for factory made and weight for roll your own tobacco products. In England, the first two policies were implemented for large retailers (i.e., with a floor area >280 m^2) in April 2012, and three years later in April 2015 for small retailers. The latter policy measures were implemented in May 2016 for manufacturing, with a year sell-through the period at PoS. The PoS bans in England do not include smoking-related products such as filters and rolling papers, e-cigarettes are also excluded.

Several studies have assessed the importance of successful implementation of tobacco control policies to reduce the ac-

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cessibility of tobacco products,[2] to decrease cigarette brand awareness,[3] to denormalize smoking,[2–4] and to reduce the prevalence of smoking among adolescents.[3,5] The PoS tobacco control policies listed above can contribute to reaching these goals.[6,7] At the PoS specifically, successful implementation of tobacco control policies largely depends on tobacco retailers. Although regulation of tobacco control policies is enforced by public authorities, tobacco retailers shape the implementation of and compliance with the law at the shop level.[8,9]

It is important to study small independent retailers' support for tobacco control policies. There has been government concern that small retailers are more likely to oppose policies, while small retailers may have a larger influence on the implementation of policies. For large chain stores, there are companywide procedures that ensure implementation, but in small retail businesses, this depends much more on the independent owner and a small number of staff. Moreover, a majority of smokers buy their cigarettes in small retail outlets, with 56% buying in newsagents/off licenses and corner shops and 17% in petrol stations.[10]

A lack of retailers' support for PoS tobacco control policies is a potential threat to a successful implementation of and compliance with tobacco control policies.[11] Retailers' support mostly affects the implementation of policies operating at shop level (e.g., product and price display bans), but may also have some implications for policies at the manufacturer-level such as minimum pack sizes and standardized packaging. After the implementation of manufacturer-level policies, many Scottish tobacco retailers had been left with noncompliant stock, which some of them were still intending to sell despite the new legislation.[12] A more long-term risk of minimum pack size evasion may be selling illegal packs, although there is no evidence of increased illicit trade in the UK.[13,14]

Retailers' support for tobacco control policies at the PoS may be determined by the policy's financial impact on businesses, such as reduced revenue.[15] The revenue argument is often used to mobilize tobacco retail groups against tobacco control policies,[16] not just against PoS policies but against any regulatory changes which could affect tobacco sales, for example, tax increases and standardized packaging. However, such arguments are not backed up by independent evidence. Tobacco outlets in New Zealand, for example, that voluntarily implemented PoS tobacco control policies have not experienced a large decrease in revenue.[17]

Misinformation on the impact of policies on business may also lower the level of support. In the United States, almost 70% of retailers said they had received information about PoS tobacco control policies from tobacco companies, while only 24% of them received information from the government.[11] This is concerning as it provides the tobacco industry with the opportunity to influence retailers and their support for tobacco control policies at the PoS. Opposition to legislation by retail trade organizations funded by the tobacco industry such as the Tobacco Retailers Alliance, and the National Federation of Retail Newsagents almost succeeded in preventing the PoS display legislation from being implemented in England, according to Tobacco Tactics.[18] However, it did succeed in having the implementation for small shops put back by three years in England. More regular contact with the tobacco industry may therefore be associated with lower levels of support.

In addition to the threat of a policy to retailers' business, the tobacco industry argues that policies such as standardized packs could further complicate business operations. Although there is little evidence of this being the case, the perceived impact of policies on business operations may therefore also determine their level of support.[12]

Several studies have been conducted to assess retailers' opinions on PoS tobacco control policies, their level of support for these policies, and determinants of support, such as interference by tobacco companies, the importance of tobacco sales to their business, and the perceived impact of these policies on their business. These determinants have been studied separately but have not been studied in association with levels of policy support. The current study focuses on four PoS tobacco control policies implemented in England between 2012 and 2015. Among small tobacco retailers, we explored the association between their support for these policies and[1] the perceived importance of tobacco sales to their business,[2] their contact with the tobacco industry, and[3] the perceived impact of these policies on their business. This study was performed 2–4 years after the implementation of the policies. Being able to show post-implementation there was limited opposition to the policies was important to ensure the policy was sustained.

Methods

Data and Study Population

This study was developed to inform the post-implementation review carried out by the UK government in 2019. The legislation required the government to assess, within 5 years of implementation, if legislation was achieving its objective and whether legislation was still the best way of achieving that objective, taking particular account of the impact on small businesses. This study aimed to investigate retailer attitudes to the legislation and compare retailers who explicitly "support" the policy with those who do not explicitly support the policy.

In England, there are approximately 49,000 small retail outlets selling tobacco, of which around 70% are independent.[19] In August 2019, interviewers from NEMS (market research company) conducted computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI) among a random sample of 24,193 managers of small shops selling tobacco across all regions of England. Of the 24,193 retailers, 6235 were contacted at least once to have the opportunity to participate. A total of 558 agreed to take part in the study (response rate 8.95%; cooperation rate 32.03%).

Retailers were included from newsagents, off-license stores, specialist tobacconists, local convenience stores/supermarkets, and independent fuel stations. Retailers were sampled using an existing database with owners classified by geographic location and business activity type (based on the governmental SIC code). Quota controls on business type ensured a proportional stratified sample. The business sector sub-samples were based on the overall proportion for England, with the regional business sector sub-samples being guided by number availability within each region. The sample in the region North East–England's smallest region in terms of population size and a number of retailers—was boosted to have a sufficient sample size to come to meaningful conclusions for the region.

All questions in the survey followed a fixed script and had predefined answers but interviewees could refuse to answer specific questions. Out of the 558 retailers that were interviewed, 25 were excluded from the analysis due to answers that were not included in variable definitions ("don't know," "unsure," or "refusal"). The data included 25 specialist tobacconists. As they do not fall under the same regulations as other tobacco retailers, we excluded them from the analysis. A total of 508 respondents were included in the analysis.

Measurements

Dependent Variables

Retailers reported their levels of support for the PoS tobacco product display ban, restriction on the display of prices at the PoS, standardized packaging, and minimum pack size. A binary variable was used: "support" versus "not-support." The category "not-support" included, besides "oppose," the answer options "neither" and "don't know," as these retailers did not explicitly express support for the policies. "Refused" was treated as a missing value in all analyses.

Independent Variables

The *perceived importance of tobacco sales* was assessed with the sum of four questions, which we categorized into three groups with equal group sizes: high, medium, and low importance. The first measure was the proportion of customers buying tobacco products on a normal day: "all," "three quarters," versus "half," versus "a quarter," "less than a quarter." The other three measures included whether retailers "agree" versus "neither agree nor disagree," versus "disagree" that customers buy another product at the same time, that relative profit on cigarette packs is high compared to other products, and that tobacco profit is important for overall profit. Responses "don't know" and "don't know/varies" were excluded.

The involvement of the tobacco industry with retailers was examined with two variables. Contact with tobacco industry representatives about (1) product/brand promotion, and (2) tobacco policies. Contact with the tobacco industry about the brand promotion was measured with five items. Respondents reported whether in the last 6 months they had had conversations with a tobacco industry representative (yes/no) about "what tobacco brands you should be stocking," "what tobacco brands you should promote to customers," "stocking their e-cigarette brands," "where their e-cigarette brands should be positioned," and "promoting little cigars (cigarillos)." Contact with the tobacco industry about four policy-related topics was measured with four items (yes/no), which included "how to avoid selling to children," "the implications of the new tracking and tracing regulations for retailers," "illegal or counterfeit tobacco," and "standardized 'plain' packaging." A sum score of the total nine items was split into three groups of about equal sizes: high, medium, and low contact. Responses "don't know" were excluded.

The *impact* of the four policies on retailers' business was assessed with one question per policy which we categorized into three groups indicating whether the policy has had a: positive, versus neutral (including "neither positive nor negative" and "don't know"), versus negative impact.

Respondents who answered positive or negative were asked to indicate from a list of reasons why they did/did not support the policies (with the exception of the price display ban). Respondents who indicated "other" in the list were asked to specify their reason.

Potential Confounders

Three characteristics of tobacco retailers were measured. Retailer type: newsagents, off-license stores, local convenience stores, and petrol stations. A geographic region of retailer: because of the different sampling method in the North East region (boosting), we compared the North East with the other regions of England combined (North West, Yorkshire and the Humber, East and West Midlands, the East of England, South West, South East, and London). Respondents reported when they started working in tobacco retail, which was categorized into before the product display ban (April 6, 2015), after the display ban but before standardized packaging was fully implemented (April 2015–May 2017), after standardized packaging was fully implemented (May 2017), or not sure.

Statistical Analyses

The study population is described for the total population and by support for each policy. For the associations of the three main independent variables of interest: (1) perceived importance of tobacco sales, (2) contact with the tobacco industry, and (3) perceived impact on their business, on the dependent variable: policy support, multiple logistic regression was used. Weights were applied to correct for the oversampling of the NE region. Three models were performed with support as the dependent variable. Model 1 comprised a crude analysis for all independent variables and potential confounders with support. Model 2 included: perceived importance of tobacco sales, contact with the tobacco industry, type of retailer, region, and when they started working in tobacco retail. The perceived impact was added in Model 3. As the results for all models did not differ greatly, and did not lead to different conclusions, Model 3 was presented as the main analysis, and the results of Model 1 and Model 2 are presented in Supplementary Tables 2 and 3.

Retailers' reasons for a positive or negative perceived impact on their business—including those given at "other"—were categorized by the researchers, listed, and counted.

We performed two sensitivity analyses for Model 3. First, for the variable support, we excluded answer categories "neither" and "don't know" to only compare retailers who explicitly supported or opposed the policies. Second, we performed a sensitivity analysis for the variable "contact with the tobacco industry" in which we separated "contact about brand promotion" from "contact about policies."

Results

Table 1 shows the characteristics of the total study sample and the prevalence of support per policy. Most retailers worked in convenience stores (52.6%), and started working in the industry before the display ban (87.4%). Overall, a majority of the retailers support the four tobacco control policies, especially the policy for minimum pack size (65.4%) and the product display ban (61.6%). The level of support was lowest among retailers perceiving a negative impact of the price display ban (33.3%) and standardized packaging (33.9%) on their business. In Supplementary Table 1, levels of support for the total study population are shown categorized as: "support," versus "neither support nor oppose," and "don't know" (neither), versus "oppose."

Table 2 presents the associations of covariates with support for the four policies. For the product display ban, respondents working in convenience stores had higher odds of support (odds ratio (OR): 2.58, 95% confidence interval (CI): 1.52–4.36) than those in newsagents. Support for the product

Table 1. Descriptive characteristics of respondents (in %) for the total population and per policy, with weights for a region in eight groups

	% respondents (of total $N = 508$)*	% Support for policies			
		Product display ban	Price display ban	Standardized packaging	Minimum pack size
Total	100	61.6 (313)	53.5 (272)	52.6 (267)	65.4 (332)
Type of retailer					
Newsagent	17.1 (87)	49.4 (44)	44.3 (39)	54.5 (48)	59.1 (52)
Off-license	17.5 (89)	59.8 (58)	43.3 (42)	43.3 (42)	60.4 (58)
Convenience store	52.6 (267)	73.3 (184)	63.5 (160)	59.5 (150)	70.6 (178)
Petrol station	12.8 (65)	57.5 (42)	47.2 (34)	52.8 (38)	63.9 (46)
Start working in tobacco retail					
Before display ban (April 6, 2015)	87.4 (444)	63.6 (286)	54.8 (246)	52.9 (238)	64.4 (290)
After display ban (April 6, 2015)	7.7 (39)	65.7 (23)	51.4 (19)	70.3 (26)	77.8 (28)
After stand. packaging (May 2017)	4.9 (25)	82.6 (19)	50.0 (11)	68.2 (15)	72.7 (16)
Region					
North East	29.1 (148)	53.8 (14)	51.9 (14)	48.1 (13)	65.4 (17)
Rest of England	70.9 (360)	65.1 (313)	54.3 (261)	55.1 (265)	65.9 (317)
Perceived importance tobacco sales					
Low	28.5 (145)	63.4 (92)	50.7 (73)	59.0 (85)	62.5 (90)
Medium	36.2 (184)	69.0 (127)	57.6 (106)	53.3 (98)	68.5 (126)
High	35.2 (179)	60.6 (109)	53.9 (97)	52.8 (95)	65.9 (118)
Tobacco industry contact					
Low	32.1 (163)	66.9 (109)	53.0 (87)	53.7 (88)	57.9 (95)
Medium	29.5 (150)	61.3 (95)	49.7 (77)	49.7 (77)	67.1 (104)
High	38.4 (195)	65.1 (123)	58.7 (111)	59.8 (113)	71.4 (135)
Perceived impact					
Negative	-	51.6 (49)	33.3 (32)	33.9 (40)	49.6 (57)
Neutral	-	66.3 (252)	57.5 (225)	59.6 (214)	69.4 (222)
Positive	-	81.3 (26)	85.7 (18)	80.0 (24)	75.3 (55)

*Unweighted percentages.

display ban was not associated with the perceived importance of tobacco sales, contact with the tobacco industry, and perceived impact on business operations.

The odds of support for the price display ban were 2 times higher among local convenience stores (OR: 2.00, 95%CI: 1.19–3.35) than newsagents (Table 2). The odds of support were 2.9 times higher when retailers expressed a perceived positive impact of the policy compared to neutral. No associations were found between support and perceived importance of tobacco sales or contact with the tobacco industry.

Support for the standardized packaging policy was greatest among retailers who started working after the product display ban in 2015 (OR after vs. before: 2.19, 95%CI: 1.00–4.78) (Table 2). The odds of support for standardized packaging were 2.8 times lower among retailers who have a negative perceived impact of the policy on their business (OR negative vs. neutral: 0.36, 95%CI: 0.23–0.56) and 2.7 times higher among retailers who have a positive perceived impact (OR positive vs. neutral: 2.69, 95%CI: 1.04–6.95). The perceived importance of tobacco sales and contact with the tobacco industry was not associated with support.

Support for the minimum pack size policy was associated with high contact with the tobacco industry (OR: 2.01, 95%CI: 1.25–3.21) (Table 2). A negative perceived impact of the policy on business operations, compared to neutral, was associated with 2.4 times lower odds of support. No association was found for the perceived importance of tobacco sales.

Interpretation of retailers' reasons (as given in response to open-ended questions) showed that retailers who had a positive perception of policy impact more often reported experiencing larger profits, increased sales, and easier prevention of underage sales (Table 3 and Supplementary Table 4). These arguments were roughly similar for the three policies (product display ban, standardized packaging, and minimum pack size). Retailers expressing a negative perceived impact of the policy on their business mentioned opposite arguments, such as a decrease in profit and sales. Unhappy customers and difficulties distinguishing brands were also mentioned as negative consequences of the policies.

The sensitivity analyses (Supplementary Tables 5 and 6) showed similar results compared to the main analysis (Table 2). In the sensitivity analysis in which support is compared only with "oppose" (i.e., "don't know" and "neither" excluded), a positive perceived impact on business operations is no longer significantly associated with support for the price display ban. Two new significant associations were found: for the minimum pack size policy, local convenience stores have higher odds of support (OR: 1.94, 95%CI: 1.11–3.41) compared to newsagents, and retailers with medium contact with

Table 2. Adjusted logistic regression model for support per policy, as odds ratio and 95%CI, with weights for a region in eight groups

	Product display ban	Price display ban	Standardized packaging	Minimum pack sizes
Perceived importance				
Low	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref
Medium	1.27 (0.78–2.06)	1.39 (0.87–2.22)	0.77 (0.48–1.23)	1.20 (0.74–1.95)
High	0.82 (0.51–1.34)	1.01 (0.62–1.62)	0.76 (0.47–1.24)	1.05 (0.64–1.71)
Tobacco industry contact				
Low	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref
Medium	0.84 (0.52–1.73)	0.85 (0.53–1.35)	0.81 (0.51–1.30)	1.51 (0.93–2.43)
High	1.08 (0.67–1.75)	1.38 (0.87–2.18)	1.44 (0.91–2.27)	2.01 (1.25–3.21)
Perceived impact				
Negative	0.63 (0.39–1.01)	0.35 (0.22–0.57)	0.36 (0.23–0.56)	0.42 (0.27–0.66)
Neutral	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref
Positive	2.00 (0.78–5.09)	3.45 (1.04–11.40)	2.69 (1.04–6.95)	1.24 (0.68–2.28)
Type of retailer				
Newsagent	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref
Off-license	1.42 (0.77–2.60)	0.94 (0.51–1.73)	0.65 (0.35–1.20)	1.18 (0.64–2.20)
Local conv. store	2.58 (1.52–4.36)	2.00 (1.19–3.35)	1.21 (0.72–2.04)	1.64 (0.97–2.79)
Petrol station	1.22 (0.64–2.34)	1.02 (0.53–1.97)	0.94 (0.48–1.82)	1.27 (0.64–2.50)
Region				
North East	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref
Rest of England	1.83 (0.81–4.15)	1.13 (0.50–2.58)	1.48 (0.65–3.37)	1.09 (0.46–2.55)
Start working				
Before display ban	Ref	Ref	Ref	Ref
After display ban	0.96 (0.45–2.03)	0.90 (0.44–1.87)	2.19 (1.00–4.78)	1.93 (0.84–4.44)
After standardized packs	2.90 (0.90–9.34)	0.68 (0.28–1.64)	1.51 (0.59–3.84)	1.32 (0.49–3.54)

Table 3. Arguments explaining positive or negative impact of the policies, multiple answers possible (in %)

	Policies		
	Product display ban (N = 24)	Standardized packaging (N = 25)	Minimum pack size (N = 64)
Positive impact			
Increased profit and sales	29.2	56.0	92.2
Simpler to stock	–	–	20.3
Improved the shop	8.3	–	–
Improved customer contact	8.3	8.0	3.1
Customer less brand specific	–	16.0	–
Better security	4.2	–	–
Prevent (underage) sales	54.2	32.0	1.6
	Product display ban (N = 106)	Standardized packaging (N = 135)	Minimum pack size (N = 132)
Negative impact			
Reduced sales/profit	60.4	21.5	75.0
Difficult differences between brands	18.9	74.1	–
Cannot show (new) brands	30.2	–	–
Increased time selling	17.0	14.1	0.8
Takes more time to stock	5.7	8.9	–
Problems with display doors	4.7	–	–
Unhappy customers	1.9	6.7	35.6
Unattractive packs	–	7.4	–
Customers buy and smoke more	–	–	3.0
Forced recommend other product	–	–	0.8

the tobacco industry have higher odds of support (OR: 1.84, 95%CI: 1.07–3.17) compared to those with low contact. The sensitivity analysis in which contact with the tobacco industry was split into two variables showed no significant associations with support.

Discussion

Two to four years after implementation, England's small retailers' support for the four PoS tobacco control policies varied between 54% and 66%. The perceived importance of tobacco sales for the business was not associated with support for the four policies. High levels of contact with the tobacco industry were associated with more support for minimum pack size, but not with the other three policies. A negative perceived impact of the policy on business operations was associated with lower odds of support for all four policies compared with neutral perceived impact. A majority of retailers, who had a negative perceived impact of the product display ban and minimum pack size, experienced a reduction in sales and/or profit.

Limitations

This study had a cross-sectional design, which does not allow for causal inference. Although it is conceivable that a negative perceived impact of a policy on business operations reduces retailers' support, a reverse effect may also operate such that a priori support for a policy increases awareness of positive effects of the policy on their business or diminishes perceptions of negative effects. There may also be residual confounding factors that we did not take into account, such as retailers' own smoking behavior, or their attitude towards the government. Moreover, as this research was carried out to inform a post-implementation review of the legislation in England, data was collected after the policies were already implemented for two (standardized packaging and minimum pack size) or four (product and price display bans) years. We, therefore, do not know whether support has increased after implementation or that it is relative to their expectations of the policies' impact on their business.

Second, the self-reported nature of the survey, some of which was retrospective, may have led to measurement bias. For example, the impact of policies on retailers' business was estimated asked retrospectively. Finally, retailers' lack of knowledge of the aim and effectiveness of tobacco control policies at the PoS could possibly influence their support.[20]

In addition, the low response rate is a risk factor for selection bias because we may have included small retailers who are more positive or negative about tobacco control policies. However, it is uncertain to what extent this may have affected our findings.

Interpretations of the Findings

This study suggests that retailers' support for PoS policies is unrelated to the perceived importance of tobacco sales for their business. This is remarkable since tobacco retail groups often use profit and sales arguments against tobacco control policies.[17] Small tobacco retailers in and outside of England experience low-profit margins on tobacco sales[21–23] but they consider those sales as important for sales of other products as customers buying tobacco products often make additional purchases.[21,24] Nonetheless, some retailers in the current study expressed the importance of tobacco sales for their business while supporting PoS tobacco control policies. This implies that sales and profit-related arguments against tobacco control policies may not represent a majority view. Future studies should focus on the rationale behind retailers' support for or opposition against tobacco control policies.

Contact with the tobacco industry was unrelated to support for most policies. This result is against our expectation, yet may have a rational explanation. It is not in the tobacco industry's interest to decrease retailers' level of support after tobacco control policies are implemented, as this may discourage retailers from continuing to sell tobacco products. Tobacco retailers are often offered financial support by tobacco companies to help comply with tobacco control policies, for instance, to adapt the tobacco display to the new legal standards or to ensure stock levels and sales.[25] This help may reduce perceived barriers for implementation and compliance and may thus increase retailers' level of support for PoS control policies.

It is unclear why a positive association was found between tobacco industry contact and support for the minimum pack size policy. Retailers' reasons for their positive perceived impact of the policy on business operations were increased profit and sales, and that it was simpler to replenish tobacco stock. This is in line with previous research where retailers said that the removal of smaller cigarette pack sizes (10 s, 17 s, 18 s, and 19 s) meant the range of products had reduced significantly, freeing up space in the storage gantry. This had led them to cut down on the slower selling brands and only replenish their best-selling brands, which had positive implications for their costs.[12] The specific role of the tobacco industry, however, in the association found remains unclear. Future qualitative studies should further explore the role of the tobacco industry in retailers' level of policy support.

The tobacco manufacturers' tactics are to try to prevent government action by amplifying retailers' opposition against tobacco control policies because of fear of reduced revenue. Despite these tactics, a majority of retailers in England support tobacco control regulations. Moreover, only about one out of six retailers thought that the tobacco policies had a negative impact on their business. An explanation for the overall positive policy support may be found in retailers' personal attitudes about smoking, tobacco control, and government intervention in general.[22] Retailers who are concerned about the health impact of tobacco for society and their clients, could, regardless of the impact on their business, support these policies.[22] On the contrary, retailers who are more negative about government policies may perceive tobacco control policies to affect them more negatively. Future country-specific studies may focus on understanding retailers' perceptions of the impact of the policies on their business to help their support for tobacco control interventions. Through cooperation between retailers and public health advocates, for instance, support rates could be further improved.[11]

Conclusions

In England, small retailers' support for the four tobacco control policies, which impact at PoS, varied between 54% and 66%, while only 24%–35% oppose and 8%–13% saying they neither support nor oppose the policies. The level of support was not associated with the importance of tobacco sales for their business or with contact with the tobacco industry. However, the negative perceived impact of a policy on business operations is associated with 1.5 to three times lower odds of support.

Supplementary Material

A Contributorship Form detailing each author's specific involvement with this content, as well as any supplementary data, are available online at https://academic.oup.com/ntr.

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Declaration of Interests

All authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability Statement

Data are available upon reasonable request.

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