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Ontario Adult Support for Restricted Ratings for Movies Showing Smoking

Exposure to smoking in movies is associated with smoking uptake among youth.^{1,2,3} As a way to reduce youth's exposure to smoking in movies the 2012 US Surgeon General's report, *Preventing Tobacco Use Among Youth and Young Adults*, endorsed assigning adult ratings, restricting access to those 18 years of age or older (Restricted or R rating) to films that depict smoking. In the US, movie ratings are assigned by the Motion Picture Association of America. In Ontario and elsewhere in Canada, film ratings are determined by provincial film review boards.

Giving restricted ratings to films depicting smoking has the support of the majority of adults in Ontario.

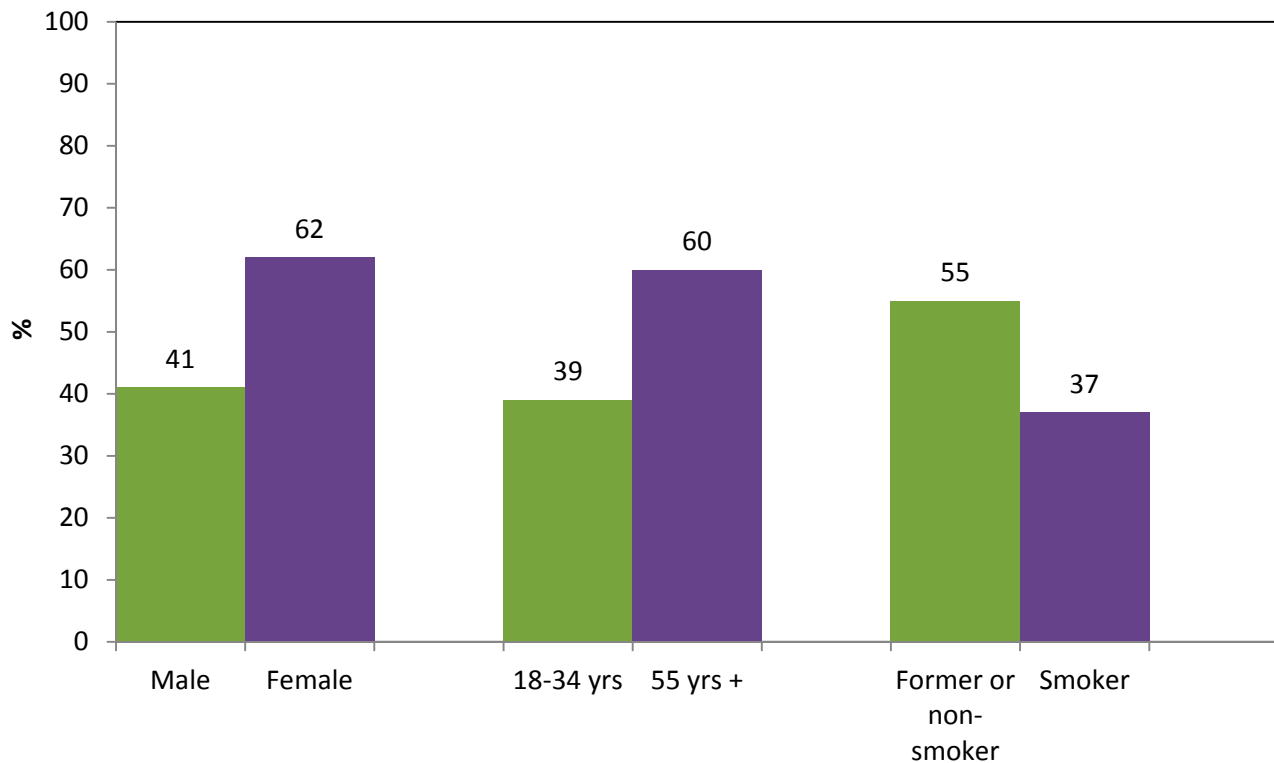
Despite campaigns like Smoke Free Movies (www.smokefreemovies.ca) which were associated with a decline in the number of tobacco depictions in youth-rated movies (PG and 14A) from 2005 to 2010 in the US,⁴ this number has increased in 2011 and 2012.^{5,6} In Ontario, a larger proportion of tobacco impressions were delivered in youth-rated movies than in the US in 2011 (80% vs. 67%, respectively). Primarily, the difference was due to 66% of Ontario's top-grossing films being issued lower youth ratings by the Ontario Film Review Board compared to the US Motion Picture Association of America ratings.⁷

Using data from the 2012 Centre for Addiction and Mental Health's *CAMH Monitor*, this update presents findings on the level of support among Ontario adults aged 18 years and older for assigning a Restricted or "R" rating to movies that show characters smoking.

Support for assigning R or Restricted ratings to movies that show characters smoking:

- A majority of adults in Ontario (52%) agreed that movies that show characters smoking should be rated 'R' or Restricted.
- Women were significantly more likely to agree with this policy than men (62% vs. 41%).
- Support was significantly higher among adults aged 55 years and older than among adults aged 18 to 34 years (60% vs. 39%).
- More than half of all former and never smokers (55%) agreed with this policy, a significantly higher level of support than that of current smokers (37%).

Figure 1: Support for Assigning R or Restricted Ratings to Movies that Show Characters Smoking, by Gender, Age and Smoking Status, Ontario, 2012



The theme for World No Tobacco Day 2013 is: “Ban tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship.” Tobacco use in movies is considered a powerful promotional tool.⁸ Limiting the promotion of tobacco products by giving restricted ratings to films depicting smoking has the support of the majority of adults in Ontario. The *CAMH Monitor* will continue to track the level of support for this policy option in the province in the coming year.

Acknowledgment

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health’s *CAMH Monitor* is an Ontario-wide, random telephone survey, focusing on addiction and mental health issues. The survey represents Ontario residents aged 18 and older, excluding people in prisons, hospitals, military establishments, and transient populations such as the homeless.

References

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- ⁶ Polansky JR, Titus K, Lanning N, Glantz SA. Smoking in top-grossing US movies, 2012. University of California, San Francisco, Center for Tobacco Control Research and Education. Available at: <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/3j69r912>.
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