Vices: Smoking and Drinking

Awareness of the health hazards of smoking, long apparent, is now virtually unanimous. Only six percent call it a normal pleasure, while 74 percent say it is a danger to the smoker and others or a major public health hazard. Twenty-eight percent say they have smoked in the past week, down from 41 percent in 1944.

Question: Do you think cigarette smoking is harmful or not? (1949)

Question: Do you think cigarette smoking is or is not harmful to your health? (1990)

Question: Which of these five statements comes closest to how you personally would describe cigarette smoking? Is it a normal pleasure of life, a normal but risky activity, dangerous/unhealthy to the smoker, dangerous/unhealthy to the smoker and others, or a major public health hazard to the smoker and others?

Question: Have you, yourself, smoked any cigarettes in the past week?

Source: Surveys by the Gallup Organization, latest that of July 6-8, 1990.


Smoking and drinking are also down sharply among high school seniors. A solid majority of them see smoking as a dirty habit. A look at adult consumption patterns for spirits, wine, beer, and cigarettes show a downward trend for all except beer in the 1980s.

Who Smokes, Whose Responsibility

Smoking is down across demographic groups. About a quarter of respondents have had a drink in the last 24 hours, down from nearly 40 percent in 1984. Smoking is seen as a personal decision, and two-thirds believe that warning labels excuse companies from responsibility in smoking deaths.

Question: Have you ever smoked cigarettes regularly? If “yes”: Do you happen to smoke cigarettes now? (1954)

Question: Have you, yourself, smoked any cigarettes in the past week? (1991)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1954</th>
<th>1991</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black*</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade school</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.S. grad.</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College grad.</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-29 years</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-44</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-64</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *Sample of blacks in 1954 survey was too small to analyze.

Question: When did you last take a drink of any kind of alcoholic beverage?

Most recent drink consumed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Within last 24 hours</th>
<th>Over one day to one week ago</th>
<th>Over one week ago</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *Asked of respondents who said they “have occasion to use alcoholic beverages” (64% in 1984 and 55% in 1992)

Question: In recent years, we’ve heard many different opinions about how smoking affects people’s quality of life. For each of the following statements people have made to us about smoking, please tell me whether you agree strongly, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly.

To smoke or not to smoke is a personal decision that adults should be free to make for themselves

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1% Not sure</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>87%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Note: In a 1990 Gallup survey, 75% of respondents said that it would make no difference if they were in a position to hire someone for a job and learned that the person smoked. 25% said they would be less likely to hire that person. 1% said more likely.

Question: Do you think cigarette companies should be held legally responsible if they are sued by the families of smokers who died of smoking-related causes, or does the fact that the companies put warning notices on cigarette packs excuse them from the responsibility?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>4% Don’t know/refused</th>
<th>Should be legally responsible</th>
<th>Should not be held responsible for other reasons (vol.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Warning notices on cigarette packs excuse cigarette companies from the responsibility of smoking-related deaths</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question: Do you think that advertising for cigarettes should be banned from all media, allowed in some media, or allowed in all media?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>5% Not sure</th>
<th>Allowed in all media</th>
<th>Allowed in some media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cigarette advertising should be banned from all media</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: In a 1988 Yankelovich, Clark Shulman study for Time and CNN. May 8–9, 1990.
Source: Survey by Yankelovich, Clark Shulman for Time and CNN. May 8–9, 1990.
Concerns about health effects are tempered by our belief in individual choice. Only 14 percent say cigarette smoking should be made totally illegal. Banning smoking in public places is favored, but there is strong sentiment for limiting it to designated areas. Taxing vice has long had support.

**Question:** Should smoking in this country be made totally illegal, or not?

- 2% Don’t know
- 14% Should
- 84% Smoking in this country should not be made totally illegal

**Source:** Survey by the Gallup Organization, July 6-8, 1990

**Question:** Would you tend to favor or oppose legislation that bans smoking altogether?

- 2% Not sure
- 34% Favor
- 64% Oppose legislation that bans smoking altogether

**Source:** Survey by Louis Harris and Associates for Lederle Laboratories, January 3-12, 1992

**Question:** Would you tend to favor or oppose legislation that bans smoking in all public places?

- 1% Not sure
- 35% Oppose
- 64% Favor legislation that bans smoking in all public places

**Source:** Survey by Louis Harris and Associates for Lederle Laboratories, January 3-12, 1992

**Question:** Do you think smoking should be allowed indoors in public places without restrictions or limited to designated smoking areas in public places, or should smoking be banned in public places?

- 4% No restrictions
- 47% Smoking should be banned in public places
- 53% Limited to designated smoking areas in public places

**Source:** Survey by ABC News/Washington Post, February 25-28, 1993

**Question:** Suppose it became necessary to increase taxes—which one or two of these methods would you most prefer?

**1940**

If necessary to increase taxes, would most prefer

- Increase the taxes on tobacco, liquor, and luxuries: 41%
- Increase the taxes on corporation profits: 21%

**Note:** All other categories received less than 20%

**Source:** Survey by the Roper Organization for Fortune, January 1940

**Question:** Assume for the moment that the government had to raise more revenue to further reduce the budget deficit. Here are some steps people have suggested could be taken to reduce the deficit. For each one, would you tell me whether you think it is a step that should or should not be very seriously considered as a way of reducing the deficit?

**Raising taxes on alcohol and cigarettes should be seriously considered as a way of reducing the deficit**

- 1984: 74%
- 1987: 69%
- 1990: 62%
- 1993: 67%

**Note:** Alcohol and cigarette taxes were asked about separately using half of the survey sample. 68% favored considering raising taxes on cigarettes and 70% favored this for alcoholic beverages.

**Source:** Surveys by the Roper Organization (Roper Reports 93-3), February 13-27, 1993