

The Puffers & The Tolerants

(Part 4 of 4)

This final part of the series examining the Smoking Habits of the Lebanese population, looks into the awareness of the population about the hazards of smoking, what is regarded as an acceptable minimum age for smoking and the effects of second-hand smoking.

General Awareness of Smoking Hazards

The study of smokers and non-smokers reveals that 75.2% of the respondents thought that there was not enough awareness in Lebanon about the hazards of smoking. As depicted in Graph 1 most of the respondents (71%) did not discuss the hazards of smoking at school. Whereas 29% did discuss the hazards of smoking at school, however, only 66% of them indicated that the course had deterred them from smoking.

Graph 2 illustrates that 76.5% of the respondents perceived television as the most widely employed medium for broadcasting tobacco ads. Similarly, television was also the mostly widely employed medium to convey anti-smoking ads (38.1%). Billboards came next (26.7%), followed by newspapers (21.9%). Graph 2 also depicts that anti-smoking ads seem to walk hand-in-hand with tobacco ads, i.e. the same medium is used, but the magnitude is different. Respondents indicated that newspapers and radio were the mediums in which anti-smoking ads outweighed tobacco ads.

Minimum Age for Smoking

Interestingly, 2.4% of the respondents indicated that 15 or less is an acceptable minimum age for smoking. Moreover, 2.7% stated that 16 is an acceptable age, and 3.9% that 17 is an acceptable age to start smoking. The majority (22%) identified 20 as an acceptable minimum age. Whereas 13.8% thought it is acceptable to start smoking between the ages of 21 and 24, 11.6% indicated 25 or more should be the minimum age. On the other hand, 23.2% did not specify a minimum age for smoking.

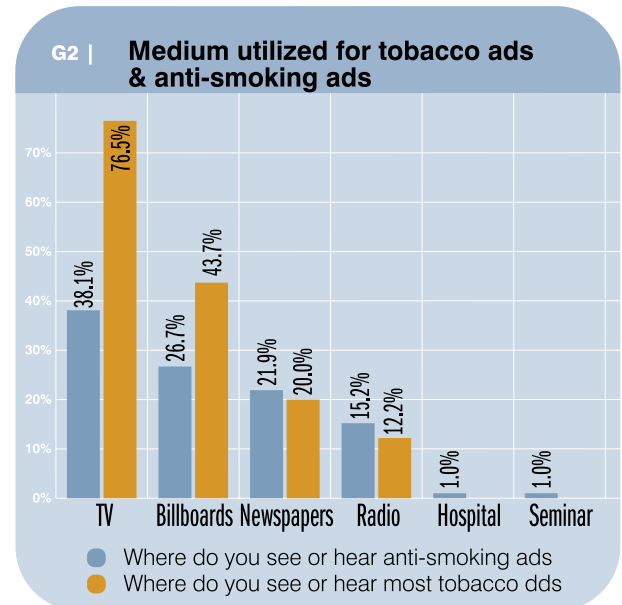
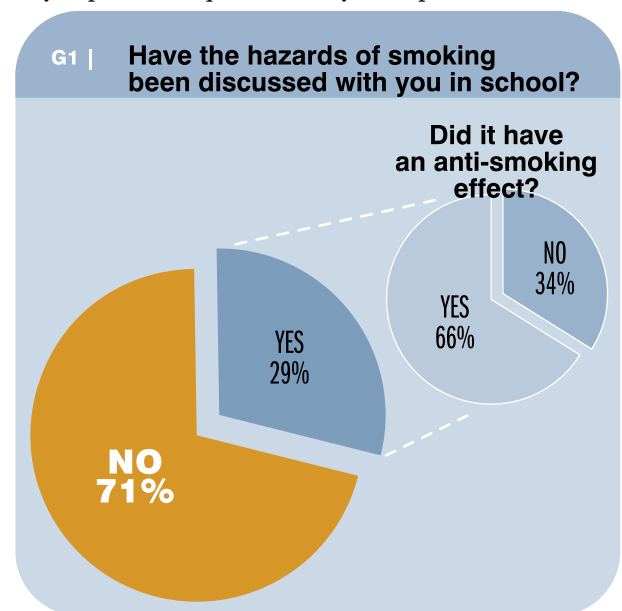
Smokers' Awareness of Second-Hand Smoking

Responses were mainly split between second-hand smoking being a little harmful (47.6%) and very harmful (43.4%). On the other hand, 2.4% of the respondents indicated that smoking was not harmful to those around them and 6.6% responded they "don't know". When asked about whether second-hand smoking harmed the health of babies and children, 76.8% replied yes, while 13% said no and 10.2% said they didn't know. Once again, responses were split between second-hand smoking causing lung cancer in non-smokers (41%) and

40.7% saying they didn't know if it did or not. However, 18.4% said that it didn't.

Smokers' Awareness of Effects of Smoking on Themselves

Even though they smoked, 95.2% indicated that they agreed with the statement that smoking was harming to their health. Moreover, 54.4% of them disclosed that they expected to quit some day. (Graph 3)



When asked if they are addicted to cigarettes, 35.5% of the respondents agreed. However, we should point out that the number of years a person had been smoking was not always indicative of whether the smoker believed s/he was addicted to cigarettes. For example, even though none of those who had been smoking for less than six months indicated that they were addicted, 25% of smokers who had been smoking for 6-12 months stated they were addicted compared to 18.5% of those who had been smoking for 1-2 years and 21.1% of those who have been smoking for 2-3 years. However, the highest percentage of addicts was among those who had been smoking for more than 3 years (39.7%).

On the other hand, 54.2% disagreed with the statement that they were addicted to cigarettes. An interesting response came from 49.4% of smokers who had been smoking for more than 3 years, stating that they were not addicted to smoking. Similarly, 68.4% of those who had been smoking for 2-3 years, 77.8% of those who had been smoking for 1-2 years and 75% of respondents who had been smoking for 6-12 months replied that they were not addicted to smoking. While all of those who had been smoking for less than 6 months stated they were not addicted to smoking.

Quitting

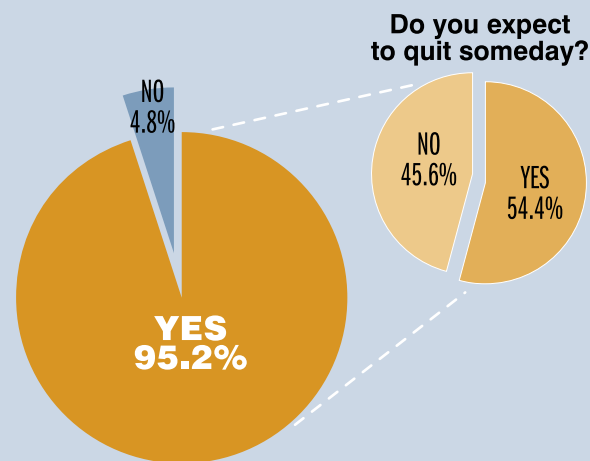
A total of 39.2% of smokers had been advised by a doctor to quit, 56.9% of them had actually quit, while 46.2% of those advised to quit had only cut down their smoking intake. It should be noted that 72.3% of those who cut down on their smoking had tried to quit.

However, 63.9% of those who tried cutting down returned to their usual consumption. As for quitting, most respondents indicated that their longest quit period was less than 1 month (44%). While only 9% said their longest quit period was between 6 months – 1 year and 10.2% stated they had quit for over a year. Nonetheless, most respondents (34.9%) had two unsuccessful quitting attempts, whereas 32.5% had only tried once. Different reasons were given for quitting. The main reason given was that it was affecting the smoker's health. Graph 4 illustrates the top 5 reasons.

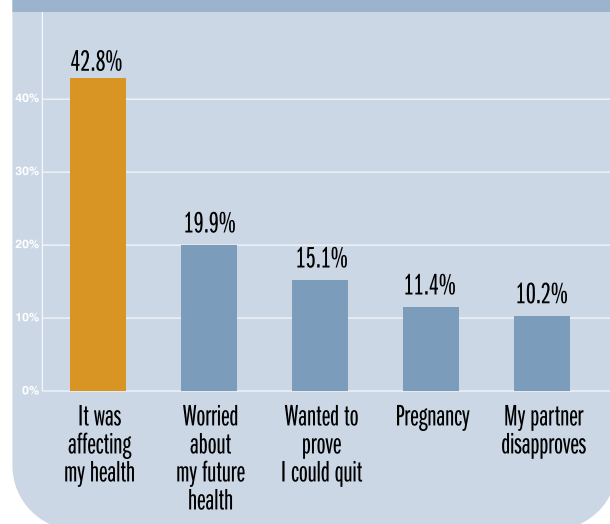
Interestingly, 34.8% of those who stated that they could quit for good anytime they wanted to had already undergone two unsuccessful attempts. Research

has shown that people continue to smoke because of what they felt (sadness, nervousness, etc) when they experience nicotine withdrawal. This was reinforced by the fact that 54.8% of those who had tried quitting agreed with the statement that smoking helped them control their nervousness.

G3 | Is smoking harming to your health?



G4 | Top 5 Reasons for Quitting



Sample & Methodology

This survey, based on a stratified random sample of 600 respondents in the Greater Beirut area, was conducted between 14 and 26 October 2004.

The survey had a margin of error of $\pm 1.9\%$.

Respondents' gender distribution was 50% males & 50% females, while age distribution was as follows:

26.2% between 15–24 years,
31% between 25–34 years,
21.8% between 35–44 years,
15.5% between 45–54 years,
4.5% between 55–64 years,
& 1% above the age of 65.