



A thematic analysis of Canadian public opinions on plain and standardized packaging of tobacco products

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Conflict Disclosure

- No conflicts of interest to disclose.

The road to Plain and standardized packaging

- Heart & Stroke and partners worked to secure PSP in Liberal election platform.
- Plain and standardized packaging of tobacco products (PSP) was included in Minister of Health's mandate letter in 2015
- H&S and partners created advocacy campaigns to maintain pressure on government.



Plain packaging in Canada

- The federal government introduced Bill S-5 which provides regulatory authority for PSP (received Royal Assent last week)
- The tobacco industry recognizes that the product and its package are valuable marketing spaces.
- PSP addresses all forms of tobacco package and product marketing, limiting variability between brands



Background

- H&S worked with international partners to learn about PSP campaign successes
- H&S also commissioned public marketing and polling research in 2015 to investigate themes and narratives most appropriate for building campaign support
- Results showed framing the issue around protecting children and youth and highlighting the overt gender specific marketing tactics



Purpose

- We and our campaign colleagues used these themes to generate interest and public support.
- However, we were interested in understanding how the media portrayed and framed the PSP debate
- We also wanted to know how the public responded and perceived the issue



Methods

Media Analysis

- Qualitative analysis of Canadian news articles and reader comments
- Timeframe: April 2013 – March 31, 2018
- Media search through Google News
- Literature search on prior themes for thematic analysis
- Content analysis of media articles and comments
- Qualitative thematic analysis of media articles and reader comments

Content of articles

THE BLOG

Plain Packaging Won't Help Canadians — But It Will Hurt Retailers

It is time for the federal government to slow down the runaway train of plain packaging legislation until all the benefits and impacts have been identified.

09/29/2017 12:10 EDT | **Updated** 09/29/2017 12:11 EDT



Plain cigarette packaging a hit with anti-smoking advocates, but debate about whether it works continues

Australia implemented plain packaging in 2012 - some say it reduced smoking rates, but others disagree



Mark Gollom · CBC News · Posted: Jun 01, 2016 5:00 AM ET | Last Updated: June 1, 2016

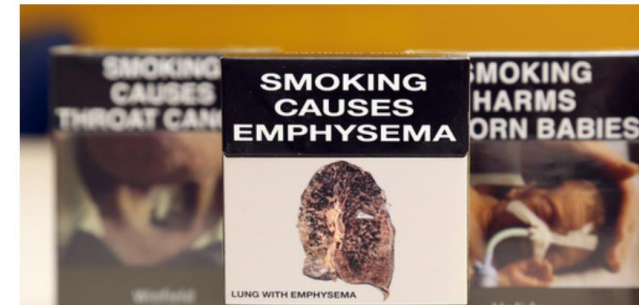
Efforts Down Under: Plain packaging has helped reduce smoking in Australia

Megan Gillis

Published:
July 24, 2016

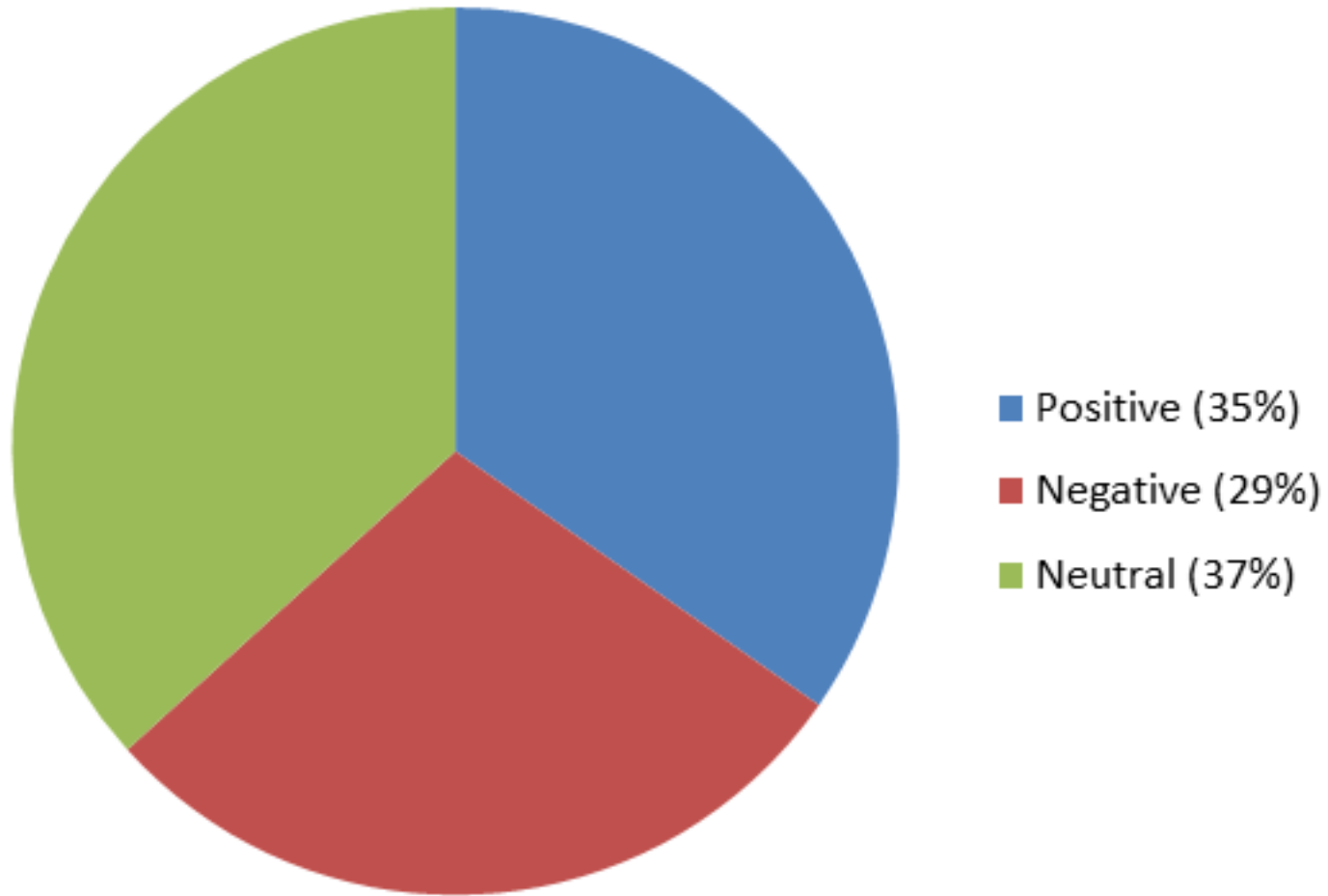
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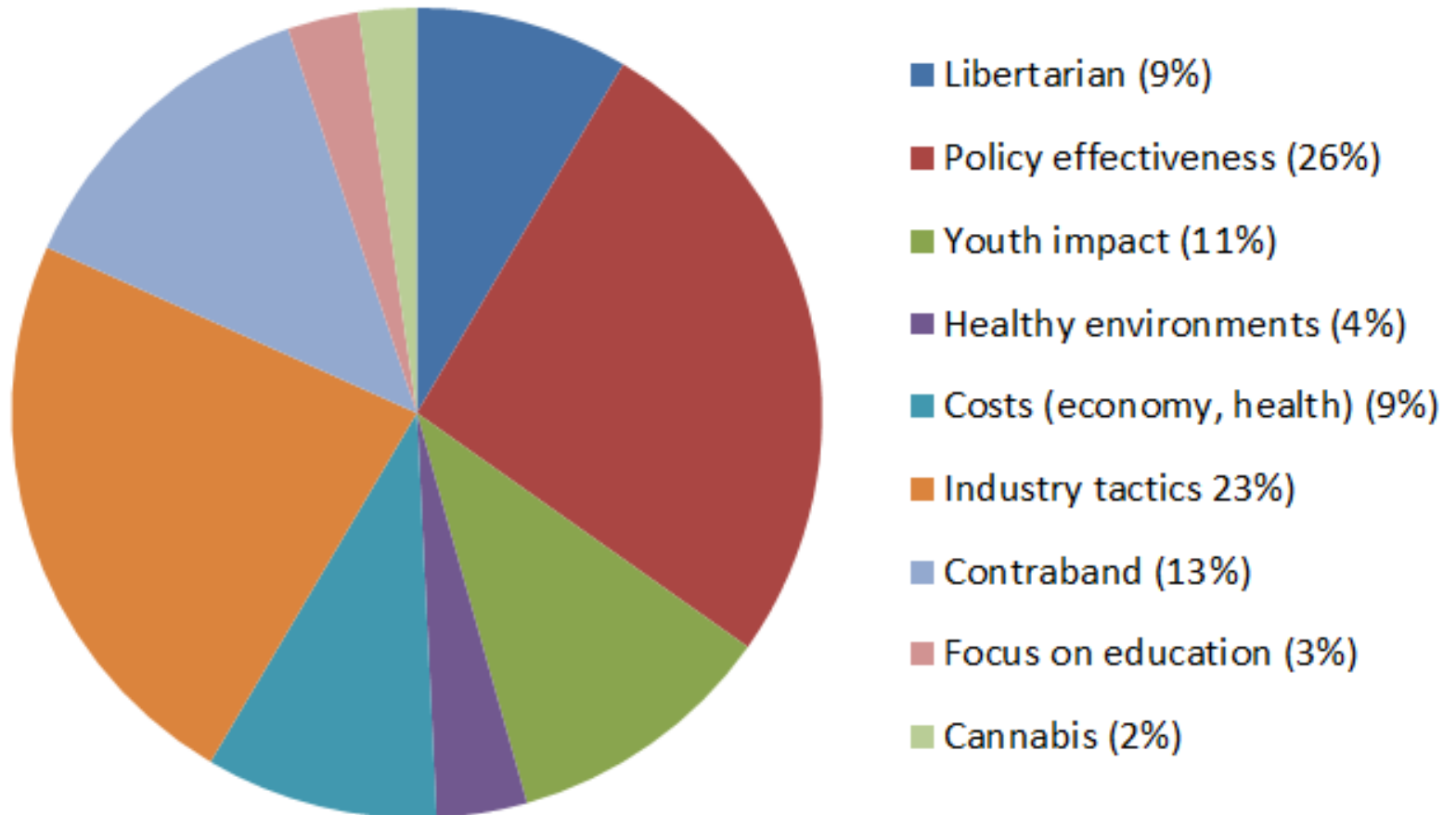
AdChoices

Content of articles



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Themes in articles



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Examples of themes

Policy effectiveness (both positive and negative)

“They argue that there is no evidence it works at preventing people from smoking,” Lee said. “However, studies of the Australian experience shows unquestionably that plain packaging, with graphic warnings, act as powerful deterrents. The industry knows full well that packaging matters — why else would it spend tens of millions on designing packaging?”

Industry tactics and manipulation

“Sounds like Big Tobacco is just looking for more ways to play the victim.”

“They are orchestrating various organizations and using them basically as their puppets to ensure governments don’t enact effective tobacco-control measures.”

Examples of themes

- **Contraband as a concern**

“...plain packaging would make it easier to disguise illegal cigarettes and make it harder for convenience store operators to differentiate between contraband and legal products.”

- **Youth protection**

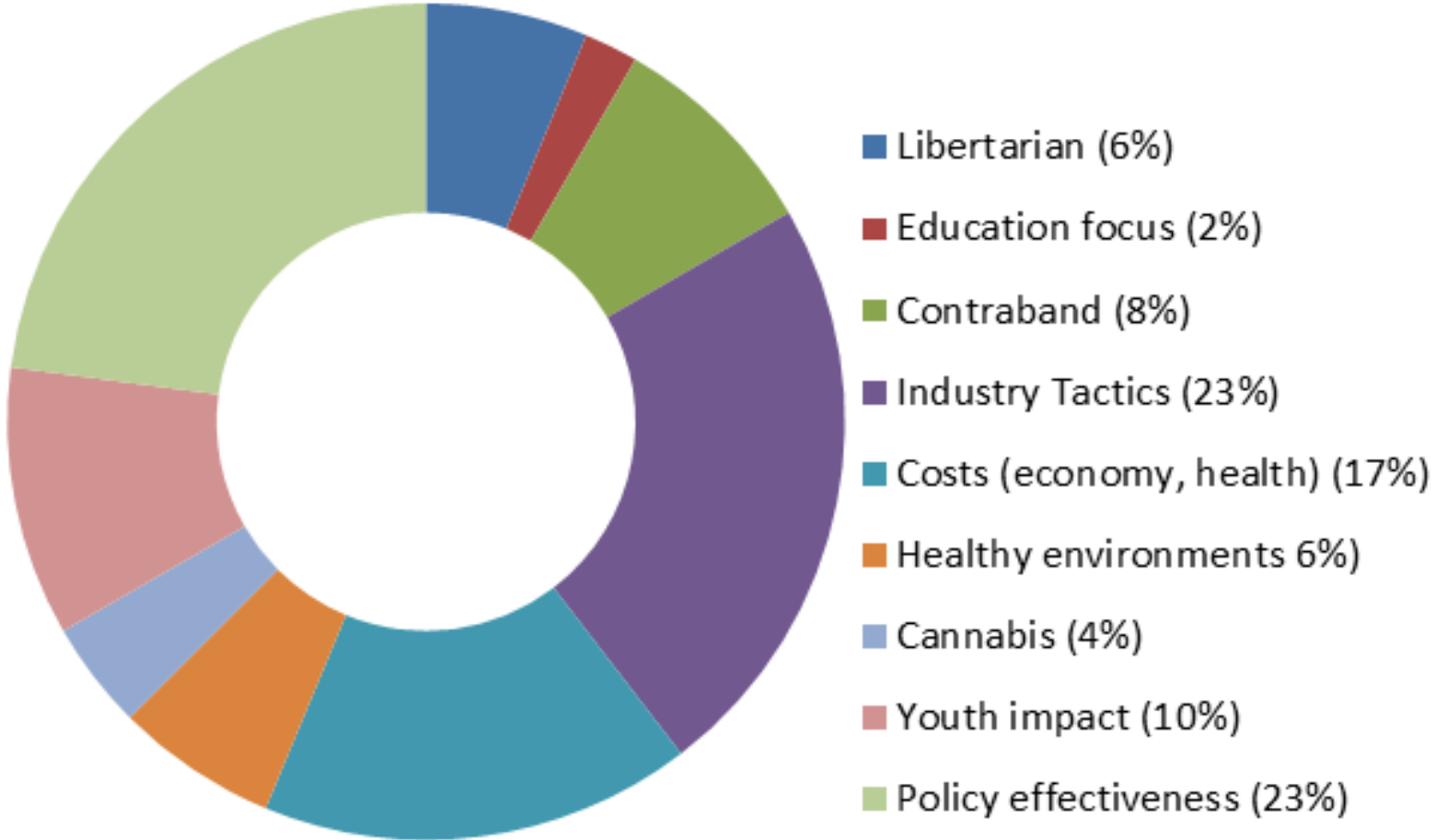
“...but says the move would really be aimed at reaching youth before they pick up the habit. He says evidence shows they are swayed by marketing campaigns”

- **Libertarian and nanny state concerns**

"I get so angry thinking the government has the right to choose what I smoke, how I smoke it, and what's on my packages," she said. "I like to blow smoke, it's a stress relief."

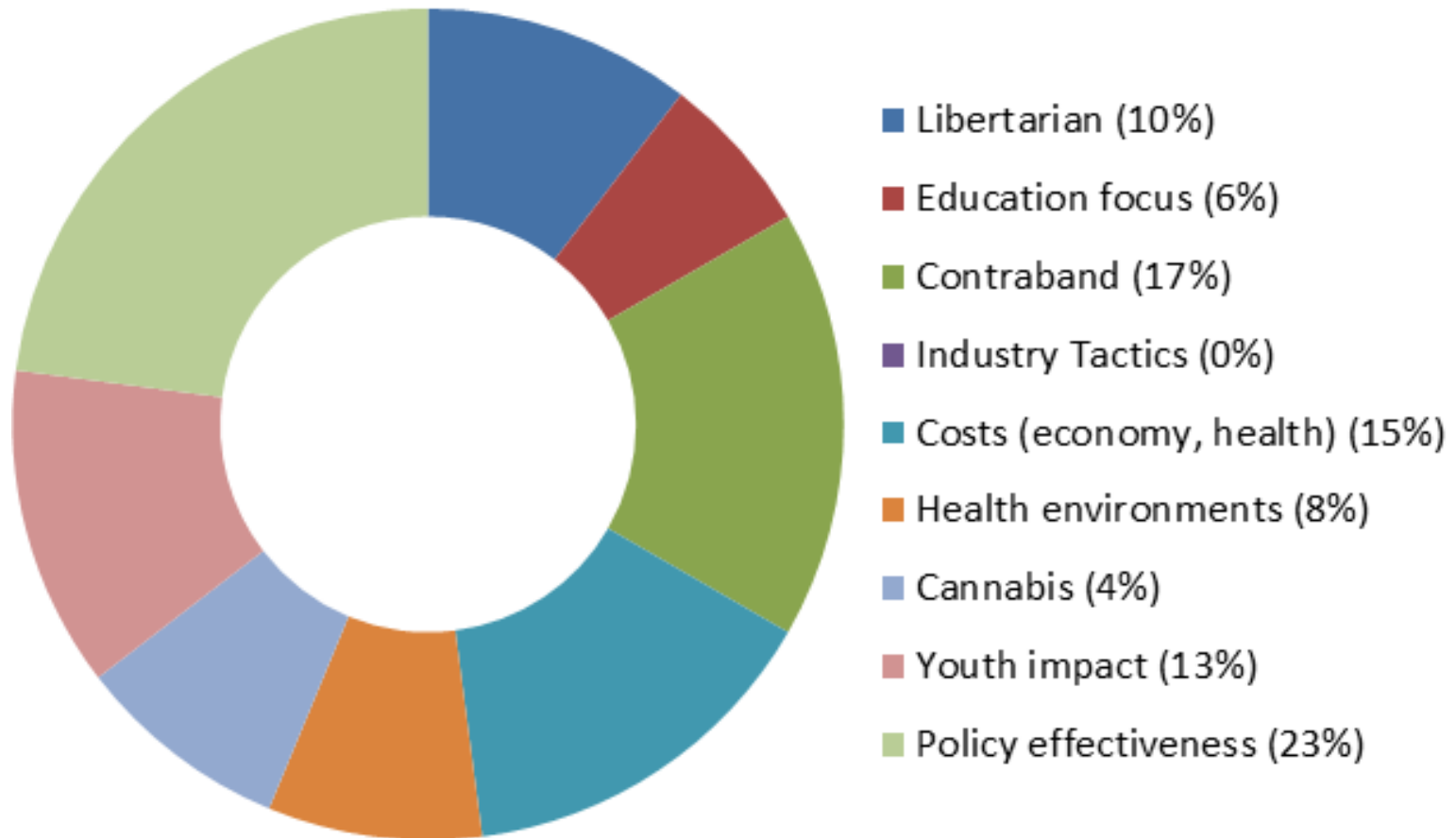
“How far down the regulatory road are we ready to go in order to get citizens not to consume a legal product? However unpopular or unfashionable, the tobacco industry is a legal one. In a free society, the rational approach to regulation should be to not infringe carelessly on companies' rights, nor on personal choice, especially when the verdict of science is inconclusive as yet.”

Positive articles - themes



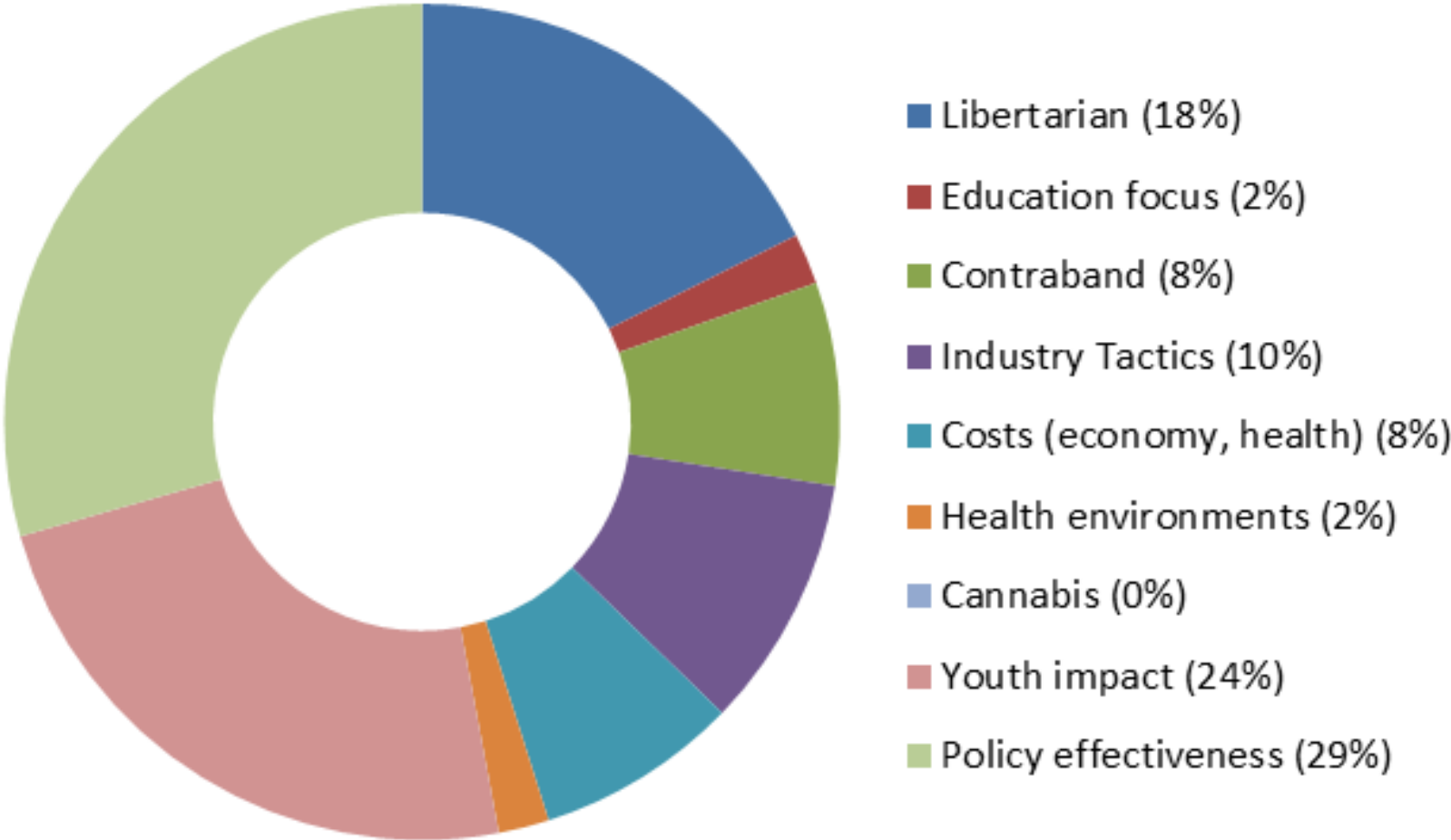
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Negative articles - themes



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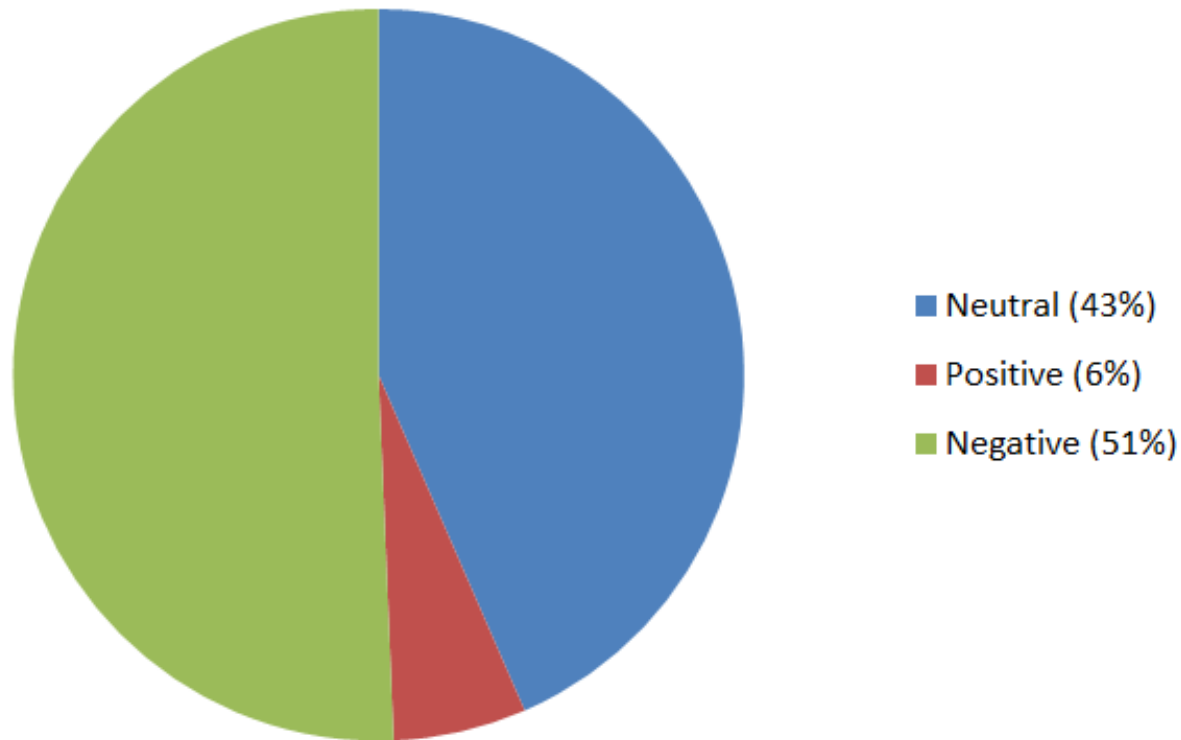
Neutral articles - themes



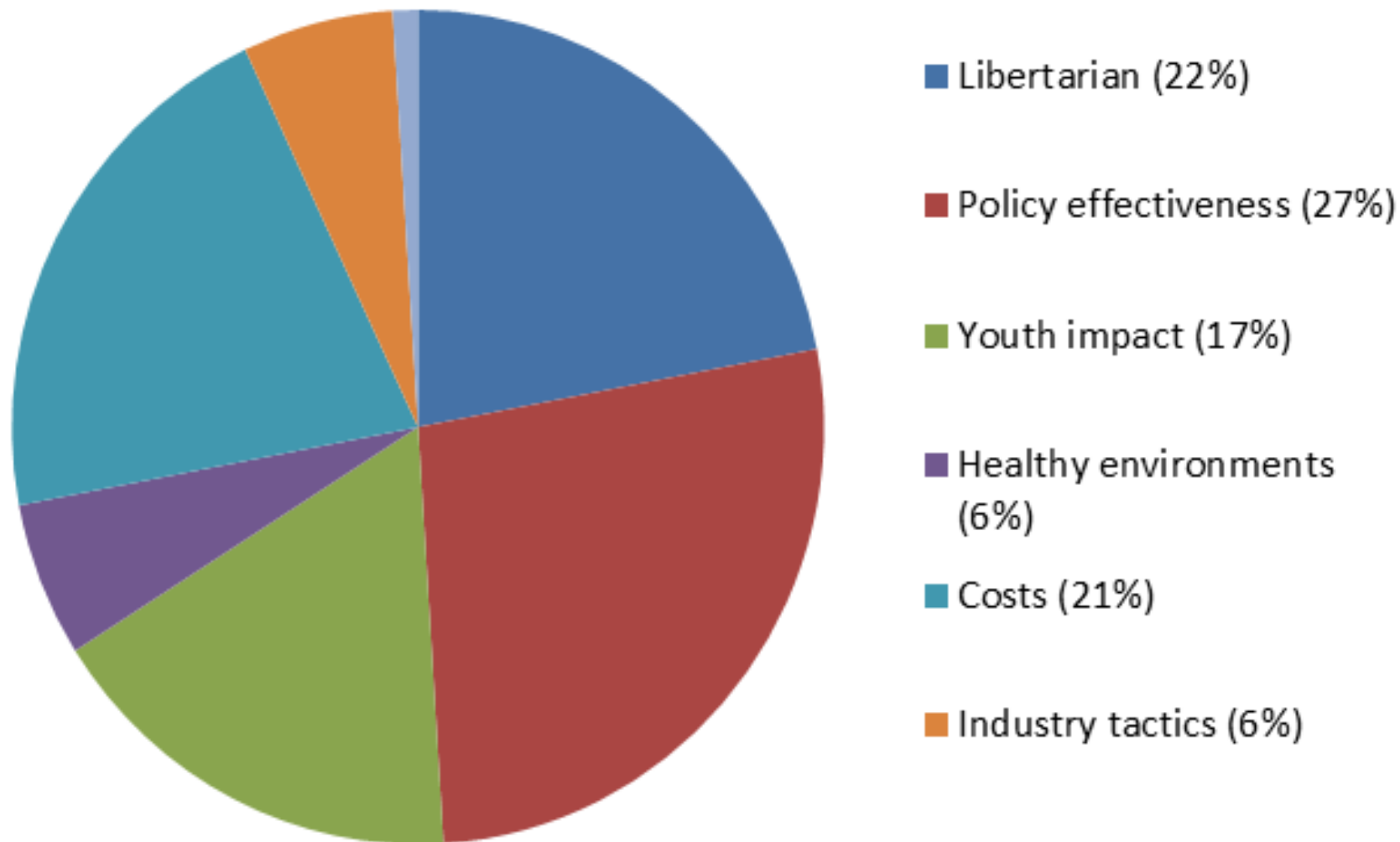
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Commentary

- Out of 1176 comments from 49 articles, 764 comments were relevant
- Comments made for 16 articles



Commentary



Commentary

- “i will smoke if i want to, so all you non-smokers can butt out, i can do what i want whether you like it or not”
- Am I the only one angry about "industry" trying to control our government? Last I checked Canada was governed by the people, not billion dollar corporations.
- I live in Australia. I have two teenage boys. Smoking, they tell me, is very uncool. Who would be seen dead with an ugly khaki packet of cigarettes costing \$27. Plain packaging works. It's another nail in the coffin of smoking.
- Give me a break. Exhaust fumes, poison in our foods, waters, air, pharmaceuticals. Those are the real cancer causing reasons.

Discussion and conclusion

- Surprisingly the focus on women was not a common theme
- Youth protection was not the most relevant narrative
- The debate around impact was most evident with the use of different data and research to explain policy effectiveness
- Canadian journalists are intrigued by industry manipulation and this theme can be used in other tobacco control and public health policy forums to generate media attention
- Contraband concerns were seen in both positive and negative articles indicating that the tobacco control community needs to be prepared to address this theme in public forums and policy debate
- Nanny state concerns are common, but seem to be limited to articles written by industry representatives and not used as themes by Canadian journalists

Limitations

- Only included print media and those available through Google search with free readership
- Date range did not capture passage of Bill S-5 and the corresponding media activity
- Selection bias of those who contribute reader comments



Thank you for your time.