Funding Health and Long-Term Care: A Survey on Increasing South Carolina's Cigarette Tax

Published February 2002
Funding Health and Long-Term Care: A Survey on Increasing South Carolina's Cigarette Tax

Data Collected by Southeastern Institute of Research, Inc.
Report Prepared by Rachelle Cummins and Anita Stowell-Ritter

Copyright © 2002
AARP
Knowledge Management
601 E Street NW
Washington, DC 20049
http://research.aarp.org
Reprinting with Permission
AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization for people 50 and over. We provide information and resources; advocate on legislative, consumer, and legal issues; assist members to serve their communities; and offer a wide range of unique benefits, special products, and services for our members. These benefits include AARP Webplace at www.aarp.org, Modern Maturity and My Generation magazines, and the monthly AARP Bulletin. Active in every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, AARP celebrates the attitude that age is just a number and life is what you make it.

Acknowledgements

AARP staff from the South Carolina State Office, State Affairs, and Knowledge Management contributed to the design and implementation of this study. Special thanks go to AARP staff including Pamela Johnson, South Carolina State Office; Jane Wiley, South Carolina State Office; Patrick Cobb, South Carolina State Office; John Luehrs, State Affairs; Gretchen Straw, Knowledge Management; Erica Dinger, Knowledge Management; Jennifer Leslie, Knowledge Management; and Cheryl Barnes, Knowledge Management. Thanks also go to Sue Berkowitz of the South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center and Team88 for their participation and review of this study. John Fries of Southeastern Institute of Research insured a timely and high quality survey. Rachelle Cummins, AARP Knowledge Management, managed all aspects of the project and co-wrote the report with Anita Stowell-Ritter, AARP Knowledge Management. For more information, contact Rachelle Cummins at (202) 434-6297.
Background

Like many states, South Carolina is experiencing an economic downturn. Last year, South Carolina had a $500 million shortfall in the State budget. This has resulted in government layoffs and across the board budget cuts. Sixty million dollars was cut from the health and long-term care services budget. This budget includes medical care for children without health insurance and long-term care services for older persons and those with disabilities in nursing homes and at home.

A number of organizations concerned about the current and future health and long-term care needs of South Carolinians are working on ways to increase state revenue. One idea calls for an increase in South Carolina's cigarette tax. Currently, there is a 7-cent tax on a pack of cigarettes. This tax is the fourth lowest in the country and was last increased in 1977. The proposed increase raises the tax 44 cents bringing the total tax per pack to 51 cents. The proposed increase is above the national average of 42 cents. Revenues generated from this increase would be dedicated to the health and long-term care services budget where annually $142 million in payments are directly related to tobacco use.

This survey was designed to measure opinion of South Carolinians age 18 and older about increasing funding for health and long-term care services by increasing South Carolina's cigarette tax. Specifically, this telephone survey of 1,000 randomly selected South Carolina adults explores

- Support for increasing funding for health and long-term care services
- Support for funding these services through increasing the state’s cigarette tax
- Likelihood of voting for state candidates who support an increase in the state’s cigarette tax to fund these services

Highlights

- Almost eight in ten South Carolinians support increasing funding for health and long-term care services.
- Almost seven in ten South Carolinians support increasing funding for health and long-term care services by increasing South Carolina's cigarette tax from 7 cents to 51 cents per pack.
- Two in five South Carolinians would be more likely to vote for a candidate for state office who supports increasing funding for health and long-term care services by increasing South Carolina's cigarette tax. Conversely, almost one in eight South Carolinians would be less likely to vote for a candidate taking this position.

---

Findings

South Carolinians strongly support increased funding for health and long-term care services.

Over half of South Carolinians strongly support increasing funding for health and long-term care services. Another one in five somewhat supports increased funding. Smokers (58%) and non-smokers (55%) strongly support increasing funding for health and long-term care services at similar rates.

Support for Increased Funding of Health and Long-Term Care Services (n=1,000)

South Carolinians also strongly support increased funding for health and long-term care services by increasing the cigarette tax.

Support for increasing health and long-term care funding remains strong when we asked about increasing South Carolina's cigarette tax. Nearly three in five South Carolinians (57%) strongly support increasing health and long-term care funding by increasing South Carolina's cigarette tax from 7 cents to 51 cents per pack. One in nine South Carolinians somewhat supports increasing funding by increasing the cigarette tax.

Support for Increased Funding by Increasing the State's Cigarette Tax (n=1,000)
As we might expect, smokers are more likely to oppose (59%) an increase in the cigarette tax; however, more than a third of smokers support (39%) the increase with most smokers strongly supporting the increase (29%).

**South Carolinians will vote for a candidate who supports increasing funding for health and long-term care by increasing the cigarette tax.**

Forty-three percent of South Carolinians would be more likely to vote for a candidate who supports increasing funding for health and long-term care services by increasing the state's cigarette tax. Only 12 percent would be less likely to vote for the candidate.

**Vote for Candidate Who Supports Increasing Funding by Increasing Cigarette Tax**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(n=1,000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More Likely</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less Likely</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes No Difference</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depends/Don't Know/Refused</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusions**

The majority of South Carolinians support increasing funding for state health and long-term care services. As South Carolina seeks ways to raise revenues to pay for health and long-term care services, increasing the cigarette tax from 7 cents to 51 cents per pack is a consumption fee that nearly 70 percent of South Carolinians support. Moreover, this is an election issue. Four in ten voters are more likely to vote for a candidate who supports increasing funding for health and long-term care services by increasing the cigarette tax.
Methodology

AARP commissioned Southeastern Institute of Research to conduct a random digit dial (RDD) telephone survey of adults age 18 or older in South Carolina. From a random sample of 6,700, a total of 1,000 interviews were completed from January 29 - February 11, 2002, yielding a 30 percent response rate and 42 percent cooperation rate. The survey has a sampling error of plus or minus 3.1 percent. This means that in 95 out of 100 samples of this size, the results obtained in the sample would fall in a range of plus or minus 3.1 percentage points of what would have been obtained if every person in South Carolina age 18 or older had been surveyed. Survey responses were weighted to reflect the actual distribution of age and gender in the adult population of South Carolina. Responses to all survey questions are in the attached annotated questionnaire.

For more information about this study, contact Rachelle Cummins, AARP Knowledge Management, (202) 434-6297.

---

3 The response rate is Response Rate 3 and the cooperation rate is Cooperation Rate 3 from the following publication: The American Association for Public Opinion Research. 2000. Standard Definitions: Final Dispositions of Case Codes and Outcome Rates for Surveys. Ann Arbor, Michigan: AAPOR.
Annotated Questionnaire
South Carolina Health and Long-Term Care Services Survey

Introduction

Hello, this is__________ calling from Southeastern Institute of Research, a national opinion research firm. We are conducting a survey in South Carolina to find out your opinion on an important issue facing the state. Your views are important and we would greatly appreciate your participation. Let me assure you, this is not a sales call and you will not be asked to buy anything either now or later. All of your responses are kept entirely confidential. The survey should take only about 4 minutes of your time.

11. RECORD GENDER OF PERSON WHO ANSWERED PHONE:
   1) Male
   2) Female

12. To make our study more representative of those living throughout South Carolina, I need to speak with the youngest male who is at home right now and is at least 18 years old.
   1) Person on phone is youngest male [SKIP TO S1]
   2) Other person is youngest male and is coming to phone [SKIP TO I4]
   3) Person is not available
   4) REFUSED [SKIP TO R1]

13. Then may I speak to the oldest female who is at home right now and is at least 18 years old?
   1) Person on phone is oldest female [SKIP TO S1]
   2) Other person on phone is oldest female and is coming to the phone [SKIP TO I4]
   3) Person is not available [TERMINATE]
   4) REFUSED [SKIP TO R1]

14. Hello, this is__________ calling from Southeastern Institute of Research, a national opinion research firm. We are conducting a survey in South Carolina to find out your opinion on an important issue facing the state. Your views are important and we would greatly appreciate your participation.

   Let me assure you, this is not a sales call and you will not be asked to buy anything either now or later. All of your responses are kept entirely confidential. The survey should take only about 4 minutes of your time.
   1) CONTINUE
   2) REFUSED [SKIP TO R1]
Screening

S1. In order to save time and ensure I only ask you questions relevant to someone in your age group, could you tell me whether you are aged 50 or older, or are you under 50? [PROGRAMMERS: WE NEED 350 RESPONDENTS 50 OR OLDER.]
1) Age 50 or older
2) Under 50
3) DON’T KNOW / NOT SURE
4) REFUSED

Description of Current Plan

Q1. Last year, South Carolina had a $500 million shortfall in the budget. This resulted in government layoffs and budget cuts across the board. Sixty million dollars was cut from health and long-term care services, including health care for children without insurance and long-term care services for the elderly and disabled in both their homes and in nursing homes. More cuts are expected.

Would you support or oppose increasing funding for health and long-term care services in South Carolina?
78% Support [SKIP TO Q3]
13% Oppose
5% IT DEPENDS [VOLUNTEERED] [SKIP TO Q4]
4% DON’T KNOW [SKIP TO Q4]
1% REFUSED [SKIP TO Q4]

Q2. And would you strongly oppose or somewhat oppose increasing funding (for health and long-term care services)?
7% Strongly
6% Somewhat
1% DON’T KNOW
0% REFUSED

[SKIP TO Q4]

Q3. And would you strongly support or somewhat support increasing funding (for health and long-term care services)?
55% Strongly
21% Somewhat
2% DON’T KNOW
<.5% REFUSED

Q4. Currently, South Carolina has a 7-cent tax on a pack of cigarettes. South Carolina’s cigarette tax is the fourth lowest in the county and was last increased in 1977. One proposal to increase funding for health and long-term care services calls for an increase in the cigarette tax from 7 cents to 51 cents, which is just above the national average for all states. This money would be used solely for health and long-term care services.

Would you support or oppose increasing funding for health and long-term care services in South Carolina by increasing South Carolina’s cigarette tax from 7 cents per pack to 51 cents per pack?
69% Support [SKIP TO Q6]
25% Oppose
2% IT DEPENDS [VOLUNTEERED] [SKIP TO Q7]
3% DON’T KNOW / NOT SURE [SKIP TO Q7]<.5% REFUSED [SKIP TO Q7]

Q5. And would you strongly oppose or somewhat oppose this increased funding if it meant increasing South Carolina’s cigarette tax to 51 cents per pack?
18% Strongly
7% Somewhat
1% DON’T KNOW
<.5% REFUSED

[SKIP TO Q7]
Q6. And would you strongly support or somewhat support increasing funding (for health and long-term care services)
   57% Strongly
   11% Somewhat
   1% DON’T KNOW
   <.5% REFUSED

Q7. If a candidate for state office in South Carolina supported increasing funding for health and long-term care services by increasing South Carolina’s cigarette tax, would you be more likely to vote for that candidate, less likely to vote for them, or would it not make any difference?
   43% More likely
   12% Less likely
   36% Would Not Make a Difference
   6% IT DEPENDS [VOLUNTEERED]
   2% DON’T KNOW
   1% REFUSED

Demographics
My last few questions are for classification purposes only!

D1. What is your marital status? Are you currently….
   52% Married,
   10% Divorced,
   3% Separated,
   10% Widowed,
   22% Or have you never been married?
   1% Living with partner [VOLUNTEERED]
   1% DON’T KNOW
   1% REFUSED

D2. What is your age as of your last birthday?
   [RECORD IN YEARS]
   32% 18-34
   30% 35-49
   21% 50-64
   16% 65+
   2% Refused

D3. Are you or your spouse a member of A-A-R-P formerly known as the American Association of Retired Persons? [IF NOT “MARRIED” ASK, “Are you a member…”]
   21% Yes
   77% No
   2% DON’T KNOW / NOT SURE
   <.5% REFUSED

D4. Thinking about your state elections for South Carolina Governor and Legislators in the last ten years, which of the following best describes your voting behavior? Would you say you always vote, sometimes miss one, rarely vote, or never vote?
   53% Always vote
   24% Sometimes miss one
   9% Rarely vote
   12% Never vote
   2% DON’T KNOW / NOT SURE
   1% REFUSED

D5. What is the highest level of education you have completed? (READ)
   8% Less than high school
   26% High school graduate or equivalent
   31% Some college or technical training beyond high school
   22% College graduate
   12% Or, Post-graduate or professional degree
   <.5% DON’T KNOW / NOT SURE
   <.5% REFUSED

D6. Which of the following best describes your current employment status? Are you currently….
   58% Employed full-time
   9% Employed part-time
   19% Retired and not working
   5% Unemployed and looking for work
   5% Homemaker
   3% Disabled
   1% Student
   1% Or something else? [Specify: __________]
   <.5% DON’T KNOW
   <.5% REFUSED
D7. Now, for statistical purposes only, please stop me when I get to the category that includes your household’s income before taxes in 2001. Was it… (READ)

9% Less than $10,000
12% $10,000 but less than $20,000
15% $20,000 but less than $30,000
14% $30,000 but less than $40,000
10% $40,000 but less than $50,000
16% $50,000 but less than $75,000
13% or was your income $75,000 or more
3% DON’T KNOW
8% REFUSED

D8. Do you currently smoke cigarettes on a regular basis?

21% Yes
78% No
<.5% DON’T KNOW / NOT SURE
<.5% REFUSED

D9. What is your 5-digit zipcode?

— — — — —

D10. And, finally, may I verify that I reached you at:

(_____)_________________________

Thank you for participating! Your Opinion Counts.
Respondent gender:
47% Male
53% Female

[SKIP TO INTERVIEWER NAME]