

SERI SOCIAL & ECONOMIC
RESEARCH INITIATIVE

NATIONAL SURVEY

MALAYSIAN PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR TOBACCO TAX INCREASES

INSIGHTS TO INFORM POLICY ON SMOKING
REDUCTION AND REVENUE GENERATION

August 2025

MattersEqualityMattersEqualityMatters**EqualityMatters**EqualityMatte

SERI SOCIAL & ECONOMIC
RESEARCH INITIATIVE

NATIONAL SURVEY
MALAYSIAN PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR TOBACCO TAX INCREASES
INSIGHTS TO INFORM POLICY ON SMOKING REDUCTION AND REVENUE GENERATION

CONTENTS

SECTION 01 BACKGROUND

- Context on Tobacco Taxes in Malaysia
- Survey Methodology, Respondent Profile

SECTION 02 SURVEY FINDINGS

- 2.1 There is Overwhelming Public Support among Malaysians for Increasing Tobacco Taxes.
- 2.2 Increasing Cigarette Taxes Will Improve Public Health.
- 2.3 Increasing Cigarette Tax is the Most Popular Option to Raise Revenue (vs SST, Dividend Tax, Corporate Tax, etc) – and could help the government raise an additional RM1.2 billion per year.

SECTION 03 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

A large, glowing yellow circle is centered on a dark red background. The circle has a soft, ethereal glow that fades into the background. Inside the circle, the text "SECTION 01" and "BACKGROUND" is displayed in a white, serif font.

SECTION 01
BACKGROUND

CONTEXT ON TOBACCO TAXES IN MALAYSIA

- Cigarette smoking remains the **most prevalent form of tobacco use in Malaysia**, still surpassing e-cigarettes and vape¹. Recent attention has focused on banning vapes², and plans to do so are underway.
- Promisingly, the Prime Minister recently announced plans for **pro-health taxes on tobacco, vape and alcohol – as part of the 13th Malaysia Plan**³. A meaningful tax increase on cigarettes is more timely than ever.
- Cigarettes have become **increasingly affordable** since 2016, undermining public health efforts⁴. GDP per capita and general prices have increased – while cigarette prices (and taxes) have remained unchanged.
- Evidence shows **price hikes are not a key driver of illicit trade**; rather, it is weak enforcement⁵. Malaysia has made significant improvements in enforcement, notably via the new Malaysian Border Control and Protection Agency (AKPS)⁶.



NATIONAL SURVEY
MALAYSIAN PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR TOBACCO TAX INCREASES
INSIGHTS TO INFORM POLICY ON SMOKING REDUCTION AND REVENUE GENERATION

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

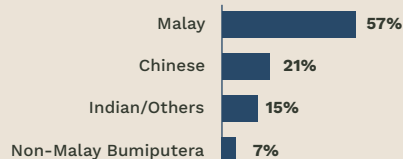
- The survey aims to determine public opinion on increasing tobacco taxation, and gain insights on the impact of tobacco taxes on reducing smoking rates and raising government revenue.
- The survey was conducted through Vase.ai. Data was collected between 18-28 July 2025 with a Malaysian **sample of 1,051** adults aged 18+.
- The sample aimed to be **representative of the Malaysian population**. Quotas for specific subgroups were set to better approximate the Malaysian population according to age, race, gender, and state based on the Malaysian Census.
- The Cost Recovery and Revenue Estimator (CoRRE) by the Tobacco Atlas was used to estimate the impact of the tobacco tax increase on revenue and the smoking population.



NATIONAL SURVEY
MALAYSIAN PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR TOBACCO TAX INCREASES
INSIGHTS TO INFORM POLICY ON SMOKING REDUCTION AND REVENUE GENERATION

RESPONDENT PROFILE

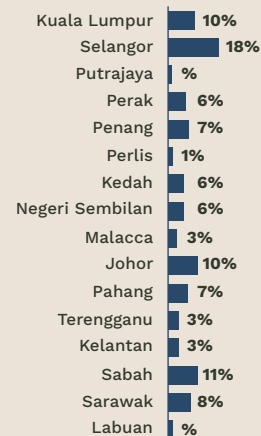
RACE



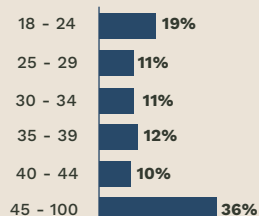
GENDER



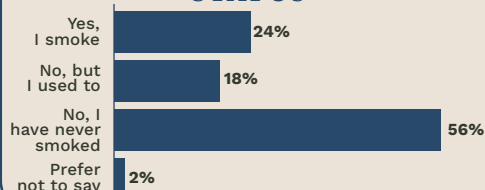
STATE



AGE



CIGARETTE SMOKING STATUS



SECTION 02
FINDINGS

NATIONAL SURVEY
MALAYSIAN PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR TOBACCO TAX INCREASES
INSIGHTS TO INFORM POLICY ON SMOKING REDUCTION AND REVENUE GENERATION

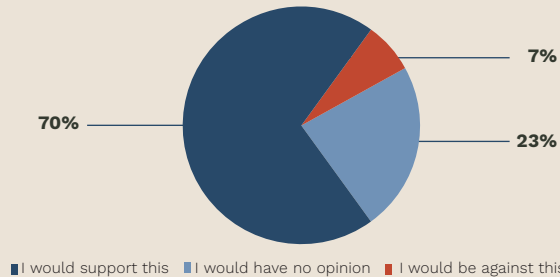
2.1
**THERE IS OVERWHELMING
PUBLIC SUPPORT AMONG
MALAYSIANS FOR INCREASING
TOBACCO TAXES.**

NATIONAL SURVEY
MALAYSIAN PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR TOBACCO TAX INCREASES
INSIGHTS TO INFORM POLICY ON SMOKING REDUCTION AND REVENUE GENERATION

FINDINGS 01

- An overwhelming 70% of Malaysians would support increasing cigarette taxes by RM3-5 per pack (vs just 7% against).
- Additionally, of this 70%, almost all (93% vs just 4%) would support an increase even higher than RM5 per pack.

A pack of cigarettes costs around RM12-RM17. If government increases cigarette taxes, raising cigarette prices by around RM1 yearly, over 3-5 years (for total increase of RM3-RM5), how would you feel about that?



All Respondents

Would you support a total increase higher than the RM3-RM5 mentioned?

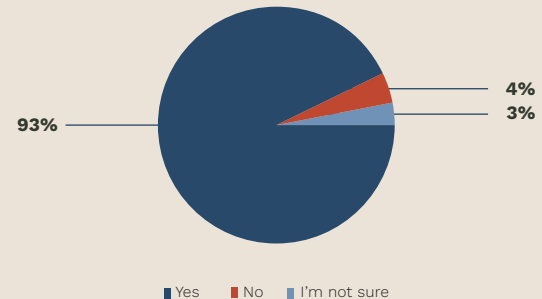


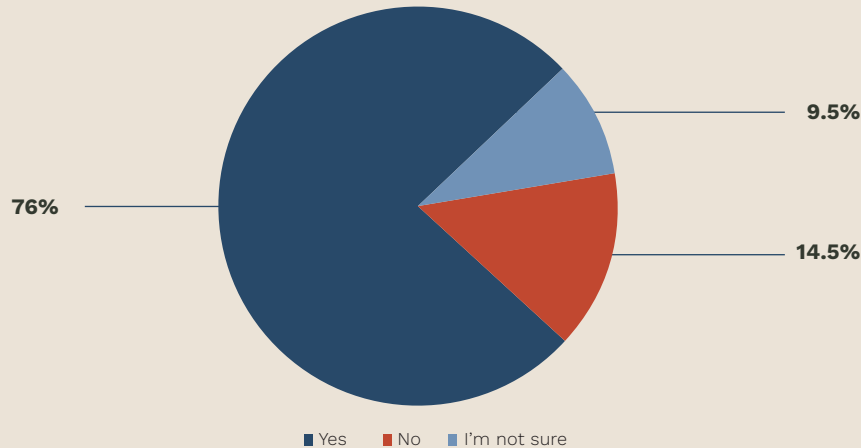
Chart reflects responses from the 70% who supported s RM3-5/pack increase

NATIONAL SURVEY
MALAYSIAN PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR TOBACCO TAX INCREASES
INSIGHTS TO INFORM POLICY ON SMOKING REDUCTION AND REVENUE GENERATION

FINDINGS 01

- There is also strong general support for increasing cigarette taxation to improve public health (regardless of specific RM increase).

In principle, would you support increasing cigarette taxation to improve public health?



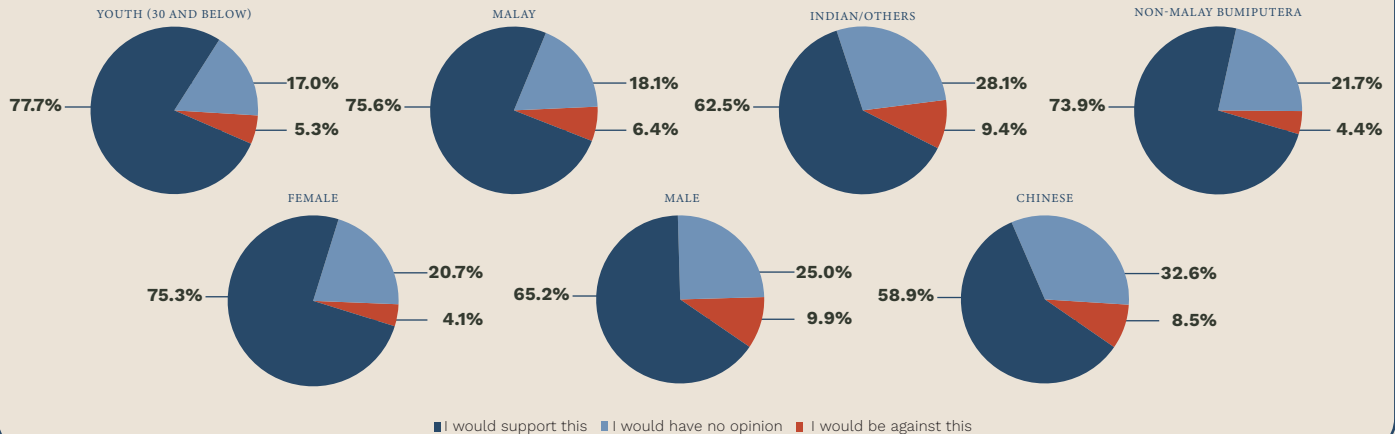
All Respondents

NATIONAL SURVEY
MALAYSIAN PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR TOBACCO TAX INCREASES
INSIGHTS TO INFORM POLICY ON SMOKING REDUCTION AND REVENUE GENERATION

FINDINGS 02

The overwhelming support for increasing cigarette taxes by RM3-5 holds across key demographics. Youth are particularly in favour (77.7% support vs 5.3% against).

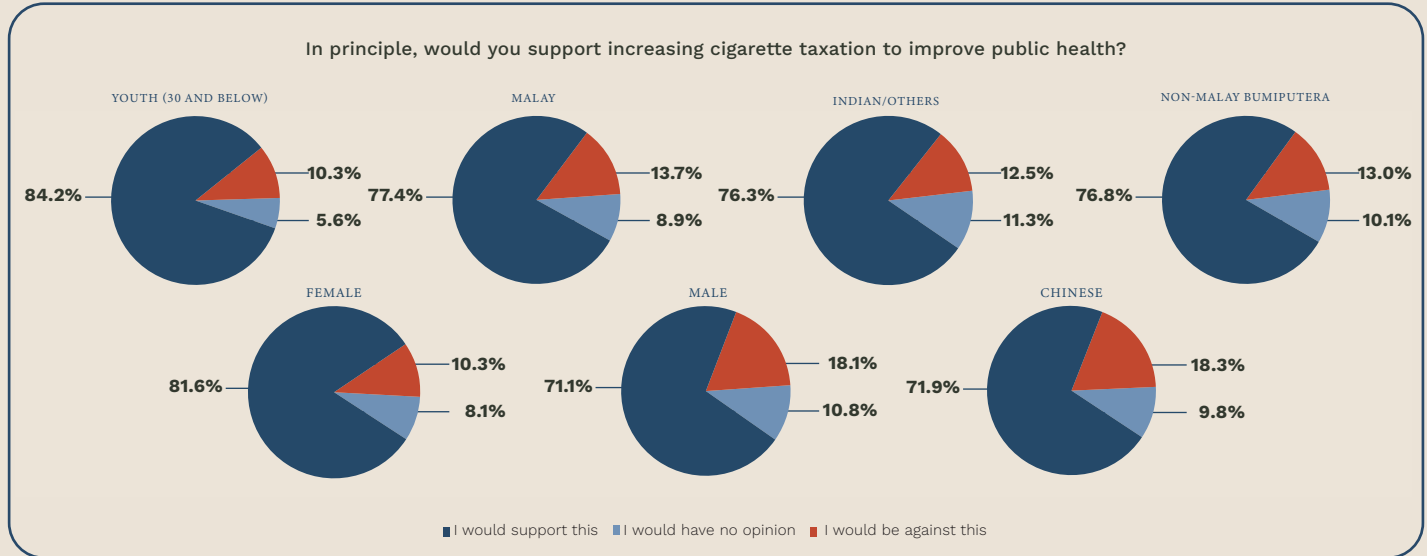
A pack of cigarettes costs around RM12 – RM17. If the government increases cigarette taxes, raising cigarette prices by around RM1 yearly, over 3-5 years (for a total increase of RM3-RM5), how would you feel about this?



NATIONAL SURVEY
MALAYSIAN PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR TOBACCO TAX INCREASES
INSIGHTS TO INFORM POLICY ON SMOKING REDUCTION AND REVENUE GENERATION

FINDINGS 02

The overwhelming support for increasing cigarette taxes in principle to improve public health – also holds across key demographics.

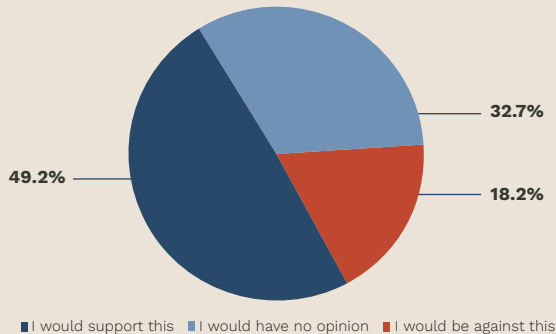


NATIONAL SURVEY
MALAYSIAN PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR TOBACCO TAX INCREASES
INSIGHTS TO INFORM POLICY ON SMOKING REDUCTION AND REVENUE GENERATION

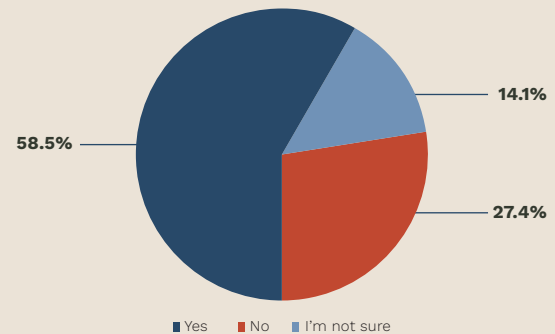
FINDINGS 03

- A majority of smokers themselves support increasing cigarette taxation. 49% support increasing cigarette taxes by RM3-5/pack, and 58.5% support increasing cigarette taxation in general to improve public health.

A pack of cigarettes costs around RM12-RM17. If government increases cigarette taxes, raising cigarette prices by around RM1 yearly, over 3-5 years (for total increase of RM3-RM5), how would you feel about this?



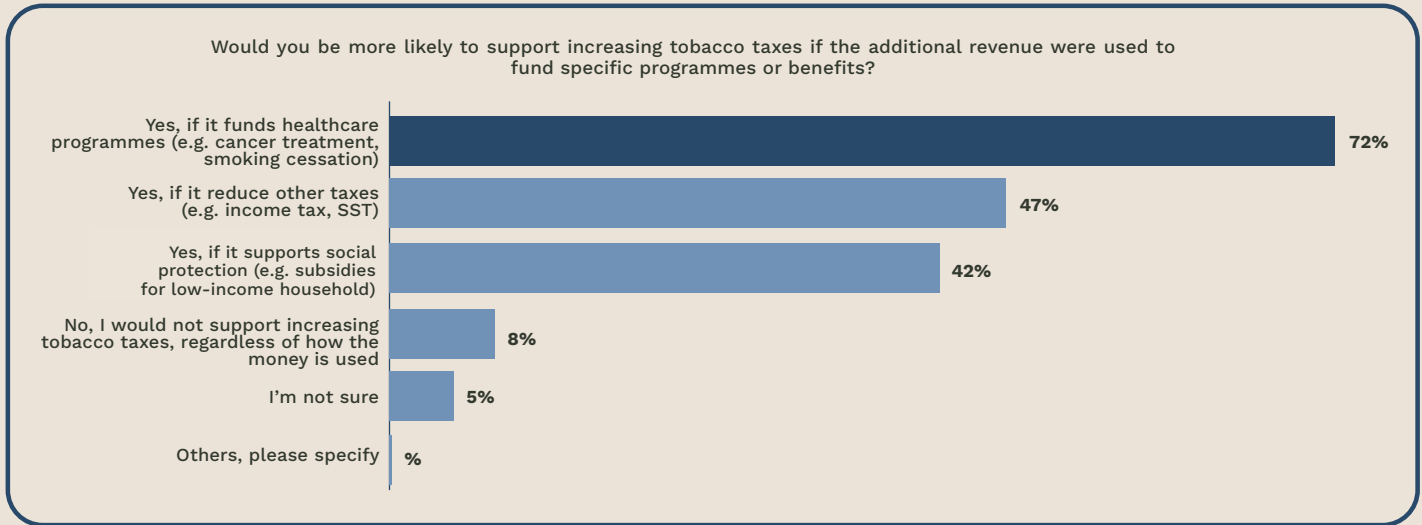
In principle, would you support increasing cigarette taxation to improve public health?



NATIONAL SURVEY
MALAYSIAN PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR TOBACCO TAX INCREASES
INSIGHTS TO INFORM POLICY ON SMOKING REDUCTION AND REVENUE GENERATION

FINDINGS 04

- Public support for tobacco taxes would be even higher – if extra revenue were used to fund healthcare programmes (e.g. cancer treatment, smoking cessation).



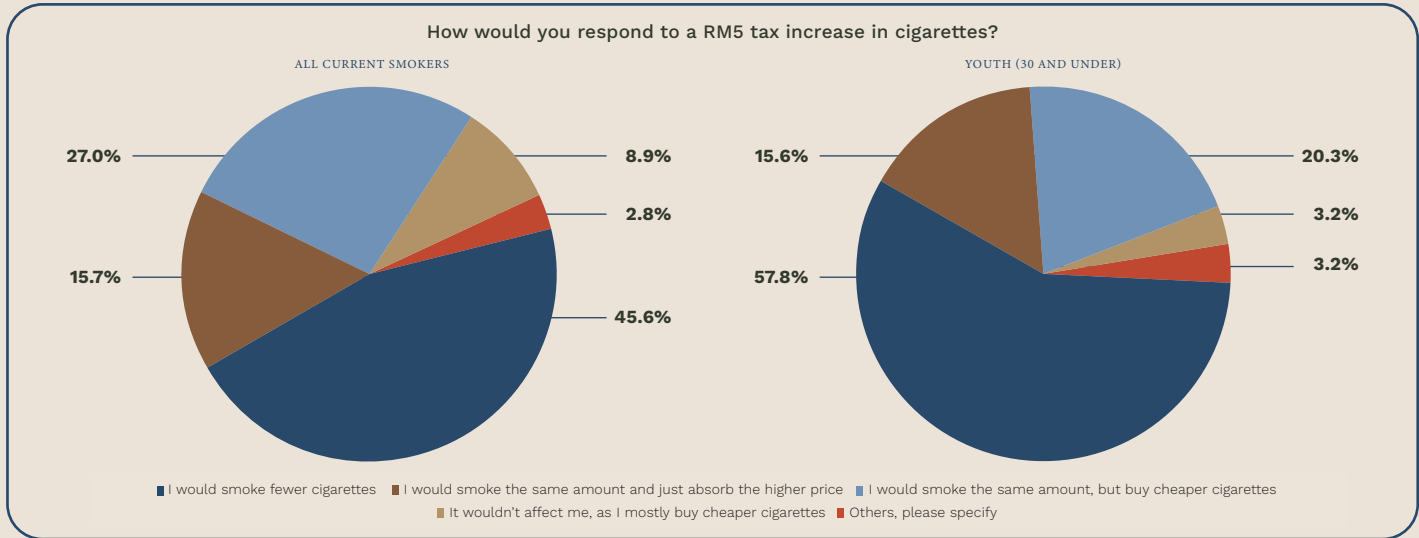
NATIONAL SURVEY
MALAYSIAN PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR TOBACCO TAX INCREASES
INSIGHTS TO INFORM POLICY ON SMOKING REDUCTION AND REVENUE GENERATION

2.2
INCREASING CIGARETTE
TAXES WILL IMPROVE
PUBLIC HEALTH.

NATIONAL SURVEY
MALAYSIAN PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR TOBACCO TAX INCREASES
INSIGHTS TO INFORM POLICY ON SMOKING REDUCTION AND REVENUE GENERATION

FINDINGS 05

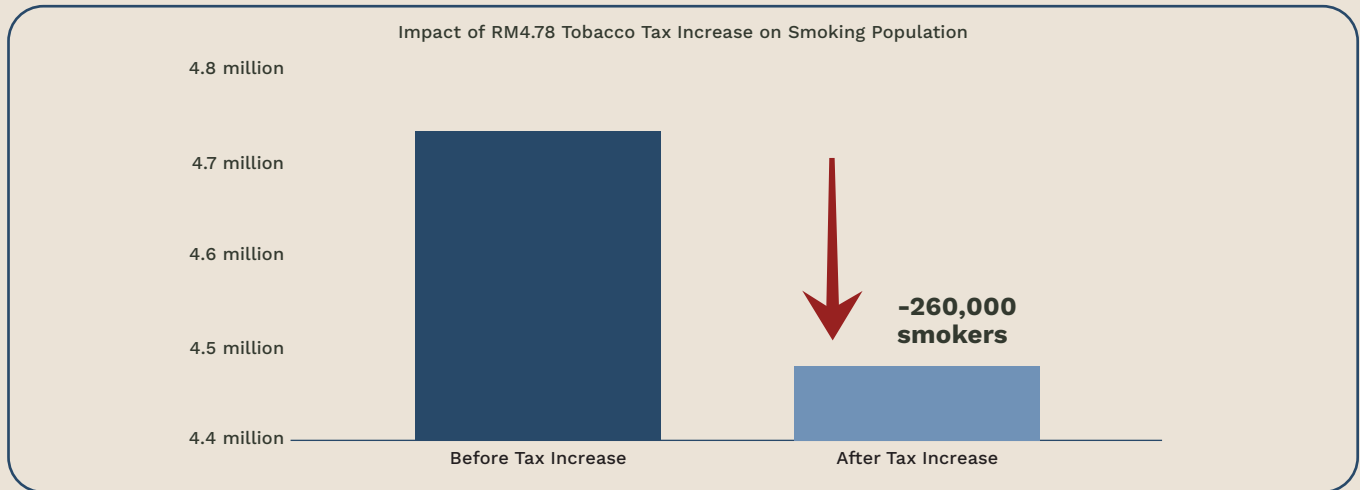
- Increasing cigarette taxation will improve public health. Almost half of respondents (and a majority of youth) say they will smoke less if cigarette taxes increased by RM5.



NATIONAL SURVEY
MALAYSIAN PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR TOBACCO TAX INCREASES
INSIGHTS TO INFORM POLICY ON SMOKING REDUCTION AND REVENUE GENERATION

FINDINGS 05

- The Tobacco Atlas CoRRE model estimates that a tax increase of around RM5 (RM4.78) will reduce smoking prevalence in Malaysia from 18.2% to 17.2% – that is 260,000 people will stop smoking completely (and more will smoke less).



*RM4.78 used (instead of RM5) to be consistent with the Tobacco Atlas CoRRE model parameters.

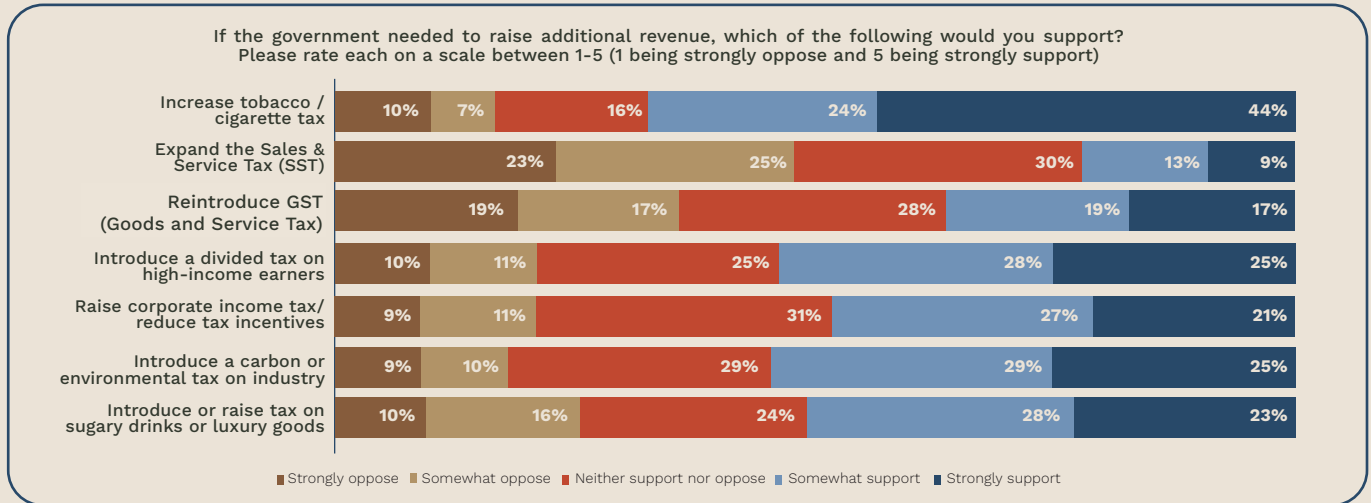
2.3

INCREASING CIGARETTE TAX IS THE MOST POPULAR OPTION TO RAISE REVENUE (VS SST, DIVIDEND TAX, CORPORATE TAX, ETC) – AND COULD HELP THE GOVERNMENT RAISE AN ADDITIONAL RM1.2 BILLION PER YEAR.

NATIONAL SURVEY
MALAYSIAN PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR TOBACCO TAX INCREASES
INSIGHTS TO INFORM POLICY ON SMOKING REDUCTION AND REVENUE GENERATION

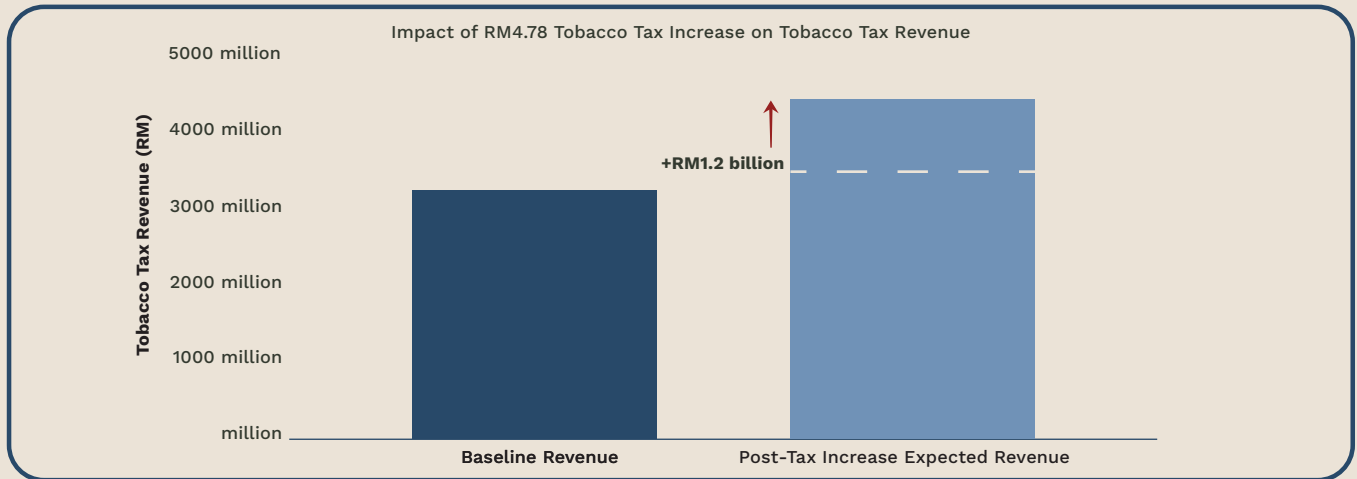
FINDINGS 06

- Increasing cigarette tax is the most popular option for raising revenue – vs SST, GST, dividend tax, corporate tax, and other alternatives.



FINDINGS 06

- Increasing cigarette tax by around RM5 (RM 4.78) will increase revenue by RM1.2 billion, according to the Tobacco Atlas CoRRE model.

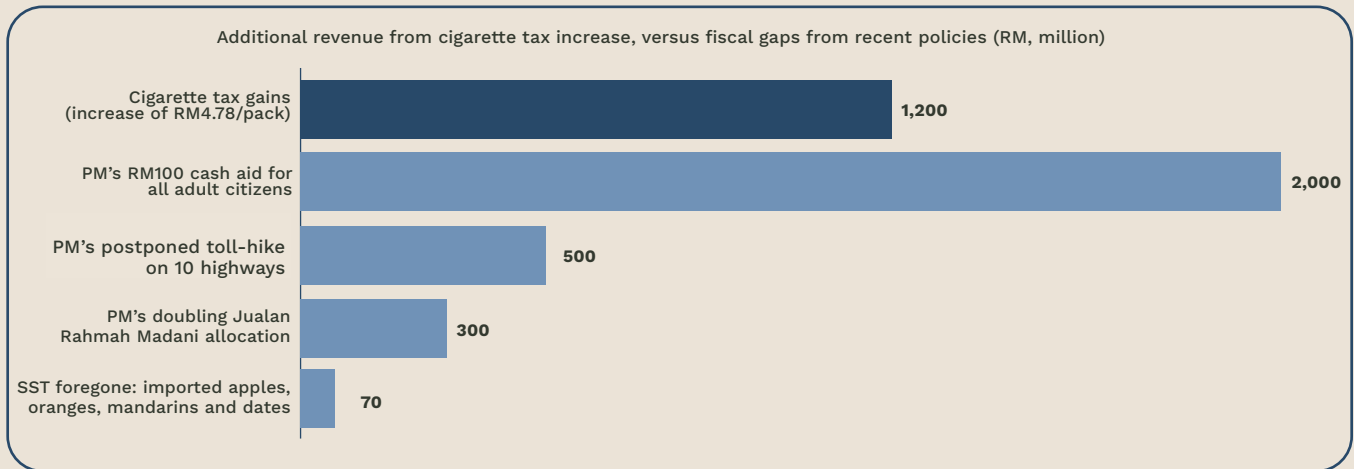


RM4.78 used (instead of RM5) to be consistent with the Tobacco Atlas CoRRE model parameters. SERI also estimated a "pessimistic/conservative scenario" based on our survey findings (we assume that half of the respondents who said they would switch to "cheaper" cigarettes if an RM5 tax is introduced are removed from the tax base),

NATIONAL SURVEY
MALAYSIAN PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR TOBACCO TAX INCREASES
INSIGHTS TO INFORM POLICY ON SMOKING REDUCTION AND REVENUE GENERATION

FINDINGS 07

- Revenue gains from a RM5 cigarette tax increase could help plug the fiscal gaps emerging from recent policies.



Sources: Tobacco Atlas CoRRE model, news reports, World Bank World Integrated Trade Solution website, SERI calculations.

SECTION 03
POLICY
RECOMMENDATIONS

NATIONAL SURVEY
MALAYSIAN PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR TOBACCO TAX INCREASES
INSIGHTS TO INFORM POLICY ON SMOKING REDUCTION AND REVENUE GENERATION

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Prioritise a meaningful increase in tobacco taxation, with a minimum of RM5 per pack.
- This increase should be followed by regular tax increases, with the best practice factoring in inflation and changes in household income to ensure tobacco products are less affordable over time to reduce smoking prevalence⁷.
- Allocate a portion of the revenue gained for public health programmes and social protection.
- Continue strengthening enforcement to further reduce the illicit trade of cigarettes.

NATIONAL SURVEY
MALAYSIAN PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR TOBACCO TAX INCREASES
INSIGHTS TO INFORM POLICY ON SMOKING REDUCTION AND REVENUE GENERATION

REFERENCES

- ¹ World Health Organization, “2023 GATS Fact Sheet Malaysia,” 2023 GATS Fact Sheet Malaysia, Jan. 2023. Available: <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/2023-gats-fact-sheet-malaysia>. [Accessed: Jun. 19, 2025]
- ² Z. Seraj and I. M. Iskandar, “Health Ministry seeks ban on vaping and vape product sales [WATCH],” New Straits Times, Jul. 28, 2025. Available: <https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2025/07/1251387/health-ministry-seeks-ban-vaping-and-vape-product-sales-watch>. [Accessed: Jul. 29, 2025]
- ³ I. Lim, “13MP to widen ‘pro-health tax’ to cover tobacco, vapes, alcohol,” Malay Mail, Jul. 31, 2025. Available: <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2025/07/31/13mp-to-widen-pro-health-tax-to-cover-tobacco-vapes-alcohol/185940>. [Accessed: Aug. 03, 2025]
- ⁴ M. D. Kittu, “Strengthening Malaysia’s Tobacco Control Through Tax Reform,” Social and Economic Research Initiative (SERI), May 2025. Available: https://www.seri.my/_files/ugd/539cff_274f7ec8d537406090a6c1babb4457b2.pdf. [Accessed: Jun. 19, 2025]
- ⁵ W. Bui and N. Mohamed Nor, “The Determinants of Illicit Cigarette Trade in Malaysia,” ASOG Working Paper Series, vol. 21–014, Mar. 2021, doi: 10.2139/ssrn.3800728. Available: <https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=3800728>
- ⁶ BERNAMA, “AKPS To Curb Smuggling Of Firearms, Drugs And Contraband – KSN,” BERNAMA, Jan. 01, 2025. Available: <https://www.bernama.com/en/news.php/news.php?id=2378477>. [Accessed: Jul. 29, 2025]
- ⁷ World Health Organisation, “Guidelines for implementation of Article 6,” WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, Jan. 2017. Available: <https://fctc.who.int/resources/publications/m/item/price-and-tax-measures-to-reduce-the-demand-for-tobacco>.

SERI SOCIAL & ECONOMIC
RESEARCH INITIATIVE

N A T I O N A L S U R V E Y
MALAYSIAN PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR TOBACCO TAX INCREASES

INSIGHTS TO INFORM POLICY ON SMOKING REDUCTION AND REVENUE GENERATION

Social and Economic Research Initiative Berhad
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

✉ hello@seri.my  www.seri.my