

Estimates of how many New Zealanders smoke Health and Lifestyles Survey 2010

Background

Around one in five (19%) New Zealand adults aged 15 to 64 years are daily smokers.^{1,2} Since smoking prevalence varies greatly among different population groups, people may not have an accurate idea of the proportion of New Zealanders who smoke.

To understand perceptions of prevalence of smoking, the Health Sponsorship Council's (HSC's) 2010 Health and Lifestyles Survey (HLS) asked people to identify the proportion of New Zealand adults who smoke daily.

Methodology

All respondents were asked: "Out of 100 adults in New Zealand, how many do you think smoke cigarettes or tobacco? By this we mean they smoke cigarettes or tobacco at least once a day."

Means (average) estimates were calculated to compare responses by:

- Smoking status (current smokers: those who smoked at least monthly, and past smokers: those who had ever smoked but did not smoke at the time of the survey, compared with never smokers).
- Ethnicity (Māori, Pacific, and Asian people, compared with people of European/ Other ethnicity).
- Neighbourhood deprivation status (high: NZDep2006 8-10 and medium: NZDep2006 4-7, compared with low: NZDep2006 1-3).
- Age (25-34 years, 35-54 years, and 55+ years, compared with 15-24 years).

- Gender.
- Educational background (no formal qualifications, School Certificate/NCEA level 1, and UE/NCEA levels 2-3/trade certificates, compared with university qualifications).

Statistically significant differences ($p < .05$) are reported.

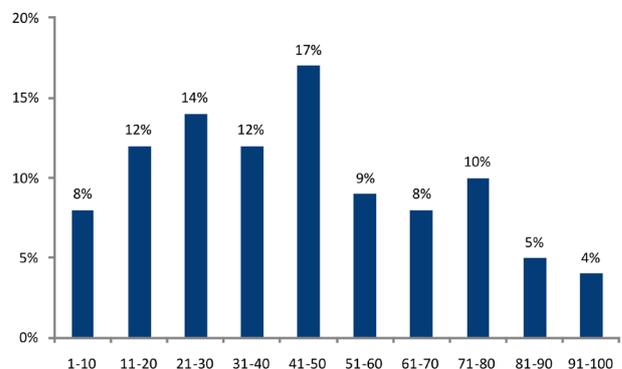
Findings

Do people over-estimate the proportion of New Zealanders who smoke?

When asked to estimate the number of New Zealand adults (out of 100) who smoke daily, responses ranged from one to 100. The most common response was '50' (15%), followed by '20' (8%), '30' (8%) and '60' (8%).

As the actual number of adult New Zealanders who smoke daily is 19 out of 100 it is clear that the majority of respondents over-estimated the proportion of daily smokers in this country (see Figure 1). Four in five (79%) respondents thought at least 21 out of 100 adults in New Zealand smoke daily.

Figure 1: People's estimation of the number of adults in New Zealand who smoke (out of 100)



Estimates of how many New Zealanders smoke Health and Lifestyles Survey 2010 (continued)

The overall mean (\bar{x}) estimate of the number of New Zealanders who smoke was 40.3 (out of 100). Respondents who gave higher mean estimates were:

- Current smokers (\bar{x} =48.6), compared with never smokers (\bar{x} =40.5).
- Never smokers (\bar{x} =40.5), compared with past smokers (\bar{x} =36.7).
- Māori (\bar{x} =53.4), Pacific (\bar{x} =58.8) and Asian people (\bar{x} =57.6), compared with those of European/Other ethnicity (\bar{x} =35.3).
- People living in neighbourhoods of high deprivation status (\bar{x} =50.5) and medium deprivation status (\bar{x} =38.4), compared with those living in neighbourhoods of low deprivation status (\bar{x} =33.9).
- People aged 15-24 years (\bar{x} =50.7), compared with those aged 25-34 years (\bar{x} =42.6), 35-54 years (\bar{x} =36.9) and 55+ years (\bar{x} =36.9).
- Females (\bar{x} =43.0), compared with males (\bar{x} =37.5).
- People with no formal qualifications (\bar{x} =47.2), compared with those with School Certificate/NCEA level 1 (\bar{x} =42.0), those with UE/NCEA levels 2-3/trade certificates (\bar{x} =39.3), and those with university qualifications (\bar{x} =31.5).

About the Survey

- The HLS is a nationwide in-home face-to-face survey conducted every two years, starting in 2008. The 2010 HLS consisted of a sample of 1,740 New Zealanders aged 15 years and over, who provided information about their health behaviours and attitudes relating to tobacco, sun safety, healthy eating, gambling, and alcohol.
- In 2010, the main sample, with a response rate of 57%, included 866 people of European/Other ethnicity, 460 Māori, 301 Pacific peoples and 113 Asian people (prioritised ethnicity).
- The data have been adjusted (weighted) to ensure they are representative of the New Zealand population.
- For this analysis, t-tests were undertaken to compare mean agreement scores collected by the 2010 HLS. The significance level used for statistical analyses was set to $\alpha=.05$.
- A full description of the 2010 HLS survey methodology and further HLS publications can be found online at www.hsc.org.nz/researchpublications.html.

References

- ¹ A daily smoker is defined as someone who has smoked more than 100 cigarettes in their lifetime and currently smokes at least once a day.
- ² Ministry of Health (2010). *Tobacco Use in New Zealand: Key findings from the 2009 New Zealand Tobacco Use Survey*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.

About the HSC

The HSC is a crown entity that uses health promotion initiatives to promote health and encourage healthy lifestyles, with a long-term focus on reducing the social, financial and health costs of a number of health behaviours.

Citation

Li, J., & Tu, D. (2011). *Estimates of how many New Zealanders smoke – Health and Lifestyles Survey 2010* [In Fact]. Wellington: Health Sponsorship Council. Retrieved from www.hsc.org.nz/researchpublications.html

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August 2011

