

## Public concern about tobacco

### Background

Towards the tobacco control sector's vision of a tobacco free New Zealand/Tupeka Kore Aotearoa, it is important to understand the level of public concern about tobacco as a health and social issue. In the Health Sponsorship Council's (HSC's) 2008 Health and Lifestyles Survey (HLS), respondents were asked a series of questions to measure their concern about tobacco.

### Overview of key findings

The majority of respondents indicated that they were concerned about smoking as a social and health issue.

- The majority of people indicated that they still thought smoking was an important health issue. Nine in 10 (89%) respondents disagreed that smoking is not really an important health issue anymore. Respondents who were more likely to disagree were current smokers, Pacific people, and those without university qualifications.
- Three in four respondents agreed that society disapproves of smoking. Respondents who were less likely to agree were Māori and Pacific people, those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, younger people, and those without university qualifications.
- Three in four respondents agreed that smoking is a real problem in New Zealand. Respondents who were less likely to agree were current smokers and people who did not have formal qualifications.

### Research details

#### Methodology

All respondents were asked for their levels of agreement ('strongly agree', 'agree', 'neither agree nor disagree', 'disagree', or 'strongly disagree') with a series of statements measuring their concern about tobacco. The statements were:

- Smoking is not really an important health issue anymore.
- Society disapproves of smoking.
- Smoking is a real problem in New Zealand.

Mean (average) agreement scores 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, compared with non-Māori).
- Neighbourhood deprivation status (NZDep 8-10 and NZDep 4-7, compared with NZDep 1-3).
- Age (25 to 34 years, 35 to 54 years, and 55 + years, compared with 15 to 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.

### Detailed findings

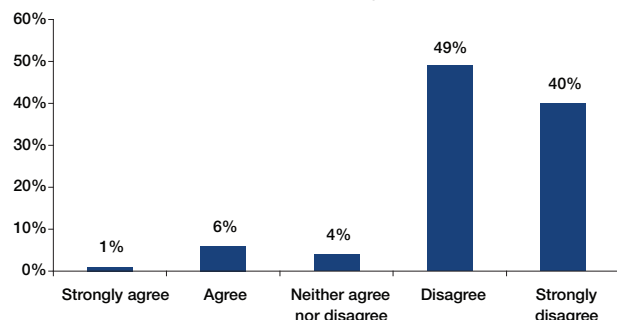
#### *Who sees smoking as an important health issue?*

Around nine in 10 (89%) respondents either 'disagreed' (49%) or 'strongly disagreed' (40%) that smoking is not really an important health issue any more (see Figure 1). Respondents who showed higher mean agreement with this statement were:

- Current smokers compared with never smokers.
- Pacific people compared with those of New Zealand/European ethnicity.
- People who did not have university qualifications (no formal qualifications, School Certificate/NCEA Level 1, and University Entrance/NCEA Levels 2-3/trade certificates), compared with those who had university qualifications.
- There were no differences by neighbourhood deprivation status, age, or gender.

## Public concern about tobacco (continued)

Figure 1. Agreement that smoking is not really an important health issue any more

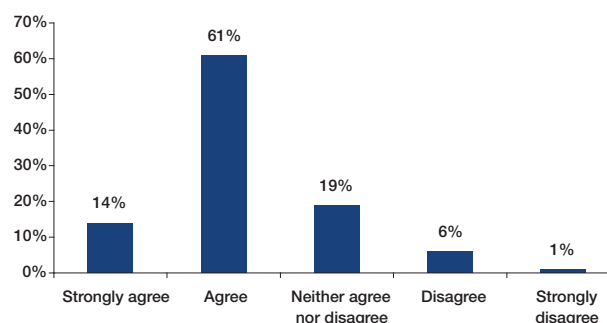


### Who thinks that society disapproves of smoking?

Three in four (75%) respondents either 'agreed' (61%) or 'strongly agreed' (14%) that society disapproves of smoking (see Figure 2). Respondents who showed lower mean agreement with this statement were:

- Māori and Pacific people, compared with people of New Zealand European/Other ethnicity.
- Those living in neighbourhoods of high deprivation (NZDep 8-10) compared with those living in neighbourhoods of low deprivation (NZDep 1-3).
- Younger people (15 to 24-year-olds) compared with older people (those aged 55 years and older).
- People who did not have formal qualifications, and those with University Entrance/NCEA 2-3/trade certificates, compared with those who had university qualifications.
- There were no differences by smoking status or by gender.

Figure 2. Agreement that society disapproves of smoking

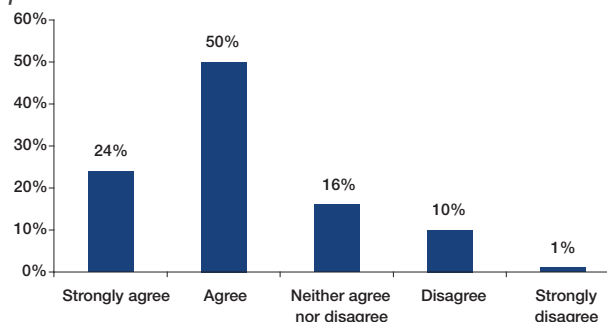


### Who thinks that smoking is a real problem?

Around three in four (74%) respondents either 'agreed' (50%) or 'strongly agreed' (24%) that smoking is a real problem in New Zealand (see Figure 3). Respondents who showed lower mean agreement with this statement were:

- Current smokers compared with never smokers.
- People who did not have formal qualifications compared with people with university qualifications.
- There were no differences by ethnicity, neighbourhood deprivation status, age, or gender.

Figure 3. Agreement that smoking is a real problem in New Zealand



### About the Survey

- The HLS is a nationwide in-home face-to-face survey conducted every two years. The first HLS was carried out in 2008 with a sample of 1,608 New Zealanders aged 15 years and over, who provided information about their health behaviours and attitudes relating to tobacco, sun safety, healthy eating, and gambling.
- The main sample, with a response rate of 64%, included 818 people of European/Other ethnicity, 392 Māori, 324 Pacific peoples and 74 Asian people.
- The data have been adjusted (weighted) to ensure they are representative of the New Zealand population.
- The significance level used for statistical analyses was set to  $\alpha = 0.05$ .
- A full description of the 2008 HLS survey methodology and further HLS publications can be found online at [www.hsc.org.nz/researchpublications.html](http://www.hsc.org.nz/researchpublications.html).

#### Citation

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