

## Young people's perceptions of how difficult it would be to quit smoking

### Background

The New Zealand Government has committed to the goal of New Zealand becoming 'smokefree' (smoking prevalence of less than 5%) by 2025. To achieve this it is important to reduce initiation of smoking as well as encourage quitting. Previous research has examined the relationship between young people's awareness of the health risks of tobacco and smoking initiation (Zhu, Liu, Shelton & Giovino, 1996) but there is little research on the relationship between perceived difficulty of quitting and youth smoking initiation. One of the key sources of New Zealand data on youth smoking is the Health Promotion Agency's (HPA's) Youth Insights Survey (YIS). The YIS monitors Year 10 students' behaviours, attitudes, and knowledge on a range of tobacco related topics, including their perceptions on quitting difficulty, and has collected this data since 2006.

### Methodology

Participants in the 2012 YIS were asked whether they thought it would be difficult for someone to quit smoking once they had started. Responses to this question were examined by:

- smoking status<sup>1</sup>
- susceptibility to smoking<sup>2</sup>
- ethnicity
- gender
- parental smoking status
- past-year quit attempts
- recall of tobacco control advertising<sup>3</sup>
- frequency of seeing Smoking Not *Our Future* (SNOF) advertising or messages<sup>4</sup>.

When looking at the differences by ethnicity, parental smoking status, recall of smokefree advertising and frequency of seeing SNOF advertising, we have controlled for individual smoking status. This means that we take into account whether or not a respondent smokes, to ensure that any differences found are not due to respondents' own smoking status. Statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ) differences between groups are reported.

Perceptions of quitting difficulty were also assessed in 2006, 2008, and 2010. Further analyses of these data were undertaken to examine changes over time.

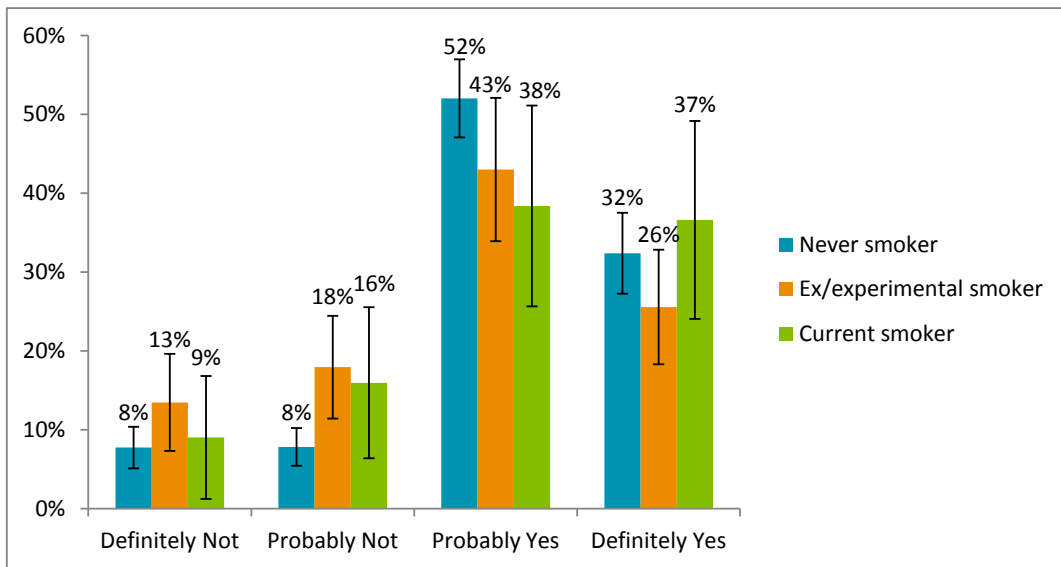
### Young people who think quitting smoking would be difficult

Around three in 10 respondents answered 'definitely yes' (31%, 29-33%) and five in 10 answered 'probably yes' (48%, 46-51%) when asked 'once someone has started smoking, do you think it would be difficult to quit?' One in 10 answered 'probably not' (11%, 10-12%) and another one in 10 answered 'definitely not' (10%, 8-11%).

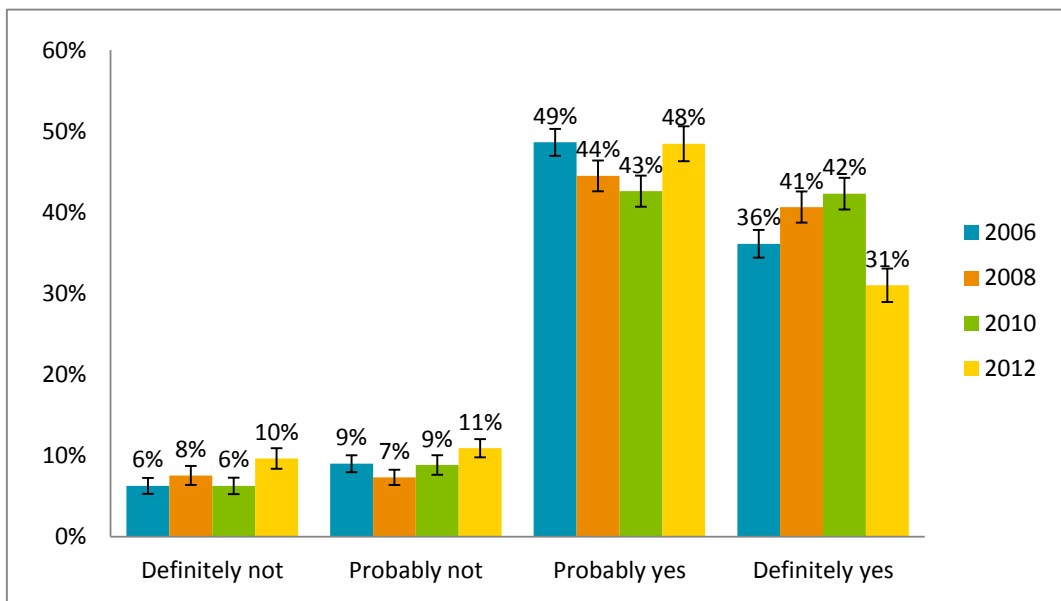
Those who were more likely to respond 'definitely yes' or 'probably yes' were:

- never smokers (84%), compared with current smokers (75%) and ex/experimental smokers (69%) (see Figure 1)
- those who had indicated that one of their parents smoked (80%), compared with those who indicated that both of their parents smoked (72%)
- females (84%), compared with males (76%)
- those who recalled seeing or hearing smokefree advertising anywhere in the past 30 days (83%), compared with those who did not recall smokefree advertising (72%) or didn't know (68%)
- those who saw SNOF advertising a lot (83%) or sometimes (80%) in the past year, compared with those who had never seen SNOF advertising in the past year (69%).

When asked if quitting would be difficult once someone has started smoking, respondents in 2012 were less likely to say 'definitely yes' compared with each of the previous years (see Figure 2).



**Figure 1: Responses to 'Would quitting be difficult once someone has started smoking?' by smoking status**



**Figure 2: Responses to 'Would quitting be difficult once someone has started smoking?' from 2006 to 2012**

## Key points

- Eight in 10 young people thought it would definitely or probably be difficult for someone to quit smoking once they had started.
- Young people who had never smoked were more likely to think that quitting would be difficult compared with those who currently smoked or had smoked in the past. Females were also more likely than males to think that quitting would be difficult.
- Young people who had been exposed to smokefree advertising in the past 30 days, or had seen SNOF advertisements or messages in the past year, were more likely to think that quitting would be difficult than those who had not.

## References

Zhu, B.P., Liu, M., Shelton, D., Giovino, G.A. (1996). Cigarette smoking and its risk factors among elementary school students in Beijing. *American Journal of Public Health*, 86(3), 368-375.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Never smoked, current smokers (smoke at least monthly), and ex smokers (no longer smoke) and experimental (smoke less often than monthly) smokers.

<sup>2</sup>Non-susceptible never smokers (would 'definitely not' accept a cigarette offered by their best friend or smoke a cigarette during the next 12 months) and susceptible never smokers.

<sup>3</sup>Seeing or hearing advertisements about smoking, quitting smoking, or the harmful effects of smoking in the past month

<sup>4</sup>HPA's Smoking Not *Our Future* campaign, which showed celebrities talking about smoking, being smokefree, and quitting smoking.

## Citation

Eathorne, A., & White, J. (2014). *Young people's perceptions of how difficult it would be to quit smoking. [In Fact]*. Wellington: Health Promotion Agency Research and Evaluation Unit.

## About the Youth Insights Survey

- The YIS forms part of the New Zealand Youth Tobacco Monitor (NZYTM), a collaborative effort by the HPA and Action on Smoking and Health (ASH).
- The YIS is a nationwide paper-based survey conducted in schools every two years, first carried out in its current form in 2006 and dating back to 1995 in different formats.
- The YIS collects data on smoking-related knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour, as well as data on students' interests, lifestyles, activities, media use, and responses to tobacco control initiatives. It monitors a broad spectrum of risk and protective factors that relate to smoking uptake among young people.
- The 2012 YIS was conducted with a sample of 3,143 Year 10 students (14 to 15-year-olds). The school-level response rate was 77%, the student level response rate 82%, and the overall response rate was 65%. The sample included 1,589 NZ European, 704 Māori, 295 Pacific, 340 Asian, and 199 people of 'Other' ethnicity (prioritised ethnicity). Seven percent (n = 222) were current smokers (smoke daily, weekly or monthly).
- The data have been adjusted (weighted) to ensure they are representative of the population of New Zealand Year 10 school students.
- For this analysis, proportions and 95% confidence intervals were produced. Odds ratios were undertaken to compare responses between groups. The significance level used for statistical analyses was set to  $\alpha=.05$ .
- Comparison groups for these analyses were as follows:
  - Smoking status (current smokers, compared with ex/experimental smokers and never smokers).
  - Smoking susceptibility (susceptible never smokers, compared with non-susceptible never smokers; as determined by answers to the questions '*If one of your best friends offered you a cigarette, would you smoke it?*' and '*At any time during the next year (12 months) do you think you will smoke a cigarette?*', where non-susceptible never smokers answered 'definitely not' to both questions, and susceptible never smokers answered anything except 'definitely not').
  - Parental smoking status (those who indicated that one parent smoked, compared with those who said that neither parent smoked).
  - Past-year quit attempts (those who had tried to stop smoking in the past year, compared with those who had not.)
  - Ethnicity (Māori, compared with non-Māori).
  - Gender (females, compared with males).
  - Recall of tobacco control advertising (those who had seen or heard advertisements about smoking, quitting smoking, or the harmful effects of smoking in the past month, compared with those who had not or did not know).
  - Frequency of seeing Smoking Not *Our Future* (SNOF) advertising or messaging (those who had seen SNOF advertising a lot or sometimes during the past year, compared with those who had not seen SNOF advertising during the past year).
- A full description of the 2012 YIS methodology and further YIS publications can be found online at <http://www.hpa.org.nz/research-library/research-publications>

## About the HPA

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