

Purchasing of cigarettes by under-age youth Youth Insights Survey 2010

Background

The Smoke-free Environments Amendment Act 2003 (the Act) aims to significantly reduce children and young people's exposure to tobacco products and reduce the harm caused to individuals by their smoking. The intention is to send a positive message about a smokefree/auahi kore lifestyle being both desirable and the norm, and to reduce the number of young people that take up smoking. Under the Act, the sale of cigarettes and tobacco is prohibited to people under 18 years of age. The Act provides a defence for retailers accused of under-age selling if they can prove that they saw an 'evidence of age' document indicating the buyer was 18 years of age or older (Ministry of Health, 2004).

The Health Sponsorship Council's (HSC's) Youth Insights Survey (YIS) is the national youth survey of topics relevant to New Zealand's tobacco control sector. In the 2010 YIS, respondents were asked whether they had been asked to show proof of age when buying or trying to buy cigarettes, and whether they had been refused the sale of cigarettes because of their age.

Overview of key findings

Around three-quarters (72%) of 14- to 15-year-old children who had bought or tried to buy cigarettes in the past 30 days reported that they were not asked to show proof of age, and two-fifths (40%) reported that they were refused the sale of cigarettes because of their age. There were no differences by ethnicity, socio-economic status, or gender, on reporting being asked for proof of age. However, girls were less likely than boys to report being refused the sale of tobacco because of their age.

Further information on youth access to tobacco can be found at www.hsc.org.nz/researchpublications.html

Methodology

Respondents were asked **when you bought, or tried to buy cigarettes, in a store during the past 30 days (one month), were you ever asked to show proof of age (ID)?** Response options were:

- 'I did not try to buy cigarettes in a store during the past 30 days'.
- 'Yes, I was asked to show proof of age (ID)'.
- 'No, I was not asked to show proof of age (ID)'.

Responses are reported for current smokers, except those who answered that they did not try to buy cigarettes (n=117).

Respondents were then asked **during the past 30 days (one month), has anybody refused to sell you cigarettes because of your age?** Response options were:

- 'I have not tried to buy cigarettes during the past 30 days'.
- 'Yes, someone refused to sell me cigarettes because of my age'.
- 'No, my age did not keep me from buying cigarettes'.

Responses are reported for current smokers only, except those who answered that they did not try to buy cigarettes (n=122).

For both questions, responses were analysed by ethnicity, school decile, and gender, and statistically significant differences ($p < .05$) are reported.

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Detailed Findings

Proof of age

Around one-quarter (28%) of current smokers who had bought or tried to buy cigarettes in the past 30 days answered 'Yes, I was asked to show proof of age (ID)' and around three-quarters (72%) answered 'No I was not asked to show proof of age (ID)'. There were no differences by ethnicity, school decile, and gender, in the proportion of those who reported having been asked for proof of age.

Refusal of sale

Two in five (40%) current smokers who had bought or tried to buy cigarettes in the past 30 days answered 'Yes, someone refused to sell me cigarettes because of my age'. Males (51%) were more than twice as likely to report being refused the sale of tobacco because of their age, compared with females (28%). There were no differences by ethnicity or socio-economic status.

About the Survey

- The YIS survey forms part of the New Zealand Youth Tobacco Monitor (NZYTM), a collaborative effort by HSC 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.
- The YIS collects data on smoking-related knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour, as well as data on students' interests, lifestyles, activities, and media use, and responses to tobacco control initiatives. It monitors the broad spectrum of risk and protective factors that relate to smoking uptake among young people.
- The 2010 YIS was conducted with a sample of 3,197 Year 10 students (14- to 15-year-olds). The school-level response rate was 79%, the student level response rate 85%, and the overall response rate was 65%. The sample included 1,708 NZ European, 639 Māori, 332 Pacific, 337 Asian people and 158 people of 'Other' ethnicity (prioritised ethnicity).
- The data have been adjusted (weighted) to ensure they are representative of the population of 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 $\alpha=0.05$.
- Comparison groups for these analyses were as follows:
 - Smoking status (current smokers: those who smoked at least monthly, compared with never smokers).
 - Ethnicity (Māori, compared with non-Māori).
 - Gender (females, compared with males).
- A full description of the 2010 YIS methodology and further YIS publications can be found at www.hsc.org.nz/researchpublications.html.

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.

References

Ministry of Health (2004). Smokefree law in New Zealand – sale and supply of smoking products to under-18s - information for retailers. (<http://www.moh.govt.nz/smokefreelaw>, retrieved June 2011).

Citation

Trappitt, R., Newcombe, R., & Tu, D. *Purchasing of cigarettes by under-age youth – Youth Insights Survey 2010* [In Fact]. Wellington: Health Sponsorship Council. Retrieved from www.hsc.org.nz/researchpublications.html