

In Fact: Young smokers' usual source of cigarettes – 2014

Background

Access to tobacco is recognised as one of the environmental risk factors for young people taking up smoking (Health Sponsorship Council, 2005). Restricting youth access to tobacco has been shown to be an effective strategy to reduce smoking initiation and maintenance among young people (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2012).

The minimum legal purchase age of cigarettes and tobacco in New Zealand is 18 years, yet 6% of 14 and 15-year-olds were regular smokers in 2014 (Action on Smoking and Health, 2015). Therefore, it is important to understand where young people are accessing tobacco. Previous research shows that social sources of cigarettes

are common for young people; just over half of Year 10 smokers in 2012 reported they usually got their cigarettes given to them by friends or peers (White, 2013).

One of the main 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 where smokers get their cigarettes from. Year 10 students are predominantly aged 14 to 15 years old.

Methodology

Respondents in the 2014 YIS were asked, "During the past 30 days (one month) how did you usually get your own cigarettes?", and required to select their responses from a list of possible sources. Multiple responses were permitted. If the participant's source was not included in the list, they were asked to write what their source was. These open-ended 'other' responses were either back coded into the appropriate categories where applicable or new categories were created; 'other' responses specified by fewer than three respondents remained coded as "I got them some other way". The full response list of all offered and new response categories is shown in Figure 1. Analyses were restricted to current smokers (smoke at least once a month or more often; n = 218).

Usual source of cigarettes

The percentage of current smokers who reported they usually got cigarettes from a particular source in the past month is shown in Figure 1. Social sources of cigarettes were common for this group of underage smokers, with almost 6 in 10 (56%, 47-64%) current smokers saying that during the past month they usually got their cigarettes given to them by friends or peers, and around 3 in 10 buying them from friends or peers (32%, 24-39%) or taking them from a parent or caregiver without asking (28%, 22-35%). Seventeen percent (12-23%) usually bought them from a shop.

Key points

- Friends and peers are the most common source of cigarettes for young smokers. Almost 6 in 10 (56%) Year 10 current smokers reported that during the past month they usually got their cigarettes given to them by friends or peers. Three in 10 (32%) usually had bought cigarettes from friends or peers.
- The home environment is also an important source of cigarettes for young smokers. Three in 10 (28%) reported they usually got their cigarettes by taking them from a parent or caregiver without asking, and 1 in 8 (13%) were usually given cigarettes by a parent or caregiver. One in six (16%) usually got cigarettes from an older sibling.
- Although Year 10 students are too young to legally purchase cigarettes, 1 in 6 (17%) current smokers reported they usually bought their cigarettes from a shop. A small minority (6%) of Year 10 students circumvented the age restriction by getting an older person to buy cigarettes on their behalf.

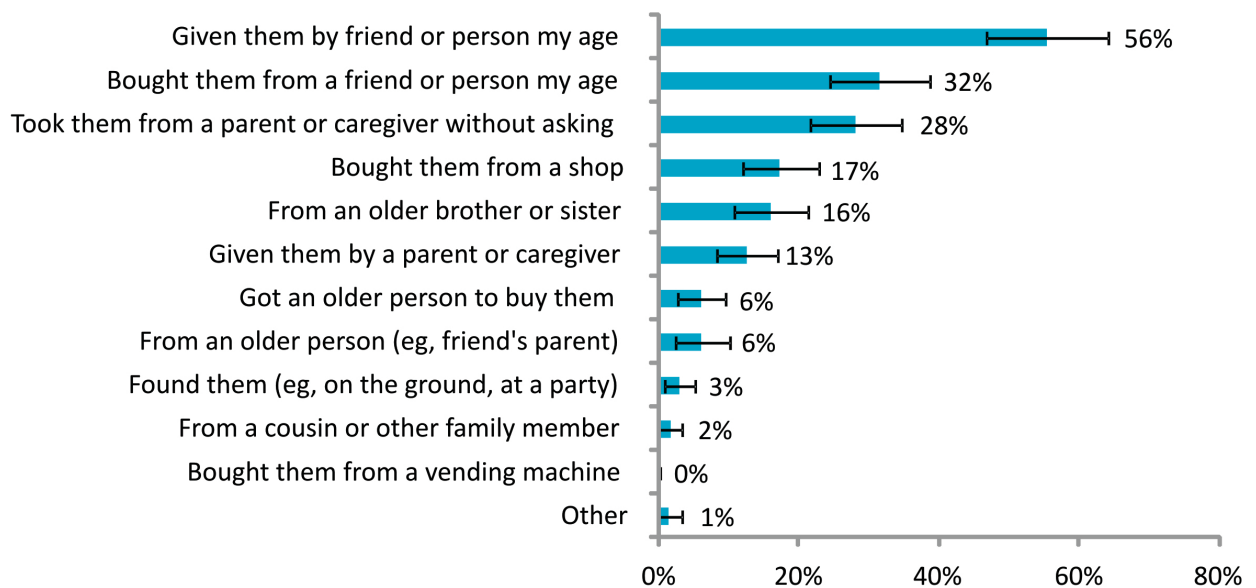


Figure 1. Usual source of cigarettes in the past month among Year 10 current smokers, 2014

References

- Action on Smoking and Health (2015). *2014 Factsheet 1 ASH Year 10 Snapshot Survey: Topline results*. Auckland: Action on Smoking and Health.
- Health Sponsorship Council (2005). *Reducing smoking initiation literature review: A background discussion document to support the national Framework for Reducing Smoking Initiation in Aotearoa-New Zealand*. Wellington: Health Sponsorship Council.
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- White, J. (2013). *Where are young smokers accessing cigarettes? [In Fact]*. Wellington: Health Promotion Agency Research and Evaluation Unit.

Citation

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About the Youth Insights Survey

- The YIS forms part of the New Zealand Youth Tobacco Monitor (NZYTM), a collaborative effort by the Health Promotion Agency (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 dates 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 the broad spectrum of risk and protective factors that relate to smoking uptake among young people.
- The 2014 YIS was conducted with a sample of 2,919 Year 10 students (14 to 15-year-olds).

The school-level response rate was 76%, the student level response rate 84%, and the overall response rate was 64%. The sample included 1,352 NZ European, 700 Māori, 321 Pacific, 353 Asian, and 193 people of 'Other' ethnicity (prioritised ethnicity). Eight percent (n = 218) 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, jack-knife proportions and 95% confidence intervals were calculated.
- A full description of the 2014 YIS methodology and further YIS publications can be found at <http://www.hpa.org.nz/research-library/research-publications>.

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Research and Evaluation Unit

Health Promotion Agency, PO Box 2142, Wellington 6140, New Zealand

<http://www.hpa.org.nz/research-library/research-publications>

research@hpa.org.nz

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