

## In Fact: Young people's opinions on tobacco control measures – 2014

### Background

The New Zealand Government has committed to a goal of New Zealand becoming 'smokefree' by the year 2025, where less than 5% of the population smokes (The New Zealand Government, 2011). New Zealand needs a comprehensive set of tobacco control measures to meet this goal and become a smokefree nation. For example, to reduce exposure to second-hand smoke and de-normalise smoking behaviour, smoking is prohibited in a range of places including indoor areas of work and licensed premises, as well as in the grounds and buildings of schools and early childhood centres (The Smoke-free Environments Amendment Act, 2003). Similarly, increasing the price of cigarettes and tobacco through increases in excise tax is an effective tool to stop people taking up smoking and encourage smokers to quit (World Health Organization, 2008).

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 their opinions on a number of tobacco control measures.

### Methodology

To regularly monitor young people's opinions about tobacco control and aid the development of appropriate health promotion strategies, participants in the 2014 YIS were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the following tobacco control measures: banning smoking in outdoor areas where young people go, implementing annual tax increases, reducing retailer availability, and banning the sale of tobacco in New Zealand.

Agreement with each statement was examined by gender, ethnicity, smoking status<sup>1</sup> and susceptibility

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

to smoking (among never smokers)<sup>2</sup> (see the 'About the Youth Insights Survey' section for more detail and relevant comparison groups). When looking at differences by gender and ethnicity, we have controlled for smoking status. This means that we take into account whether or not the respondent smoked to ensure that any difference found by gender or ethnicity is not in fact due to the respondent's own smoking status. Only statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ) differences between groups are reported.

Agreement with these statements was also assessed in 2012 (and in 2010 for agreement with smoking bans in outdoor areas where young people go). Further analyses of these data were, therefore, undertaken to examine changes over time.

### Banning smoking in outdoor areas where young people go

All respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed that, "Smoking should be banned in all outdoor places where young people go". Sixty-eight percent (66-71%) agreed with this statement, 13% (12-15%) disagreed, and 18% (17-20%) answered 'don't know' (Figure 1).

Those who were more likely to agree that smoking should be banned in all outdoor places where young people go were:

- never smokers (77%), compared with ex/experimental smokers (54%) and current smokers (22%); and ex/experimental smokers compared with current smokers (Figure 2)
- non-susceptible never smokers (81%), compared with susceptible never smokers (59%).

The proportion of respondents who agreed that smoking should be banned in all outdoor places where young people go was significantly lower in 2014 (68%) than in 2012 (73%), but similar to 2010 (71%).

## Implementing annual tax increases

All respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed that, “Tax on cigarettes should be increased every year”. Sixty percent (58-63%) agreed with this statement, 18% (16-20%) disagreed, and 21% (20-23%) answered ‘don’t know’ (Figure 1).

Those who were more likely to agree that tax on cigarettes should be increased every year were:

- non-Māori (63%), compared with Māori (50%)
- never smokers (68%), compared with ex/experimental smokers (49%) and current smokers (17%); and ex/experimental smokers compared with current smokers (Figure 2)
- non-susceptible never smokers (71%), compared with susceptible never smokers (55%).

There was no significant difference between 2012 and 2014 in the proportion of respondents who agreed that tax on cigarettes should be increased every year.

## Reducing retailer availability

All respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed that, “There should be fewer places where cigarettes and tobacco can be sold”. Seventy-seven percent (75-79%) agreed with this statement, 11% (10-13%) disagreed, and 12% (11-14%) answered ‘don’t know’ (Figure 1).

Those who were more likely to agree that there should be fewer places where cigarettes and tobacco can be sold were:

- non-Māori (80%), compared with Māori (66%)

- never smokers (84%), compared with ex/experimental smokers (65%) and current smokers (37%); and ex/experimental smokers compared with current smokers (Figure 2)
- non-susceptible never smokers (85%), compared with susceptible never smokers (76%).

There was no significant difference between 2012 and 2014 in the proportion of respondents who agreed that there should be fewer places where cigarettes and tobacco can be sold.

## Banning the sale of tobacco in New Zealand

All respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed that, “Cigarettes and tobacco should not be sold in New Zealand”. Fifty-six percent (54-58%) agreed with this statement, 22% (20-24%) disagreed, and 22% (21-24%) answered ‘don’t know’ (Figure 1).

Those who were more likely to agree that cigarettes and tobacco should not be sold in New Zealand were:

- never smokers (64%), compared with ex/experimental smokers (42%) and current smokers (12%); and ex/experimental smokers compared with current smokers (Figure 2)
- non-susceptible never smokers (70%), compared with susceptible never smokers (44%).

There was no significant difference between 2012 and 2014 in the proportion of respondents who agreed that cigarettes and tobacco should not be sold in New Zealand.

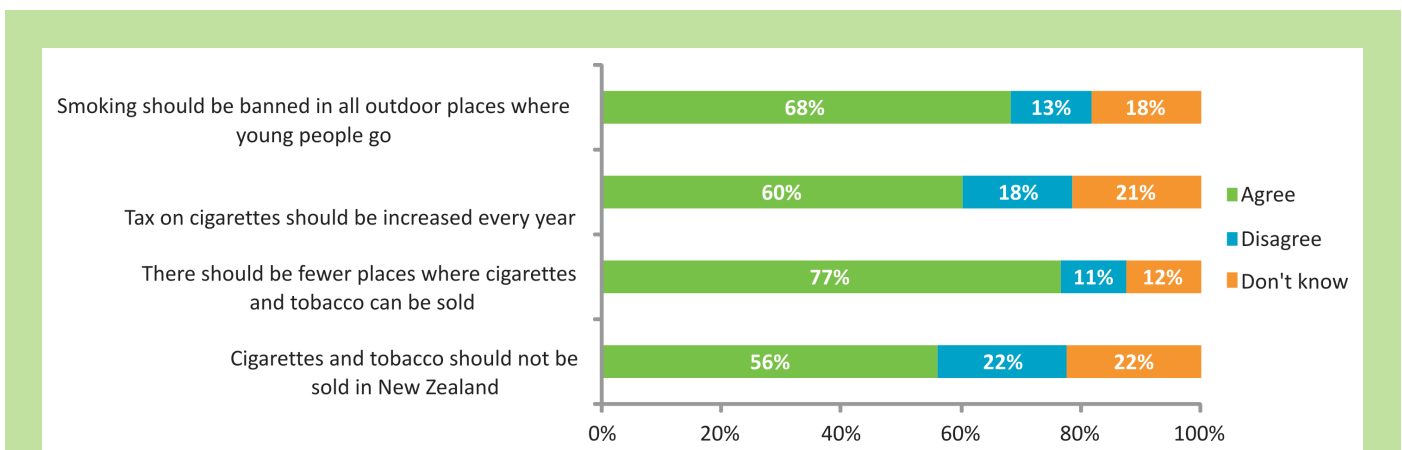
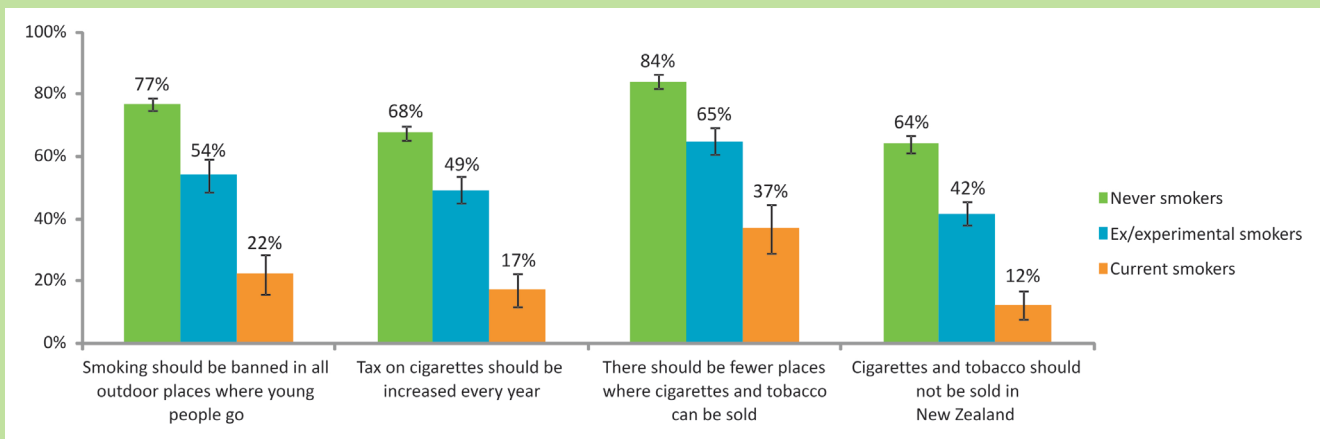


Figure 1. Opinion on statements about tobacco control measures, 2014



**Figure 2. Proportion of respondents who agreed with each statement about tobacco control measures by smoking status, 2014**

## 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 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, 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 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 first. Multivariate logistic regression was then used 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:
  - Gender (females, compared with males).
  - Ethnicity (Māori, compared with non-Māori).
  - Smoking status (never smokers, compared with ex/experimental smokers and current smokers). Ex/experimental smokers had smoked a cigarette, but no longer smoke or smoke less often than once a month. Current smokers reported smoking at least once a month or more often.
  - Susceptibility to smoking (never smokers who were not susceptible to start smoking, compared with never smokers who were susceptible to start smoking). Non-susceptible never smokers answered 'definitely not' 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?" Susceptible never smokers answered anything except 'definitely not' to these two questions.
- 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>.

## Key points

- The majority of young people agreed with the suggested tobacco control measures.
- Reducing retailer availability, in terms of decreasing the number of places where cigarettes and tobacco can be sold, received the strongest support: more than three-quarters of young people agreed with this measure.
- Different patterns in response were seen by smoking status, with those who had never smoked showing the highest levels of agreement with each measure.
- Although current smokers showed the lowest levels of agreement, a proportion did agree with each measure.
- The proportion of young people who agreed that smoking should be banned in all outdoor places where young people go was significantly lower in 2014 than in 2012.

## References

- The New Zealand Government (2011). *Government response to the report of the Māori Affairs Committee on its inquiry into the tobacco industry in Aotearoa and the consequences of tobacco use for Māori. (Final Response)*. Presented to the House of Representatives in accordance with Standing Order 248. Wellington: New Zealand Government.
- The Smoke-free Environments Amendment Act 2003 (2003). *The Smoke-free Environments Amendment Act 2003*. Wellington: New Zealand Government.
- World Health Organization (2008). *WHO Report on the Global Tobacco Epidemic, 2008: The MPOWER package*. Geneva: World Health Organization.

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