

Young people's opinions on the attractiveness of sun tans

Background

Melanoma is one of the most common types of cancer diagnosed in New Zealand (Ministry of Health, 2012), and New Zealand has one of the highest rates of melanoma in the world (Erdmann et al., 2013). Sun exposure in childhood and the use of tanning booths or sun beds before the age of 35 years are both key risk factors for developing melanoma later in life (Ministry of Health, 2008). In the summer of 2013, one in five young New Zealanders aged 13 to 17 years had been sunburnt in the weekend prior to being surveyed (Kruse, 2013), so it is important to understand young people's attitudes towards sun tanning. The New Zealand Cancer Registry (Ministry of Health, 2012) shows that the rate of melanoma for non-Māori is nearly 10 times that for Māori (41.1 compared with 4.5 per 100,000 people), so sun-safety is particularly important for non-Māori young people. The Health Promotion Agency's (HPA's) Youth Insights Survey (YIS) monitors Year 10 students' behaviour, attitudes and knowledge on a range of health-related topics, including their opinions on the attractiveness of sun tans.

Methodology

Participants in the 2012 YIS were asked whether they thought people look more attractive when they have a sun tan. Given the elevated risk of melanoma for non-Māori, analysis was restricted to New Zealand Europeans. Responses were examined by gender and school decile status, as well as smoking status and agreement that *"I don't need adults telling me how to keep myself safe or healthy"* as measures of other risky behaviour and attitudes. Only those differences between groups that were statistically significant ($p < .05$) are reported.

Opinion on the attractiveness of sun tans

Young people who identified as New Zealand Europeans were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement that *"People look more attractive when they have a sun tan"*. Around half (54%, 51-58%) agreed with this statement, while 18% (16-20%) disagreed and 28% (25-30%) were unsure ("don't know").

Those New Zealand European young people more likely to agree that people look more attractive when they have a sun tan were:

- students at high decile (59%) compared with low decile (47%) schools. The rate of agreement for students at medium decile schools was 52%, however, this was not statistically significantly different from the rates at either high or low decile schools
- those who had ever smoked a cigarette (64%), compared with those who had never smoked a cigarette (51%)
- those who agreed that *"I don't need adults telling me how to keep myself safe or healthy"* (64%), compared with those who disagreed with this statement (51%) or were unsure (45%).

Key points

- Around half of New Zealand European Year 10 students agreed that people look more attractive when they have a sun tan.
- Perceived attractiveness of sun tans was associated with other high-risk indicators, namely smoking cigarettes and a resistant attitude toward adults telling them how to keep safe or healthy.



About the Youth Insights Survey

- The YIS forms part of the New Zealand Youth Tobacco Monitor (NZYTM), a collaborative effort by 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 other health-related topics.
- 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).
- 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:
 - Gender (females compared with males).
 - School decile status (as a measure of socioeconomic status: low school decile compared with medium and high).
 - Smoking status (as a measure of risky behaviour: ever smokers, including those who had had just a few puffs; compared with never smokers).
 - Agreement with the statement "I don't need adults telling me how to keep myself safe or healthy" (as a measure of risky attitudes: those who agreed compared with those who disagreed or didn't know).
- A full description of the 2012 YIS methodology and further YIS publications can be found at <http://www.hpa.org.nz/research-library/research-publications>.

References

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