

Awareness, Support, and Perceived Impacts of New Zealand's Smokefree Aotearoa 2025 Legislation Among Adults Who Smoke or Formerly Smoked

Findings from the Oct-Dec 2022 EASE/ITC New Zealand Survey

December 10, 2023

(v2: correction made to page 6 on Dec 18, 2023)

(v3: corrections to “formerly smoked” results on Jul 22, 2025)

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ETHICS CLEARANCE

The 2022 EASE/ITC New Zealand Survey received ethics clearance from the University of Waterloo Research Ethics Board (REB42549) and from the University of Otago Ethics Committee (20/020).

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Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION

The 2021 Smokefree Aotearoa 2025 Action Plan set out a comprehensive strategy aiming to minimise smoking prevalence rapidly by reducing uptake of smoking by young people and increasing smoking cessation among people who smoke. The 2022 Smokefree Environments and Regulated Products (Smoked Tobacco) Amendment Act (SERPA) introduced three key measures included in the Action Plan: greatly reducing the number of retail outlets able to sell smoked tobacco products, limiting nicotine in smoked tobacco products so they are non-addictive, and introducing a 'smokefree generation' policy.

This report summarises evidence from the New Zealand EASE/International Tobacco Control Policy Evaluation Project (ITC) Survey on attitudes to smoking and awareness, support, and perceived impacts of the three key measures included in New Zealand's smokefree legislation.

METHODS

The EASE/ITC Survey was conducted in October–December 2022. Respondents were 1040 adults aged 18 years and older who smoke cigarettes and 419 adults who had recently (within the last two years) stopped smoking. The survey was conducted online, and the sampling design and weighting procedure allowed the estimates to be generalised to the national population of adults who smoke.

MAIN FINDINGS

The survey revealed the following core information about people who smoke:

- 74% regret starting to smoke
- 84% would like to stop smoking
- 69% are planning to stop, 31% in the next 6 months
- 81% have tried to stop smoking, 41% in the last year
- But 87% feel somewhat or very addicted to smoking

Executive Summary

The table shows there was strong support for the smokefree goal and the three key measures in the smokefree legislation among people who have recently stopped smoking. Substantial proportions of people who smoke also supported denicotinisation and the smokefree generation policy, though fewer supported retail reduction.

Smokefree goal/policy	Adults who recently quit		Adults who currently smoke	
	Support %	Oppose %	Support %	Oppose %
Smokefree goal	73	20	45	48
Denicotinisation	75	16	48	32
Retail reduction	68	26	40	54
Smokefree generation	70	24	59	33

Don't know responses not reported

PERCEIVED IMPACT OF SMOKEFREE POLICIES

The survey also asked people who smoke what they would do if each of the smokefree policies were introduced.

If tobacco products were denicotinised:

13% would stop smoking; another 13% would reduce their smoking

If retail outlets were reduced:

12% would stop smoking; another 30% would reduce their smoking

CONCLUSIONS

The results of the EASE/ITC Survey emphasise the critical need and strong support (among even those who smoke) for implementing the key measures of the Smokefree Aotearoa 2025 Action Plan and smokefree legislation.

Methods

OVERVIEW

The EASE/ITC New Zealand Survey is a longitudinal adult cohort survey that has been conducted in 2016-17, 2018, 2020-21, 2021, and 2022. The surveys examine tobacco and/or nicotine use related beliefs, attitudes behaviours.

This report summarises some key findings from the 2022 (Wave 4) survey.

SAMPLE

The EASE/ITC New Zealand Survey included adults aged 18 and older who smoked or had recently (last 2 years) stopped smoking. Respondents were recruited from people who completed the New Zealand Health Survey (NZHS), Dynata web panels, and social media. Compensation for time spent completing the survey was provided.

SURVEY

Data were collected in October-December 2022 via self-completed online surveys. The survey covers the following content areas:

- patterns of smoking and vaping;
- intentions to quit smoking;
- specific products and brands;
- sources and purchasing of cigarettes and vaping products;
- perceptions of risk and social norms around smoking and vaping;
- exposure to health warnings and public education campaigns;
- exposure to e-cigarette marketing;

- awareness and use of other tobacco products;
- substance use and other risk behaviours;
- support for very low nicotine in cigarettes, retail reductions, flavour bans, and other measures in the smokefree community; and
- socio-demographics and socio-economic status.

DATA ANALYSIS

To enhance representativeness, survey weights were used to match sample proportions on key demographics with the population of people who smoke or who have recently stopped smoking in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Post-stratification survey weights were created using age-by-sex-by-ethnicity-by-deprivation index groups, separately for people who smoke or who have recently stopped smoking using population estimates from the NZHS. All estimates in the current report are weighted and rescaled to the original sample size.

TECHNICAL REPORTS

The surveys and technical reports are available at:

<https://itcproject.org/countries/new-zealand/>

The technical reports include detailed information on methodology and survey weighting.

Sample descriptive statistics

	Adults who smoke n=1040	Adults who quit n=419
Gender		
Male	37.6%	26.3%
Female	61.1%	71.3%
Other	1.3%	2.4%
Age		
18-24	18.0%	27.5%
25-44	49.1%	46.5%
45+	32.9%	26.0%
Ethnicity		
Māori	39.9%	42.2%
Pacific (non-Māori)	17.5%	17.7%
Non-Māori Non-Pacific	42.6%	40.1%
Family financial status		
Not meeting basic expenses	9.3%	4.7%
Just meeting basic expenses	35.4%	33.4%
Meeting needs with a little left over	35.3%	38.6%
Living comfortably	20.0%	23.3%
Household income		
Loss/Zero income	1.2%	1.1%
Less than \$20,000	10.0%	6.8%
\$20,001-30,000	11.2%	10.7%
\$30,001-50,000	18.6%	15.0%
\$50,001-70,000	17.2%	19.7%
\$70,001-100,000	17.3%	18.9%
\$100,001 and above	24.6%	27.9%

All estimates are unweighted

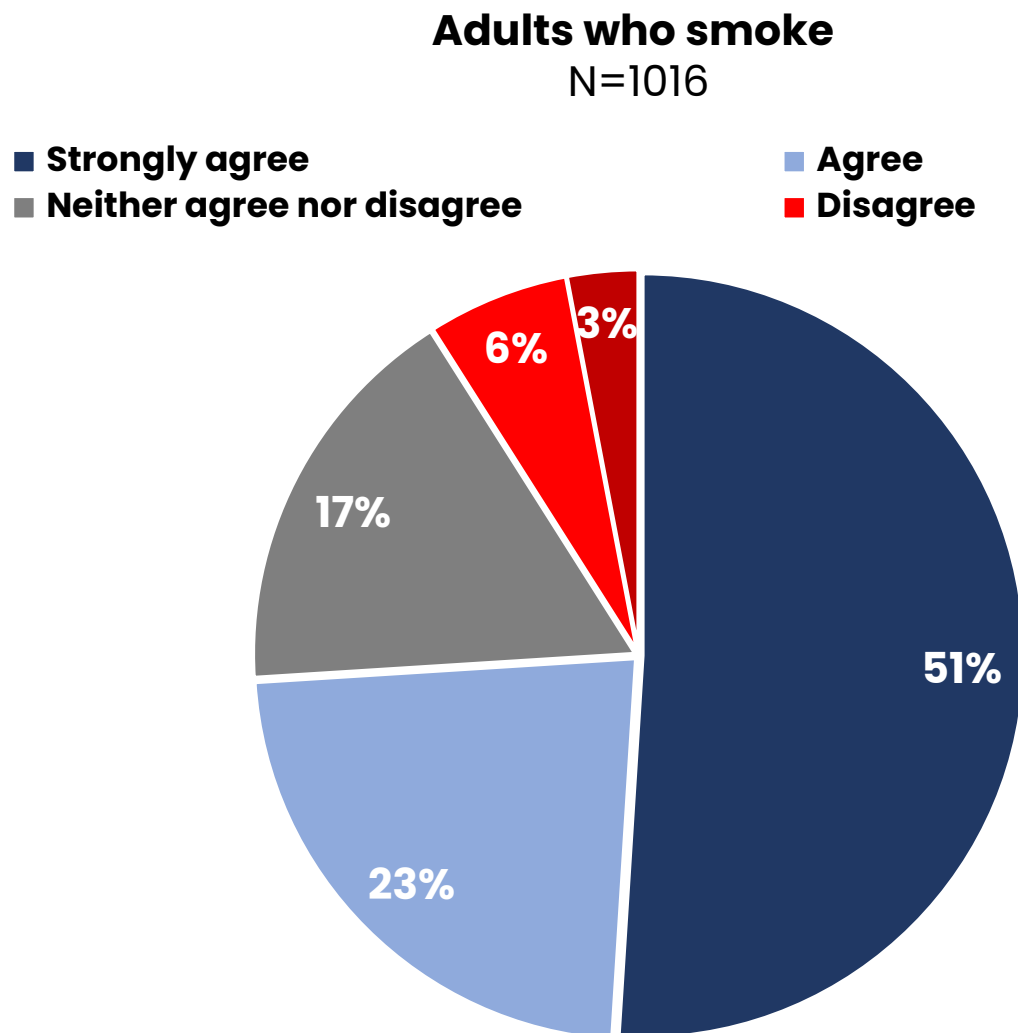
Evidence of the Need to Strengthen Tobacco Control in Aotearoa/New Zealand

Regret Starting Smoking

Three-quarters of adults who smoke regret that they ever started smoking cigarettes.

If I had a chance to live my life again, I would not have started smoking cigarettes.

RESPONDENTS WHO SMOKE, OCT-DEC 2022



Desire To Quit Smoking

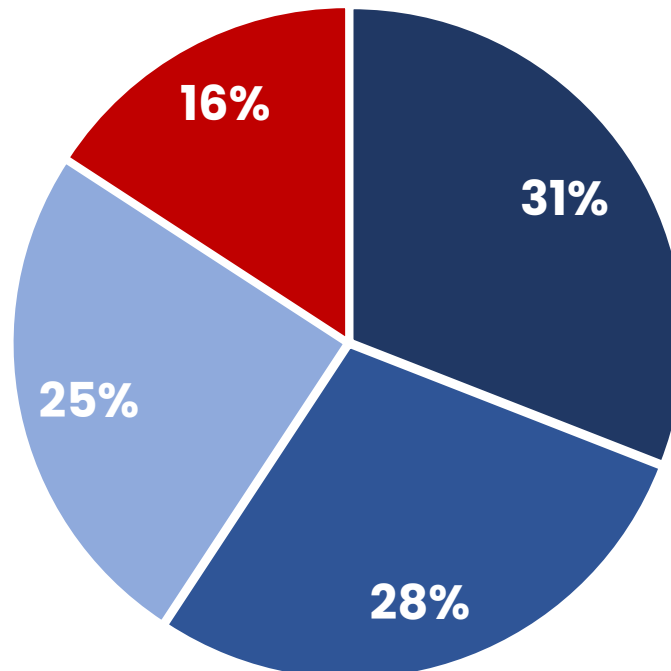
Over 80% of adults who smoke want to quit smoking.

How much do you want to stop smoking?

RESPONDENTS WHO SMOKE, OCT-DEC 2022

Adults who smoke
N=1020

■ **A lot** ■ **Somewhat** ■ **A little** ■ **Not at all**



Planning To Quit Smoking

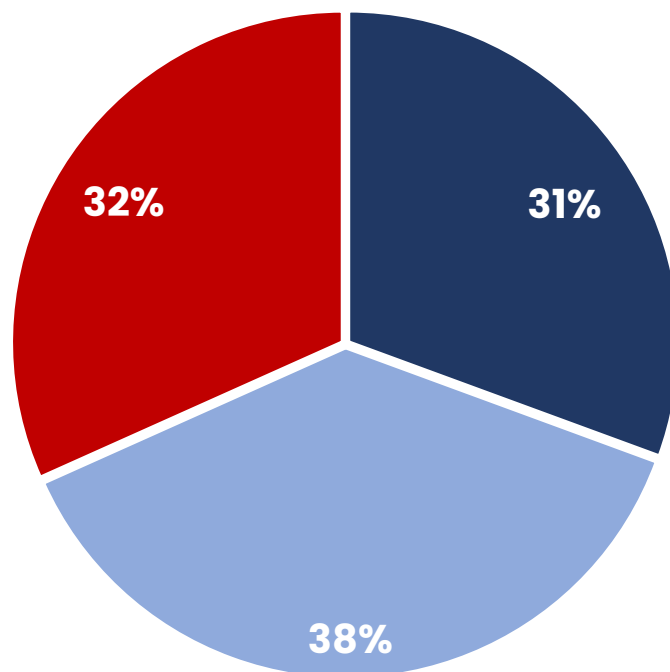
Over two-thirds of adults who smoke plan to quit smoking, and about one-third of adults who smoke plan to quit within 6 months.

Are you planning to stop smoking ...Within the next month, Between 1-6 months from now, Sometime in the future, Beyond 6 months, or Not planning to quit?

RESPONDENTS WHO SMOKE, OCT-DEC 2022

Adults who smoke
N=975

■ Within the next 6 months ■ Beyond 6 months ■ Not planning to quit



Ever Tried To Quit Smoking

Over 80% of adults who smoke had ever tried to quit smoking cigarettes, and over 40% of adults who smoke reported having attempted to quit in the last 12 months.

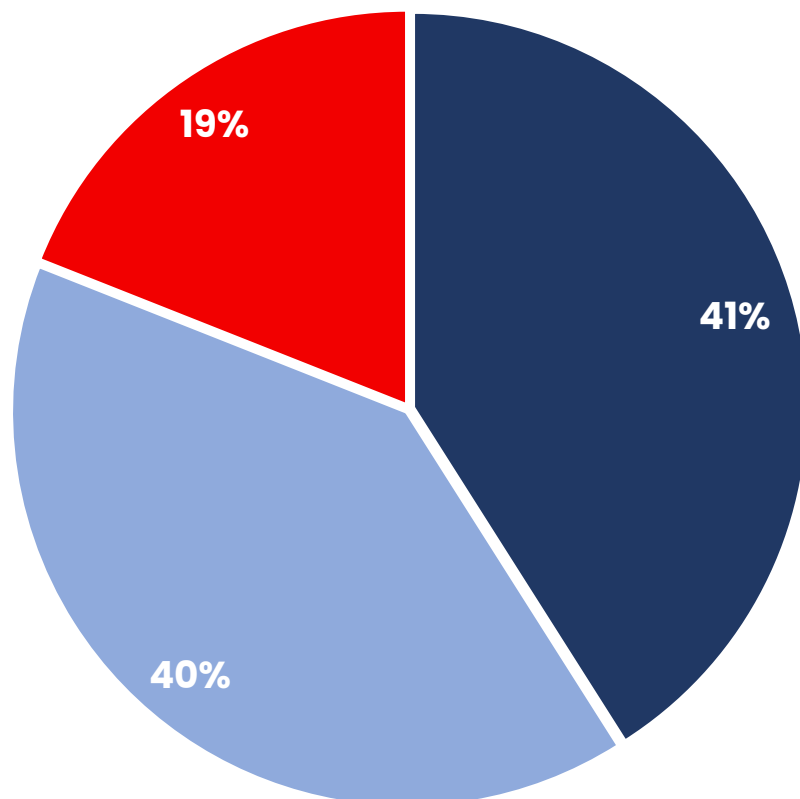
Have you ever tried to stop smoking?

Have you ever tried to stop smoking in the last 12 months?

ALL RESPONDENTS, OCT-DEC 2022

■ Tried to quit (in last 12 months) ■ Tried to quit (more than 12 months ago) ■ Never tried to quit

**Adults who smoke
N=1034**



Addicted To Smoking

Almost 90% of adults who smoke indicated that they consider themselves addicted to cigarettes. Nearly half of adults who smoke indicated that they consider themselves **very** addicted to cigarettes.

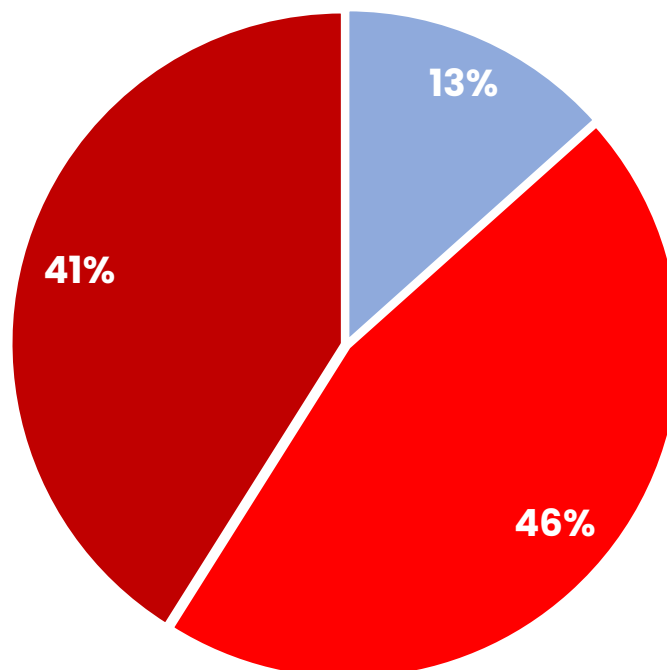
Do you consider yourself addicted to cigarettes?

RESPONDENTS WHO SMOKE, OCT-DEC 2022

Adults who smoke

N=1014

■ Not at all addicted ■ Somewhat addicted ■ Very addicted



Findings on Support For and Possible Impact of the Smokefree Aotearoa Plan

Smokefree 2025 Goal: Support

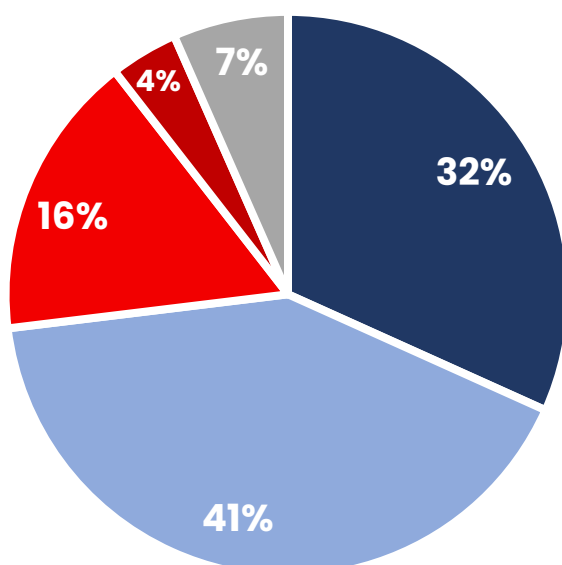
Three-quarters of adults who had recently stopped smoking and nearly half of the adults who smoke indicated that they support the New Zealand Smokefree 2025 goal.

Do you support or oppose the Smokefree 2025 policy goal?

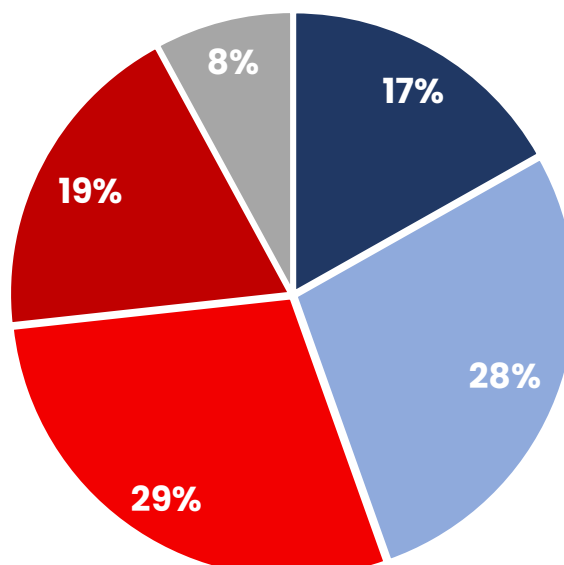
ALL RESPONDENTS, OCT-DEC 2022

■ Strongly support ■ Support ■ Oppose ■ Strongly oppose ■ Don't know

Adults who have stopped smoking
N=409



Adults who smoke
N=1011



Nicotine Reduction: Awareness

Only one-third of adults who had recently stopped smoking and adults who smoke were aware of the government's plan to allow only very low nicotine cigarettes and tobacco to be sold.

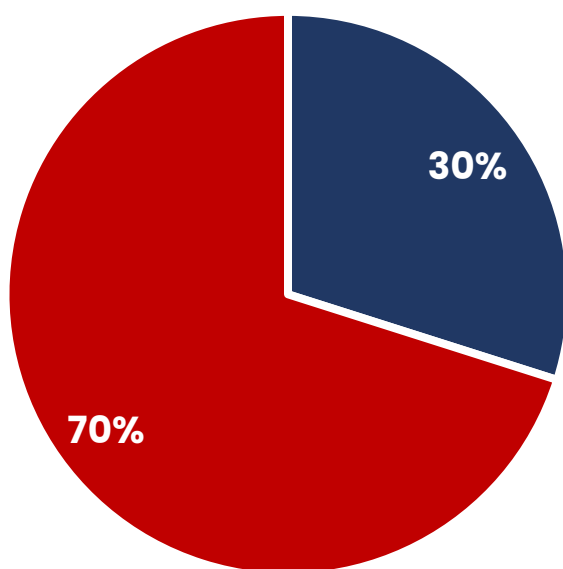
Have you heard that the government plans to allow only very low nicotine cigarettes and tobacco to be sold?

ALL RESPONDENTS, OCT-DEC 2022

■ Yes ■ No

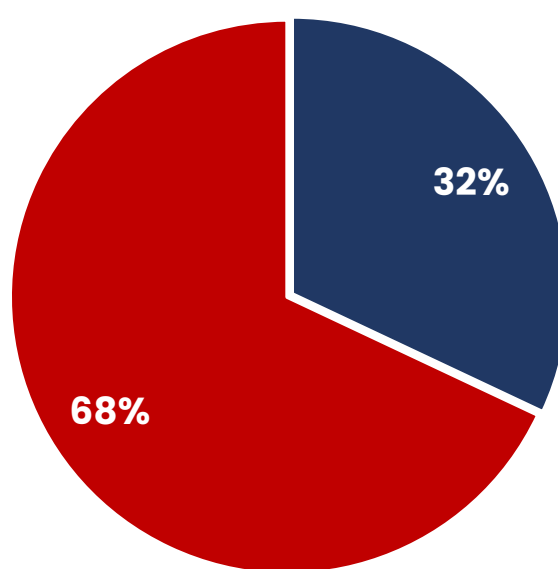
Adults who have stopped smoking

N=401



Adults who smoke

N=991



Nicotine Reduction: Support

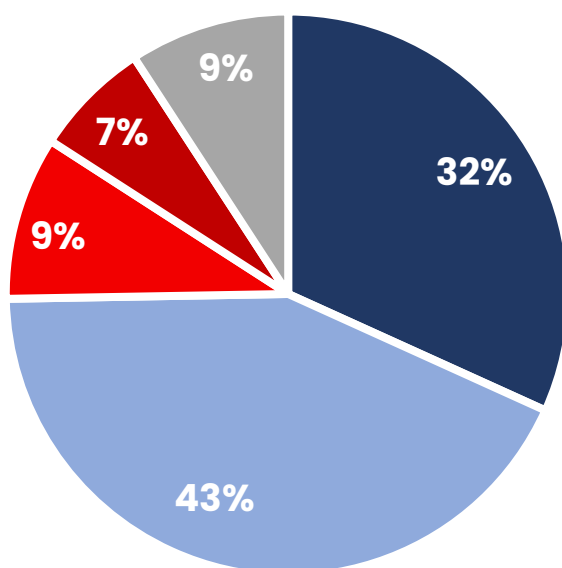
Three-quarters of adults who had recently stopped smoking and nearly half of adults who smoke indicated that they would support a law that reduces the amount of nicotine in cigarettes and tobacco to make them less addictive.

If you could get nicotine in products other than tobacco products, would you support or oppose a law that reduces the amount of nicotine in cigarettes and tobacco, to make them less addictive?

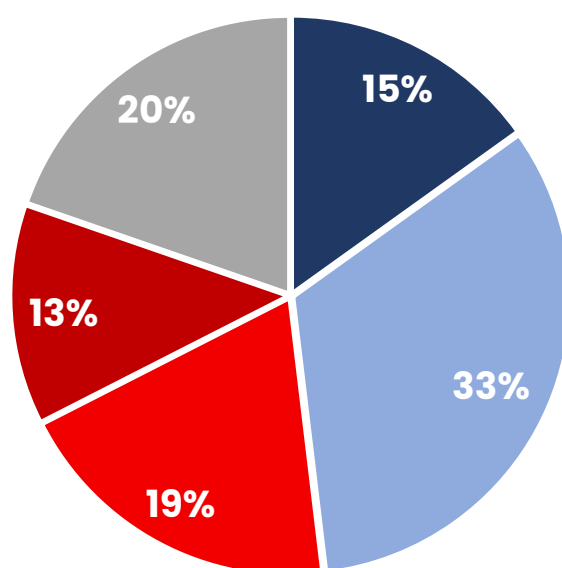
ALL RESPONDENTS, OCT-DEC 2022

■ Strongly support ■ Support ■ Oppose ■ Strongly oppose ■ Don't know

Adults who have stopped smoking
N=413



Adults who smoke
N=1027



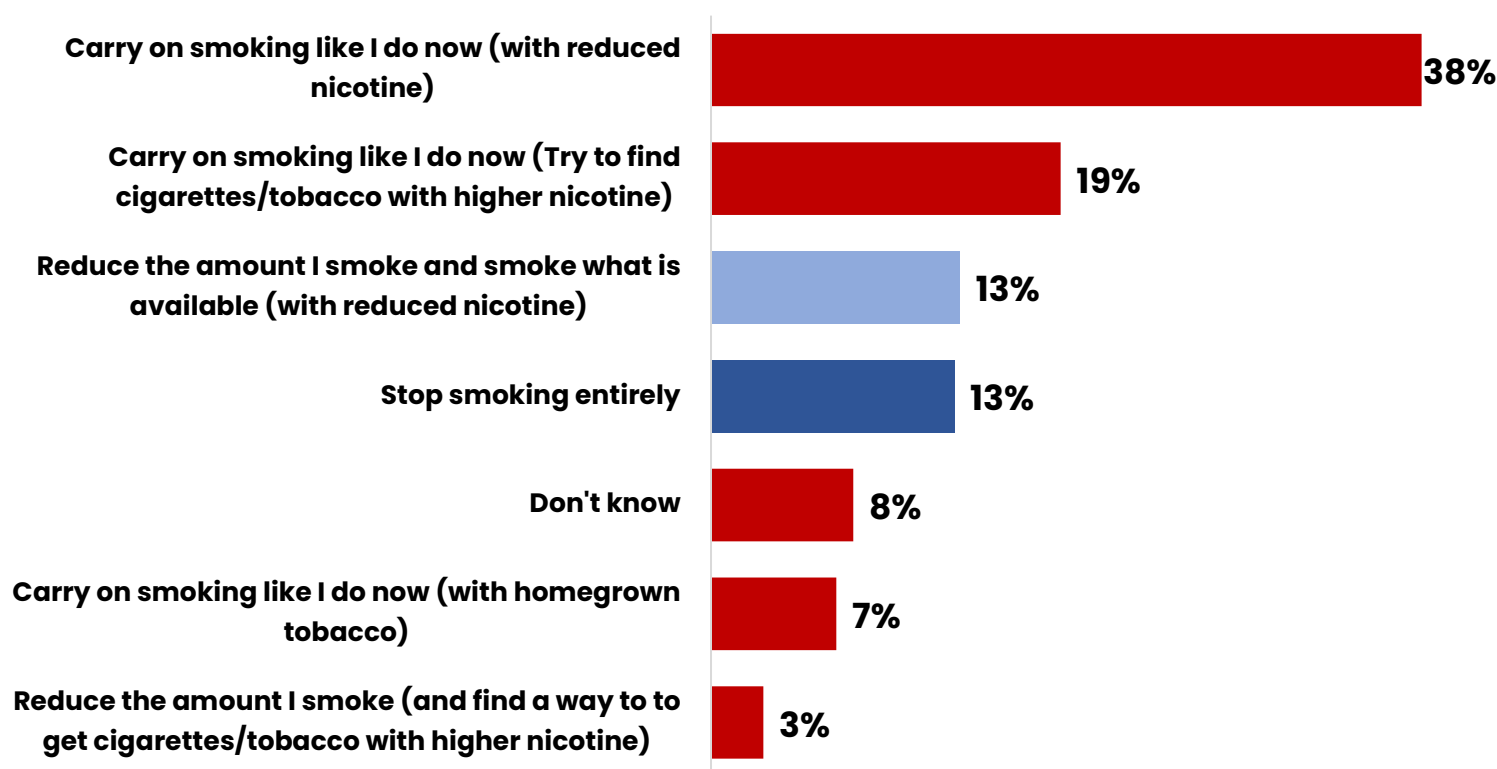
Nicotine Reduction: Perceived Impact

One-quarter of adults who smoke reported that they would either reduce the amount they smoke or quit smoking entirely if the nicotine content of cigarettes and tobacco was reduced so that they were no longer addictive.

Which ONE of the following would you be MOST LIKELY to do if the amount of nicotine in cigarettes and tobacco was greatly reduced so they were no longer addictive?

RESPONDENTS WHO SMOKE, OCT-DEC 2022

Adults who smoke N=1033



Smoke-free Generation: Awareness

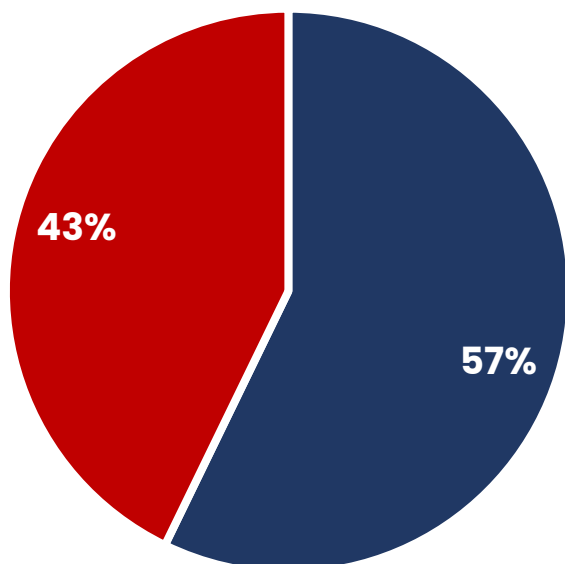
More than half of adults who had recently stopped smoking and adults who smoke were aware of the government's plan to prevent anyone who is born after January 1, 2009 from ever buying cigarettes or tobacco in their lifetime.

Have you heard that the government plans to prevent anyone who is born after January 1, 2009 from EVER buying cigarettes or tobacco in their LIFETIME? This policy is called the 'smoke-free generation' policy.

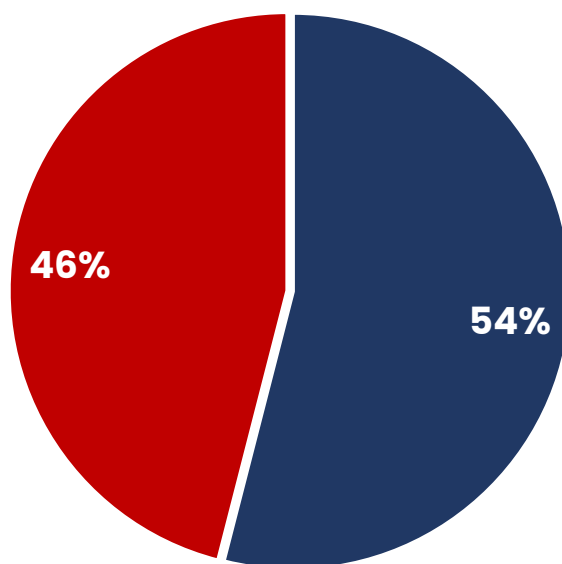
ALL RESPONDENTS, OCT-DEC 2022

■ Yes ■ No

**Adults who have
stopped smoking**
N=403



Adults who smoke
N=991



Smoke-free Generation: Support

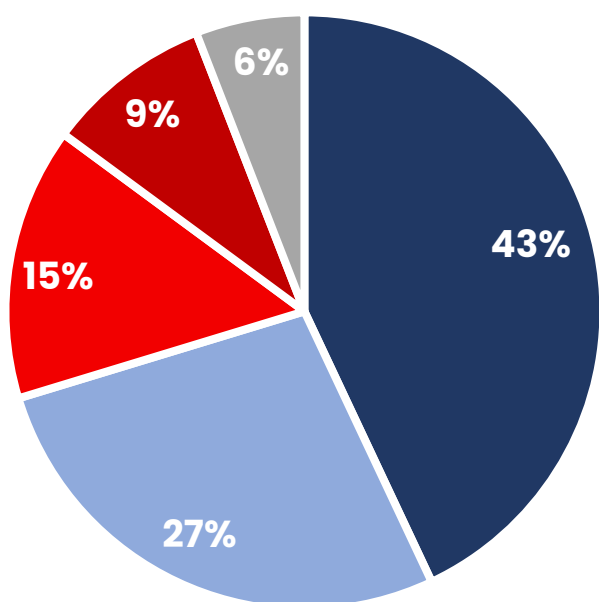
Over two-thirds of adults who had recently stopped smoking and nearly 60% of adults who smoke indicated that they would support a law that prevents anyone who is born after January 1, 2009 from ever buying cigarettes or tobacco in their lifetime.

Would you support or oppose a law that prevents anyone who is born after January 1, 2009 from EVER buying cigarettes or tobacco in their LIFETIME? This measure would eventually create a smoke-free generation.

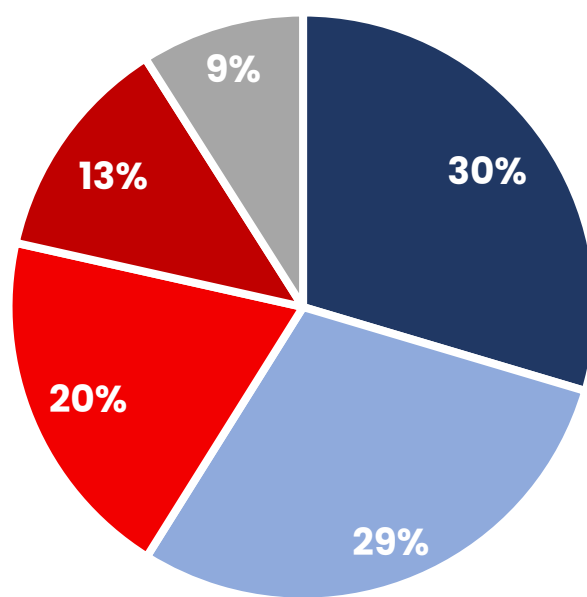
ALL RESPONDENTS, OCT-DEC 2022

■ Strongly support ■ Support ■ Oppose ■ Strongly oppose ■ Don't know

Adults who have stopped smoking
N=413



Adults who smoke
N=1014

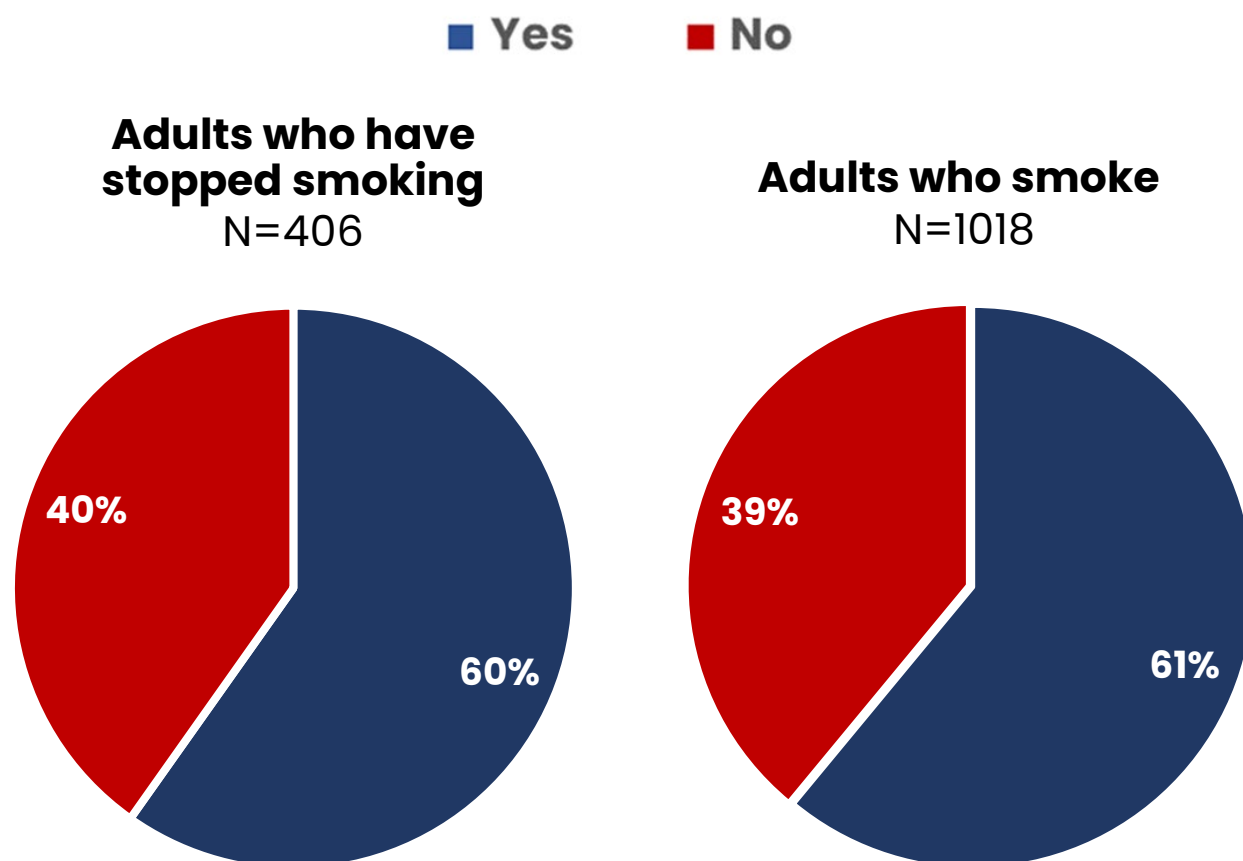


Retail Store Reduction: Awareness

Over 60% of adults who had recently stopped smoking and adults who smoke were aware of the government's plan to reduce the number of places that can sell tobacco.

Have you heard that the government plans to reduce the number of places that are allowed to sell cigarettes or tobacco?

ALL RESPONDENTS, OCT-DEC 2022



Retail Store Reduction: Support

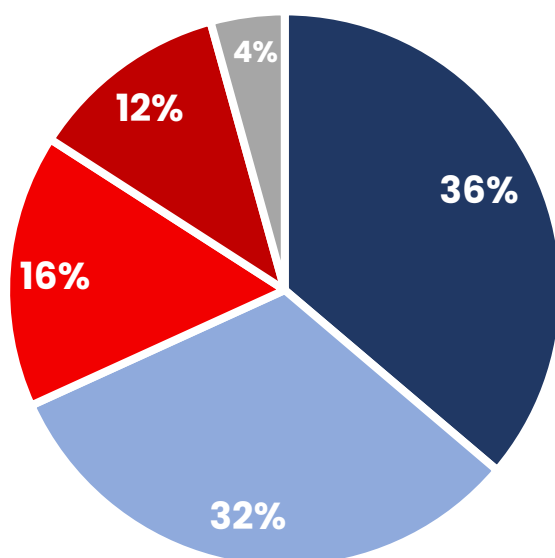
Over two-thirds of adults who had recently stopped smoking and 40% of adults who smoke indicated that they would support a law that reduces the number of places in New Zealand that are allowed to sell tobacco from 6000 to 600 or less.

Would you support or oppose a law that reduces the number of places in New Zealand that are allowed to sell tobacco – from around 6000 (the current number) to 600 or less?

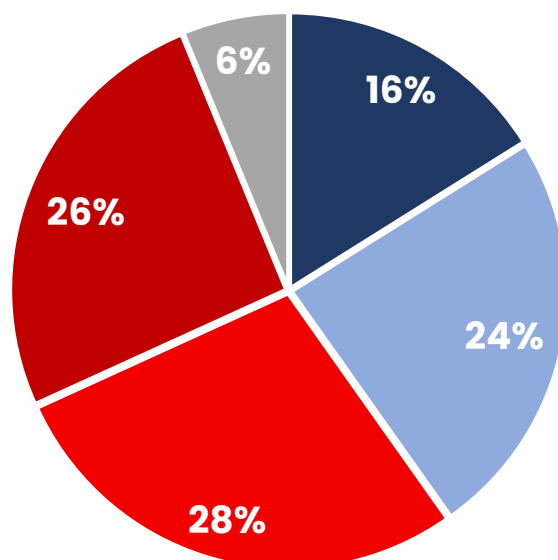
ALL RESPONDENTS, OCT-DEC 2022

■ Strongly support ■ Support ■ Oppose ■ Strongly oppose ■ Don't know

Adults who have stopped smoking
N=413



Adults who smoke
N=1025



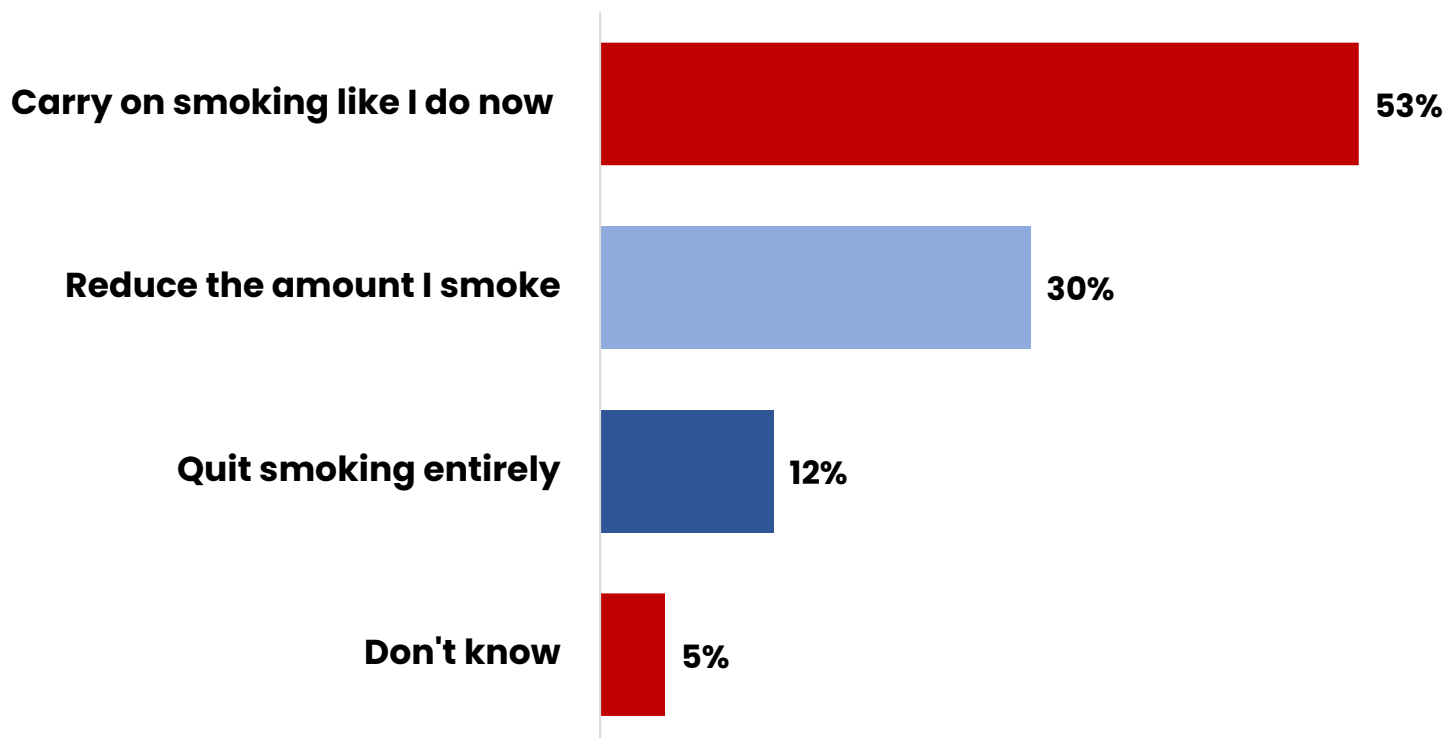
Retail Store Reduction: Perceived Impact

About one-third of adults who smoke stated that if the number of places in New Zealand that could sell tobacco was reduced from around 6000 to 300, they would reduce the amount they smoked; more than 10% stated that they would quit smoking entirely.

Which ONE of the following would you be MOST LIKELY to do if the number of places in New Zealand that could sell tobacco was reduced from around 6000 to 300?

RESPONDENTS WHO SMOKE, OCT-DEC 2022

Adults who smoke N=1033



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More information about the EASE/ITC New Zealand Project is available at <https://itcproject.org/countries/new-zealand/>.

For further information about the ITC Project see <https://itcproject.org/>.