

# Do risk-minimizing beliefs about smoking inhibit quitting? Findings from the International Tobacco Control (ITC) Four-Country Survey

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## Abstract

**Objective**—To replicate findings that risk-minimizing and self-exempting beliefs lower quit intentions, and to extend this by testing their capacity to prospectively predict smoking cessation.

**Method**—13,324 adult ( $\geq 18$  years) cigarette smokers from the USA, Canada, UK, and Australia from one of the first three waves (2002-2004) of the International Tobacco Control 4-Country survey were employed for the predictive analysis where beliefs measured in one wave (1-3) of a cohort were used to predict cessation outcomes in the next wave (2-4).

**Results**—Both types of belief were negatively associated with both intention to quit in the same wave and making a quit attempt at the next wave. When taken together and controlling for demographic factors, the risk-minimizing beliefs continued to be predictive, but the self-exempting belief was not. Some of the effects of risk-minimizing beliefs on quit attempts seem to be independent of intentions, but not consistently independent of other known predictors. There were no consistent predictive effects on sustained cessation among those who made attempts to quit for either measure.

**Conclusions**—Countering risk-minimizing beliefs may facilitate increased quitting, but this may not be so important for self-exempting beliefs.

## Keywords

Self-exempting beliefs; risk-minimizing; intention to quit; quit attempts; prospective prediction; smoking cessation

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