

Beliefs among Adult Smokers and Quitters about Nicotine and De-nicotinized Cigarettes in the 2016-17 ITC New Zealand Survey

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Abstract

Objectives: We sought to explore understanding of addiction and nicotine, as well as support and interest in low-nicotine cigarettes among New Zealand (NZ) smokers and recent quitters.

Methods: Data came from wave 1 (August 2016-April 2017) of the International Tobacco Control (ITC) NZ Survey, comprising 1090 smokers and recent quitters, including 363 identifying as Māori (the NZ indigenous population).

Results: Most participants (74%) were interested in trying low-nicotine or nicotine-free cigarettes and 80% supported introducing a law to reduce nicotine in cigarettes and tobacco if nicotine was available through alternative products. Support was similar among demographic groups, smokers, recent quitters, and daily and occasional smokers. Nearly all participants believed smoking is addictive and nicotine is the major cause of addiction. Almost half erroneously thought nicotine is the main cause of cancer from cigarettes.

Conclusions: Findings suggest that introducing mandated low-nicotine cigarettes could be feasible in NZ where alternative nicotine delivery products are widely available. However, implementation may need to be accompanied by public education to correct misperceptions about the harmfulness of nicotine and to encourage switching to alternative nicotine delivery products among smokers who cannot quit nicotine completely.

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