

# Time perspective as a predictor of smoking status: Findings from the International Tobacco Control (ITC) Surveys in Scotland, France, Germany, China, and Malaysia

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## Abstract

**Background:** Prior studies have demonstrated that time perspective—the propensity to consider short- versus long-term consequences of one’s actions—is a potentially important predictor of health-related behaviors, including smoking. However, most prior studies have been conducted within single high-income countries. The aim of this study was to examine whether time perspective was associated with the likelihood of being a smoker or non-smoker across five countries that vary in smoking behavior and strength of tobacco control policies.

**Methods:** The data were from the International Tobacco Control (ITC) Surveys in five countries with large probability samples of both smokers (N=10,341) and non-smokers (N=4,955): Scotland, France, Germany, China, and Malaysia. The surveys were conducted between 2005 and 2008. Survey respondents indicated their smoking status (smoker vs. non-smoker) and time perspective (future oriented vs. not future-oriented) and provided demographic information.

**Results:** Across all five countries, non-smokers were significantly more likely to be future-oriented (66%) than were smokers (57%),  $\chi^2 (1, N = 15,244) = 120.64, p < .001$ . This bivariate relationship between time perspective and smoking status held in a multivariate analysis. After controlling for country, age, sex, income, education, and ethnicity (language in France), those who were future-oriented had 36% greater odds of being a non-smoker than a smoker (95% CI: 1.22 to 1.51,  $p < .001$ ).

**Conclusion:** These findings establish time perspective as an important predictor of smoking status across multiple countries and suggest the potential value of incorporating material to enhance future orientation in smoking cessation interventions.

**Keywords:** Time perspective, Future orientation, Tobacco, Smoking, Smoking status, International

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