

# Support and perceived impact of key Smokefree policies in Aotearoa/New Zealand

**FINDINGS FROM THE ITC YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT SURVEY**

DAVID HAMMOND, JESSICA L. REID, JUDE BALL, RICHARD EDWARDS, JANET HOEK, ANARU WAA, JAMES STANLEY, AND ROBIN BURKHALTER, ON BEHALF OF THE ITC YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT TOBACCO AND VAPING SURVEY TEAM

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## **ETHICS CLEARANCE**

THE PROJECT HAS BEEN REVIEWED BY AND RECEIVED ETHICS CLEARANCE THROUGH A UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD (ORE#31017) AND A UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO ETHICS COMMITTEE (23/065).

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## **CONTACT**

DAVID HAMMOND PhD  
PROFESSOR  
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH SCIENCES  
UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO  
DHAMMOND@UWATERLOO.CA

JUDE BALL PhD  
SENIOR RESEARCH FELLOW  
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH  
UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO  
ASPIRE@OTAGO.AC.NZ



# Executive summary

A national survey was conducted in 2023 in Aotearoa/New Zealand among 3,414 youth (aged 16–19) and young adults (aged 20–29), as part of the International Tobacco Control (ITC) Policy Evaluation Project. The current report summarizes findings on awareness, support, and perceived impact for three of Aotearoa/New Zealand’s Smokefree policies: limits on retail stores, nicotine reduction, and smokefree generation.

## RETAIL STORE NUMBER

- More than half of youth and young adults were aware of the government’s policy (at the time of the survey) to greatly reduce the number of places that can sell tobacco from around 6000 (the current number) to 600 or fewer.
- The vast majority (78%) of youth and young adults indicated support for such a law, with little opposition (15%). Even among those who smoked, the majority (nearly 60%) supported this measure.
- Two-thirds of youth and young adults who smoked said they would either stop smoking (20%) or reduce the amount they smoke (44%) if the government reduced the number of tobacco retailers to 600 or fewer.

## NICOTINE REDUCTION

- Approximately one-third of youth and young adults were aware of the government’s plan to allow only very low nicotine cigarettes and tobacco to be sold.
- Overall, 68% of youth and young adults indicated they would support a nicotine reduction policy to make cigarettes and tobacco less addictive. Fewer than one in five opposed the law. Support was high even among those who smoked: over 60% indicated support and only one-quarter were opposed.
- When people who smoked were asked what they would most likely do if the nicotine in cigarettes was greatly reduced, nearly half of youth and young adults said they would quit or reduce their smoking.

## SMOKEFREE GENERATION

- More than half of youth and young adults reported that they had heard of the ‘smokefree generation’ policy, which would prevent anyone born on or after January 1, 2009 from ever being sold cigarettes or tobacco.
- Overall, 79% of youth and young adults indicated that they would support the law. Few (14%) were opposed. Among those who smoked, nearly two-thirds of youth and three-quarters of young adults supported the smokefree generation law.

Overall, youth and young adults indicated very high levels of support for New Zealand’s Smokefree goals and policies. Among youth and young adults who smoked, many indicated they would quit or reduce their smoking if the policies were implemented.

# Methods

## OVERVIEW

The ITC Youth & Young Adult Tobacco and Vaping Survey is a repeat cross-sectional survey conducted annually since 2017 (and semi-annually in 2020 and 2021) in Canada, England, and the United States (US), and beginning in 2023 in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The ITC surveys examine trends in tobacco use and vaping. This report summarizes key findings from the 2023 survey wave in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

## SAMPLE

Aotearoa/New Zealand respondents included youth aged 16–19 years and young adults aged 20–29 years, recruited through commercial panels (Dynata and TGM). Respondents received compensation for their time spent completing the survey, in accordance with their panel's usual incentive structure.

## SURVEY

Data was collected in August–September 2023 via self-completed online surveys. The survey covers the following topics:

- prevalence and patterns of smoking and vaping;
- use of 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; 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 young people in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Post-stratification survey weights were created using age-by-sex-by-race/ethnicity groups, separately for youth and young adults, using population estimates from the Census. 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:

<http://davidhammond.ca/projects/e-cigarettes/itc-youth-tobacco-ecig/>

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

# Sample

	<b>Youth</b> <b>Age 16-19</b> N=1021	<b>Young adults</b> <b>Age 20-29</b> N=2393
<b>Sex-at-birth</b>		
Female	48.9%	49.0%
Male	51.1%	51.0%
<b>Race/ethnicity*</b>		
Māori	23.6%	18.4%
Pacific	9.7%	8.2%
Asian	13.7%	21.3%
Middle Eastern, Latin American, African, Other	2.2%	2.8%
NZ European/European	50.9%	49.3%
<b>Student status</b>		
Current/returning student	78.7%	25.4%
Else	21.2%	74.6%
<b>Family financial status</b>		
Not meeting basic expenses	5.4%	4.6%
Just meeting basic expenses	29.0%	32.4%
Meeting needs with a little left over	31.4%	36.7%
Living comfortably	29.3%	23.6%
Not stated	5.1%	2.8%
<b>Household income</b>		
Less than \$14,999	10.6%	6.5%
\$15,000-29,999	8.6%	5.5%
\$30,000-49,999	6.5%	9.5%
\$50,000-79,999	17.2%	24.7%
\$80,000-99,999	15.0%	14.1%
\$100,000-149,999	18.3%	19.9%
\$150,000 and above	12.3%	12.7%
Not stated	11.6%	7.0%

ALL ESTIMATES WEIGHTED

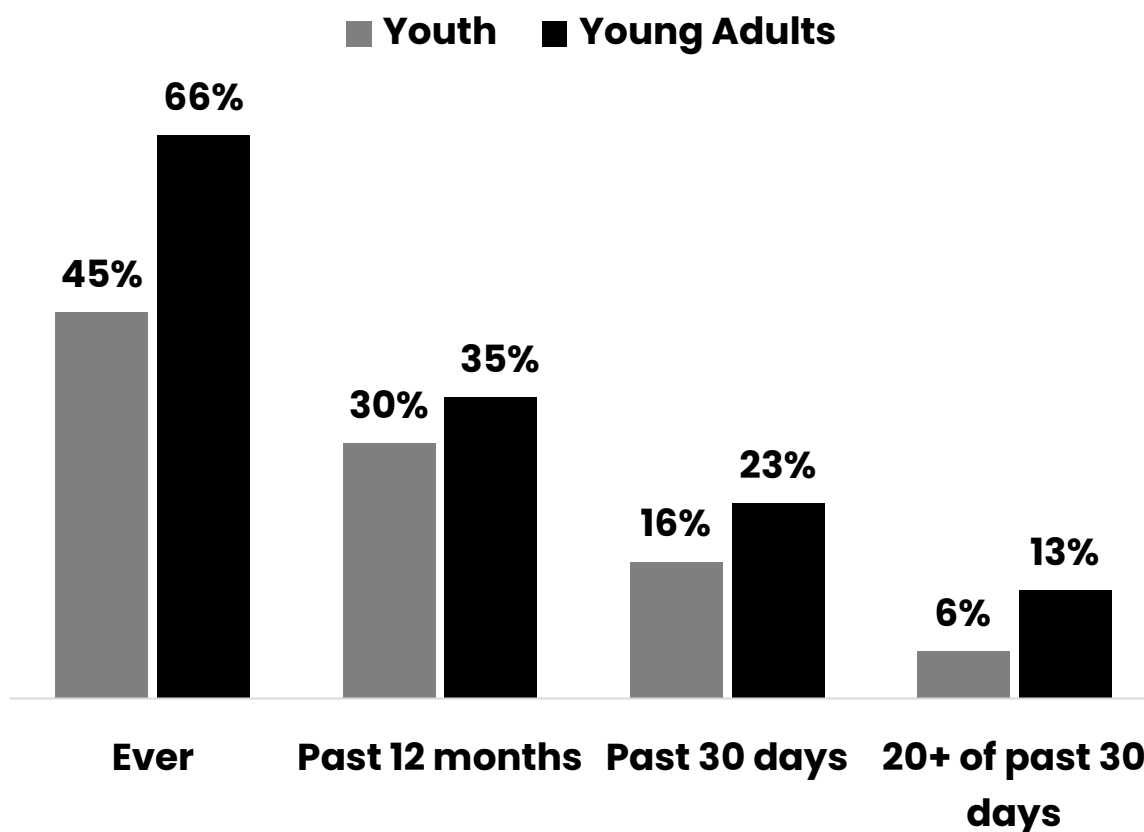
\*RACE/ETHNICITY CATEGORIZED IN PRIORITY ORDER AS LISTED (I.E., RESPONDENTS REPRESENTED IN FIRST CATEGORY THEY SELECTED)

# Smoking prevalence

Almost half of youth aged 16–19 in New Zealand reported having ever smoked a cigarette; approximately 16% had smoked a cigarette in the past 30 days, including 6% who reported smoking on 20 or more of the past 30 days (i.e., daily or near-daily smoking). Prevalence estimates among young adults aged 20–29 were greater than among youth for all measures, particularly for smoking on 20 or more of the past 30 days.

## Cigarette smoking: ever, in the past 12 months, in the past 30 days, and on 20 or more of the past 30 days

ALL RESPONDENTS, 2023 AUG/SEPT, N=1021 YOUTH, N=2393 YOUNG ADULTS



# Retail store limits - Awareness

Among youth and young adults, just over half were aware of the policy included in the 2022 Smokefree legislation to greatly reduce the number of places that can sell tobacco. Awareness was slightly higher among young adults than youth, and was similar among people who smoked and those who did not.

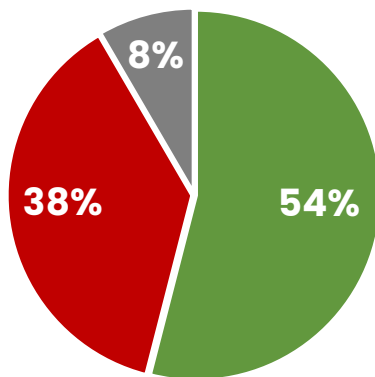
## Have you heard that the government plans to dramatically reduce the number of places that are allowed to sell cigarettes or tobacco?

ALL RESPONDENTS, 2023 AUG/SEPT

■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know

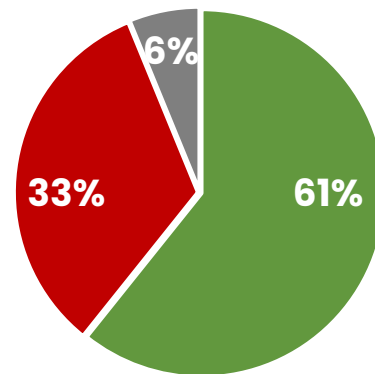
### Youth

N=1020



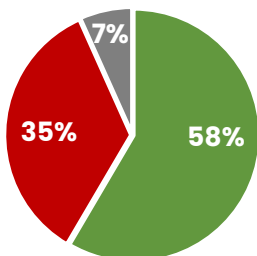
### Young adults

N=2390



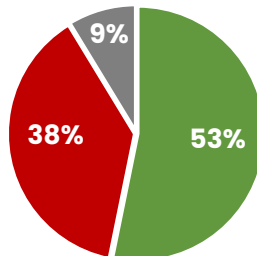
### Smoked in past 30 days

n=164



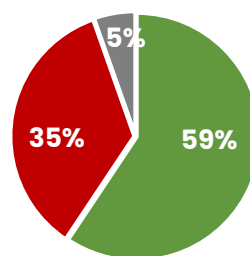
### Did not smoke

n=856



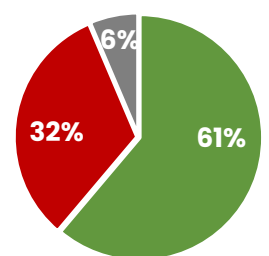
### Smoked in past 30 days

n=545



### Did not smoke

n=1845



# Retail store limits - Support

Overall, the vast majority (78%) of youth and young adults indicated that they would support a law that reduces the number of places in New Zealand that are allowed to sell tobacco to 600 or fewer. Relatively few opposed the law (15% overall: 13% of youth and 16% of young adults).

While support was lower among those who smoked, nearly 60% of these respondents still supported the law, and only about one-third opposed it.

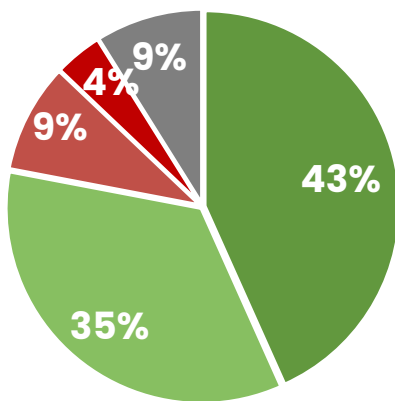
**Would you support or oppose a law that reduces the number of places in New Zealand that are allowed to sell tobacco - from around 6000 (the current number) to 600 or less?**

ALL RESPONDENTS, 2023 AUG/SEPT

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

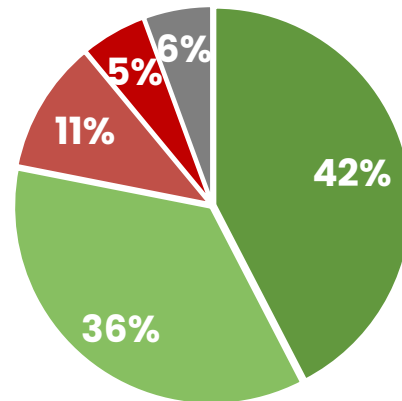
## Youth

N=1019



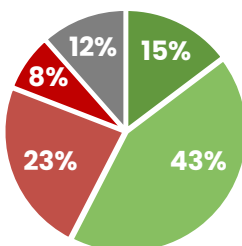
## Young adults

N=2389



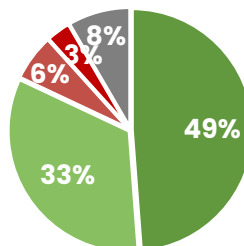
### Smoked in past 30 days

n=164



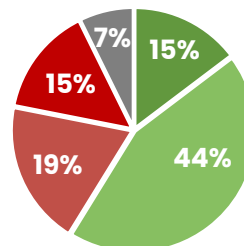
### Did not smoke

n=855



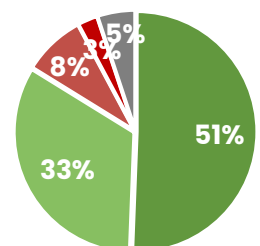
### Smoked in past 30 days

n=545



### Did not smoke

n=1843





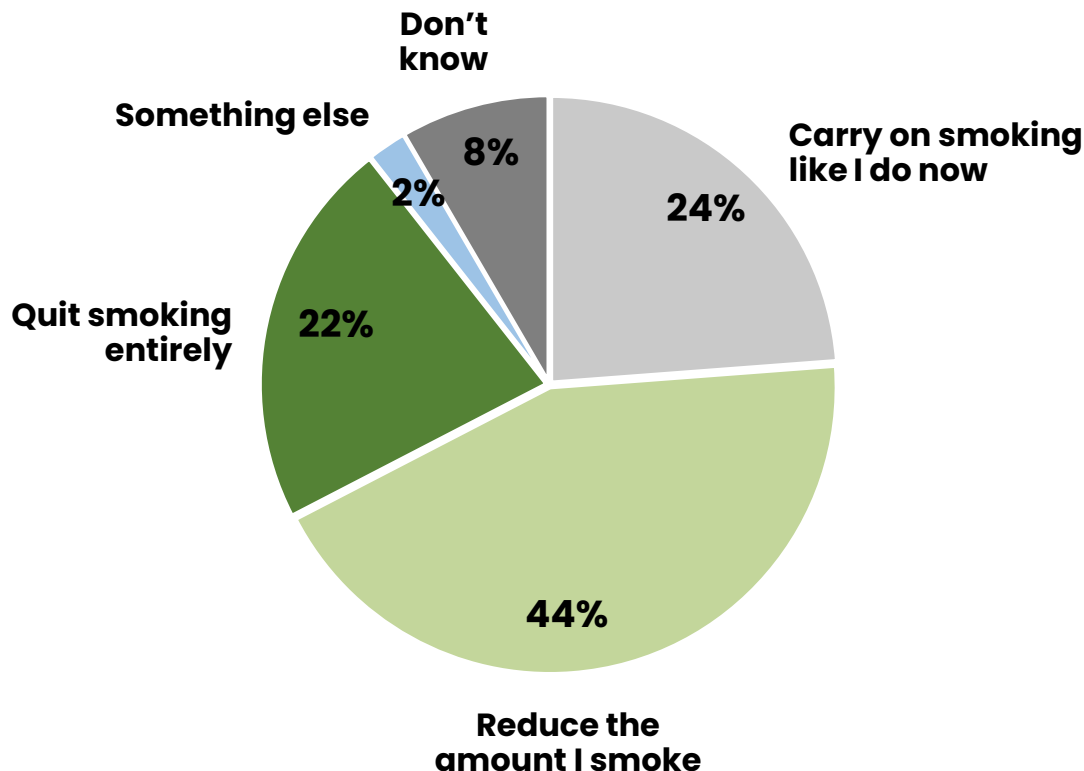
# Retail store limits – Perceived impact

## YOUTH

When asked what they would most likely do if the number of tobacco retailers was reduced, two-thirds of youth aged 16–19 who smoked said they would quit or reduce their smoking.

**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 600 or less?**

YOUTH AGED 16–19 WHO SMOKED IN THE PAST 30 DAYS, n=164



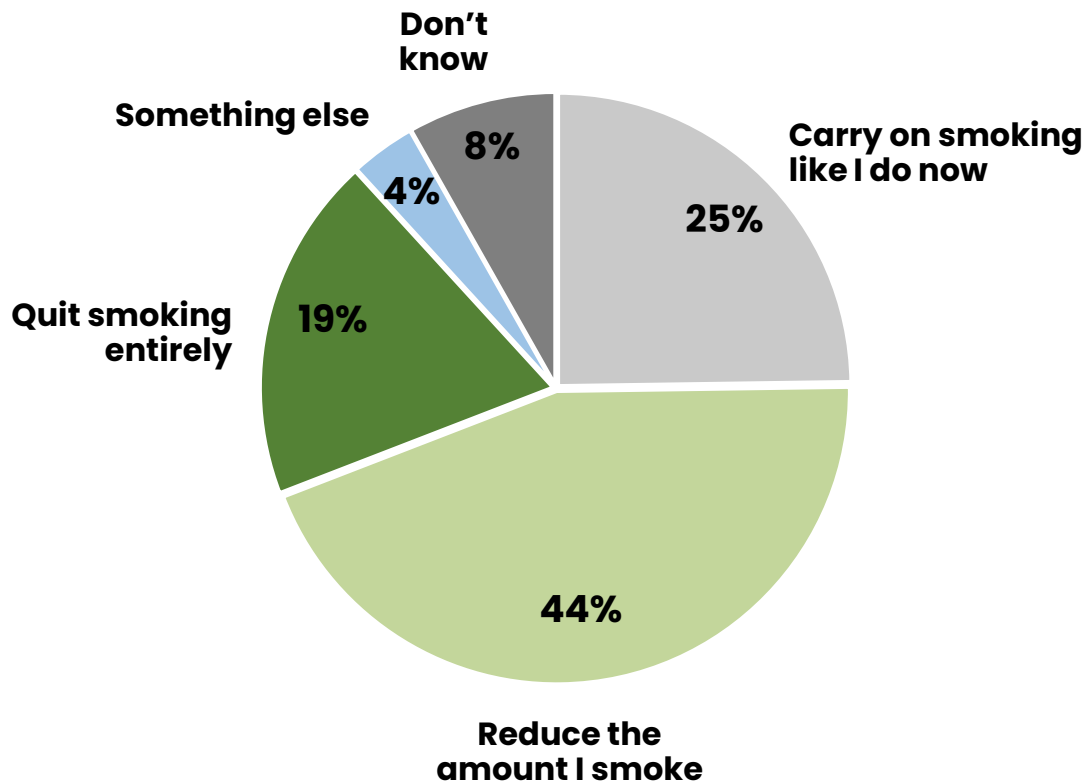
# Retail store limits – Perceived impact

## YOUNG ADULTS

When asked what they would most likely do if the number of tobacco retailers was reduced, nearly two-thirds of young adults aged 20–29 who smoked said they would quit or reduce their smoking.

**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 600 or less?**

YOUNG ADULTS AGED 20–29 WHO SMOKED IN THE PAST 30 DAYS, n=545



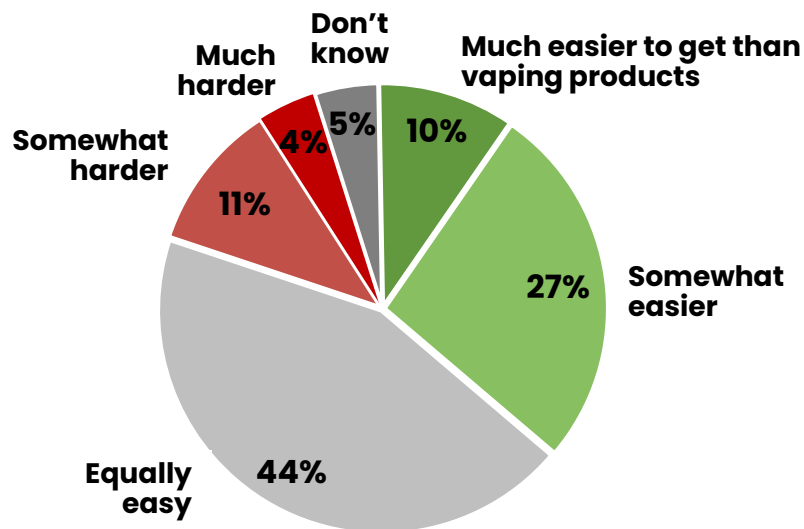
# Perceived access to tobacco

Youth and young adults who smoked in the past 30 days were asked about ease of access to tobacco and cigarettes, compared with vaping products. Over one-third reported that tobacco was easier to get than vaping products, while relatively few reported that tobacco was harder to get.

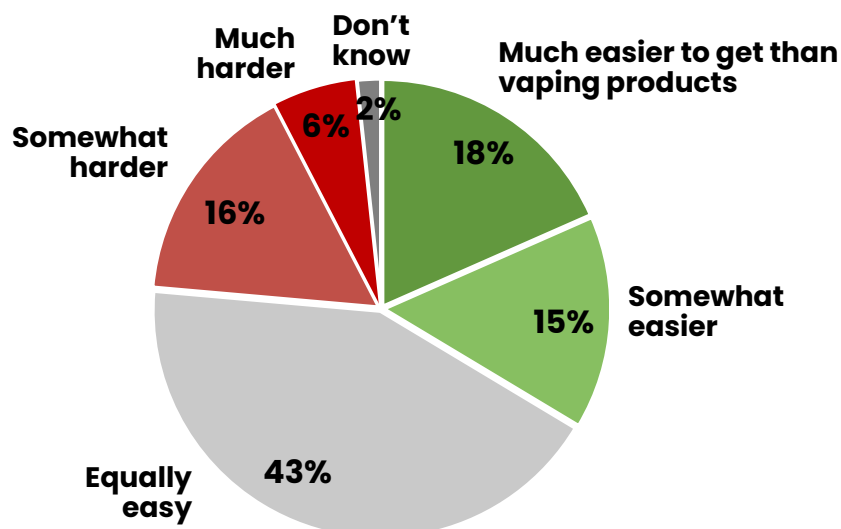
## Compared to vaping products, do you think ordinary cigarettes or tobacco are easier or harder to get?

AMONG THOSE WHO SMOKED IN THE PAST 30 DAYS, 2023 AUG/SEPT

**Youth**  
n=164



**Young adults**  
n=545



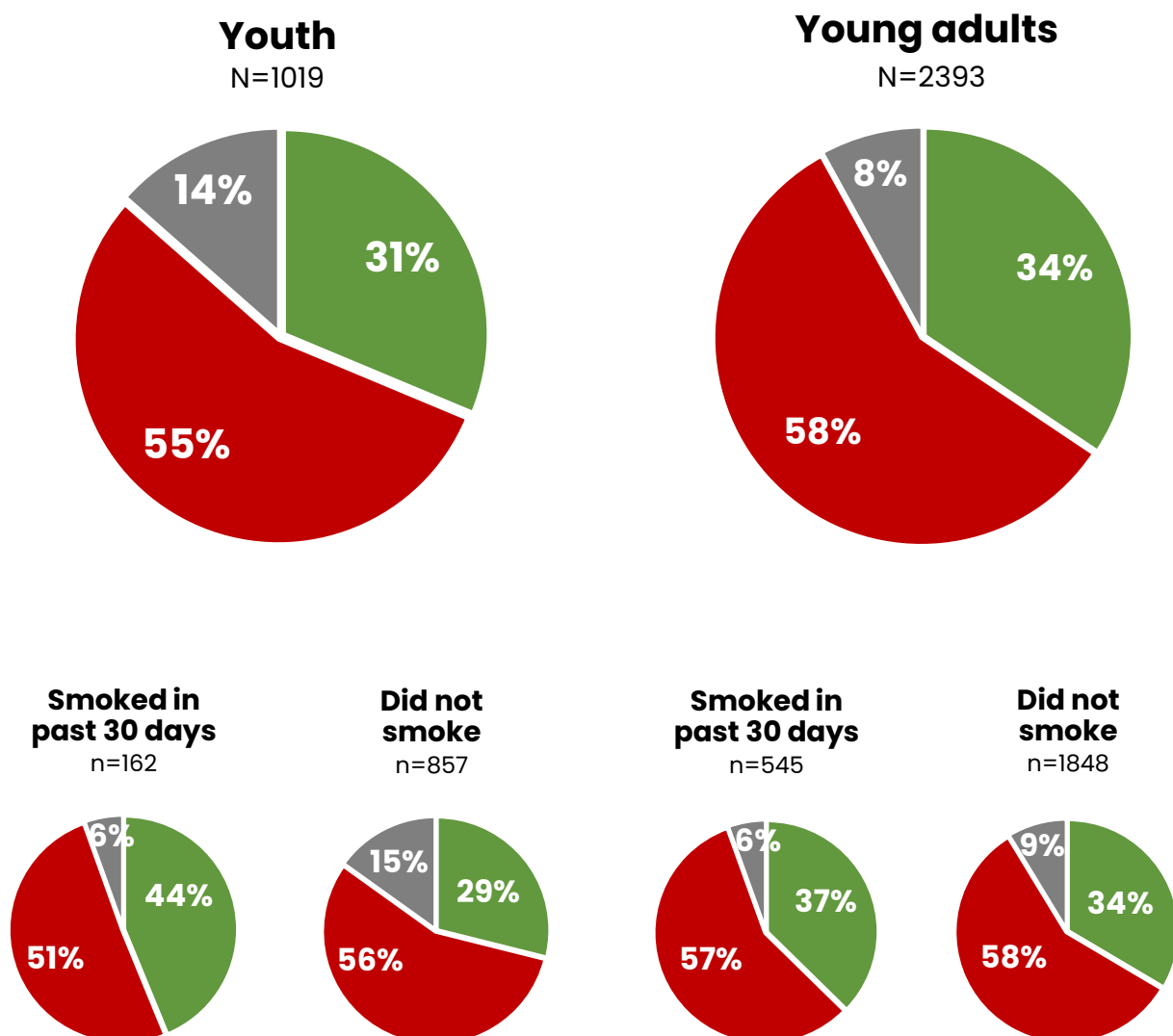
# Nicotine reduction – Awareness

Overall, approximately one-third of youth and young adults were aware of the government’s plan to allow only very low nicotine cigarettes and tobacco to be sold, while more than half said they were not. Awareness was higher among youth who had smoked in the past 30 days than those who had not.

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

ALL RESPONDENTS, 2023 AUG/SEPT

■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know



# Nicotine reduction – Support

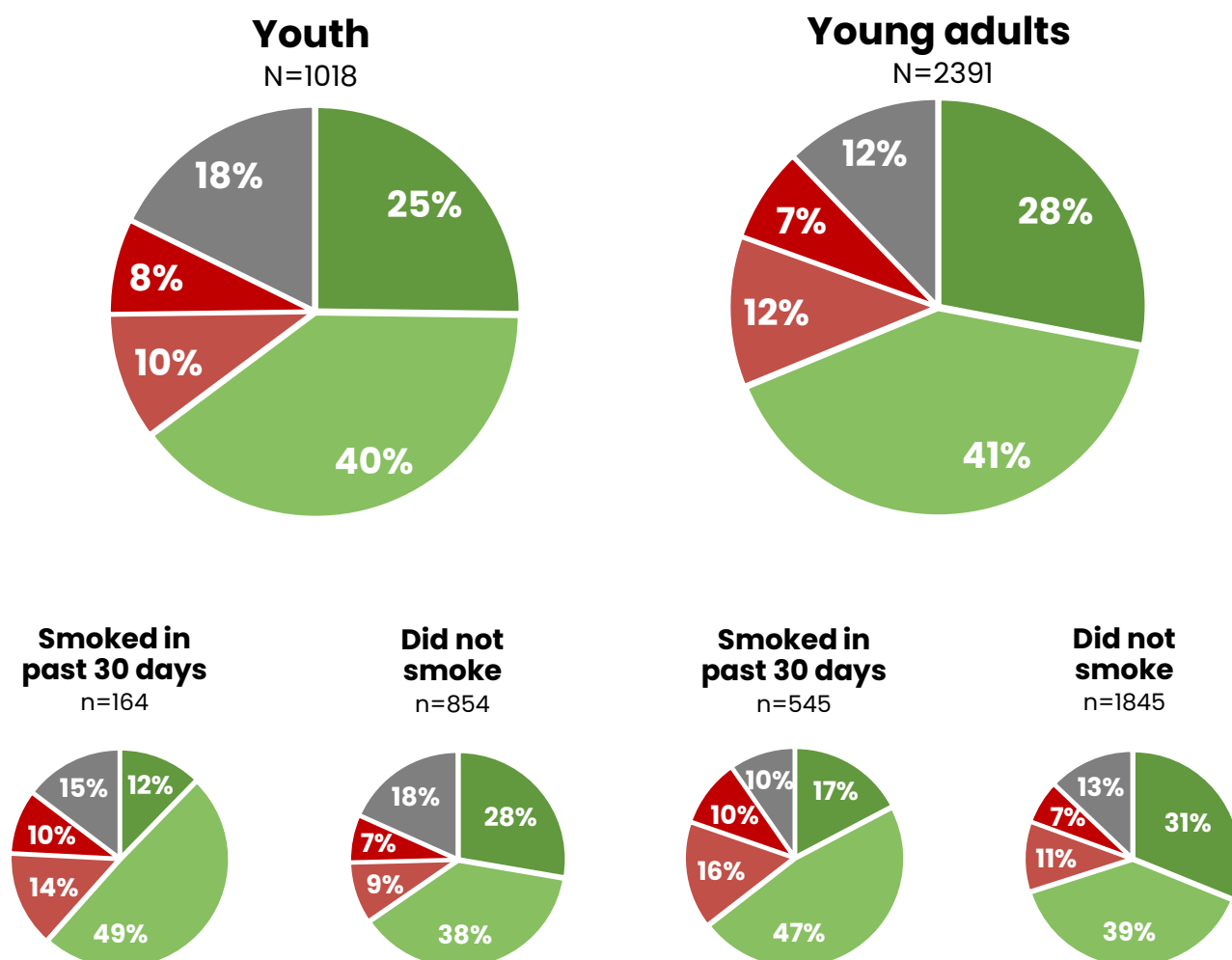
Overall, 68% (65% of youth and 69% of young adults) indicated that they would support a law that reduces the amount of nicotine in cigarettes and tobacco, to make them less addictive. Fewer than one in five opposed the law.

Support was stronger among those who did not smoke. However, even among those who smoked, over 60% indicated support, and only one-quarter of youth (24%) and young adults (26%) were opposed.

**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, 2023 AUG/SEPT

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



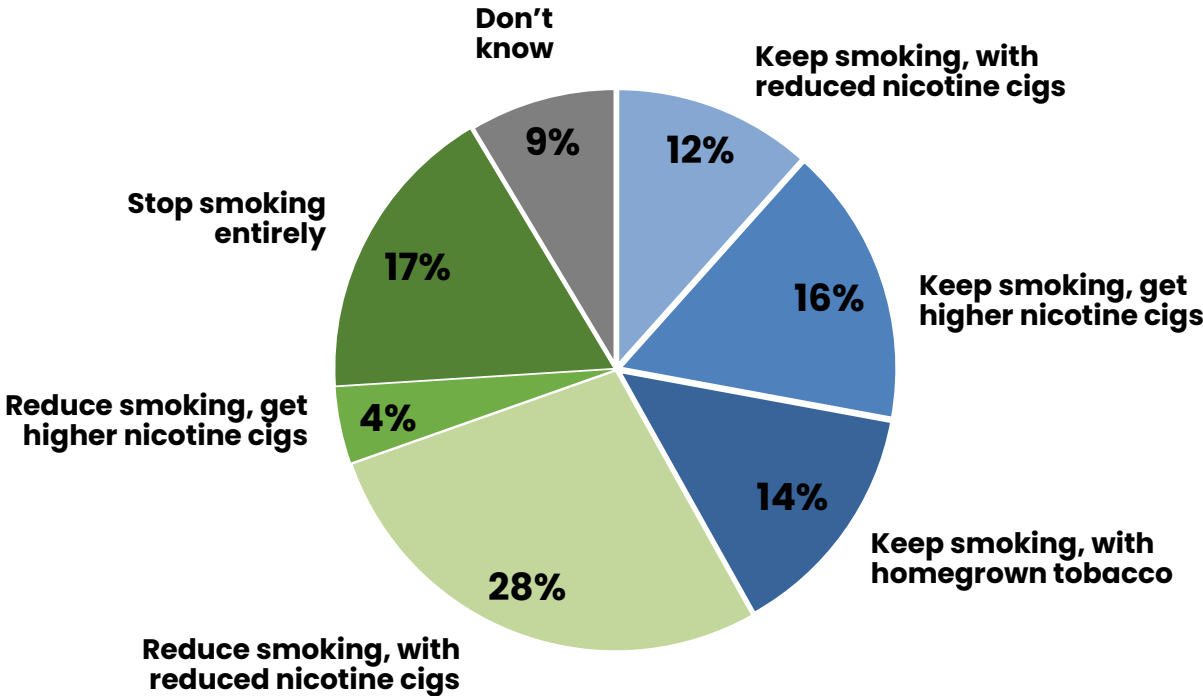
# Nicotine reduction – Perceived impact

## YOUTH

When youth aged 16-19 who had smoked in the past 20-days were asked what they would most likely do if the nicotine in cigarettes was greatly reduced, about half of youth said they would quit or reduce their smoking.

**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?**

YOUTH AGED 16-19 WHO SMOKED IN THE PAST 30 DAYS, n=164



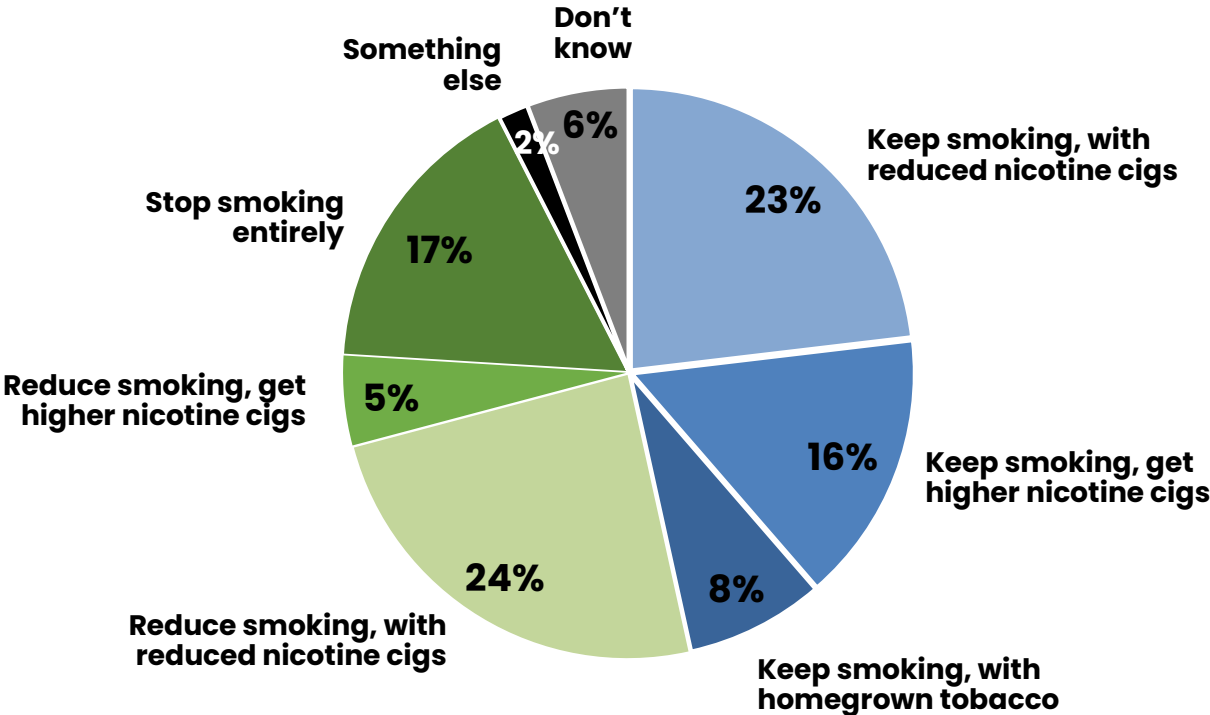
# Nicotine reduction – Perceived impact

## YOUNG ADULTS

When young adults aged 20–29 who smoked in the past 30–days were asked what they would most likely do if the nicotine in cigarettes was greatly reduced, nearly half of young adults said they would quit or reduce their smoking.

**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?**

YOUNG ADULTS AGED 20–29 WHO SMOKED IN THE PAST 30 DAYS, n=545



# Smokefree generation – Awareness

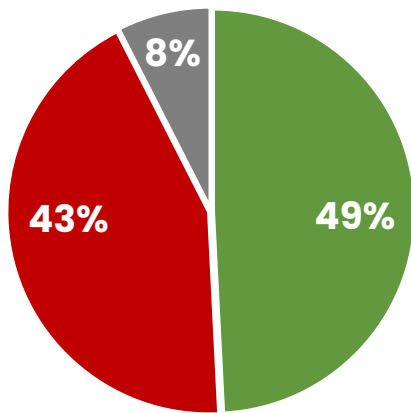
Nearly half of youth, and more than half of young adults, reported that they had heard of the ‘smokefree generation’ policy, which would prevent anyone born on or after January 1, 2009 from ever being sold cigarettes or tobacco. Awareness was slightly lower among those who had smoked in the past 30 days.

**Have you heard that the government plans to prevent anyone who is born after January 1, 2009 from EVER being sold cigarettes or tobacco in their LIFETIME? This policy is called the ‘smokefree generation’ policy.**

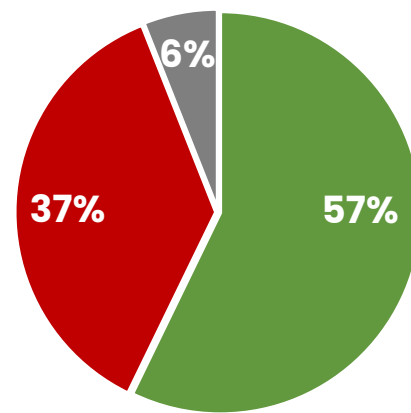
ALL RESPONDENTS, 2023 AUG/SEPT

■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know

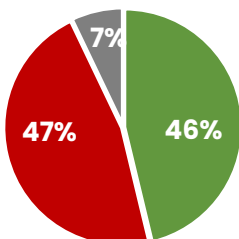
**Youth**  
N=1020



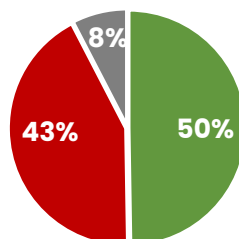
**Young adults**  
N=2392



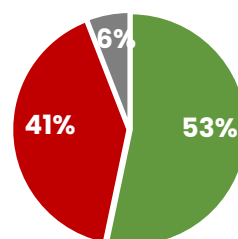
**Smoked in past 30 days**  
n=163



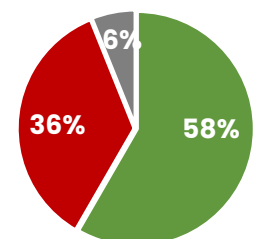
**Did not smoke**  
n=857



**Smoked in past 30 days**  
n=545



**Did not smoke**  
n=1847





# Smokefree generation – Support

Overall, 79% (76% of youth and 81% of young adults) indicated that they would support a law that prevents anyone born on or after January 1, 2009 from ever being sold cigarettes or tobacco. Relatively few youth and young adults (14%) opposed the law.

Among those who smoked, nearly two-thirds of youth and three-quarters of young adults supported a smokefree generation law. Support was even stronger among those who did not smoke.

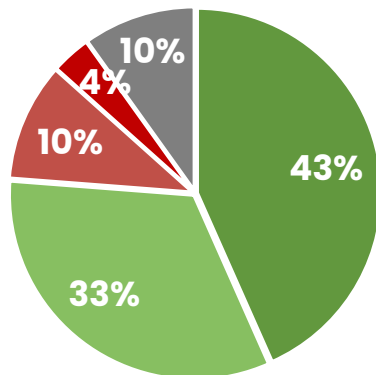
**Would you support or oppose a law that . . . Prevents anyone who is born after January 1, 2009 from EVER being sold cigarettes or tobacco in their LIFETIME? This measure would eventually create a smokefree generation.**

ALL RESPONDENTS, 2023 AUG/SEPT

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

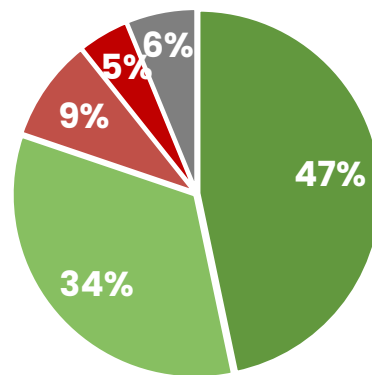
## Youth

N=1021



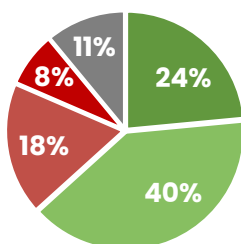
## Young adults

N=2387



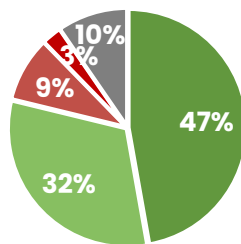
## Smoked in past 30 days

n=164



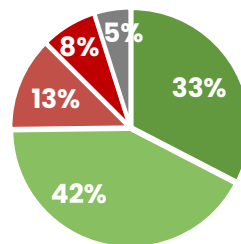
## Did not smoke

n=857



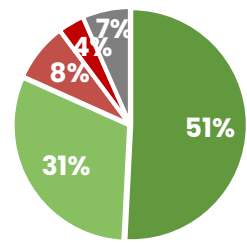
## Smoked in past 30 days

n=545



## Did not smoke

n=1841



# Smokefree goal – Support

Following a brief explanation of the government’s Smokefree 2025 policy goal, respondents were asked about their support or opposition. Four out of five youth (79%) and young adults (81%) indicated support for the goal.

**The government's Smokefree 2025 goal aims to reduce the availability of tobacco and the number of people smoking to minimal levels, thereby making New Zealand essentially a smokefree nation by 2025.** ('Minimal numbers of people smoking' is often interpreted as: Less than 5% of people in all population groups will smoke.)

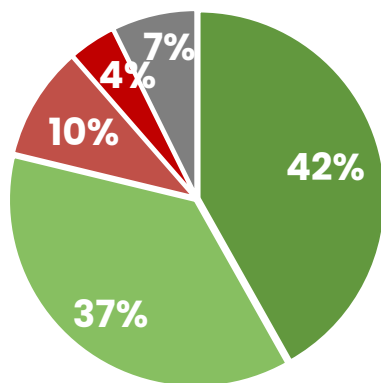
## Do you support or oppose the Smokefree 2025 policy goal?

ALL RESPONDENTS, 2023 AUG/SEPT

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

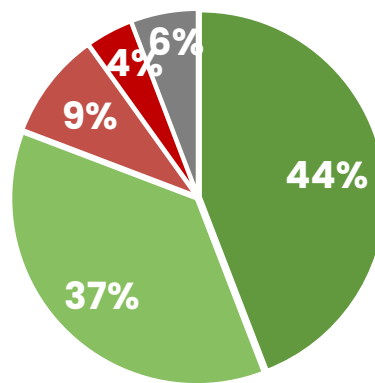
### Youth

N=1021



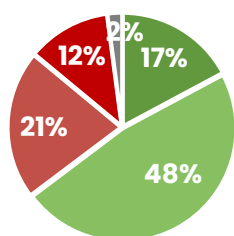
### Young adults

N=2391



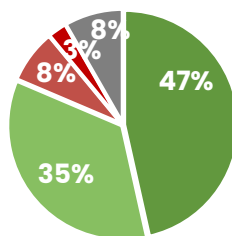
### Smoked in past 30 days

n=164



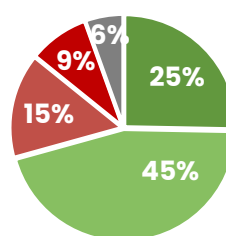
### Did not smoke

n=857



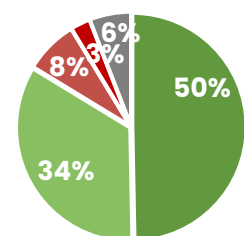
### Smoked in past 30 days

n=545



### Did not smoke

n=1845



## CONTACTS

### **DAVID HAMMOND PhD**

PROFESSOR  
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH SCIENCES  
UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO  
ONTARIO, CANADA  
DHAMMOND@UWATERLOO.CA

### **JUDE BALL PhD**

SENIOR RESEARCH FELLOW  
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH  
UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO  
DUNEDIN, NEW ZEALAND  
ASPIRE@OTAGO.AC.NZ

