

MEDIA RELEASE

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Study finds concern for children a significant new reason to quit smoking

New Zealand smokers are increasingly saying that ‘setting an example’ for children is an important reason to quit, according to new public health research from the University of Otago, Wellington.

Until recently health, cigarette prices, and the effect of second-hand smoke were given in surveys as the most important reasons for quitting. This latest research indicates that smokers are now thinking more often of the impact of smoking on the chance of their children taking up smoking.

In this latest study, ‘setting an example’ for children was given as ‘very much’ a reason for quitting by 51% of smokers, compared to 45% giving personal health concerns. Lead author Dr George Thomson says similar results have recently been shown in a survey in France, where 60% of smokers gave ‘setting an example’ as a reason to quit.

“Most smokers across a number of countries have until now rated personal health and cost as the main reason for quitting, and that was the case in New Zealand in the 1990s,” he says.

“But in our survey cost (38%) is only the third ranked ‘very much’ reason, after children (51%) and health (45%), which adds a new dimension to tobacco control efforts.”

Dr Thomson says policymakers and health officials could take note of this trend and consider placing greater emphasis on ‘social reasons’ in tobacco pack warnings and in media campaigns.

“The growing realisation that the example of smoking has an effect on children needs to be reinforced by further public education,” says Dr Thomson. “One of the other factors which might be making a difference is the increasing adoption by councils of smokefree parks and playgrounds, partly because they want to reduce the example of smoking.”

The study is published today in the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health* and was funded by the Health Research Council of New Zealand. It surveyed a national sample of 1376 smokers, and is part of a wider International Tobacco Control Policy Evaluation Project which has been running for some years.

This study also highlights greater concern by Maori and Pacific smokers about ‘setting an example’ for their children. Women smokers were also more likely to say that concern for children is a major reason to stop smoking.

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