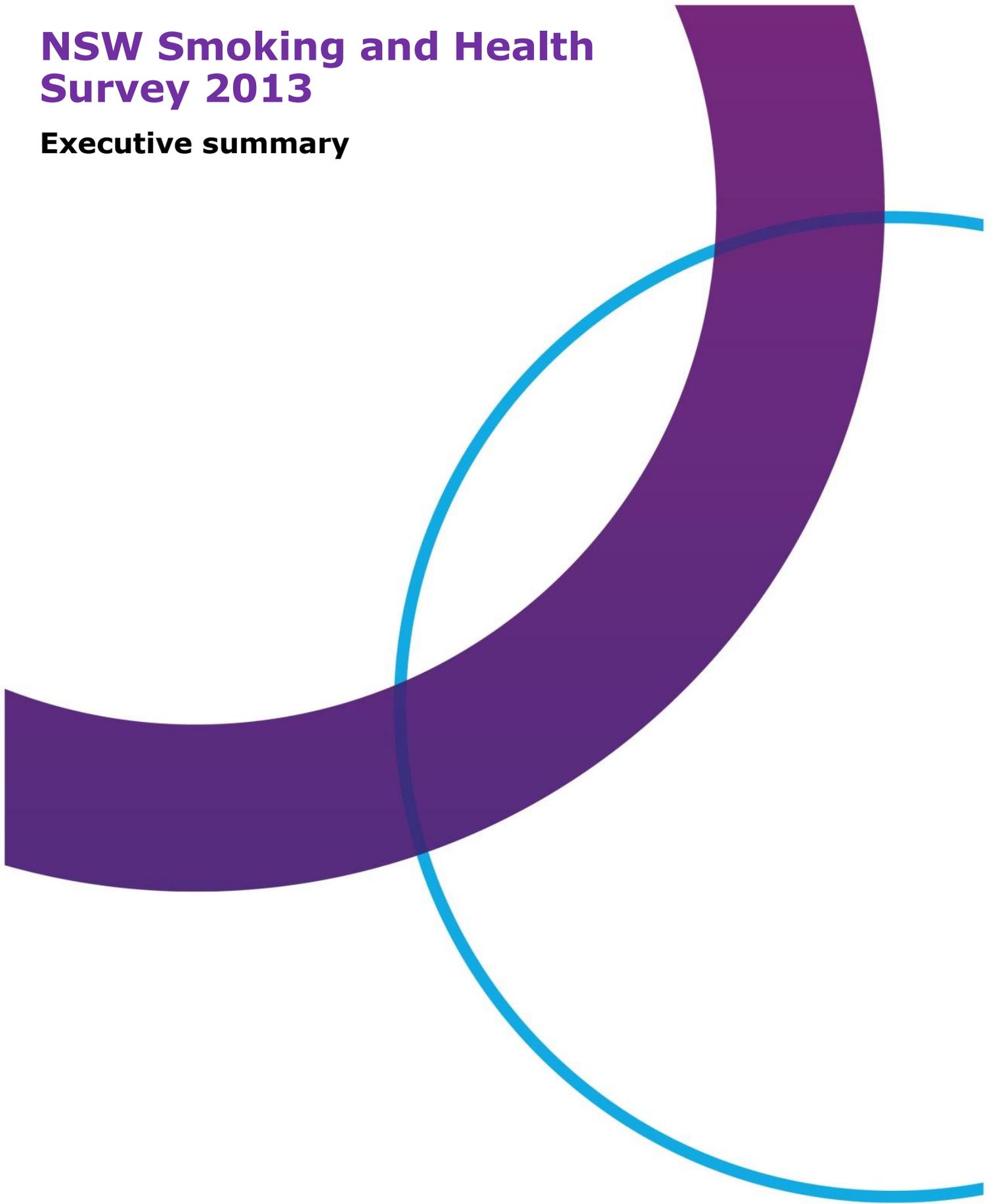


# NSW Smoking and Health Survey 2013

## Executive summary



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SHPN: (CI) 180013

### Publisher

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## Executive summary

### Background and objectives

The NSW Smoking & Health Survey measures tobacco-related knowledge, attitudes and behaviour in the NSW community. It forms part of the Cancer Institute NSW's evaluation of its tobacco control program, and assists in guiding new tobacco control measures. This research aimed to understand:

- (i) NSW smokers' use of tobacco, their quit attempts and reasons for considering quitting
- (ii) the NSW adult population's knowledge about the health consequences of smoking, including exposure to second-hand smoke
- (iii) the NSW adult population's knowledge and attitudes towards current and potential tobacco control measures.

This summary focuses on key selected findings relating to smoking/quitting behaviour and intentions; support for policy and legislative changes; and the response to plain packaging.

### Methodology

The survey was conducted by computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI). Fieldwork took place from 4 April to 11 May 2013. A total of 1,619 interviews were conducted among people aged 18 years and over living in NSW. The sample was split 50:50 between smokers and non-smokers, and was allocated proportionately to the Sydney metropolitan area and the rest of NSW.

A dual (overlapping) sample frame approach was introduced for the first time in 2013, whereby 80% of interviews were conducted via fixed landline sample and 20% were conducted via mobile phone sample. The questionnaire took an average of 18 minutes to complete.

An overall response rate of 19% was achieved, according to American Association for Public Opinion Research standards<sup>1</sup>. This equates to 45% of all known eligible households/numbers contacted completing the survey.

The data was weighted appropriately and all findings in this report are based on weighted data.

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<sup>1</sup> The American Association for Public Opinion Research. 2009. Standard Definitions: Final Dispositions of Case Codes and Outcome Rates for Surveys. 6th edition. AAPOR.

## Key findings

### Smoking and quitting behaviour and intentions

- The average number of cigarettes smoked per day by daily smokers is down from 19.3 in 2011 to 14.7 in 2013.
- The average number of quit attempts (5.2) and the average duration of the last quit attempt (13+ months) have both increased since 2011.
- The proportion of NSW current smokers considering quitting in the next six months (63%) and those seriously considering doing so (42%) are down slightly on those reported in 2011 (70% and 53%, respectively).
- A quarter of all current smokers in NSW (23%) were planning to quit in the next 30 days, which is unchanged from 2011 (25%). Health or fitness (81%) and cost (38%) were by far the most dominant reasons for considering quitting.
- Feeling supported would be important to the vast majority of smokers if they tried to quit (85%), and most do not think it would be too difficult to find someone to offer them such support (67%).

### Knowledge of the health effects of smoking

- Lung cancer (68%), emphysema (49%) and heart disease (42%) were the health condition most readily mentioned, unprompted, by smokers as being caused by smoking.
- The proportion of smokers mentioning lung cancer, heart disease and gangrene (26%), unprompted, has increased significantly since 2011
- Since 2011, a greater proportion of smokers, when prompted, recognise that smoking can cause infertility (57%; up from 47%), stomach cancer (67%; up from 54%) and blindness (73%; up from 65%).

### Support for policy and legislative changes

- There was strong community support for regulation of the retail environment, such as stricter penalties for the sale of tobacco products to those aged under 18 years (93%); licensing of tobacco retail outlets (92%); and licensing fees for retailers (85%).
- Opinions were divided on the idea of banning cigarette vending machines in licensed premises (57% in support, versus 37% against).
- Further price increases were supported, particularly to discourage young people from smoking (73%), rather than encouraging people to quit (59%). While support for price increases was strongest amongst non-smokers, more than a third of current smokers supported further price increases for either of these two purposes.
- Eight in ten current smokers have noticed signage related to smoking while visiting shops in the past month. However, only a minority have gone on to buy tobacco after noticing such signage, even though they have been out shopping for something else. This includes 12% of all current smokers who have done this, either sometimes (9%) or often (3%).
- There is widespread community support for the new laws banning smoking in some outdoor public places. Eight in 10 people are aware of the new laws and the

vast majority approve of them (85%). Almost two out of three smokers aware of the news laws approve of them.

- There was widespread support for all the locations currently included in the new ban on smoking in some outdoor public places; ranging from nearly universal support for within 10 metres of children's play equipment (97%), down to 78% supporting within four metres of pedestrian access points to a public building.
- The support for locations currently included in the new laws was typically higher among non-smokers than current smokers. Support was widespread among the NSW public for nearly all the other suggested potential locations to be included in the ban. Support was highest for making all open or outdoor public shopping malls smoke-free by law (78%, including 64% who agreed strongly), followed by all outdoor areas in pubs, clubs, cafes and restaurants (75%, including 65% who strongly agreed).
- The public was divided on whether all balconies of apartment blocks and multi-dwelling residential buildings should be made smoke-free by law (48% agreed; 50% disagreed). Smokers were generally less supportive of all proposed bans.
- There was widespread support among the NSW public for fines for failure to comply with the new laws banning smoking in some public places. Three quarters of all NSW adults supported a general fine (75%), while seven in 10 supported a fine of \$550 (70%).
- While 52% of current smokers actually supported a fine for failure to comply with the new laws, just 18% supported a fine of \$550.

### Response to plain packaging

- Two thirds of all NSW adults aged 18 years or over support the new regulations on plain packaging (66%, including 53% who agree strongly), although smokers were more polarised on the issue (54% disagree, compared to 41% agree).
- Most NSW smokers claimed that the introduction of plain packaging has had no impact on them at all (60%). However, there were some encouraging impacts on smoking behaviours and intentions, such as thoughts about quitting (12%), feeling embarrassed to be a smoker (10%), smoking less (9%) and trying to quit (3%).
- Almost four in 10 current smokers in NSW thought that the taste of their preferred brand had changed recently, including a third of all smokers who thought their preferred brand now tasted worse (32%). The perceived recent change in the taste of the smokers' preferred brands has had a "positive" impact on 13% of all smokers in NSW, including thoughts about quitting (7%), smoking less (7%) and trying to quit (2%).

## Conclusions

There were some positive findings in relation to smoking and quitting behaviour in 2013 compared to 2011. The average number of cigarettes smoked per day by daily smokers is down, while the average number of quit attempts and the duration of quit attempts are both up. Almost a quarter of all NSW smokers are planning to quit in the next 30 days, which remains consistent with the 2011 findings.

There are high levels of community support for regulation of the retail environment (including price increases, licensing and plain packaging); the new laws banning smoking in some outdoor public places; extending these laws to other outdoor locations; and fines

on failure to comply with these laws. However, it is clear that the community is divided on whether cigarette vending machines should be banned in licensed premises or whether balconies on apartment blocks should be made smoke-free by law.

Smokers are also polarised on the issue of plain packaging. However, this regulation is having an impact on some smokers' behaviour, attitudes and intentions. At the same time, a third of all smokers in NSW think that the taste of their preferred brand had worsened recently. The impacts on behaviours and intentions caused by the perceived change in taste mirror those claimed as a result of the introduction of plain packaging.

In the absence of any real recent change in the taste, it is possible these impacts are indirectly attributable to the introduction of plain packaging, given the empirical evidence that suggests pack design may influence perceptions of taste.

Moreover, there is evidence that there has been erosion in the impact of branding since the introduction of plain packaging. Brand loyalty as an influence on choice of cigarette was mentioned by significantly less smokers than in 2011. Concurrently, what friends or family smoke has grown as a reason for choice since 2011.

These findings suggest that identification with brand may have begun to diminish somewhat, and that choice is becoming more commoditised (i.e. smoke whatever other people are smoking). The introduction of plain packaging may well have played a part in this too.