

Statistical standard for cigarette smoking behaviour

Rationale

Information on cigarette smoking behaviour is used by both government and private health sector agencies, special interest groups, researchers, other organisations and individuals to plan health promotion programmes, identify and monitor changes in smoking prevalence and withdrawal rates and to identify at risk groups in the population.

Definition

Cigarette smoking refers to the active smoking of one or more manufactured or hand rolled tobacco cigarettes, from purchased or home grown tobacco, per day.

The term smoking refers to active smoking behaviour, that is, the intentional inhalation of tobacco smoke. Smoking does not refer to or include passive smoking (the unintentional inhalation of tobacco smoke).

Cigarette smoking does not include:

- the smoking of tobacco in cigars, pipes and cigarillos;
- the smoking of any other substances, e.g. herbal cigarettes or marijuana; or
- the consumption of tobacco products by other means, such as chewing.

Operational issues

Age restrictions on the sale of tobacco products

Until 1988 it was illegal to sell tobacco products to those under the age of 15. From 1988, under the Toxic Substances Act, it was illegal to sell tobacco products to a person under the age of 16 and, in 1997, this age was raised to 18 years in the Smokefree Environments Amendment Act 1997. However, this does not necessarily mean that people under the age of 18 do not purchase or smoke tobacco products.

Age of respondents

In past Censuses of Population and Dwellings, question(s) on cigarette smoking behaviour have been asked of respondents aged 15 years and over. Most other surveys also limit their scope to the 15 years of age and over population. It is therefore recommended that the cigarette smoking behaviour question is at least asked of people 15 years and over to facilitate comparisons with historical and other survey data, although some surveys may choose to ask the cigarette smoking behaviour question of people under 15 years of age.

Constraints on response

There may be some constraints on response to the cigarette smoking behaviour question. Respondents may be defensive about answering it or unaware of why the question is asked. Some respondents may not wish to reveal their cigarette smoking behaviour because of its social undesirability or because they do not want other household members to know about it. Age restrictions on the sale of tobacco products may also affect the reported smoking behaviour and non-response rates of people aged under 18.

Composition of the 'never smoked regularly' output category

It is unclear how occasional smokers, who smoke less than one cigarette per day, respond to the cigarette smoking behaviour question. The 'never smoked regularly' category may include occasional or social smokers who smoke less than one cigarette per day as well as those who may have experimented with cigarette smoking but never considered themselves habitual smokers.

Explanatory notes

Excluded from the statistical concept of cigarette smoking are the following concepts.

(1) Dosage

Information on the dosage of cigarette smoking (ie the number of cigarettes smoked) is not included in this standard for two main reasons. First, there is some unreliability and a high level of non-response for this variable, and second, there is difficulty in establishing consumption equivalences between cigars, cigarillo and pipe tobacco (as they have varying tobacco contents) and cigarettes.

(2) Passive smoking

Passive smoking is excluded from the statistical concept of cigarette smoking, as it does not involve the *intentional* inhalation of tobacco smoke.

(3) Cigar, cigarillo and pipe tobacco

Cigar, cigarillo, and pipe tobacco are all tobacco products with associated health risks. They are excluded for two main reasons; the differences in the health-risks associated with these forms of smoking compared with cigarette smoking; and to achieve consistency with previous census questions which have asked about the smoking of manufactured or hand-rolled cigarettes.

(4) Illegal substances

The smoking of any and all illegal substances, including marijuana, opium etc is excluded from the statistical concept of cigarette smoking.

(5) Other substances

The smoking of all other substances including non-tobacco herbal cigarettes is excluded from the statistical concept of cigarette smoking.

(6) Consumption by other means

The consumption of tobacco products by other means, such as chewing, is also excluded from the statistical concept of

cigarette smoking.

Previous questions on cigarette smoking behaviour

Statistics New Zealand (Statistics NZ) first collected information about cigarette smoking behaviour in the 1976 Census of Population and Dwellings, then again in the 1981 Census. The topic was not included in any further Statistics NZ surveys until 1992/93 when a question on tobacco smoking was included in the Household Health Survey (HHS), a sample survey conducted in conjunction with the then Department of Health. A question on cigarette smoking behaviour was also included in the 2006 Census, and was consistent with this standard.

Caution should be exercised when attempting comparisons between data on tobacco smoking behaviour from the 1993 HHS and other Statistics NZ surveys consistent with this standard owing to differences in the methodology in the surveys and the questions asked.

Classification criteria

Information on cigarette smoking is classified into three categories – regular smoker, ex-smoker and never smoked regularly. The two criteria used in classifying responding units to the classification categories are current tobacco cigarette smoking behaviour and past tobacco cigarette smoking behaviour.

The criteria are applied to produce the following classification categories:

- Regular Smoker – someone who currently smokes one or more manufactured or hand rolled tobacco cigarettes per day.
- Ex-smoker – someone who does not now, but used to smoke one or more manufactured or hand rolled tobacco cigarettes per day.
- Never smoked regularly – someone who has never smoked manufactured or hand rolled tobacco cigarettes at all or smoked less than one per day.

The benchmark criterion of one cigarette per day is used to retain consistency with previous collections and is considered appropriate by users.

Classification

Cigarette smoking behaviour is a flat classification with 3 categories - excluding residual categories.

The residual categories are defined in [Glossary](#).

Classification	Cigarette Smoking Behaviour Classification
Abbreviation	CIGSMOKE
Version	V2.0
Effective date	04/03/2003

Coding process

Only one response should be coded. Where two or more responses are indicated, code to 'response unidentifiable'. Where the response contains only part of the required information, code to 'response unidentifiable'. Where no response has been given, code to 'not stated'. Imputation is not recommended for this variable.

Questionnaire module

Requirements

The cigarette smoking behaviour questionnaire module must:

- specify that it is about tobacco cigarette smoking, that is, it includes the smoking of manufactured (tailor-made) and hand rolled (roll-your-own) tobacco cigarettes;
- in self-administered questionnaires, incorporate a statement to the effect that cigar, pipe, cigarillo smoking is not included;
- in interviewer administered surveys, the interviewer should instruct the respondent to the effect that cigar, pipe, cigarillo smoking is not included.

Recommendations

It has been suggested that many respondents may be defensive about answering the question and unaware of why the question is asked (ie primarily for health statistics). The standard therefore recommends inclusion of a note explaining the reasons for collecting this information in survey questionnaire guide notes and instructions to interviewers. For example, "this information is required for health monitoring and planning purposes".

Example

The questionnaire module below is an example that meets the requirements documented in this statistical standard. Other questionnaire modules may vary in format but should conform to the requirements contained in this statistical standard.

27 Do you smoke cigarettes regularly (that is, one or more per day)?
COUNT ONLY tobacco cigarettes
DON'T COUNT pipes, cigars or cigarillos

yes → **Go to 29**

no
↓

28 Have you ever been a regular smoker of one or more cigarettes per day?

yes no

Standard output

Cigarette smoking behaviour

The standard output variable categories are the same as the classification categories. The residual categories may be output separately or combined. Where a combination item of residuals is to be used in output, this item should be labelled 'not elsewhere included' and should have a footnote indicating its composition.

The following information should accompany data published or supplied under this standard:

- the definition of the output variable; and
- the classification criteria associated with each output category.

The residual categories are defined in [Glossary](#).

Related classifications and standards

New Zealand

This statistical standard does not affect other standards in the official statistical system in New Zealand.

International

This statistical standard is not based on an international standard or the standard of another country.

Glossary

Active smoking

The intentional inhalation of tobacco smoke by a smoker.

Cigar

A cylinder of tobacco rolled in a tobacco leaf for smoking.

Cigarillo

A small cigar (see cigar also).

Hand-rolled cigarettes

These are also known as roll-your-own cigarettes or colloquially as rollies, and are the same as manufactured cigarettes except that loose tobacco, cigarette papers and/or filters are purchased separately and hand-rolled by the smoker. Hand-rolled cigarettes include cigarettes rolled using hand-held rolling machines.

Health risk factor

Factors contributing to and causing death, disease and sickness which are related to the lifestyle of individuals and the community at large.

Manufactured cigarette

Also commonly referred to as tailor-made cigarettes, this is a cylinder of finely cut tobacco rolled in paper using mechanical production line techniques, and sold in packets of 20 or more.

Never smoked

Someone who never actively smoked manufactured or hand rolled tobacco cigarettes at all or never actively smoked one or more per day.

Passive smoking

The unintentional inhalation of tobacco smoke introduced into the atmosphere by smokers.

Pipe

A wooden or metal narrow hollow tube with a bulb in the end containing burning tobacco through which smoke is inhaled.

Regularly

The smoking of one or more cigarettes per day.

Regular smoker

Someone who actively smokes one or more manufactured or hand-rolled tobacco cigarettes per day.

Smoking

Smoking refers to the active smoking of manufactured or hand-rolled cigarettes.

Tobacco

The leaves of any plant of the genus *Nicotiana* as prepared for smoking.

Residual categories

Don't know

Use of this category is discretionary. The use of a category capturing don't know responses is most applicable to household surveys where don't know may be a legitimate response to certain questions.

Refused to answer

This category is only used when it is known that the respondent has purposefully chosen not to respond to the question. Use of this residual category in processing is optional. Its use is most applicable in face-to-face or telephone interviews, but may be used in self-completed questionnaires if the respondent has clearly indicated they refuse or object to answering the question.

Response unidentifiable

This category is used when there is a response given, but:

- the response is illegible, or
- it is unclear what the meaning or intent of the response is; this most commonly occurs when the response being classified contains insufficient detail, is ambiguous or is vague, or
- the response is contradictory eg, both the yes and no tick boxes have been ticked, or
- the response is clear and seemingly within the scope of the classification but can not be coded because no suitable option (particularly other residual category options such as 'not elsewhere classified' or 'not further defined') exists in the classification or codefile.

Response outside scope

This category is used for responses that are positively identified (ie the meaning and the intent are clear) but which clearly fall outside the scope of the classification/topic as defined in the standard.

Not stated

This category is only used where a respondent has not given any response to the question asked, ie it is solely for non-response.