

New research shows children need protection from smoking in cars

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(Medical Xpress)—New research published in a leading international journal shows young people's exposure to secondhand smoke in cars in New Zealand remains high, particularly among Māori and Pacific people, low socio-economic groups and those whose parents smoke.

Using annual surveys of more than 25,000 Year 10 school students over a seven-year period from 2006 to 2012, ASPIRE2025 researchers have found that while exposure rates trended downwards slightly in that time, 23% of children were still reporting exposure to second hand smoke in the previous week.

Over half of the children reporting exposure (56%) were exposed on three or more days.

More worryingly, marked inequalities in exposure by ethnicity and socio-economic position did not reduce, says ASPIRE2025 Co-Director, Professor Richard Edwards.

The slow downward trend and persisting inequalities are at odds with New Zealand's goal of fully protecting children from exposure to [smoking](#) and second hand smoke, Professor Edwards says.

"Smoking in cars is an important health issue because [secondhand smoke](#) is highly hazardous to children and is found in very high levels in cars.

"Moreover, in-vehicle [second-hand smoke](#) exposure is consistently and significantly associated with susceptibility to initiation and more frequent smoking."

Professor Edwards is calling on the Government to follow the example of other jurisdictions and introduce laws that require cars in which children are travelling to be smokefree.

"International evidence has shown such a move would successfully reduce children's exposure to a proven health hazard.

"We need specific smokefree laws to prohibit smoking in cars, alongside other major structural changes that reduce tobacco supply and demand if we are to protect all [children](#) from smoking and achieve our smokefree nation goal by 2025."

The research has been published online in the latest edition of the international journal *Tobacco Control*.

Provided by University of Otago

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