

Quitting Behaviour of Older Smokers

Fact Sheet He Pūrongo Meka

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Nā Te Roopū Me Mutu
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Quitline is a free telephone smoking cessation service. It offers callers wanting to quit written information, advice over the phone, and heavily subsidised nicotine replacement therapy (NRT). Between 2003 and 2006, an average of around 32,000 callers registered each year. Quitline is run by the Quit Group on contract to the Ministry of Health.

Quitline media campaigns (for example, television and magazine advertising) target the 25–44 age group, yet smokers of all ages contact Quitline. Relatively little has been written about the quitting behaviour of smokers outside of this target group, particularly older smokers. This fact sheet contains information on the demographic characteristics of older smokers who called Quitline between January 2004 and June 2007, as well as their quitting outcomes and experiences. For the purposes of this fact sheet, older smokers are categorised into two groups: those aged between 45 and 64, and those 65 or over.

Data presented in this fact sheet comes from a variety of sources: a longitudinal survey of Quitline callers in 2002/3, the Quitline database, and the 2006 Census of Population and Dwellings (Census). Census data is included in some tables to provide a comparison between older regular smokers in New Zealand and those who have used Quitline to help them stop smoking.

Definitions of Quitline caller types

- > *New callers are first-time callers to Quitline who register with the programme and receive support from Quit Advisors.*

- > *Relapsed callers are those who have previously registered and contact Quitline again to give quitting another go.*
- > *Quit Pack callers ask for quitting information only, and register for information either by phone or via the internet.*

Quitline Callers, January 2004 – June 2007

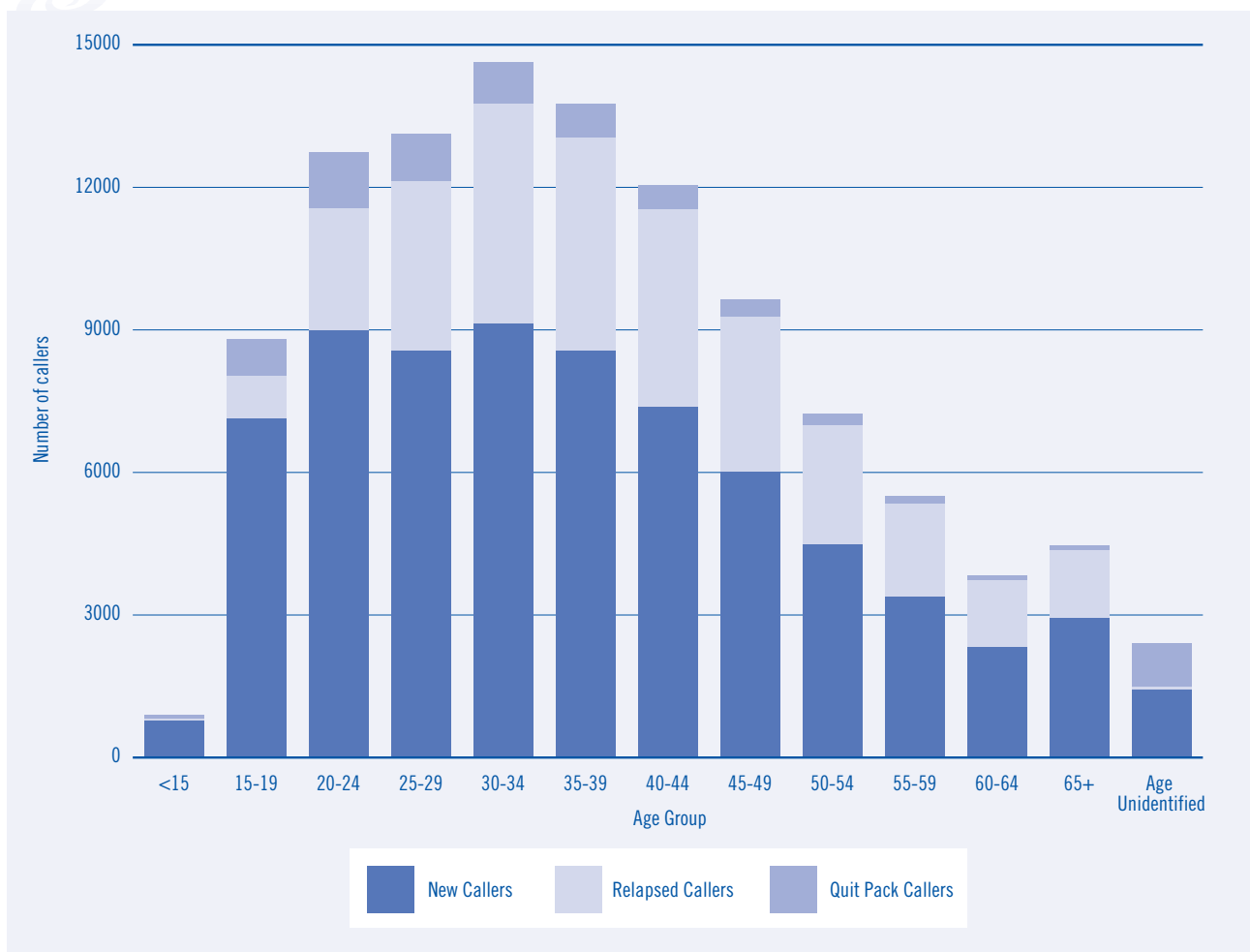
The age of Quitline callers is normally distributed, with 50% between 25 and 44 years old (Figure 1). Of the 109,077 callers who registered over the three-and-a-half-year period, 26,219 (24%) were aged 45–64 and 4,457 (4%) were 65 years or over.

The age distribution of new callers and relapsed callers was largely similar. Of the 71,101 new callers, 23% were aged 45–64 and 4% were 65 or over. Of the 30,944 relapsed callers, 29% were

aged 45–64 and 5% were 65 or over – indicating a slightly higher likelihood of older callers ringing Quitline back if they relapsed.

Quit Pack callers were considerably younger than new and relapsed callers. Before January 2006, Quit Pack callers were included in the figures for new callers. Of the 7,032 Quit Pack callers who registered with Quitline between January 2006 and June 2007, just 13% were aged 45–64 and 1% were 65 or over. From March 2007, Quit Pack callers requesting information on behalf of another person, such as a family member or friend, were not required to provide age details. This explains the relatively large proportion of callers in this group whose age was not recorded or reported.

Figure 1. Quitline callers by age group, January 2004 – June 2007



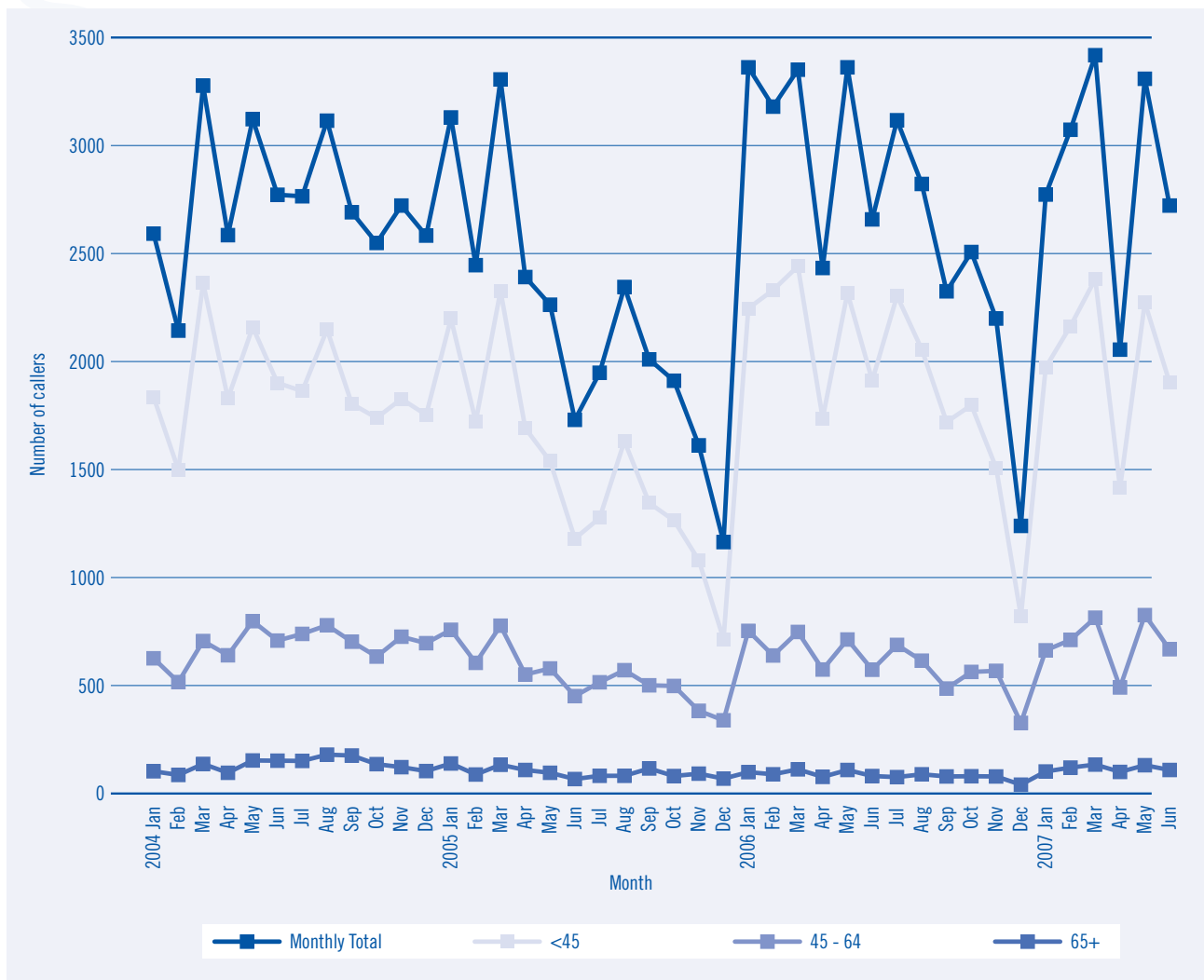
Monthly Caller Patterns, January 2004 – June 2007

Quitline caller volumes vary throughout the year (Figure 2). Numbers are usually lowest in December, mainly because the period leading up to Christmas is not a popular time for quitting, and Quit Group campaigns are not televised because of the expense of advertising at that time of year. Caller registrations strongly recover in January, when smokers make New Year's resolutions to quit. This seasonal trend was much reduced in December 2004 due to the Smokefree Environment Amendment Act. Coming into effect on 10 December 2004, the Act required that all indoor public places, including workplaces, were smoke free.

Older Quitline Callers

- An average of 653 callers aged 45–64 registered with Quitline each month.
- An average of 106 callers aged 65+ registered with Quitline each month.
- Both groups of older callers generally mirrored the monthly call trends of callers of all ages.

Figure 2. Monthly Quitline callers by age group, January 2004 – June 2007



Comparing Quitline Callers with Smokers

In the Census all adults aged 15+ were asked to report their smoking status. Current smokers were defined as those who smoked tailor-made or roll-your-own cigarettes regularly, i.e. one or more a day. People who smoked pipes, cigars or cigarillos were not counted as smokers. In this section, Quitline callers registered in 2006 are compared with regular smokers from the Census.

Age

- The age distribution of relapsed callers resembles the smoker population more closely than new callers and Quit Pack callers (Table 1).
- Overall, the under-45 age group is over-represented among Quitline callers compared with the Census. This is especially true of Quit Pack callers.
- Older age groups (45–64 and 65+) are under-represented among Quitline callers compared with the smoker population.

Table 1. Percentage, by caller type, of regular smokers aged 15+ from Census and Quitline callers, 2006

Age group	Census (%)	Quitline callers (%)			
		New callers	Relapsed callers	Quit Pack callers	Total callers
<45	65.6	72.5	65.9	83.8	71.2
45-64	28.4	23.3	29.5	14.7	24.6
65+	6.0	4.2	4.6	1.5	4.2

- Quitline callers who did not disclose their age or who were unidentified are excluded (n = 927).

Gender

- Female callers in all age groups are over-represented among Quitline callers compared with the smoker population in the 2006 Census (Table 2).
- Male callers in all age groups are under-represented among Quitline callers compared with the 2006 Census.
- Males aged 45–64 are the most under-represented among Quitline callers compared with the 2006 Census.

Table 2. Percentage, by gender, of regular smokers aged 15+ from Census and Quitline callers, 2006

Age group	Census (%)		Quitline callers (%)	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
<45	49.3	50.7	55.5	44.5
45–64	48.5	51.5	57.0	43.0
65+	49.2	50.8	52.8	47.2
Overall	49.4	50.6	55.9	44.1

- Quitline callers who did not disclose their gender or who were unidentified are excluded (n=783).

Ethnicity

In July 2006, Quitline changed the way ethnicity data was collected and reported. Ethnicity categories were changed to match the standards recommended by Statistics New Zealand.¹ Therefore, only six months' ethnicity data is presented in this fact sheet. In both the Census and Quitline registration processes, respondents/callers may identify with more than one ethnic group. It is not compulsory for Quitline callers to disclose their ethnicity.

- 14,209 callers registered between July and December 2006.
- Europeans made up the majority of Quitline callers in all age groups (77%), and were also the largest ethnic group of 15+ regular smokers in New Zealand (65%) (Table 3).
- Europeans were over-represented among Quitline callers compared with European smokers in the general population in all age groups.
- The proportion of Māori Quitline callers very closely matched that of Māori in the smoker population in all age groups.
- Pacific and Asian callers were under-represented among Quitline callers in all age groups, especially in the two older age groups.
- A very small proportion of 15+ regular smokers and Quitline callers identified themselves as Middle Eastern/Latin American/African (MELAA) in all age groups.

¹ Statistics New Zealand (2005). *Statistical Standard of Ethnicity 2005*. Wellington: Statistics New Zealand.

Table 3. Percentage, by ethnicity, of regular smokers aged 15+ from Census and Quitline callers, July – December 2006

Age group	Census (%)					
	European	Māori	Pacific	Asian	MELAA	Other
<45	61.6	27.8	9.2	5.6	0.7	8.6
45–64	66.8	18.7	5.2	3.4	0.4	11.1
65+	79.1	10.0	3.3	2.4	0.2	7.6
Overall	64.6	24.3	7.8	4.8	0.6	9.3
Age group	Quitline callers (%)					
	European	Māori	Pacific	Asian	MELAA	Other
<45	74.8	26.1	6.7	3.8	1.0	0.9
45–64	81.9	20.3	2.9	2.2	0.4	0.9
65+	90.6	10.8	1.8	0.5	0.9	1.6
Overall	76.5	24.2	5.6	3.3	0.8	0.9

- Quitline callers who did not disclose their ethnicity or who were unidentified are excluded (n=330).

Use of Quitline Services and Quitting Behaviour

This section reports data collected in a 12-month longitudinal survey conducted in 2002/3. This survey formed part of an evaluation of Quitline in which 2,002 callers were interviewed after three weeks, six months and 12 months of being sent an exchange voucher for nicotine patches or gum (a Quit Card). Survey participants were aged 15 or over.

Written Material on Quitting

When clients first call Quitline they are sent a pack containing information on quitting and the Quitline service. Three weeks after their initial call, participants were asked if they had read at least some of the information. Some callers had not received the information pack at the three-week survey, so were not questioned.

- All age groups reported high use of the information sent by Quitline, with around 94% of participants having read at least some of the material (Table 4).
- Participants aged 45 and over were more likely to have read all of the written material sent by Quitline.

Table 4. Use of written material provided by Quitline by age group

Age group	Number	Did not read (%)	Just glanced through (%)	Read some of it (%)	Read most of it (%)	Read all of it (%)	Don't know (%)
15–44	1,385	2.5	4.6	10.5	24.5	57.8	0.1
45–64	488	1.6	5.3	5.9	16.8	70.1	0.2
65+	47	0.0	2.1	4.3	14.9	78.7	0.0
Age unidentified	32	3.1	3.1	6.3	25.0	62.5	0.0
Overall	1952	2.2	4.7	9.1	22.3	62.3	0.1

Contact with a Quitline Advisor

Quitline is a proactive service that provides call-backs to clients. The aim of call-backs is to maintain support during the course of quitting. At the time of the longitudinal surveys, an external call centre answered all calls, resulting in a small percentage of participants who had no contact with a Quitline Advisor (QLA). This practice changed in May 2005, when all calls were answered by a QLA. In the six-month follow-up survey, participants were asked how many times they had contact with a QLA.

- Most participants had three contacts with a QLA within the first six months of being sent a Quit Card (Table 5).
- All age groups had a similar level of contact with a QLA.

Table 5. Contact with a Quitline Advisor, by age group, six months after first calling Quitline

Age group	Number	Average number of contacts
15–44	909	3.0
45–64	316	3.1
65+	34	3.1
Age unidentified	21	2.5
Overall	1,280	3.0

Nicotine Patches and Gum

New Zealand Quitline is the world's only national quitting programme that distributes subsidised nicotine replacement therapy (NRT). Callers are sent a Quit Card with a four-week dosage of NRT printed on it. They can redeem the card at a pharmacy for a nominal charge. At the six-month survey, participants were asked about their redemption and use of NRT. At the time of the survey, callers were eligible for eight weeks of subsidised NRT, although some may have received an additional four weeks for extra support.

- The majority of participants (89%) redeemed at least one Quit Card (Table 6), and 65% used most or all of the NRT (Table 7).

- Participants aged 45 or over were more likely than younger callers to redeem two or more cards.
- Participants aged 45 or over were also more likely to use all or most of the NRT.

Table 6. Redemption of Quit Cards by age group

Age group	Number	Did not redeem any card (%)	Redeemed one card (%)	Redeemed two or more cards (%)
15–44	909	13.5	57.4	29.0
45–64	316	5.7	50.0	44.3
65+	34	5.9	35.3	58.8
Age unidentified	21	14.3	42.9	42.9
Overall	1280	11.4	54.8	33.8

Table 7. Amount of NRT used by age group

Age group	Number	None of it (%)	Some of it (%)	Most of it (%)	All of it (%)	Still using it (%)
15–44	767	1.0	35.5	30.6	31.3	1.6
45–64	285	1.1	25.6	31.6	39.3	2.5
65+	31	0.0	22.6	35.5	41.9	0.0
Age unidentified	16	0.0	18.8	43.8	37.5	0.0
Overall	1099	1.0	32.3	31.2	33.8	1.7

Quit Rates

In the six-month and twelve-month follow-up surveys, participants were asked if they had smoked in the last seven days (seven-day point prevalence quit). Participants who had smoked in the past seven days were classified as having not quit. An intention-to-treat analysis (ITT) was used, where all participants who had pulled out of the study or who were not able to be contacted were counted as having not quit.

- Older Quitline callers (45+ years) had a considerably higher six-month quit rate than other Quitline callers (Table 8).
- At twelve months the 45–64 age group had the highest quit rate (16%) compared with the 15–44 age group (10%) and the overall quit rate (12%).
- The quit rate of all age groups improved when callers used all three aspects of the Quitline service; i.e. they had:
 - read at least some of the written resources on quitting;
 - redeemed at least one Quit Card; and
 - had at least two conversations with a Quitline Advisor.

The 45–64 and 65+ age groups who had used all three aspects of the service had much higher quit rates, particularly at twelve months, than their younger counterparts who had used all three aspects (Table 9).

Table 8. Seven-day quit rate by age group

Age group	Number	Quit at 6 months (%)	Quit at 12 months (%)
15–44	1427	17.0	10.2
45–64	495	25.5	16.2
65+	48	31.3	12.5
Age unidentified	32	28.1	15.6
Overall	2002	19.6	11.8

- Participants who pulled out of the study or who were not able to be contacted were counted as having not quit (intention-to-treat analysis).
- Quitting was measured by seven-day point prevalence, i.e. participants had not smoked in the last seven days.

Table 9. Seven-day quit rate, by age group, of participants who used all three aspects of the Quitline service

Age group	Number	Quit at 6 months (%)	Quit at 12 months (%)
15–44	603	23.7	14.8
45–64	226	15.9	23.5
65+	19	47.4	26.3
Age Unidentified	10	40.0	0.0
Overall	858	28.1	17.0

- Participants who pulled out of the study or who were not able to be contacted were counted as having not quit (intention-to-treat analysis).
- Quitting was measured by a seven-day point prevalence, i.e. participants had not smoked in the last seven days.