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Tobacco smoking

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Worldwide, 22% of adults aged ≥15 years currently smoke tobacco. Up to half of current smokers will eventually die of a tobacco-related disease, and smoking is the leading cause of ill health, drug-related death and hospital separations in Australia.¹⁻³

From April 2012 to March 2013, general practitioner (GP) BEACH participants recorded the current smoking status of 32,276 patients aged ≥18 years. Over half of the patients had never smoked and one-quarter were previous smokers. A small proportion (3%) described themselves as occasional smokers and 17% were daily smokers. The following differences between groups were all statistically significant as assessed using non-overlapping 95% confidence intervals.

Smoking status of patients

The proportion of females who had never smoked (62%) was higher than that of males (44%); male patients were more likely to be previous, occasional or daily smokers (Figure 1).

Daily smokers

There was a greater proportion of daily smokers among people aged 25–44 years (22%) than in any other age group. The percentage of smokers among patients aged 65–74 years (8%) was less than half that of patients in the younger age groups. Of those aged ≥75 years, 4% were daily smokers. Patients who carried a healthcare card (HCC) were more likely to smoke (22%)

than non-HCC holders (14%), and daily smoking was more prevalent among those from an English-speaking background (ESB, 17%) than from a non-English-speaking background (NESB, 13%). Patients were divided into major city, regional and remote residential locations using the Australian Standard Geographical Classification. Those who lived in a major city were less likely to smoke (16%) than those who lived in regional (20%) or remote (26%) areas.

References

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