

Laurentian University Smoking Behaviour Survey & Policy Scan

Preliminary Findings 2012 (Updated)



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LAURENTIAN UNIVERSITY SMOKING BEHAVIOUR SURVEY AND POLICY SCAN
Preliminary Findings 2012

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was twofold. First to conduct a province-wide non-smoking ‘policy scan’ in order to identify the different types of policies that have been implemented at other academic institutions across Ontario. Second, to administer a campus-wide survey to: a) measure the prevalence of smoking and exposure to second-hand smoke at Laurentian University; and b) identify, via collaborative input, prevention / education / protection strategies from which the Laurentian University community, both smokers and non-smokers, could benefit.

OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

Policy Scan

- No university in Ontario implemented a ‘smoke-free policy;’
- Six universities used ‘Designated Outdoor Smoking Areas’ for on-campus smokers;
- Nine universities, which included Laurentian University, had non-smoking policies that reflected the Smoke Free Ontario Act.

Survey

Respondent characteristics

- A total of 1282 persons completed the *Laurentian University Smoking Behaviour Survey* in the Fall of 2012.
- 15.1% of respondents were current smokers (either daily or occasional) and 15.4 % of respondents were former smokers (either former daily or former occasional).

Public Opinion on Policy recommendations

- The majority of respondents (51.5%) felt that smoking should only be allowed in ‘Designated Outdoor Smoking Areas’; including 35.2% of daily smokers and 41.5% of occasional smokers.
- Half of all students felt that smoking should only be allowed in ‘Designated Outdoor Smoking Areas’ (53%).
- One-quarter (23.7%) of students living on-campus felt that smoking should only be allowed away from any entrance or exit (as reflected in the current Laurentian University Non-Smoking policy).

Second-hand smoke

- Most respondents (80.8%) indicated they had been exposed to second-hand smoke: either daily (9.3%), almost daily (21.3%), weekly (28.4%), or monthly (21.8%) on the Laurentian University campus.
- Most respondents (77.3%) said that it bothered them to be exposed to cigarette smoke.
- Most respondents (61.0%) said that they wanted to ask someone to stop smoking in public area on campus, but only 11.7% actually did.

Perceptions of effects of Policy Changes

- Only 9.5% of current smokers felt that further restrictions on campus would increase their likelihood of quitting.
- However, among former smokers, 40.2% felt that if they were still trying to quit smoking, further restrictions on campus would increase their likelihood of quitting.

Knowledge about LU quitting aids

- Only 29.8% of smokers and 30.0% of non-smokers were aware of the Laurentian ‘*Leave the Pack Behind*’ initiative.

Recommendations:

- 1) Laurentian University should be more progressive in developing non-smoking initiatives.
- 2) Laurentian University should revise its existing non-smoking policy to limit smoking to ‘Designated Outdoor Smoking Areas’.
- 3) Laurentian University should parallel this policy change with aggressive efforts to increase the utilization of existing cessation services offered on campus.
- 4) Laurentian University should continue to evaluate its policy implementation with the goal of moving incrementally toward a smoke-free campus.

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BACKGROUND

It is estimated that tobacco use kills more than 5 million people annually (WHO, 2009). Smoking causes a wide range of diseases, including coronary artery disease, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, peptic ulcer disease, and many cancers, such as lung, stomach, bladder, kidney, cervical, oral, esophageal, pancreatic, laryngeal, and leukemia (USDHHS, 2004). In 2010, 18% of Ontario's population were classified as 'Current Smokers' and claims of 'exposure to second-hand-smoke during the last 30 days,' continues to be problematic in the workplace (26%) and at entrances to public buildings (53%) (OTRU, 2012). Exposure to second-hand-smoke or environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) has been found to just as lethal as first-hand inhalation. ETS exposure has been associated with a number of debilitating health effects; including developmental risks (e.g., low birth weight), respiratory effects (e.g., asthma induction and exacerbation in children), carcinogenic effects (e.g., increased prevalence of lung cancer) and cardiovascular effects (e.g., increased heart disease mortality) (NIH, 1999).

In Ontario, smoking rates are significantly higher among men (22%) compared to women (15%) (OTRU, 2012). Rates of current smokers in Northeastern Ontario (25.1%) (NE LHIN, 2012) and the Sudbury district (24%) (OTRU, 2012) are also significantly higher than the provincial average (18%) and this is true for both men and women smokers. Over the last decade, efforts to promote smoking cessation, prevent the initiation of tobacco consumption, and protect bystanders from second-hand smoke exposure have been extensive. As part of this effort, Ontario developed the Smoke-Free Act prohibiting smoking in all enclosed public spaces and within 9 meters of any public entrance or exit (Government of Ontario, 2010). Despite these efforts, many people continue to smoke. In fact, cigarette-smoking rates have flat-lined, with no significant reduction in prevalence rates since 2005 (OTRU, 2012). Furthermore, many Ontarians continue to report being exposed to second-hand smoke in public spaces, including patios at restaurants and bars (32%), on sidewalks and in parks (57%) (OTRU, 2012). As such, given that smoking is among the leading causes of preventable deaths (Health Canada, 2010) and that rates of tobacco consumption and exposure continue to be problematic, continued efforts to help people who smoke to quit and to protect non-smokers from exposure to second-hand smoke are warranted.

Relevant to the current project, transition to post-secondary education holds great importance for young adults. Given that approximately half of all young adults in Canada attend college or University (PHAC, 2011), post-secondary institutions provide an opportunity to target a large cohort of youth. Hammond (2005) reported that 21.6% of students between the ages of 18 and 29 were classified as current smokers. Importantly, the 2011 Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey showed that significant increases in the prevalence of smoking occur between the ages of 15-19 years (9%), and during the period of post-secondary transition, ages 20-24 years (21%) (Health Canada, 2012). In 2005, Giesler *et al.* surveyed a random sample of 9,956 full-time and part-time students from 23 campuses in Ontario (13 universities; 10 colleges). They reported that 21% of the university students' surveyed currently smoked, most of whom were male and lived off-campus. Importantly, overall smoking behavior among post-secondary students appears to be less fixed, for example there is a significant proportion who claim to be 'occasional smokers' smoking on the weekends, but not weekdays (Tiffany, 2004). These statistics highlight the important role that post-secondary institutions can play in preventing the initiation of smoking, altering the development of permanent smoking patterns and in encouraging the early cessation of smoking in a critical group of youth. In addition, from a community health perspective, this is a key time-frame for the early prevention of smoking-related diseases in a large proportion of society.

Post-secondary institutions are often at the forefront of social change and have the potential to influence a large and key community demographic. In 2004, Dalhousie University was the first Canadian university to implement a smoke-free campus policy (no smoking anywhere on campus property). Ballie *et al.* (2011) recently reported that currently, 10 of 77 Canadian universities now claim to be a "smoke-free" campus. Institutions that have implemented a smoke-free campus policy have reported numerous benefits including, a significant decrease in the prevalence of smoking, a change in the social acceptability of smoking among students, and an increase in favourable attitudes toward tobacco regulation (Seo *et al.*, 2011). Support for these claims also come from Lechner *et al.* (2012) who recently completed a 4-year study that followed a campus-wide tobacco intervention program. The program included completely eliminating the use and sale of tobacco products on campus property. The researchers observed a

gradual decrease in the prevalence of smoking over time, and most notably, an immediate decrease in exposure to second-hand smoke at an entrance to campus buildings.

Smoking is a critical public health issue in Canada. Universities have a responsibility to model, provide and promote healthy environments and behaviours to our students. Thus, the purpose of this study was twofold. First, we conducted a province-wide non-smoking ‘policy scan’ in order to identify the different types of policies that have been implemented in other universities across Ontario. Second, we administered a campus-wide survey to: a) gain a better sense of the prevalence of smoking and exposure to second-hand smoke at Laurentian University; and b) identify, via collaborative input, prevention / education / protection strategies from which the Laurentian University community, both smokers and non-smokers, could benefit.

METHODS

Policy Scan

For the policy scan, all Ontario universities (n=21) were identified from the Ontario University Application Centre (OUAC) website (www.ouac.on.ca). Individual university websites were then visited to locate their smoking policy. Non-smoking policies were categorized into one of five distinctions, from most aggressive to least aggressive policies: *1) Policy where the campus is completely smoke-free; 2) Policy uses Designated Outdoor Smoking Areas; 3) Policy reflects the Smoke-Free Ontario Act; 4) Policy does not reflect the stipulations of the Smoke-Free Ontario Act; and 5) No official policy located.* These distinctions were meant to reflect the previously reported continuum of “hard” or “soft” policies (Ballie et al., 2011).

Survey Development and Data Collection

The core members of this research team (Gauthier, Dorman, Wenghofer, et al.) reviewed existing surveys to identify relevant questions. Questions from surveys were tailored according to the objectives of this project. Additional questions were added where necessary. The intent was to construct a survey containing approximately 25 items with a five-minute completion time. The

survey was reviewed by members external to the research group to ensure item clarity and to test time-of-completion. The final survey contained 26 items with an opportunity to leave comments. Depending on the response patterns, the number of items to complete ranged from 12 (for never-smokers) to 22 (for current smokers). Once finalized, the survey was translated into French by members of the research team and reviewed by two independent French-speaking professors at Laurentian University. The survey was made available via the internet using Gravic's Remark Web Survey Software (Gravic, Inc-, 2013). The web-based version of the questionnaire was hosted on the secure Centre for Rural and Northern Health Research's (CRaNHR) server, housed at Laurentian University, using the proprietary survey software. Information transmitted via the web-based survey was protected by the security protocols of Laurentian University Computer Services. These included hardware and software firewalls to protect the server, and Hypertext Transfer Protocol Secure (HTTPS) to encrypt web survey data for the secure transmission of data between the respondent's computer and the LU server.

Two e-mails were sent to all students, staff, faculty, administrators, and contract workers at Laurentian University through the in-house email provider. The first email was sent on November 12, 2012 and a second, reminder email was sent two weeks after the initial request for participation.¹

Statistical Analyses

Survey data were analysed in SPSS (version 16). Descriptive statistics are presented using frequency distributions and group comparisons are reported using Chi-Square analyses. Only group level data were analyzed (e.g., Men vs. Women; Students vs. Faculty/Staff/Other; On-campus vs. Off-campus students; Smokers vs. Non-Smokers). For all analyses, missing values were excluded.

¹ An incentive (a draw for one of two BlackBerry Playbooks) was offered to potential respondents. Respondents were made aware of the incentive in the survey recruitment script to encourage participation. The respondents could indicate their wish to be included in the draw and this info was separate from the questionnaire and not linked with their responses – therefore we could not link respondent names with their actual responses. The winning email addresses were selected using an electronic, random-number selector.

RESULTS

Provincial Policy Scan

A total of 21 university policies were reviewed. No university in Ontario has yet employed a policy wherein the campus was completely smoke-free (Category 1). Six universities have implemented Designated Outdoor Smoking Areas (Category 2). Nine universities, including Laurentian University, are classified as those whose non-smoking policies reflect the Smoke Free Ontario Act (Category 3). Five university policies did not reflect the stipulations of the Smoke Free Ontario Act (Category 4). One University did not have a policy, which we could locate on-line (Category 5).

Survey Results

Respondent Characteristics

A total of 1282 persons completed the *Laurentian University Smoking Behaviour Survey* in the fall of 2012. Sixty-seven percent of respondents were female, 71.3% respondents identified themselves as students and the average number of years spent on the Laurentian University campus for all respondents was 5.2 years. Among all respondents, 15.1% were current smokers (either daily- 10% or occasional- 5.1%), 15.4% of respondents were former smokers (either former daily or former occasional), and 69.5% of respondents indicated that they had never smoked.

Among students, 14.7% (n=134) indicated that they were either daily (9.0%) or occasional smokers (5.7%), 9.3% (n=85) said they were former smokers and 76.0% (n=695) were never-smokers. Among non-students (e.g., staff, faculty, administration, contract worker, other), 16.2% (n=59) indicated that they were either daily (12.6%) or occasional smokers (3.6%), 30.7% (n=112) were former smokers and 53.2% (n=194) were never smokers. Among men, 19.2% (n=79) were current smokers and 12.7% (n=109) of women were current smokers.

Participants who Smoke

On average, current smokers consumed 7 cigarettes per day (range: less than 1 cigarette – 35 cigarettes) and had been smoking for 12.3 years (range: less than 1 year – 51 years). The majority of smokers had ‘tried to quit smoking’ (70.0%) and most indicated they plan to quit within the next year (57.5%). The most frequently cited quitting aids were nicotine patch (n=34), nicotine gum (n=37), and medication (n=24) (note: 76 respondents (39.2%) indicated they tried ‘nothing’ to help them quit). Most current smokers (89.5%) did not feel that smoking practices at Laurentian University affected their efforts to quit. Only 9.5% of current smokers felt that further restrictions on campus would increase their likelihood of quitting. Only 25.8% of daily smokers and 37.5% of occasional smokers were aware of the ‘*Leave the Pack Behind*’ smoking cessation program currently offered at Laurentian University (32.1% of former smokers and 29.5% of never smokers were aware of the ‘*Leave the Pack Behind*’ smoking cessation program).

Participants who Formerly Smoked

The most frequently cited quitting aid used among former smokers was ‘nothing’ (n=129; 65.5%). Among those who quit while at Laurentian University (n=88), 9.1% said that the ‘quitting aids used were offered by Laurentian University.’ Among former smokers, 40.2% felt that if they were still trying to quit smoking, further restrictions on campus would increase their likelihood of quitting.

Smoking Behaviours on Campus

Most respondents (80.8%) indicated they had been exposed to second-hand smoke, either daily (9.3%), almost daily (21.3%), weekly (28.4%), or monthly (21.8%) on the Laurentian University campus and most respondents (77.3%) said that it bothered them to be exposed to cigarette smoke. A significantly greater percentage of never-smokers (90%) indicated that ‘it bothered them to be exposed to second-hand smoke,’ when compared to current smokers. Fourteen percent of daily smokers and 30.8% of occasional smokers indicated that it bothered them to be

exposed to second-hand smoke. A significantly greater percentage of never smokers (71.7%) and former smokers (60.2%) indicated that they had ‘wanted to ask someone to stop smoking in a public space’, compared to current smokers, 21.9% occasional smokers and 9.4% of daily smokers indicated that they wanted to ask someone to stop smoking in a public space. However, only 11.7% of the total sample had ever asked someone to stop smoking in their presence, most of whom, were never-smokers (8.7%).

Smoking Policy Data

Most current smokers, 94.5% of daily smokers and 80.0% of occasional smokers, were aware that smoking is prohibited within 9 meters of any entrance. The majority of respondents (51.5%) felt that smoking should only be allowed in ‘Designated Outdoor Smoking Areas’, this included 35.2% of daily smokers and 41.5% of occasional smokers. Nineteen percent of the total sample felt smoking should not be allowed anywhere on campus, 23.7% felt that smoking should only be allowed away from any entrance or exit (as reflected in the current Laurentian University Non-Smoking policy), and 5.2% felt smoking should be allowed anywhere outside on campus. Most students (53.0%) also indicated that smoking should only be allowed in ‘Designated Outdoor Smoking Areas’. Similarly, the majority of students living ‘on campus’ felt that smoking should only be allowed in ‘Designated Outdoor Smoking Areas’ (51.1%), compared to 19.3% who felt smoking should not be allowed anywhere on campus, 23.7% felt that smoking should only be allowed away from any entrance or exit (as reflected in the current Laurentian University Non-Smoking policy), and 5.9% felt smoking should be allowed anywhere outside on campus.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results from our policy scan indicate that Laurentian University’s Non-Smoking policy has fallen behind the more progressive policies, which implement the use of Designated Outdoor Smoking Areas. According Ballie *et al.* (2011) at the national level many (approximately 10) post-secondary institutions have implemented completely smoke-free environments, however,

provincially no academic institution has been able successfully implement such a policy.² Nearly 80% of respondents said that they were exposed to second-hand smoke in the past month on campus, and the overwhelming majority of respondents felt that the ideal smoking policy for Laurentian University would reflect the use of Designated Outdoor Smoking Areas.

In general, reported rates of smoking, specifically among students (14.7%), at Laurentian University were considerably lower than what has been reported provincially (21%) (Kirkwood, Lawrence, & Wade, 2011). However, of greater concern was the lack of awareness for existing cessation services offered at Laurentian University. Very few respondents indicated that cessation aids were offered by the University and few individuals were aware of the *Leave the Pack Behind* program which is meant to offer comprehensive tobacco control initiatives for students on post-secondary campuses.

As such, we recommend the following

- 1) Laurentian University should be more progressive in developing non-smoking initiatives.
- 2) Laurentian University should revise its existing Non-Smoking policy to include the use of Designated Outdoor Smoking Areas. Reductions in the prevalence of smoking at building entrances and in high traffic locations will immediately protect non-smokers from the dangers of environmental tobacco smoke.
- 3) Laurentian University should parallel this policy change with aggressive efforts to increase the utilization of existing cessation services offered on campus for both students and employees.
- 4) Laurentian University should continue to evaluate its policy implementation with the goal of moving incrementally toward a smoke-free campus.

The collaborative input of students, employees and administrators is essential to developing meaningful and effective prevention / education / protection strategies on the Laurentian University campus. Results from this study are preliminary findings. We would like to thank those who responded to the *Laurentian University Smoking Behaviour Survey*. Our intention is to continue to monitor tobacco related behaviours on the Laurentian University campus with a second collection of data occurring the Fall of 2014.

² In 2004, Lakehead University implemented a completely smoke-free campus; however, in 2005 the University reverted to a policy that enforced the use of designated outdoor smoking areas.

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Figure 1: Prevalence of ‘Tried to Quit Smoking’ Among Current Smokers

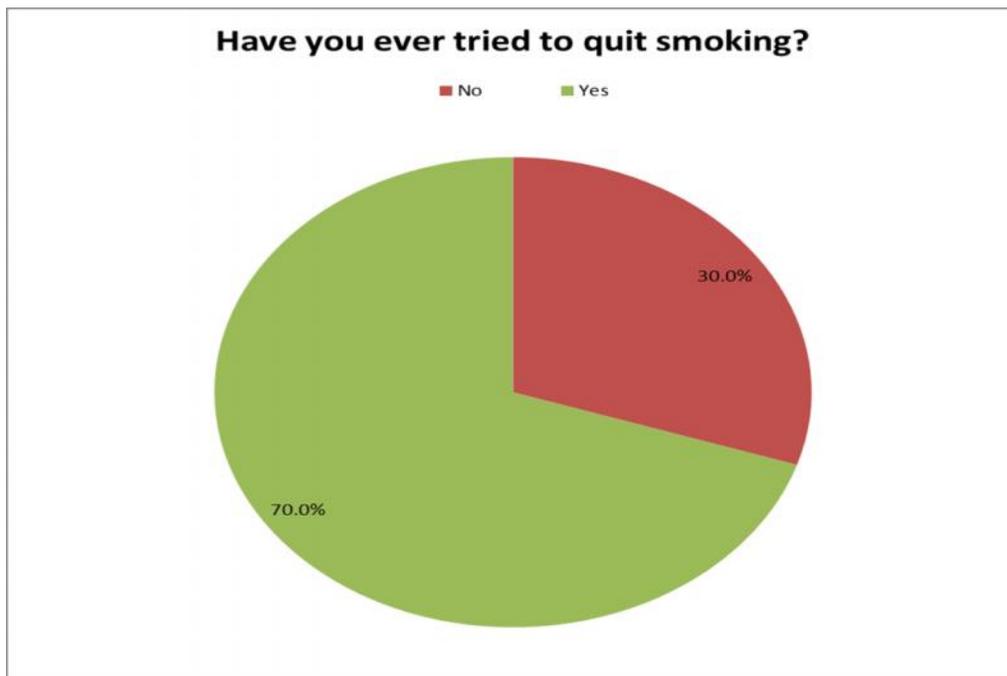


Figure 2: Use of Quitting Aids by Current Smokers (number of times cited)

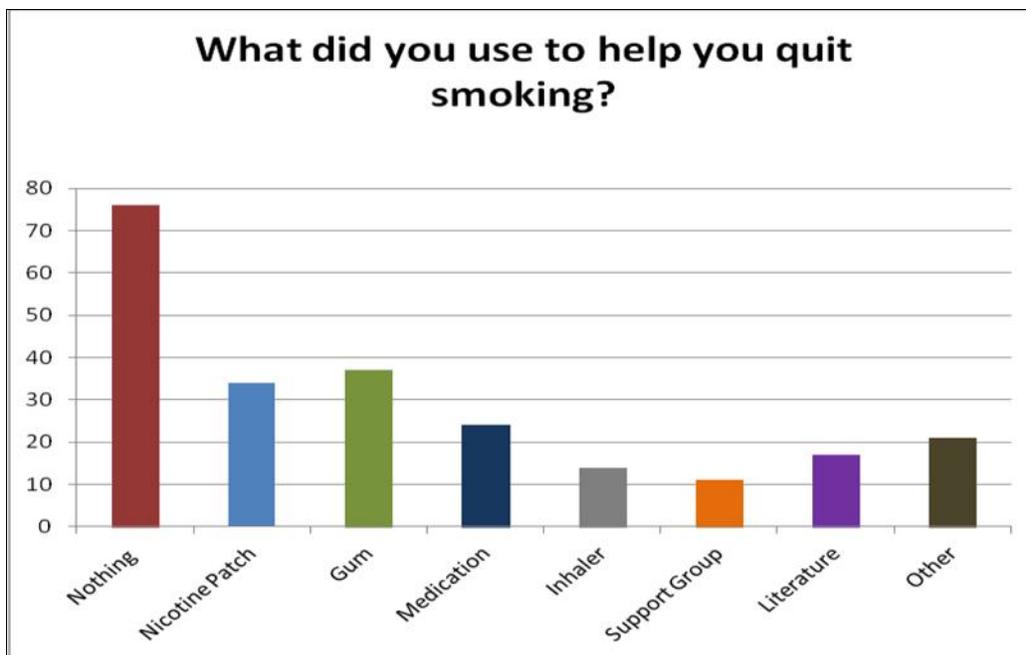


Figure 3: Use of Quitting Aids Offered at Laurentian University by Current Smokers

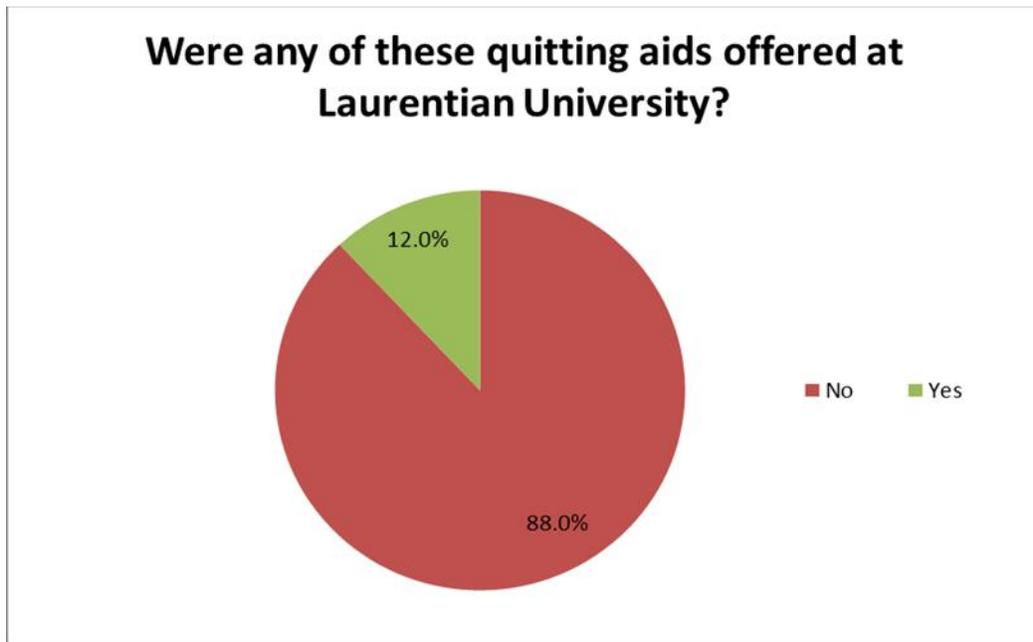


Figure 4: Plan to 'Quit Smoking in the Next Year' by Current Smokers

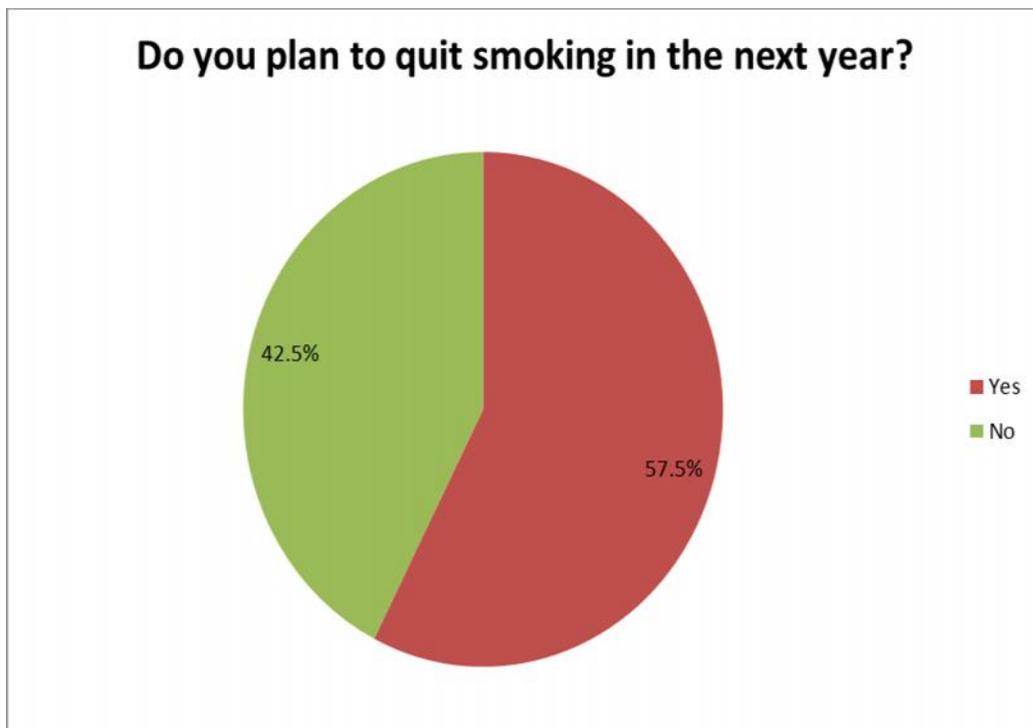


Figure 5: Perception of ‘Smoking Practices on the Laurentian University Campus’ by Current Smokers

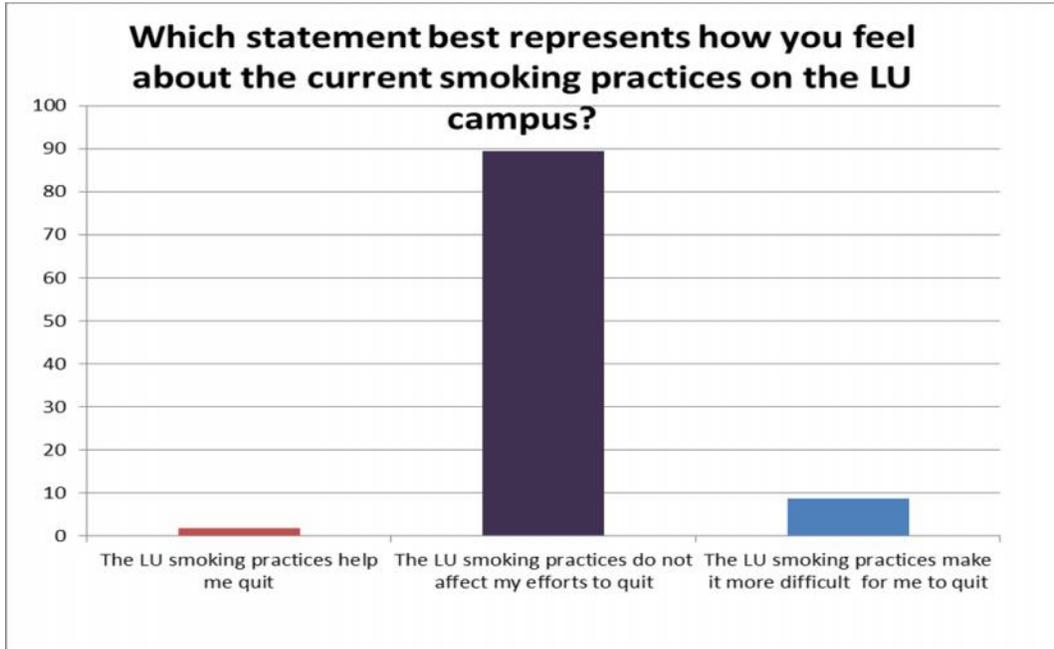


Figure 6: Perception of ‘Further Restrictions on the Laurentian University Campus’ by Current Smokers

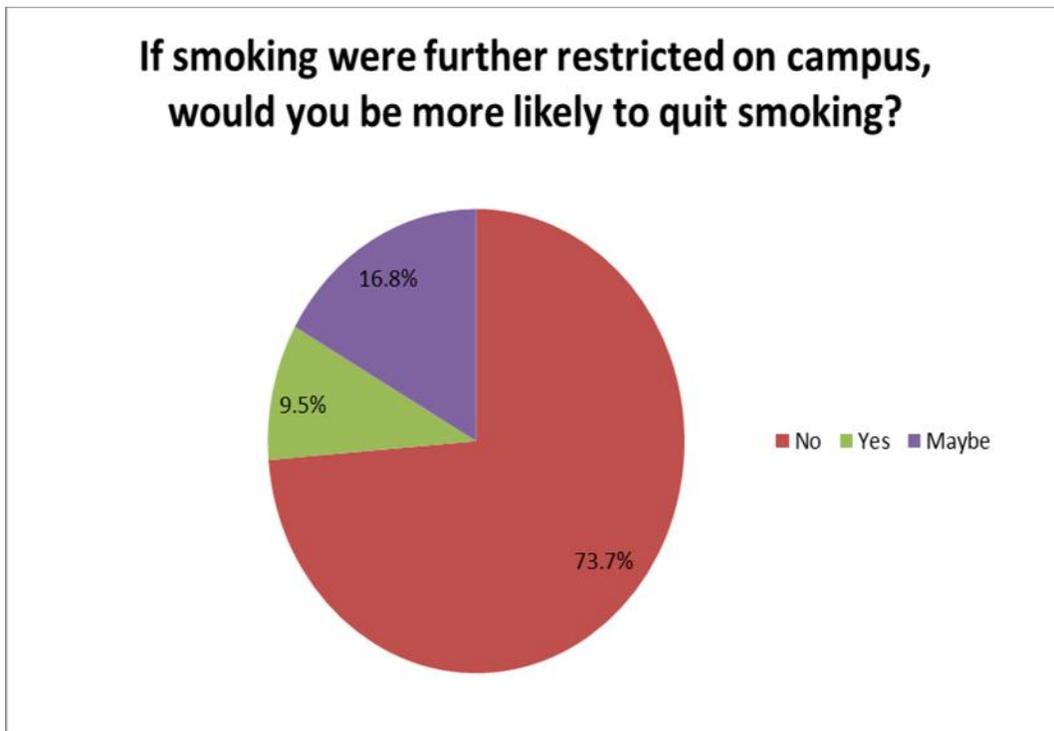


Figure 7: Use of Quitting Aids by Former Smokers (number of times cited)

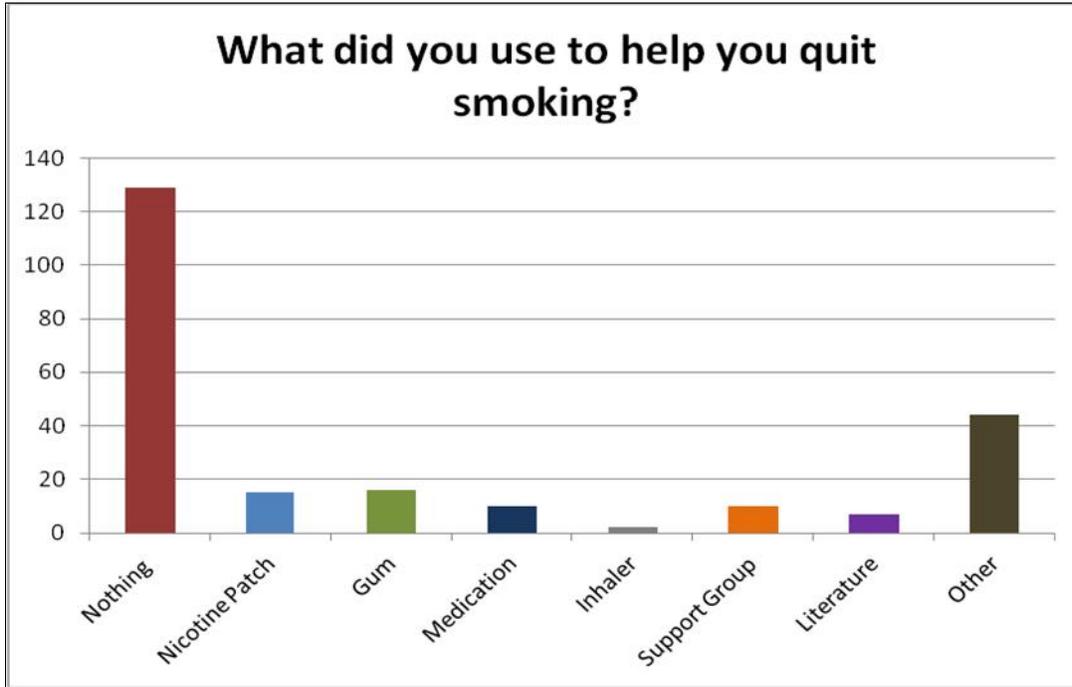


Figure 8: Use of Quitting Aids at Laurentian University by Former Smokers

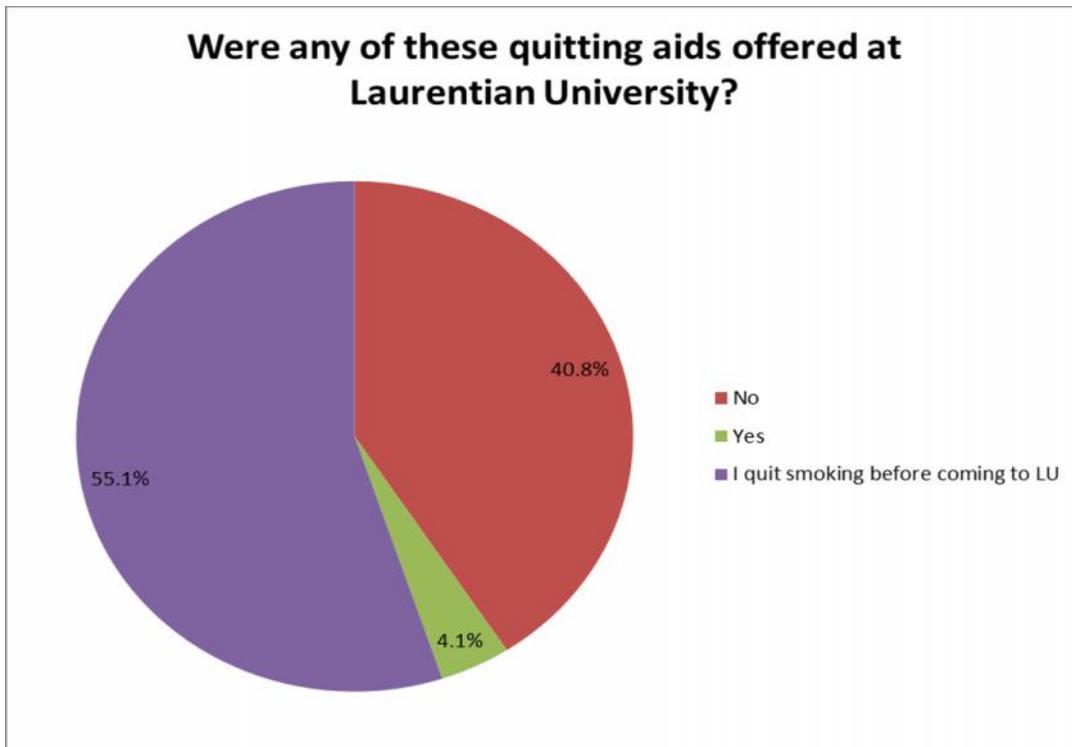


Figure 9: Perception of ‘Further Restrictions on the Laurentian University Campus’ by Former Smokers

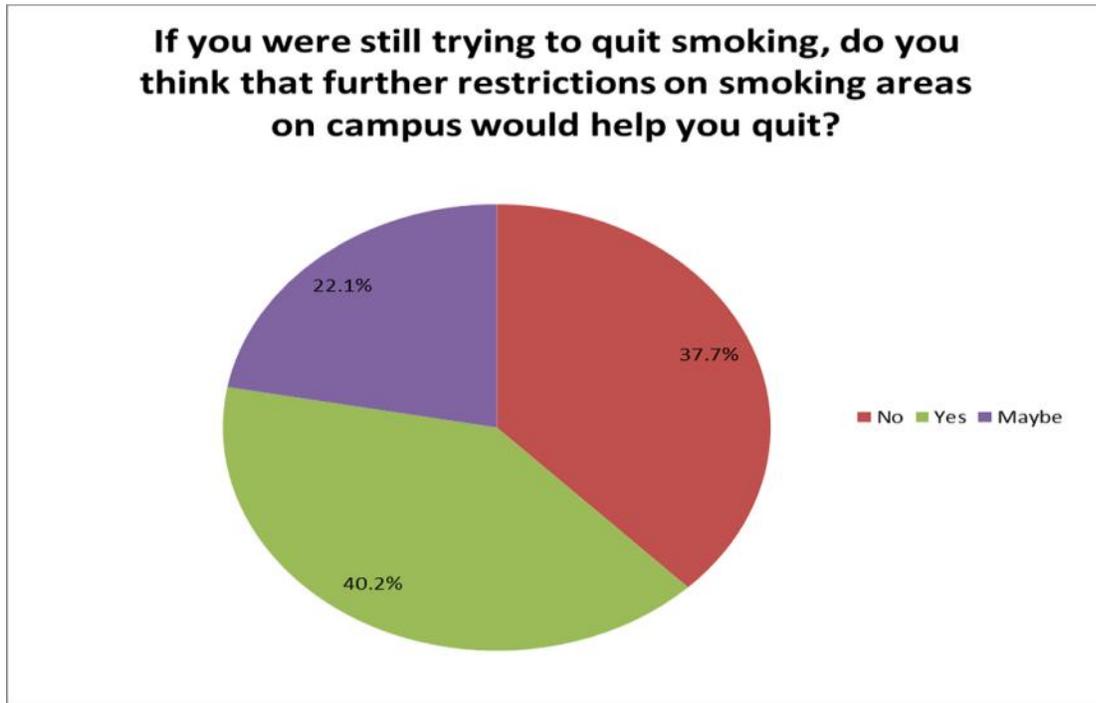


Figure 10: Prevalence of ‘Exposure to Second-Hand Smoke’ on the Laurentian University Campus

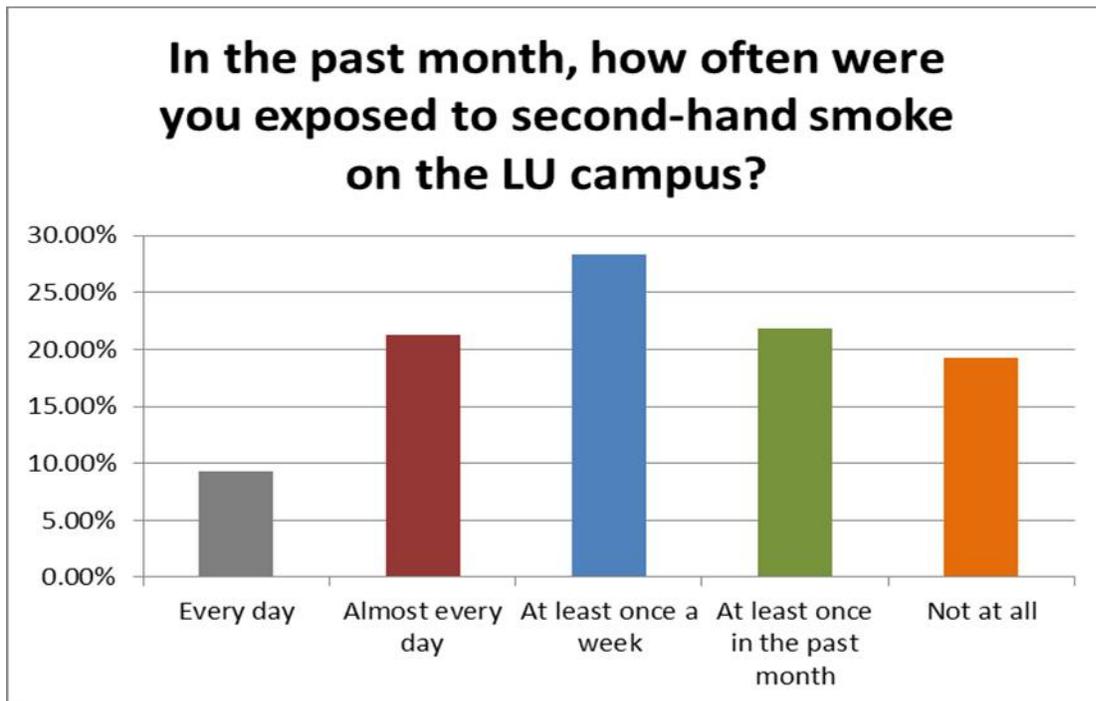


Figure 11: Prevalence of Discontentment with Exposed to Second-Hand Smoke on the Laurentian University Campus

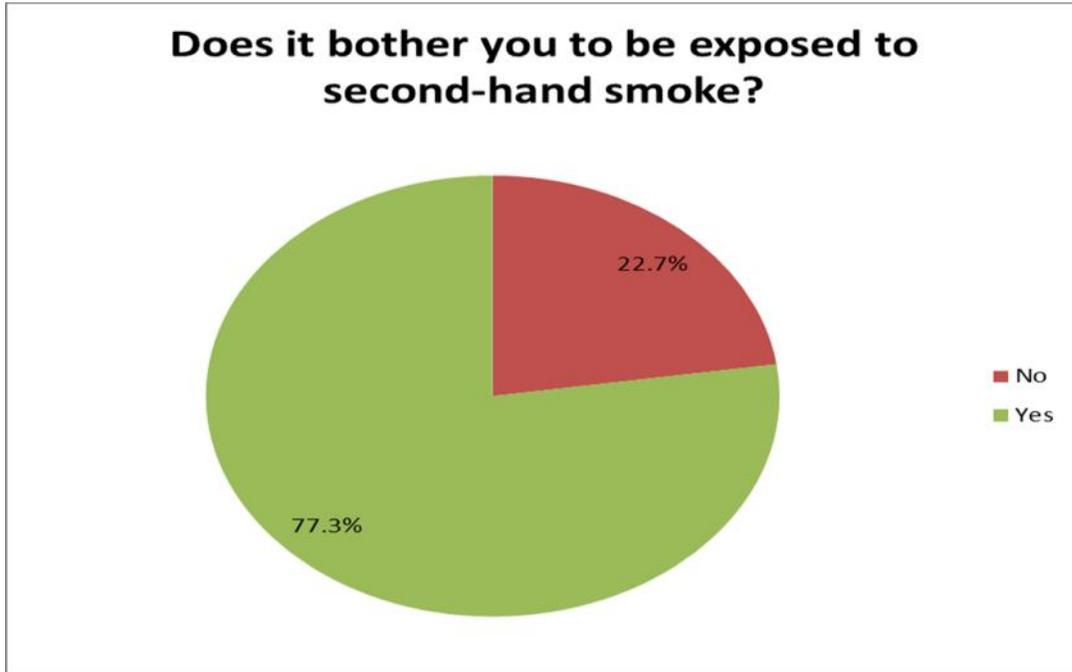


Figure 12: Prevalence of 'Wanting to Ask Someone to Stop Smoking' on the Laurentian University Campus

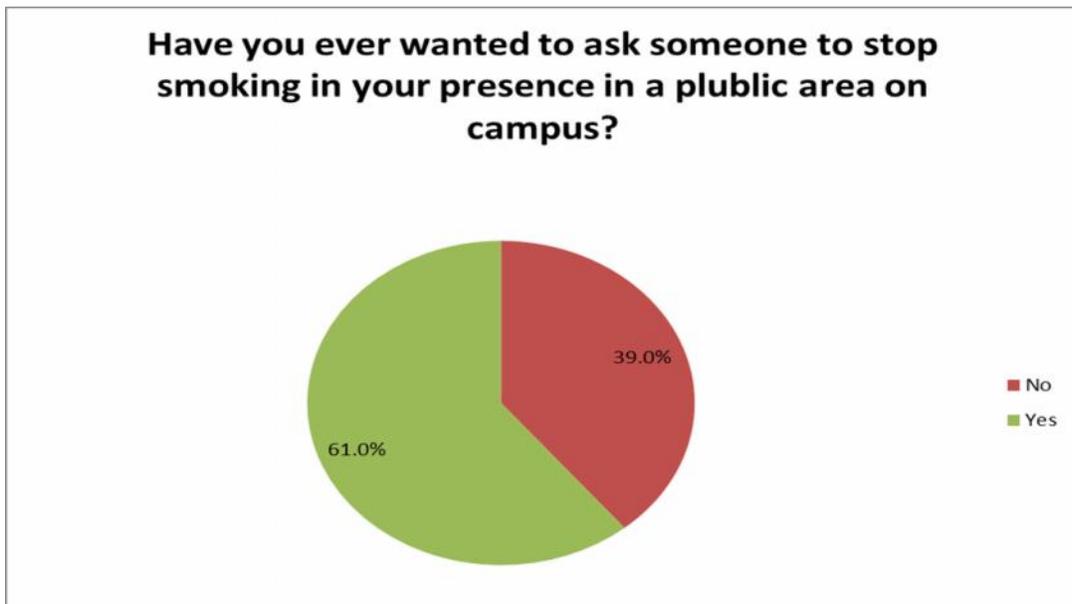


Figure 13: Prevalence of ‘Asking Someone to Stop Smoking’ on the Laurentian University Campus

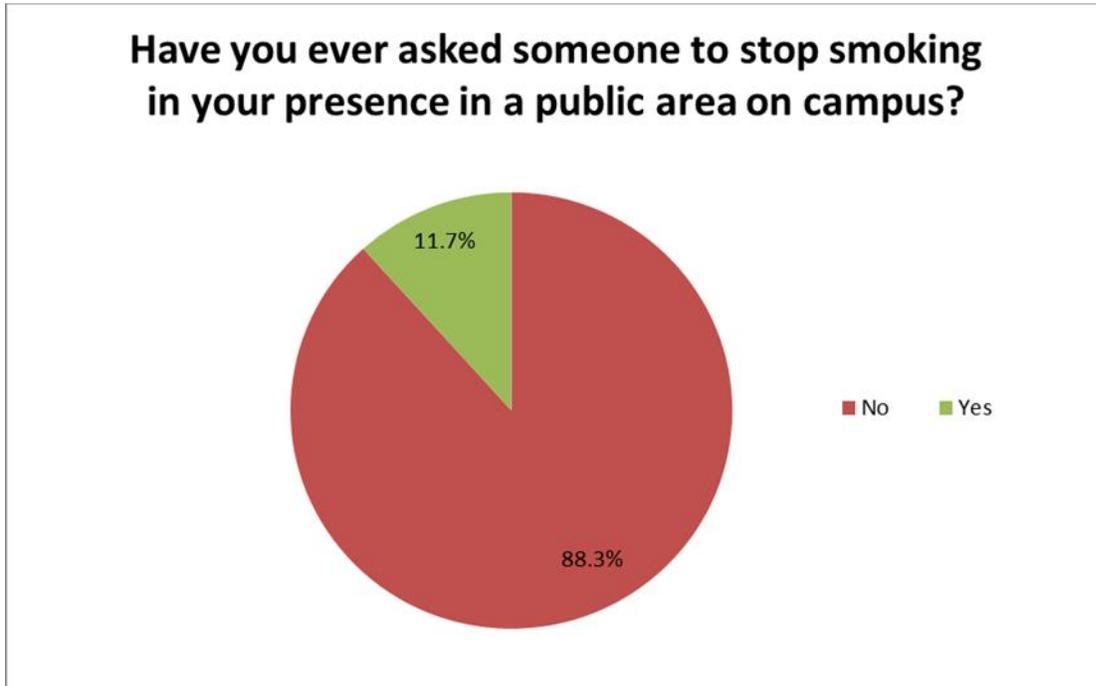


Figure 14: Awareness of the *Ontario Smoke-Free Ontario Act*

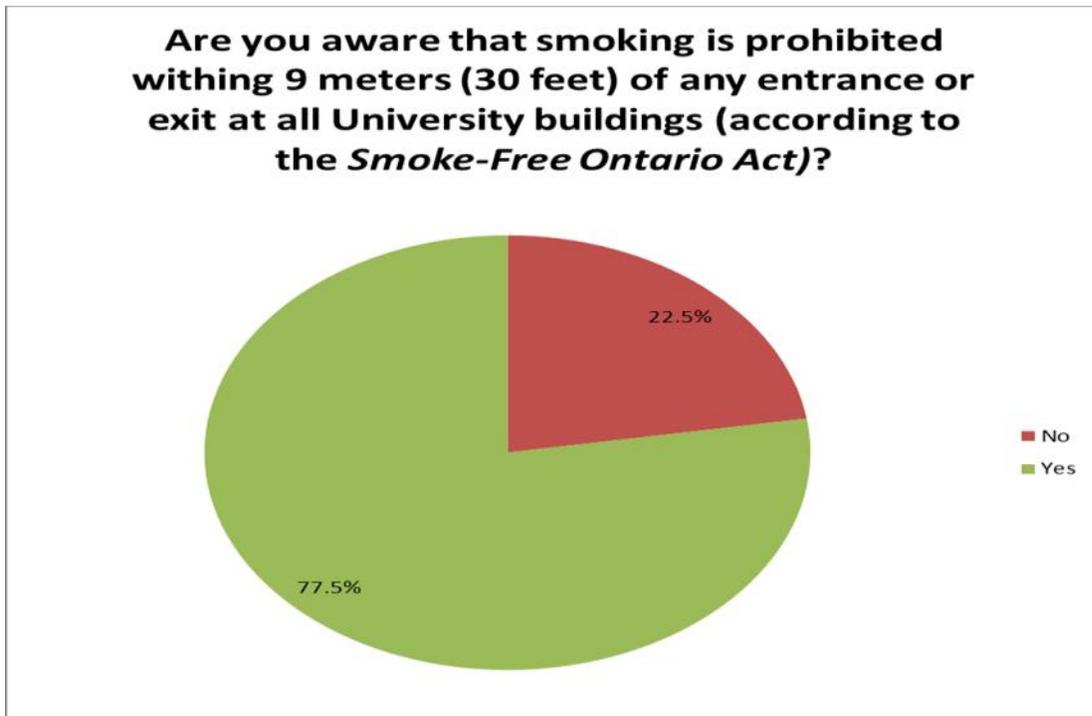


Figure 15: Selection of the Ideal Smoking Policy for the Laurentian University Campus

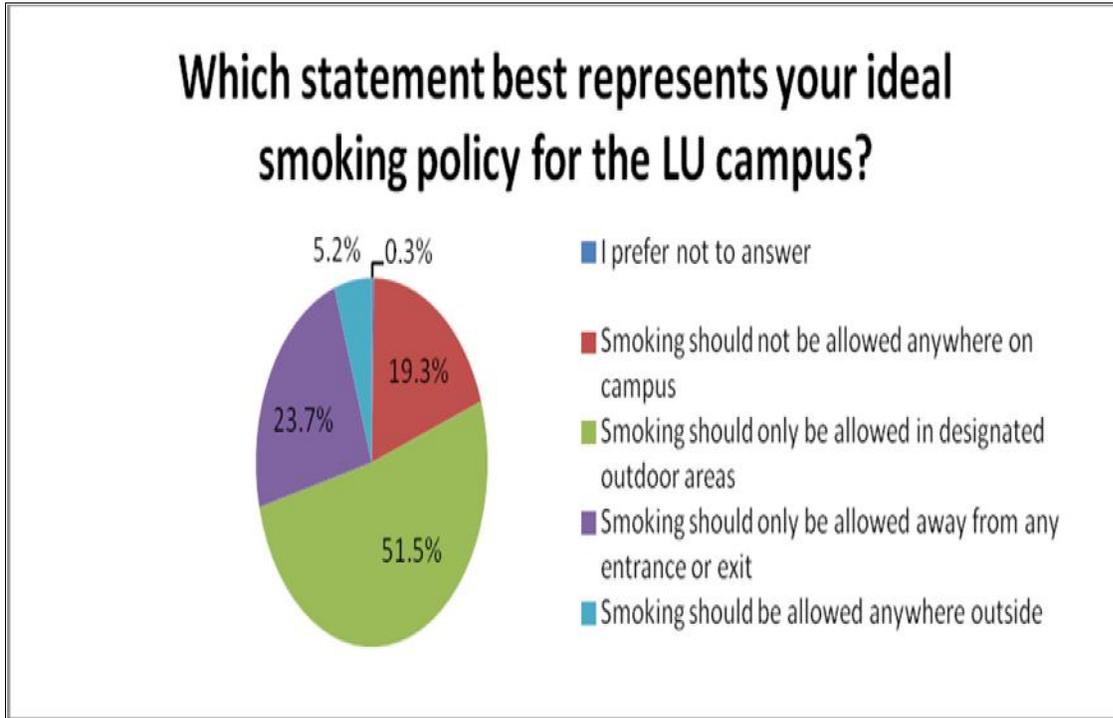


Figure 16: Awareness of the ‘*Leave the Pack Behind* Smoking Cessation Program’ at Laurentian University

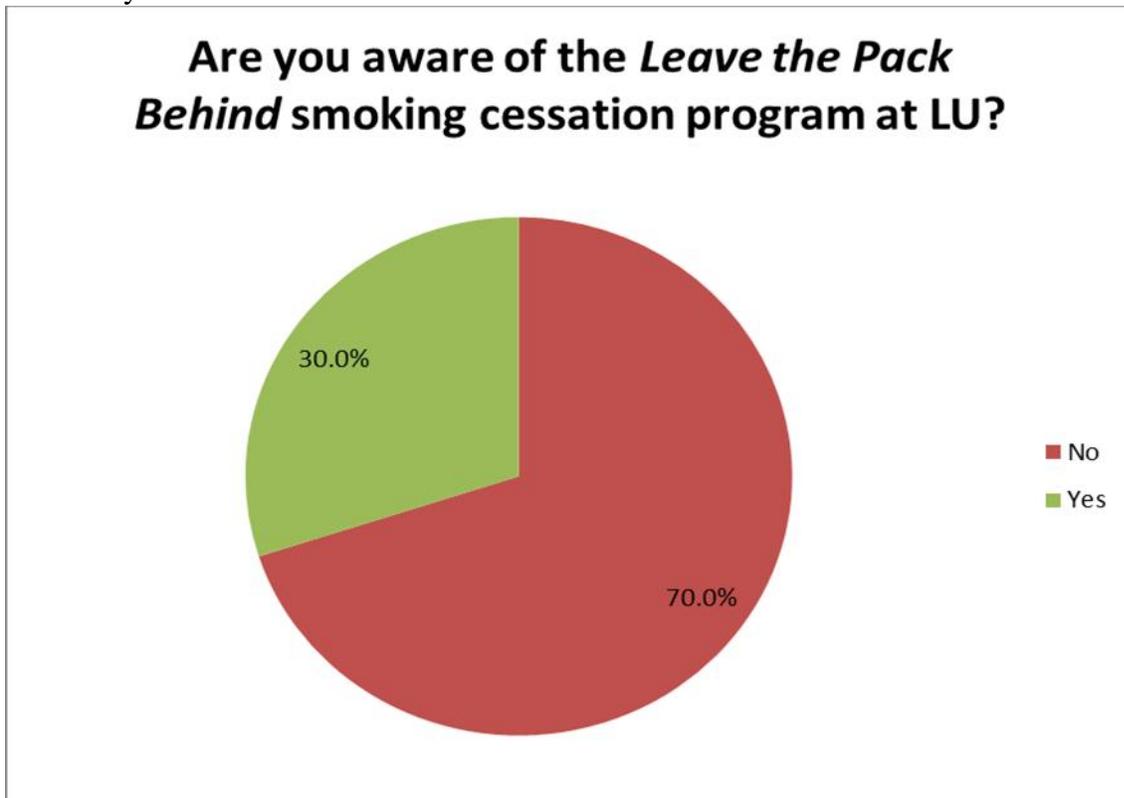
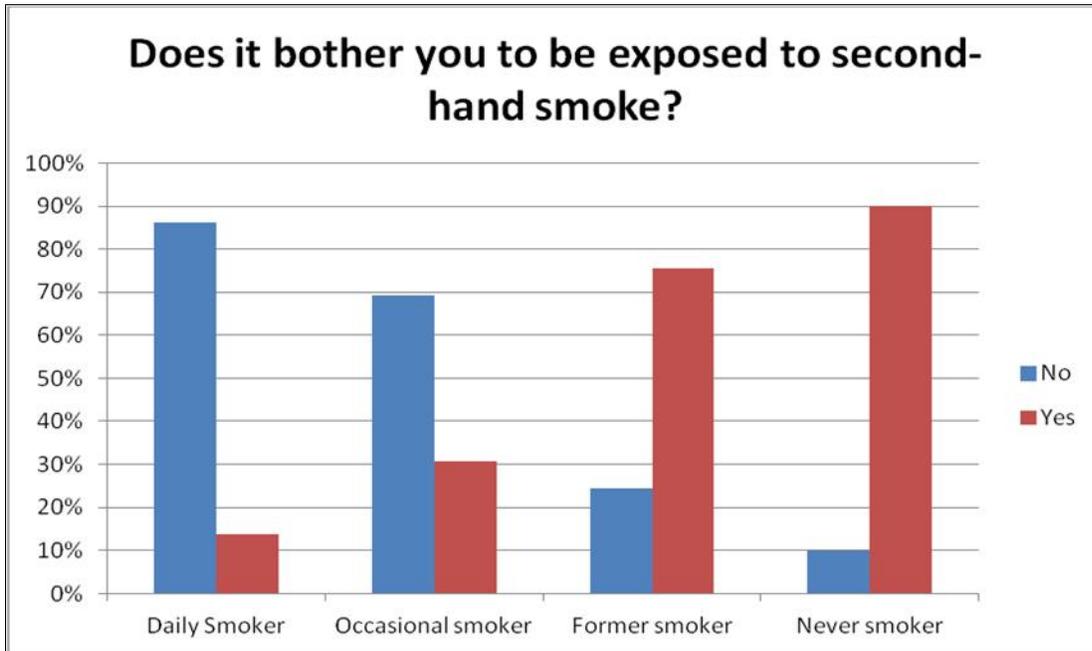
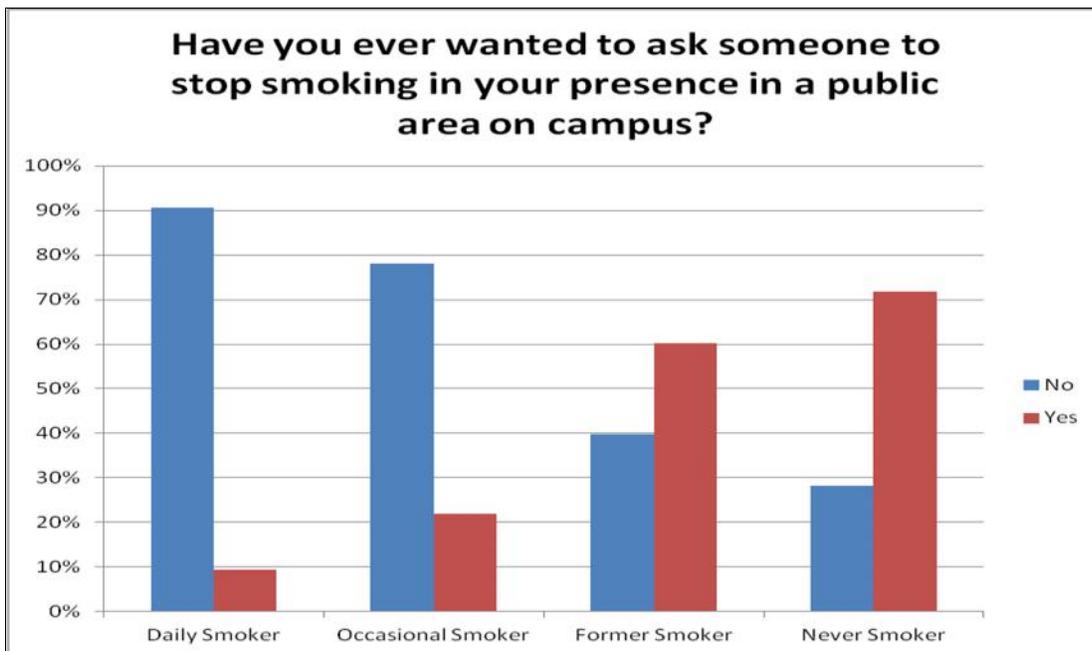


Figure 17: Prevalence of ‘Discontentment with Exposure to Second-Hand Smoke’ (Smokers vs. Non-smokers)



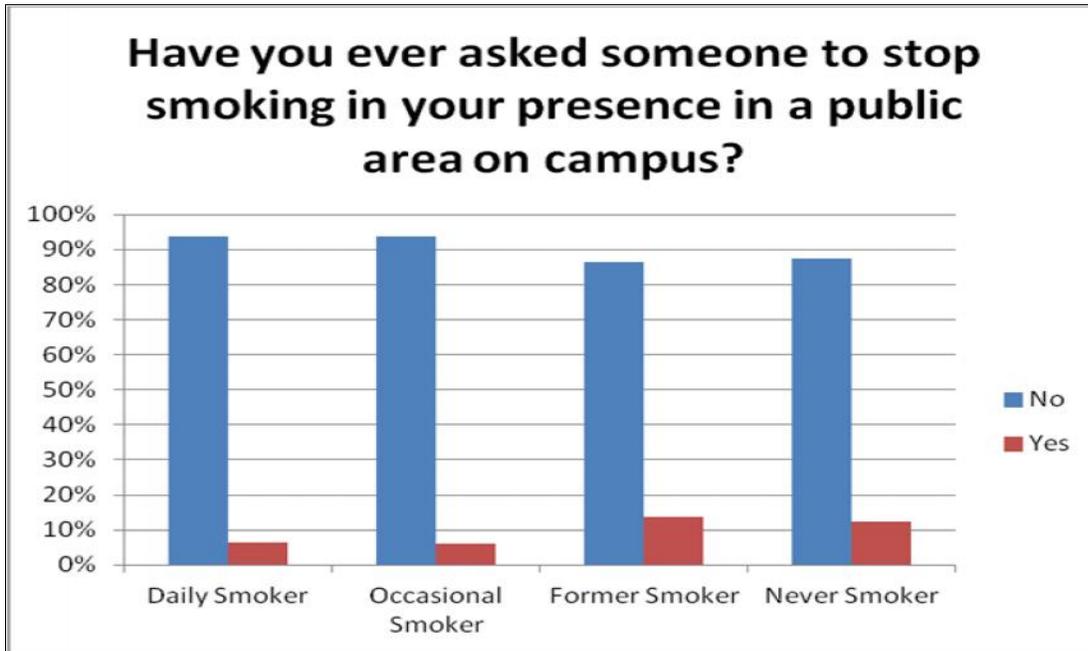
$\chi^2=442.8; p<0.001$

Figure 18: Prevalence of ‘Wanting to Ask Someone to Stop Smoking’ on the Laurentian University Campus (Smokers vs. Non-smokers)



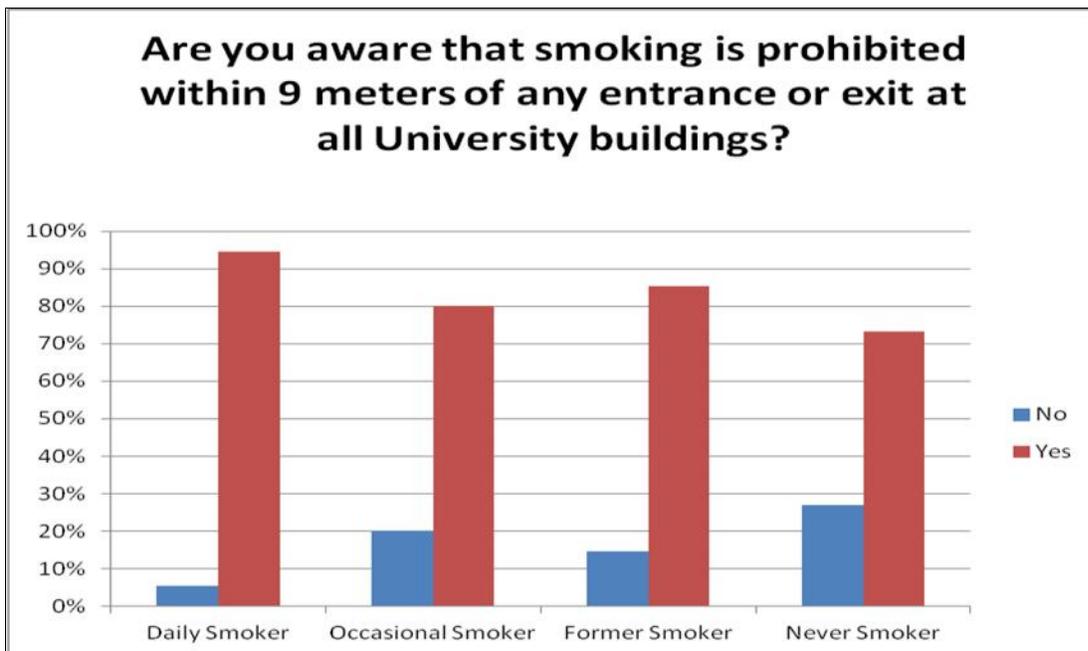
$\chi^2=226.9; p<0.001$

Figure 19: Prevalence of ‘Asking Someone to Stop Smoking’ on the Laurentian University Campus (Smokers vs. Non-smokers)



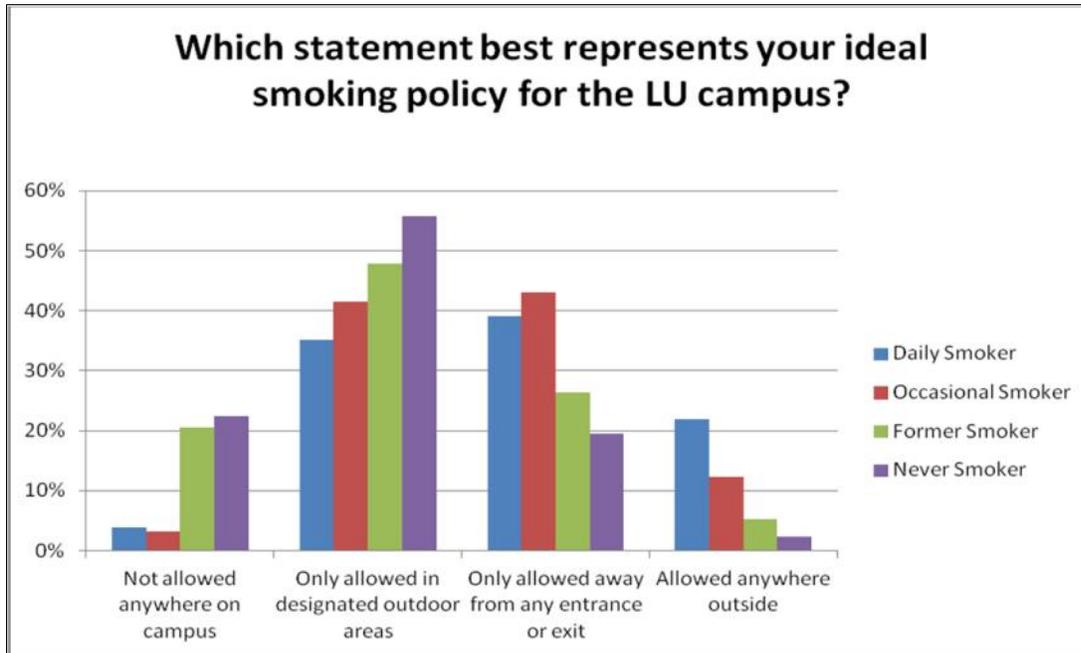
$\chi^2=6.7$; $p=0.08$

Figure 20: Awareness of the *Ontario Smoke-Free Ontario Act* (Smokers vs. Non-smokers)



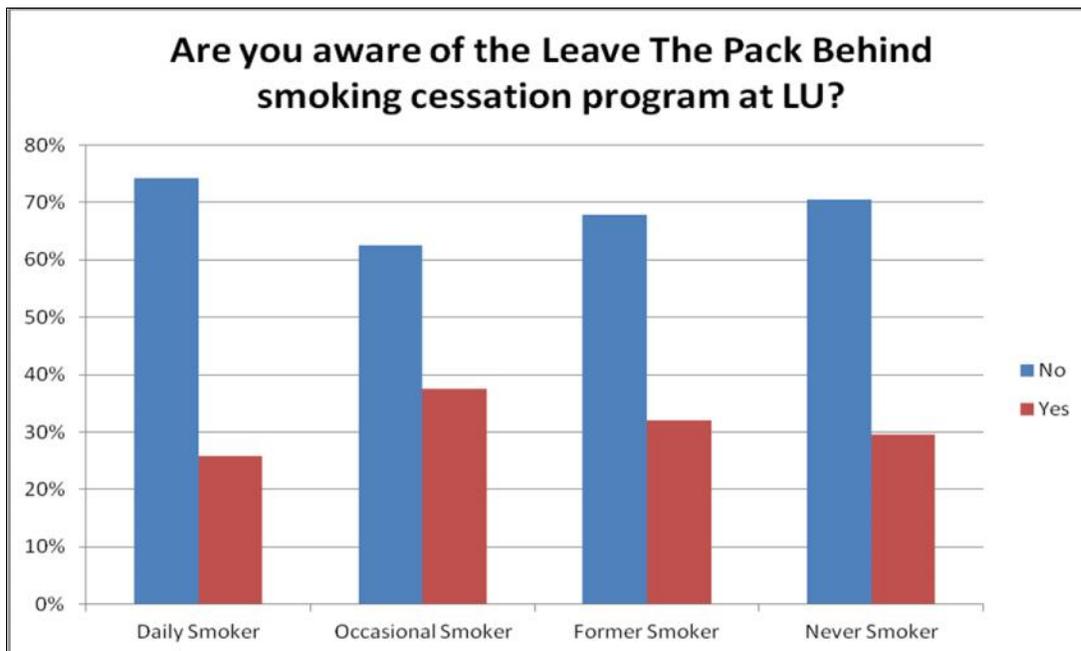
$\chi^2=38.3$; $p<0.001$

Figure 21: Selection of the Ideal Smoking Policy for the Laurentian University Campus (Smokers vs. Non-smokers)



$\chi^2=158.4$; $p<0.001$

Figure 22: Awareness of the 'Leave the Pack Behind Smoking Cessation Program' at Laurentian University (Smokers vs. Non-smokers)



$\chi^2=3.3$; $p=0.349$

Disclaimer:

Information contained in this material is research gathered from the Laurentian University population and presented by the authors of this report. The Laurentian University Administration had no role in the design and conduct of the study; management, analyses, or interpretation of the data; preparation, review, or approval of the report.

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