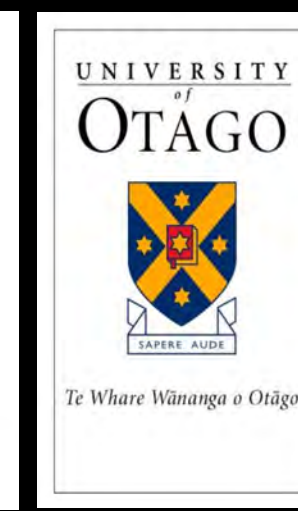


Most Smokers Support Fire-safe Cigarettes: National Survey Data from New Zealand

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Background

Cigarettes are a common cause of fires, causing about 30% of fire deaths in the US and 10% worldwide.¹ A recent New Zealand (NZ) study highlighted the importance of cigarette fires and burns among NZ smokers.²

A possible solution is for governments to mandate for fire-safe (or “reduced ignition propensity”) cigarettes as per Canada and various US states (including New York and California).^{3,4}

Potential techniques include banning the use of fire accelerants in cigarette paper, and requiring ‘speed bumps’ or other means to stop cigarettes burning when not being used.

Such products can have consumer acceptability⁵ and do not increase the intensity of how cigarettes are smoked by users.⁶

There is no evidence to support tobacco industry assertions that fire-safe cigarettes might *increase* smoker carelessness.⁷

There are no current developments within government agencies to advance this issue in NZ, and we are unaware of any fire-safe measures used by manufacturers of factory-made cigarettes sold in NZ to reduce fire risk.

Aims

To assess knowledge about and attitudes towards fire-safe cigarettes among New Zealand smokers.

Methods

Subjects were participants in the first wave of the NZ arm of the International Tobacco Control Policy Evaluation Survey (ITC Project). The NZ ITC cohort is derived from a nationally representative Health Survey, which included booster sampling of Māori (indigenous New Zealanders) and people of Pacific Island and Asian ethnic groups. For wave one, 1376 smokers aged 18+ took part in phone interviews between March 2007 to February 2008. Results were weighted to reflect the national population of smokers and the complex sample design. Further details on the survey methods are available elsewhere.⁸

We asked participants if they knew whether the cigarettes they smoked were designed to reduce the risk of fires, and about their attitudes towards legislation for fire-safe cigarettes:

“Research has shown that fire-safe cigarettes are less likely to cause house fires than other cigarettes. Would you support a law for all factory-made cigarettes to be fire-safe?”

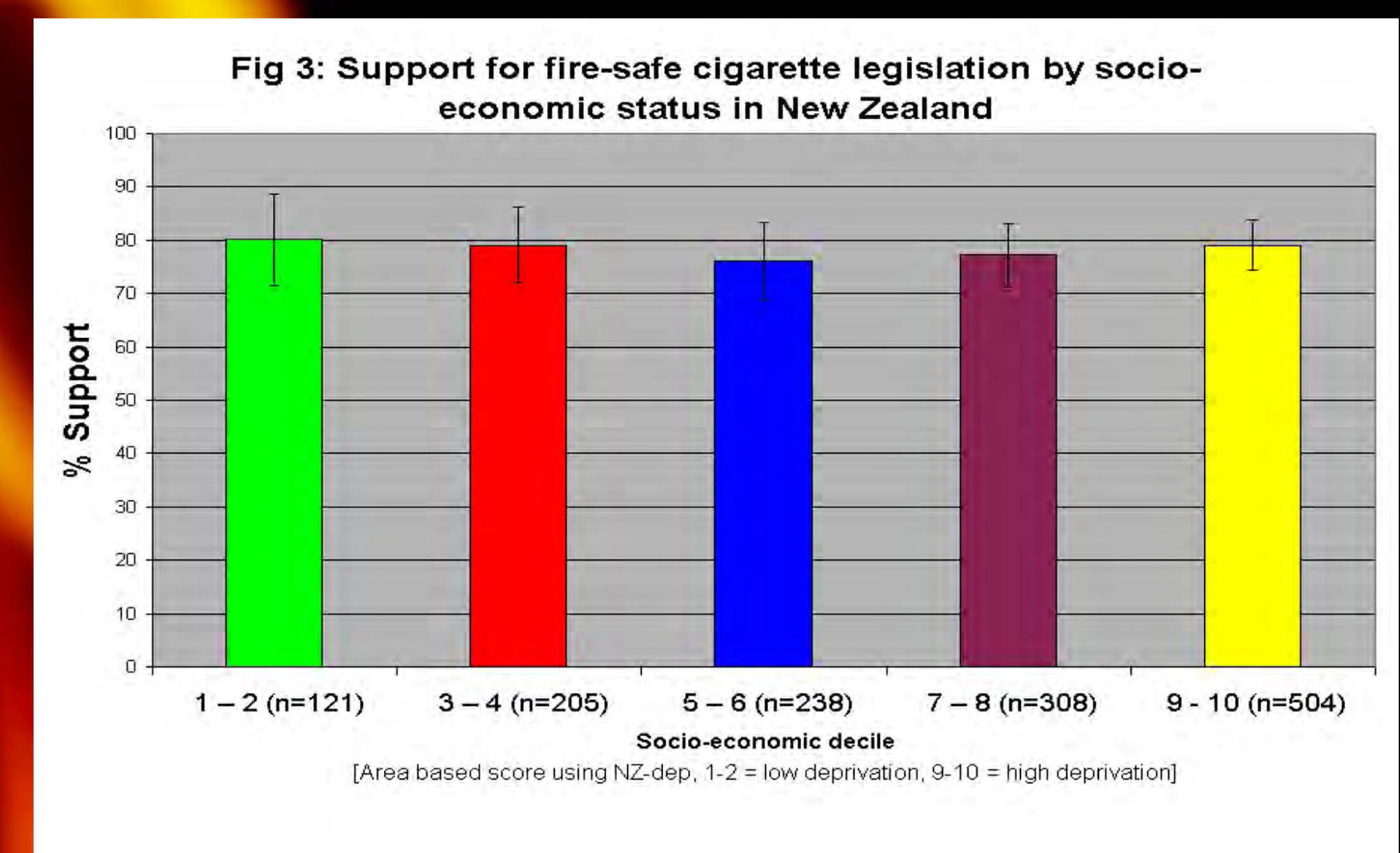
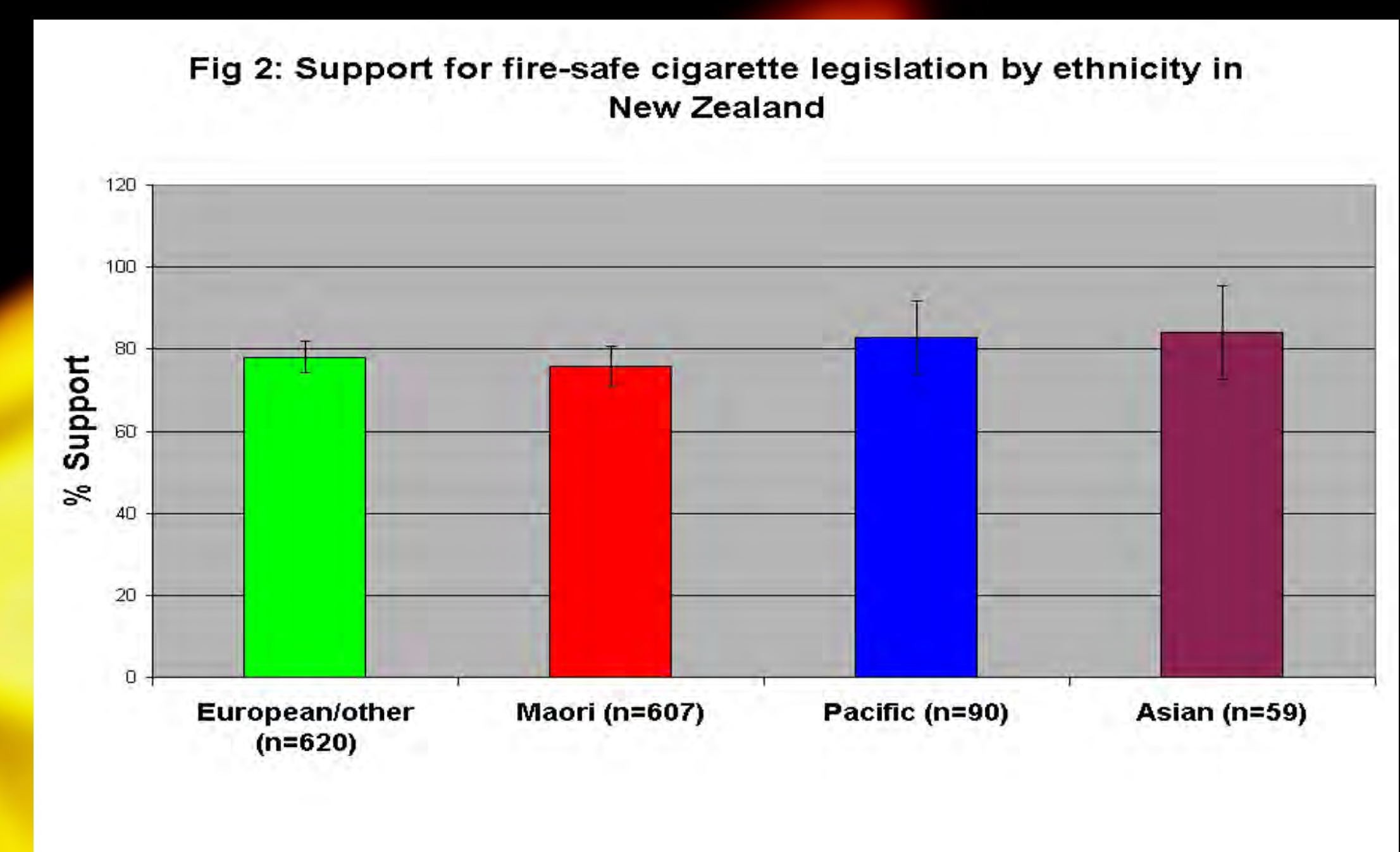
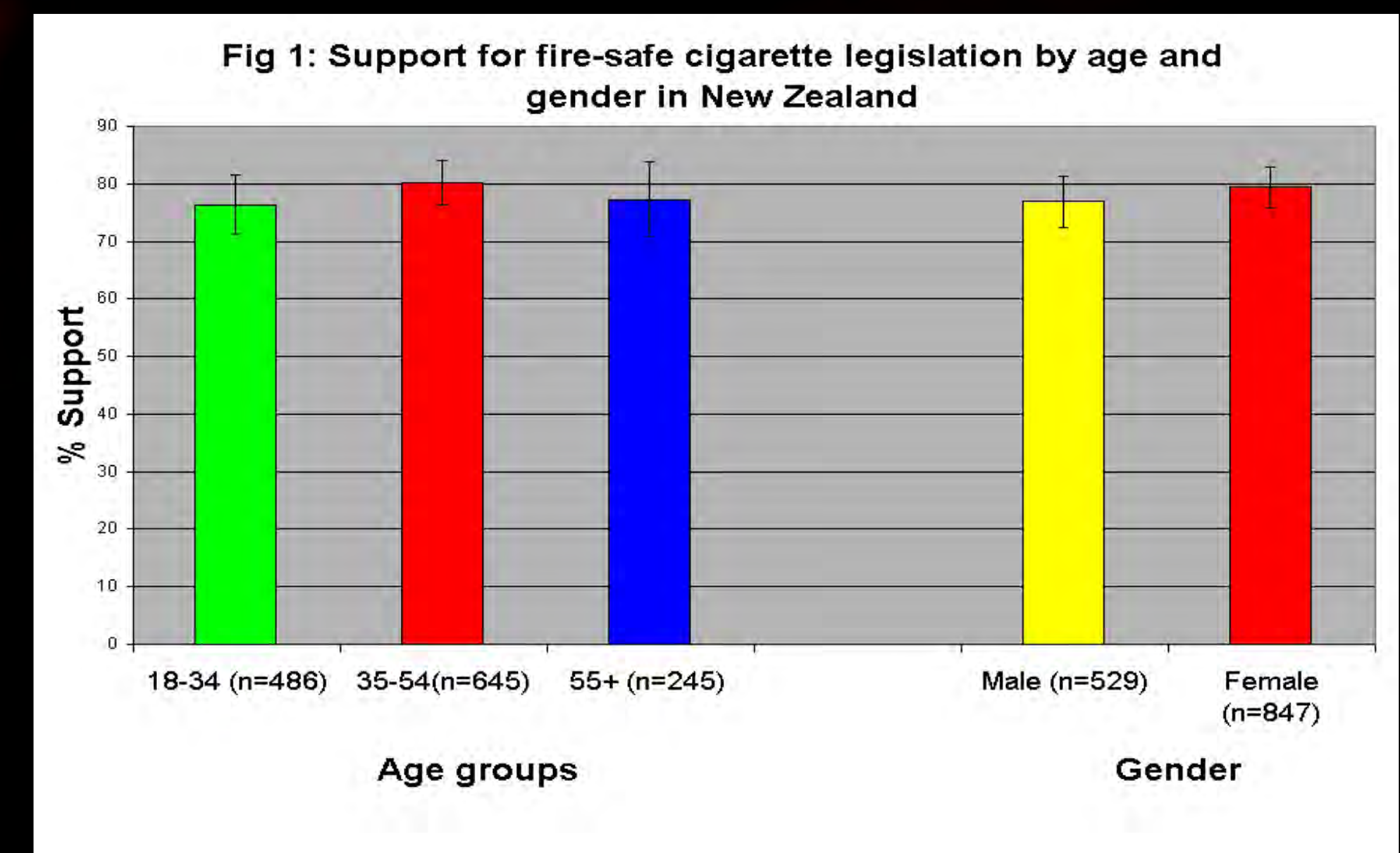
Results

A quarter (25.2%) of smokers thought they already smoked fire-safe cigarettes, with 54.8% saying “no” to this question and 19.4% indicating “can’t say”.

A large majority (78.2%, 95% confidence interval = 75.3% to 81.0%) of smokers surveyed supported having a law for factory-made cigarettes to be made fire-safe.

Support was strong (> 75%) among smokers of both genders and from all age, ethnic and socio-economic status groups.

Support for fire-safe cigarettes by age and gender, ethnicity and deprivation level are shown in figures 1-3.



Discussion

This is the first study we are aware of to investigate smoker support at a country level for a law requiring fire-safe cigarettes.

Adoption of such a law is likely to reduce cigarette-related burns and deaths, and prevent fires that damage property and forests.

Such laws may set a precedent and hence facilitate other tobacco product regulation (eg, for the removal of tobacco additives or reduction of nicotine content).

Given the public health importance of this legislation and strength of public support, the NZ and other governments should explore the introduction of such laws.

Funding and acknowledgements

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