Reviewer's report

Title: What is behind smoker support for new smokefree areas? National survey data

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Reviewer: Janne Scheffels

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General comments:
The aim of this study is to describe support for new smokefree areas laws in NZ, and to explore factors that may influence this support. A sample of 1376 adult smokers is surveyed, the sample taken from the NZ Health Survey.

This is a study asking an interesting question that has not been explored much until now. Smokefree laws covering cars and various outdoor settings applies to settings that, compared to the areas most often restricted by smokefree laws until now such as offices and public serving places, more are part of the private sphere. When laws restricting what people can do in these places are considered, the issue of public support is crucial.

The data and methods used to explore the questions asked appears sound, and the paper presents interesting findings. However, the paper is not very easy to read. This is in my opinion mainly due to two things.

First, the tables are too large, and to difficult to understand intuitively. Five tables of this size is very much, and especially if the tables are not so well edited, as these appear.

Second, as the large tables illustrate, the paper could be better focused. It presents a lot of findings, but the framework of presentation is still a bit unclear. I would like to see more about why are the different variables are included, and what the associations tells us.

About the tables:
Table 1 is an overview of the distribution of how the sample has answered on the Smokefree Support Index. This table is not so difficult to read, but I am not sure how necessary it is to present these data in such detail. Perhaps could this information be given in the text only in stead?

Table 2 is very detailed, this could also be economized down to a smaller table, showing only main tendencies. Also, I do not like that the tables comes with so extensive notes. I would, in this table and in all the others, shorten the notes considerably. One option could also be to put the information presented in stead in the notes in the methods section of the text part of the paper.

Table 3 is confusing, as the system of presenting what is reference category is
not the same all through it (for the two first variables the reference is presented as 1.00 in the table, for the two next it is only mentioned in parantheses, and finally for the SHS exposure and control behaviors it is a little bit of both). This table also is very large. I would suggest taking out those variables that do not inform the subject very much, and only inform in a note or in the heading that they are controlled for.

Table 4 is a presentation of compared mean scores. This too is very detailed, and has a lot of text. I would cut this down considerably.

Other specific comments:
Page 3, paragraph 2: I think that the importance of this study should be better argued for. In what specific ways can it be useful to know more about smokers’ attitudes towards smokefree areas laws?

Page 3, last paragraph: I would prefer that the authors described in text what they want to do: to examine how the support among smokers is, and explore how this support is associated with specific sociodemographic variables, attitudes and practices. We do not need to know that you are doing ‘the most detailed multivariate analysis’, we want to know what you can find out for us.

Page 5: I think that better explanations of measures and analysis is needed here, the readers needs some more instructions to understand the analysis. I would, as mentioned before avoid having so many and so large notes in the table and instead present most of this information here.

Page 5, the results section is short and reports the main findings in a focused way. This is easy to read and gives a good overview. However, the headings of the different sections is a bit confusing: I would not use the general term attitudes only here but describe the dependent variable more precisely: ‘Support for smokefree laws by demographic and socio-demographic characteristics’ and so on.

Page 10, the discussion section, last paragraph discusses why European smokers are less supportive towards smokefree areas laws than Maori/Asian smokers. It is suggested that European smokers may be more representative of a ‘hardcore’ smoking minority than the M/A-smokers. For foreign readers, it is not intuitively understandable why it should be so. I suppose this has to do with that it is fewer smokers in the European population, and that the ‘epidemic’ as such is getting closer to the phase where only the more marginalized smokers remain. And that smoking in M/A-groups is more common, as in an earlier phase of diffusion? Both facts about the prevalence of smoking in the different populations as well as the way of thinking around the ‘hardcore’-hypothesis will have to be presented here if this discussion is to make any sense to the reader.

In relation to this, the way of writing in the next paragraph, the first one about limitations of the study, also seems strange given that this paper is to be read by an international audience (‘because smoking in this country.’).
In general, the section about limitations of the study from page 10 on discusses potential problems in a balanced way, pointing to possible selection bias and measurement errors. The last paragraph about how unlikely it is that not all confounders have been controlled for is unnecessary, and in my opinion also not very convincing – I would take this out.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests