

# Smoking Bans in NZ Restaurants and Bars: How Will Overseas Visitors React?

Banning smoking in NZ restaurants and bars is unlikely to have a negative impact on overseas tourist numbers or revenues. On the contrary, it may help boost New Zealand's attractiveness to overseas visitors.

## Nationalities and likely smoking status of visitors to New Zealand

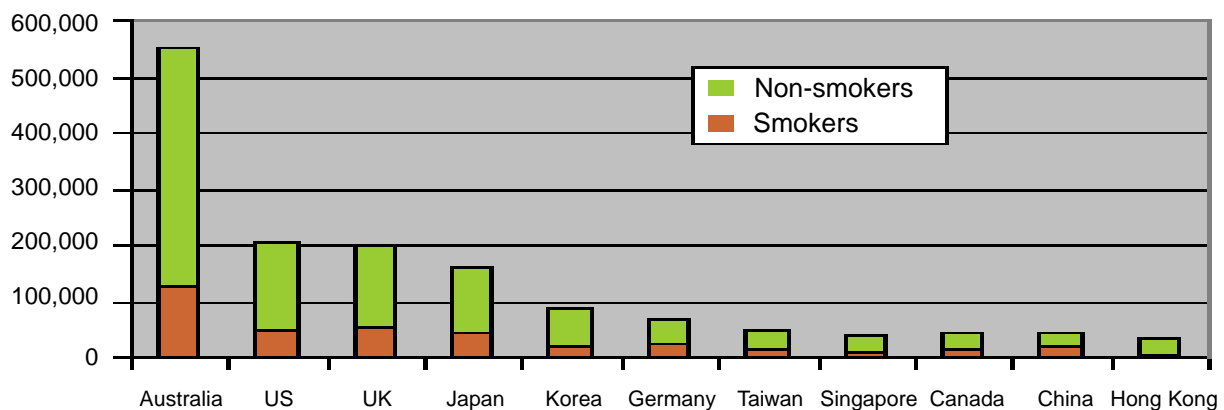
Each year more than 1.7 million people visit New Zealand for holidays, business or to see family or friends (Statistics NZ 2000).

More than half of these visitors come from countries like Australia, United States and United Kingdom, where male and female adult smoking rates are quite similar to, or slightly higher than, New Zealand's.

Only about 20 percent of NZ visitors come from countries with high mate smoking rates (ie. greater than 40 percent). These countries include Japan, Korea, Taiwan and China. Female smoking rates in these countries are low, however.

These figures indicate non-smokers are likely to comprise the dominant share of New Zealand's inbound tourist market — around 75 percent overall. Most of these non-smokers are likely to support smoking bans or restrictions in restaurants and bars, since this is typically the finding in most studies of public attitudes to environmental tobacco-smoke in developed countries (Ministry of Health 1999, Mullins and Borland 1995). As well, many of New Zealand's international visitors are from countries such as Australia and the United States, where smoking bans have already been introduced in bars or restaurants in several states and cities.

**Figure 1: Estimated numbers of smokers and non-smokers among visitors to New Zealand from top 11 countries\***



Source: Chart data calculated from visitor arrival data for year ended August 2000 (Statistics NZ 2000) and smoking prevalence data (Carrao et al. 2000).

\* Assumes that visitors to New Zealand smoke at the same rate as everyone in their country of origin and that visitors under 15 do not smoke.

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## Tourists and smoking restrictions in New Zealand restaurants and bars

Dining out is a popular activity amongst visitors to New Zealand. The latest International Visitors Survey shows that, more than half of all visitors from Australia, US, UK, Japan, South Korea, Germany, Taiwan, Singapore, Canada and Hong Kong ate out at a restaurant or other venue during their stay in New Zealand (NZ Tourism Board 2000).

Restaurant smoking bans may help to encourage even more overseas visitors to eat out, or eat out more often, during their stay in New Zealand. In South Australia, where restaurant smoking bans have been in place since January 1999, studies show that a majority of both non-smokers and smokers consider the quality of their dining experience will be either unchanged or enhanced by smoking bans (Wakefield et al 1999).

Restaurant smoking bans also seem in most cases not to undermine business revenues. In Adelaide, 78 percent of restaurants imposing voluntary smoking bans reported no change or a gain in business as a result of the bans (Jones et al 1999). A study of the impact of indoor smoking bans on international tourism revenues in three US states (California, Utah and Vermont) and six cities found that these bans were not associated with tourism revenue reductions, and in fact may have helped increase revenues in some places (Glantz and Charlesworth 1999).

Bars and nightclubs are only visited by a minority of overseas tourists (NZ Tourism Board). Smoking bans in these places are therefore likely to be potentially problematic only to the relatively small percentage of visitors to NZ who smoke and also regularly go to bars.

In saying this, it should be remembered that not all visitors to New Zealand who smoke and go to bars will necessarily object to bar smoking bans. Surveys suggest that at least a small proportion of smokers are likely to support smoking bans or restrictions in bars (Semmonds et al 1995).

Visitors to New Zealand who smoke may also be more prepared than other smokers to accept and comply with smoking bans in indoor environments. Most international visitors to New Zealand are required not to smoke for a period of at least 3-4 hours when they fly into or out of New Zealand on commercial aircraft. At least two of New Zealand's major tour bus operators also ban smoking on their tourist coaches.

Many people, both non-smokers and smokers, elect not to go to bars and nightclubs at least in part because of the high levels of environmental tobacco smoke in these places (Reeder and Blair 2000). Smoking bans could therefore encourage more international tourists to go to bars and nightclubs during their New Zealand stay.

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OCTOBER 2001