

Part 7: Connectedness – parents, family, school and peers

Social connectedness has been identified as a protective factor for a range of positive youth health outcomes (Adolescent Health Research Group, 2004; Minister of Youth Affairs, 2002; Resnick, 2000), including reduced smoking uptake (Atkins, Oman, Vesely et al., 2002; Health Sponsorship Council, 2005). This section reports the findings from several questions measuring participants' sense of connection with parents, family and whānau, school and peers.

The style of parenting that young people report is one commonly used indicator of connectedness. Measures of parenting style in this survey include a series of questions asking about 'parents and caregivers' smoking-specific rules, monitoring and awareness of students' school and social life, and rule setting (Adolescent Health Research Group, 2003; Tobacco Information and Prevention Service; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2005).

The measures of family, school and peer connectedness are from Victoria University's Youth Connectedness Project. Measures of family connectedness included questions about spending time together as a family, whether this is important and if family/whānau members help each other out. School connectedness was measured by asking students if they were given respect and trust from teachers at school and if they felt proud of and liked going to their school/kura. They were also asked about their school leaving intentions and to rank their own academic performance relative to the 'average student' at the school. Peer connectedness was measured by asking students to assess whether they could trust their friends with personal problems, if their friends accepted them as who they are and if they helped each other out.

Parenting style

Smoking-specific rules

Close to six in ten students (57.2%) reported that their parents or caregivers *had set rules about not smoking cigarettes/tobacco* and around four in five students (80.7%) reported that their parents or caregivers *would be upset if they [the student] were caught smoking cigarettes/tobacco*.

A lower proportion of Māori and New Zealand European/Pākehā students reported that their parents or caregivers *had set rules about not smoking cigarettes/tobacco* (55.8% and 53.9%, respectively), compared with Pacific students (67.7%). A lower proportion of Māori students reported that their parents or caregivers *would be upset if they were caught smoking cigarettes/tobacco*, compared with non-Māori students (67.6% and 84.4%, respectively).

A lower proportion of students from low decile schools reported that their parents or caregivers *would be upset if they were caught smoking cigarettes/tobacco*, compared with students from high decile schools (75.5% and 87.3%, respectively). This was also true for ‘current smokers’, compared with ‘non smokers’ (50.0% and 89.4%, respectively).

Awareness and monitoring

Close to three-quarters of all students in Year 10 (75.8%) reported that their parents or caregivers *know about [their] school life (e.g., teachers, grades)*. Around two-thirds of all students (65.8%) reported that their parents or caregivers *generally know what [they] spend their pocket money on*. Over one in ten students (14.8%) reported that their parents or caregivers *often have no idea where [they are] when away from home*.

Lower proportions of Māori students, compared with non-Māori students, reported that their parents or caregivers *know about [their] school life (e.g., teachers, grades)* (69.4% and 77.6%, respectively) and agreed that their parents or caregivers *generally know what [they] spend their pocket money on* (57.8% and 68.1%, respectively). A higher proportion of Māori students compared with non-Māori students reported that their parents or caregivers *often have no idea where [they are] when away from home* (21.3% and 13.0%, respectively).

A lower proportion of students from low and mid decile schools compared with students from high decile schools reported that their parents or caregivers *know about [their] school life (e.g., teachers, grades)* (72.7%, 72.6% and 81.1%, respectively).

A lower proportion of ‘current smokers’, compared with students who had never smoked, reported that their parents or caregivers *know about [their] school life (e.g., teachers, grades)* (68.0% and 80.7%, respectively). A higher proportion of ‘current smokers, compared with ‘never smokers’ reported that their parents or caregivers *often have no idea where [they are] when away from home* (32.2% and 8.6%, respectively). ‘Current smokers’ also were more likely to disagree that their parents or caregivers *generally know what [they] spend their pocket money on*, compared with ‘never smokers’ (38.7% and 13.7%, respectively).

Rules and consequences

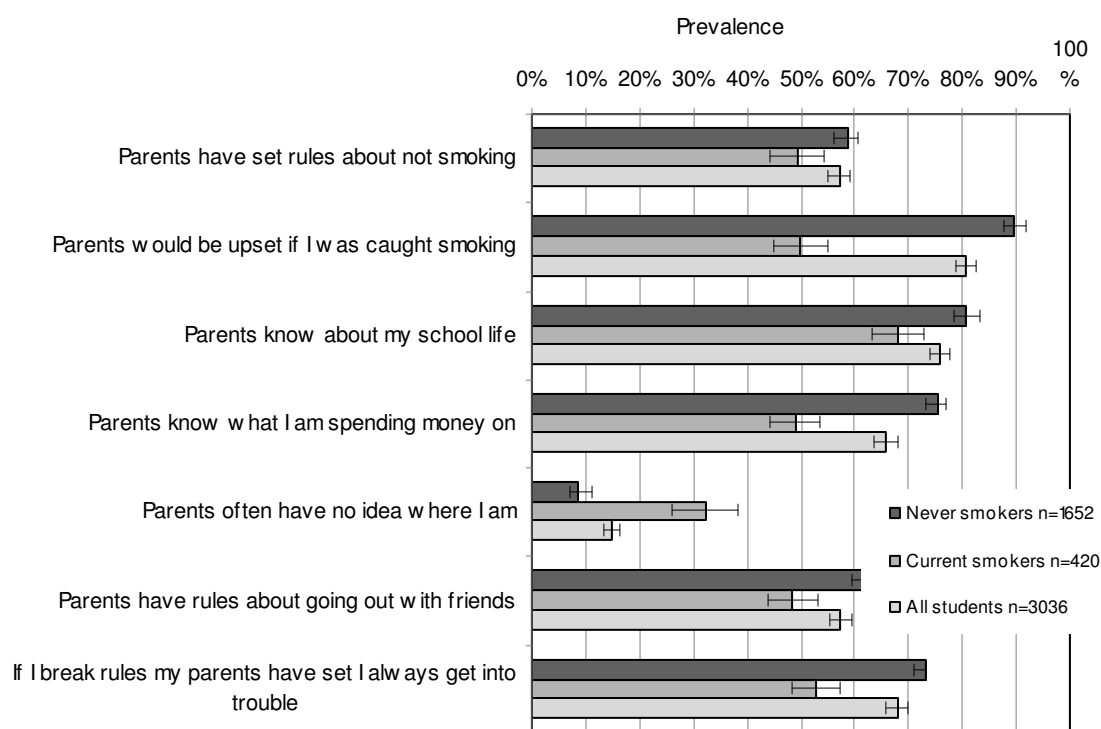
Close to six in ten students (57.3%) reported that their parents or caregivers *have rules about when [they] can go out with friends*, and just over two-thirds of all students (67.9%) reported that they *always get into trouble if [they] break any important rules [their] parents or caregivers have set*. A higher proportion of female students reported that their parents or caregivers *have rules about when [they] can go out with friends*, compared with male students (62.3% and 52.7%, respectively).

A higher proportion of Pacific students said that their parents or caregivers *have rules about when [they] can go out with friends* and that they *always get into trouble if [they] break any important rules [their] parents or caregivers have set* (67.6% and 74.0%, respectively), compared with Māori students (51.3% and 60.1%, respectively).

Lower proportions of ‘current smokers’ said that their parents or caregivers *have rules about when [they] can go out with friends* and that they *always get into trouble if [they] break any important rules [their] parents or caregivers have set* (48.5% and 52.8%, respectively), compared with ‘never smokers’ students (61.8% and 73.3%, respectively).

Overall, lower proportions of were 'current smokers' reported consistently lower levels of parental connectedness for all the indicators used in this survey, compared with ‘never smokers’ - See Figure 7.1.

Figure 7.1 Parenting style: Smoking-specific, awareness, and rules – all students by smoking status



Bars indicate the prevalence of students who agreed with statement

Family/whānau connectedness

To measure family/ whānau connectedness, students were asked to rate the following statements, by using the categories - *never/almost never; not often; sometimes; often and always/almost always*:

- For family, spending time together is important
- We can easily think of things to do together as a family
- Family likes to spend time together
- Family asks each other for help
- Like to do things as a family

Spending time with family/whānau

More than one-half of students reported that for their family/whānau, *spending time together* was *often* (30.1%) or *always/almost always* (24.5%) important. However, under one in five students reported that for their family/ whānau, *spending time together* was *not often* (11.4%) or *never/almost never* (4.9%) important.

Two in five students reported that *their family/whānau likes to spend free time together often* (24.1%) or *always/almost always* (16.5%). However, close to a quarter of students said their families *never/almost never* liked or *not often* liked to spend free time together (6.6% and 17.1%, respectively). A higher proportion of female students liked to spend time together with their family/whānau *often* or *always/almost always*, compared with male students (48.5% and 41.5%, respectively).

Close to two in five students reported that their *family/whānau can easily think of things to do together as a family often* (27.3%) or *always/almost always* (16.5%). Again, close to one in five students said their families *never/almost never* or *not often* thought of things to do as a family easily (6.4% and 14.8%, respectively).

Close to two in five students (39.5%) reported *they like to do things just as a family often* (24.0%) or *always/almost always* (15.5%). However, close to a quarter of students (23.7%) reported that liking doing things just as a family was *not often* (16.3%) or *never/almost never* (7.4%).

Close to two-thirds of Pacific students (65.4%) reported that for *their family/whānau*, *spending time together* was *often* or *always/almost always* important. In comparison, close to half of the Māori students and over half of New Zealand European/Pākehā students (48.0% and 54.7%, respectively) reported that for their family/whānau, *spending time together* was *often* or *always/almost always* important. A higher proportion of Pacific students reported that their family/whānau likes to spend free time together *often* or *always/almost always*, compared with Māori and New Zealand European/Pākehā students (50.8%, 39.4% and 38.0% respectively).

Similarly, a higher proportion of Pacific students reported that their family/whānau *can easily think of things to do together as a family often or always/almost always*, compared with Māori and New Zealand European/Pākehā students (57.5%, 41.3% and 41.9%, respectively). Again, a higher proportion of Pacific students reported that they like to do things just as a family *often or always/almost always*, compared with Māori and New Zealand European/Pākehā students (54.3%, 38.4% and 45.0%, respectively).

Analysis of students' responses by smoking status showed that 'current smokers' consistently reported lower levels of family/whānau connectedness, when compared 'never smokers'.

A lower proportion of 'current smokers' reported that for their family/whānau, *spending time together was often or always/almost always* important, compared with 'never smokers' (35.8% and 61.4%, respectively). 'Current smokers' were also less likely to report that *their family/whānau likes to spend free time together often or always/almost always*, compared with 'never smokers' (27.4% and 46.4%, respectively).

Similarly, a lower proportion of 'current smokers' reported that *their family/whānau can easily think of things to do together as a family often or always/almost always*, compared with 'never smokers' (31.8% and 48.9%, respectively). Again, a lower proportion of 'current smokers' reported that they *like to do things just as a family often or always/almost always*, compared with 'never smokers' (26.9% and 45.1%, respectively).

Family/whānau support

One in two students said that *their family/whānau ask each other for help* either *always/almost always* (20.6%) or *often* (28.8%). Over one in ten students (13.8%) reported that their family/whānau ask each other for help *not often*, and 4.9% reported that their family/whānau *never/almost never* ask each other for help.

A higher proportion of Pacific students reported that *their family/whānau asked each other for help often or always/almost always*, compared with Māori and New Zealand European/Pākehā students (57.6%, 46.6% and 48.0%, respectively).

A higher proportion of 'current smokers' reported that *their family/whānau asked each other for help never/almost never* (13.6%) or *not often* (18.4%), compared with 'never smokers' (2.8% and 11.4%, respectively).

School connectedness

School connectedness was measured by asking students when they plan to leave school, and by asking them to rank their own academic performance relative to an 'average student' at school. Students were also asked whether they *strongly agreed, agreed, neither/nor, disagreed or strongly disagreed* with the following statements:

- Treated with as much as respect as other students
- Adults in school / kura trusted (the students) with responsibility
- Adults in schools / kura gave (the students) opportunities to make decisions for themselves
- Like going to school /kura
- Feel proud about school /kura

Respect and trust by teachers at school

Students were asked whether they were *treated them with as much respect as other students*, whether adults at school *trusted them with responsibility* and whether adults gave them *opportunities to make decisions for themselves*.

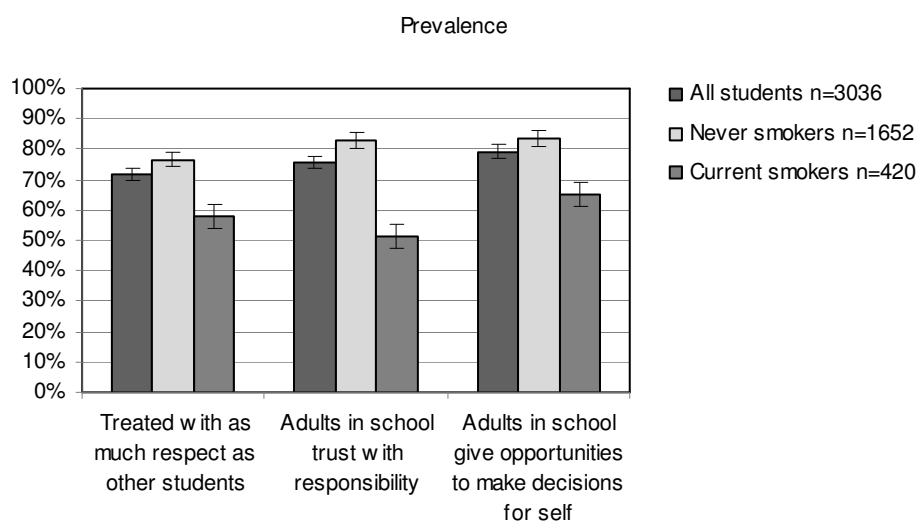
Overall, 71.6% of all students *strongly agree* or *agree* (16.1% and 55.5%, respectively) that teachers *treated them with as much respect as other students*. A higher proportion of 'current smokers' either *strongly disagree* or *disagree* with this statement, compared with students who had never smoked (24.2% and 11.1%, respectively).

Just over three-quarters of the students (75.5%) either *strongly agree* (18.0%) or *agree* (57.5%) that *adults trusted them with responsibility*. Female students were more likely to either *strongly agree* or *agree* with this statement, compared with male students (81.5% and 70.1%, respectively).

Overall, Māori students were less likely to either *strongly agree* or *agree* (13.6% and 56.1%, respectively) with this, compared with non-Māori students (19.3% strongly agreed and 57.8% agreed). The difference was even more marked with 'current smokers', compared with 'never smokers' - 51.4% of current smokers *strongly agree* or *agree* compared with 82.9% of 'never smokers' who *strongly agree* or *agree*.

Close to four in five students (79.3%) *agree* overall that *adults in schools gave them opportunities to make decisions themselves* (20.9% *strongly agree* and 58.4% *agree*). Again, 'never smokers' were more likely to *agree* with this (83.6% *strongly agree* or *agree*), compared with 'current smokers' (65.2% *strongly agreed* or *agreed*).

Figure 7.1 Respect and trust by teachers at school – all students by smoking status



Bars indicate the prevalence of students who agreed with statement

Pride in school

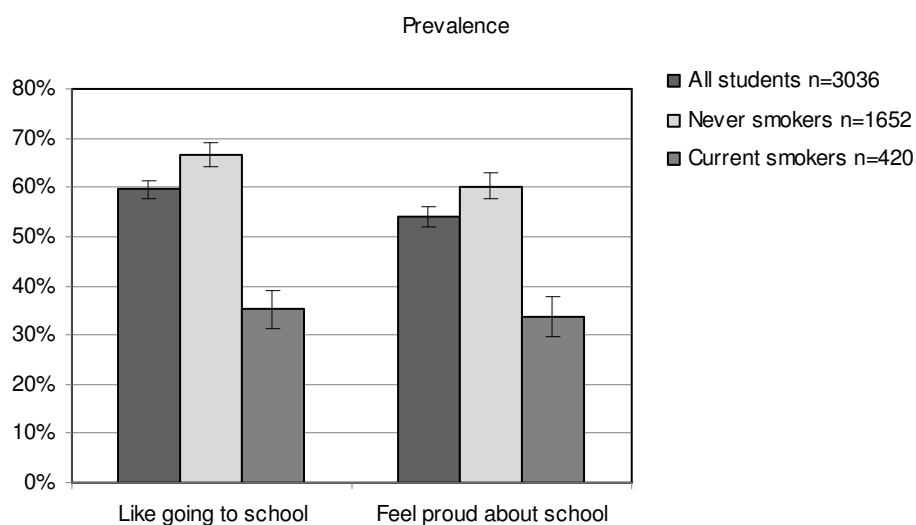
Over one in two students either agreed (38.9%) or strongly agreed (15.2%) with the statement *I feel proud about my school/kura*. However, close to three in ten students (27.6%) neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement, and almost one in five either disagreed (10.6%) or strongly disagreed (7.8%).

A higher proportion of Pacific students *strongly agree* with this statement, compared with Māori and New Zealand European/Pākehā students (32.0%, 15.7% and 12.1%, respectively). A lower proportion of 'current smokers' reported feeling proud about their school, compared with 'never smokers' (33.7% and 60.2% *strongly agree* or *agree* with this statement, respectively).

Similarly, close to three in five students (59.5%) either *agree* (43.8%) or *strongly agree* (15.7%) with the statement *I like going to my school/kura*, while 20.9% *neither agree nor disagree*, 11.5% *disagree* and 8.1% *strongly disagree*.

Again, a higher proportion of Pacific students *strongly agree* with this statement, compared with Māori and New Zealand European/Pākehā students (31.6%, 15.2% and 12.8%, respectively) and a lower proportion of 'current smokers' reported that they liked going to their school, compared with 'never smokers' (35.2% and 66.7%, respectively).

Figure 7.2 Pride in school – all students by smoking status



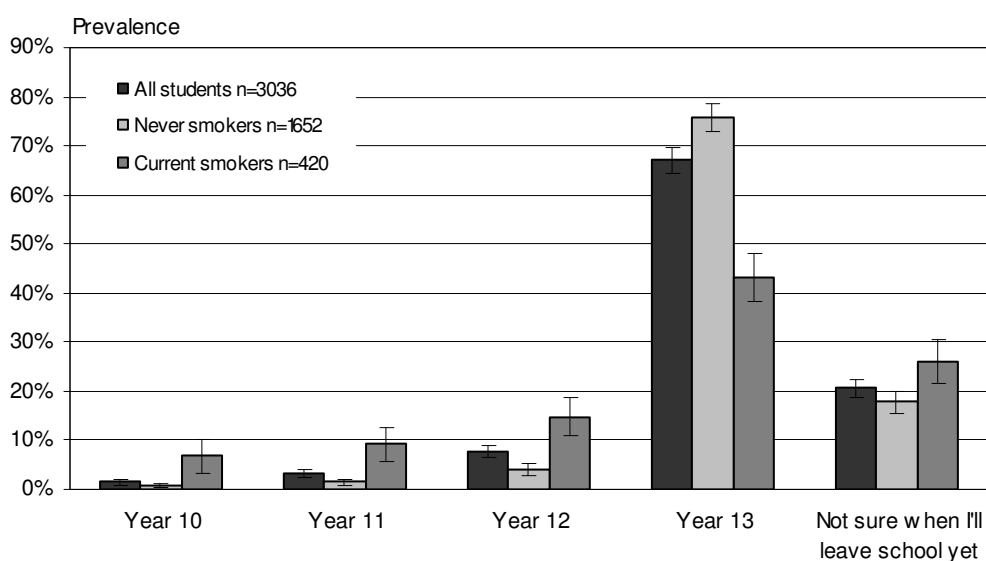
Bars indicate the prevalence of students who agreed with statement

School-leaving plans

Students were asked when they plan to leave school, most said Year 13, the final year of secondary schooling in New Zealand (67.0%, Figure 7.3). One in five participating students said they were not sure when they would leave school (20.7%).

A higher proportion of 'current smokers' (9.2%) planned to leave school in Year 11, compared with 1.5% of students who had never smoked a cigarette. However, a higher proportion of 'current smokers' also were not sure when they would leave school, compared with of 'never smokers' (26.1% and 17.8%, respectively).

Figure 7.3 School leaving plans – all students by smoking status



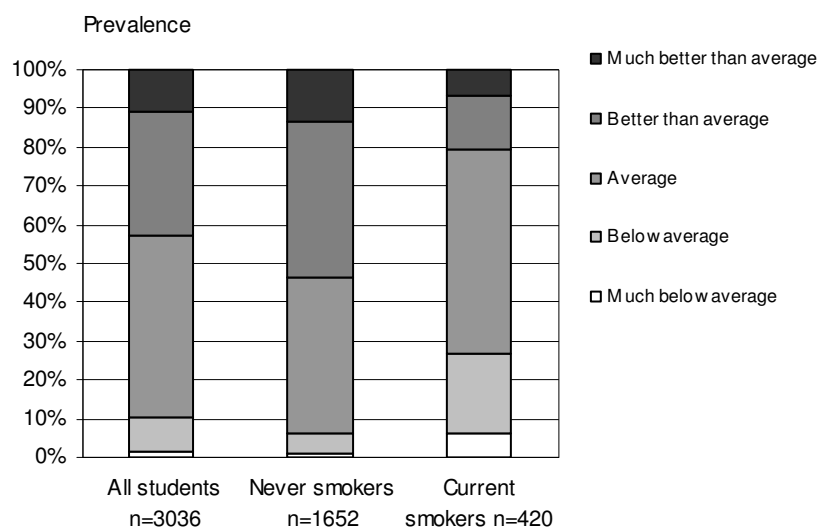
Self-rated school performance

Students were also asked to rate their own *performance in school subjects compared with the average student in [their] school year*, using a scale from *much better than average* to *much below average*.

Overall, about one-third of students (32.4%) rated their performance at school as *better than average* compared with the average student in their year, and around one-half (47.0%) rated their performance as *average*. Māori students were more likely to rate their performance as *average* (53.5%) than *better than average* (23.6%). In contrast, close to a third of non-Māori students rated their performance as *better than average* (34.8%) and 45.1% rated their performance as *average* when compared with the average student in their year.

For 'never smokers', two in five rated their performance at school as *better than average* (40.1%, Figure 7.4), compared with 13.7% of 'current smokers'. 'Current smokers' were more likely to rate their performance as *average*, compared with 'never smokers' (52.9% and 40.6%, respectively).

Figure 7.4 Self-rated school performance – all students by smoking status



Bars indicate the prevalence of students who agreed with statement

Peer connectedness

Peer connectedness was measured by asking students whether they *strongly agreed*, *agreed*, *neither/nor*, *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed* with the following three statements:

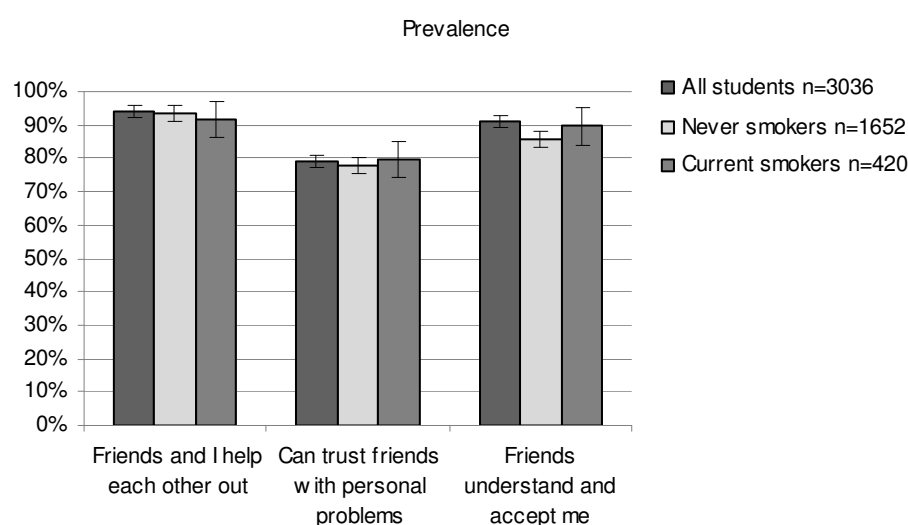
- Friends and (the student) help each other out
- Can trust friends with personal problems
- Friends understand and accept (the student) for who they are

Nearly all students either *agree* (42.1%) or *strongly agree* (51.9%) with the statement *my friends and I help each other out*. Similarly, nine in ten students either *agree* (42.1) or *strongly agree* (48.9%) with the statement *my friends understand and accept me for who I am*. Around four in five of students either *agree* (39.2%) or *strongly agree* (39.7%) with the statement *I can trust my friends with personal problems*. However, 13.6% of students *neither agree nor disagree* with this statement, 5.3% *disagree* and 2.1% *strongly disagree*.

Female students were more likely to strongly agree with all three statements, compared with their male students who were more likely to only agree.

Close to two-thirds of female students *strongly agree* with the statement *my friends and I help each other out*, compared with male students (64.7% and 39.8%, respectively). Similarly, 61.0% of female students *strongly agree* with the statement *my friends understand and accept me for who I am*, compared with 37.5% of male students. Over half of female students (53.4%) *strongly agree* with the statement *I can trust my friends with personal problems*, compared with 26.8% of male students.

Figure 7.5 Peer support – all students by smoking status



Bars indicate the prevalence of students who agreed with statement