

# EVALUATION NEWS

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## Evaluation of the Workplace-based Cessation Demonstration Projects Initiative

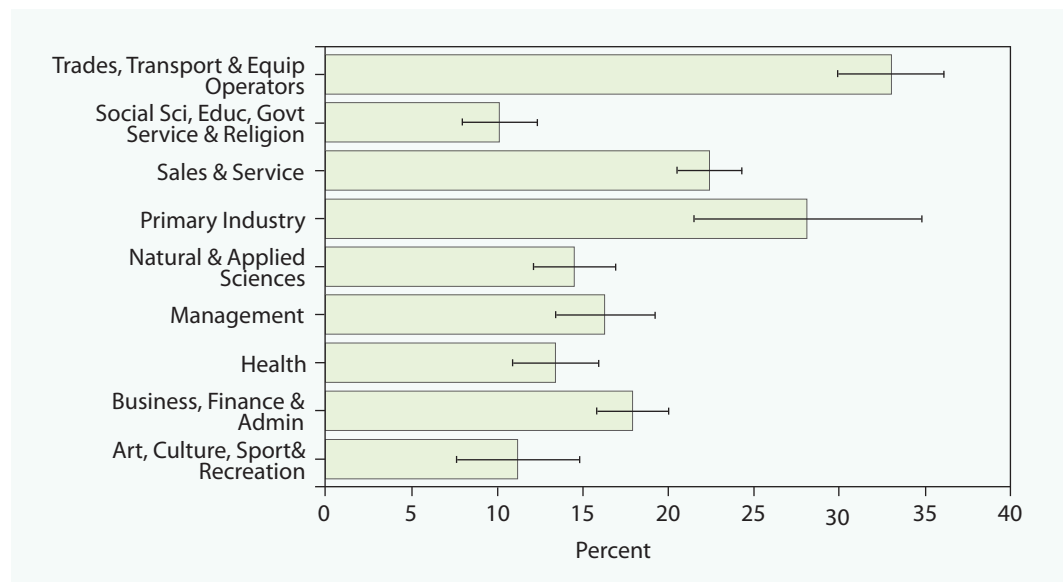
### Background

Occupational status (whether or not you are working and what type of job you have) is a commonly used indicator to assess socioeconomic inequalities in tobacco use.

Research demonstrates that smoking rates are higher among occupations in manufacturing, construction and service industry sectors (e.g., retail, hospitality), and are relatively lower among occupations in management,

business and government sectors.<sup>1-6</sup> The Canadian Community Health Survey reports that in 2009-2010, the prevalence of current smoking among Ontarians was highest for those who worked in trade occupations (33%), primary industry (e.g., agriculture, logging, mining) (28%), and sales and service (23%). These occupations represent 55% of current smokers employed in Ontario (see Figure 1).<sup>6</sup> Across Canada, more than a third of workers in construction were smokers, and smoking rates were also high in mining, oil and gas extraction, transportation and warehousing.<sup>5</sup> Providing tailored smoking cessation support in the workplace is an important initiative to reduce levels of smoking.

**Figure 1: Current Smokers by Occupation Group (Past 30 Days), Ontario, CCHS 2009/10**



Source: Canadian Community Health Survey 2009/10

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The Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) identified workplace cessation as a priority in its April 2011 commitment to the renewed Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy. The Ministry has provided one-time funding to Ontario Public Health Units to run workplace-based, tobacco use cessation demonstration projects at worksites in the construction, mining, manufacturing, hospitality and service sectors. Individual cessation initiatives have been tailored to suit the needs, opportunities and circumstances of each workplace and include a variety of supports and activities, including (but not limited to):

- Self-help materials
- Group and individual counseling
- Quit smoking competitions and challenges
- Smoking cessation training for workplace staff
- Smoke-free policy development
- Improved accessibility to nicotine replacement therapy (NRT)

OTRU is working with participating public health units, workplace leaders, Smokers' Helpline, Canadian Cancer Society, Smoking Treatment for Ontario Patients (STOP), and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health to evaluate the workplace-based cessation demonstration projects. The objectives of the evaluation are: to determine which interventions within different contexts best meet the needs of workers who are trying to quit smoking; and to better understand what approaches, strategies, tools and resources can best engage employers and encourage uptake and sustainability of effective workplace cessation programming.

## Evaluation Approach

A formative-developmental evaluation approach involves stakeholder organizations in the evaluation process (e.g., gathering, interpreting and framing data), to ensure methodological flexibility in response to project and contextual

changes, and to encourage health units to use evaluation results in real time to refine their projects during the course of the evaluation. At the same time, a cluster evaluation approach will be used to draw conclusions from the collective experience.

An Evaluation Working Group with representatives from participating Tobacco Control Area Networks (TCANs) and health units, the MOHLTC and the Program and Training Consultation Centre (PTCC) provides input on the evaluation process. In addition, a Workplace Learning Collaborative hosted by PTCC,





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meets on a monthly basis to ensure collaborative learning and networking across the project sites.

## Evaluation Methods

We are collecting data to understand how workplace settings, including their unique social and organizational contexts, influence the feasibility, implementation, outcomes and sustainability of workplace-based cessation programs. The evaluation consists of three main components:

1. Employer and employee needs assessment surveys to inform tailored quit smoking programs for individual workplaces.
2. Intake and follow-up surveys with employees who participate in a workplace-based quit smoking program to assess the effectiveness of the interventions.
3. Interviews and focus groups with program implementers and participants in a selection of case study sites to gather data on perspectives and experiences.

Data will be amalgamated and analyzed by region, occupational sector, workplace setting and employee characteristics to answer the following evaluation questions.

1. What workplace quit smoking programs are effective for different subgroups of employees and under what circumstances?
2. What helps and hinders the development and implementation of quit smoking programs in the workplace?
3. How can health unit staff and employers reduce the impact of smoking on employees and workplaces?
4. What challenges and facilitators are encountered by participants of quit smoking programs in the workplace?



## Progress to Date

Over the course of the project, we expect to evaluate quit smoking programs in workplaces across 13 participating Ontario health units. As of July 2013, 2979 employees and 38 employers have completed needs assessment surveys. Preliminary data suggest that when developing effective quit smoking programs, it is important to consider:

- Challenges associated with individual workplace characteristics (e.g., job type, work schedule, workplace culture and setting)
- Factors that prevent employees from achieving their tobacco-related goals (e.g., workplace or personal stress)
- Timing and location of programs (e.g., offering programs on-site during work hours)

Over the next two years, we will continue to collect data and share outcomes of the workplace cessation demonstration projects evaluation. The results will inform the expansion and implementation of a broader workplace-based cessation strategy and the development of similar services in other communities and workplaces.



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The Ontario Tobacco Research Unit (OTRU) is an Ontario-based research network that is recognized as a Canadian leader in tobacco control research, monitoring and evaluation, teaching and training and as a respected source of science based information on tobacco control.