



**LUNG
SASK**

Impact Report
2023-2024

Saskatchewan
QUIT SMOKING
Challenge



Thank you to our sponsor:



For the third consecutive year, Lung Saskatchewan led the Saskatchewan Quits Smoking Challenge sponsored by Nicorette, with the support of Heart & Stroke and the Pharmacy Association of Saskatchewan. The 2023-2024 challenge launched on December 4th, 2023, and wrapped up on January 31st, 2024. In total, 563 participants registered for the challenge, which is over five times as many as the previous year's challenge. Of the 100 participants who took both the pre and post-survey, 42 were able to successfully quit smoking.

This year, the challenge was moved to span December and January rather than the summer months. This change was made as December and January have the highest quit smoking rates¹. In addition, this period includes National Non-Smoking Week and captures individuals making New Year resolutions.

"Thank you. You gave me the courage to be smoke free and I was desperate."

- C.B., Saskatchewan Quits Participant

Promotion & Advertising

The challenge was advertised through Facebook ads and posters/postcards distributed to 428 pharmacies across Saskatchewan. Facebook ads were run from December 8th, 2023 to January 31st, 2024. Participants were invited to sign up by completing the pre-survey and joining the Saskatchewan Quits Facebook group, where all communication took place throughout the challenge.

Most participants, 97%, were new to the Saskatchewan Quits Smoking Challenge. Additionally, 72% of participants heard about the Saskatchewan Quits challenge on Facebook, and nearly 9% from a pharmacy where our posters and postcards were displayed. Our posters and postcards that we sent to Saskatchewan pharmacies were scanned 204 times by individuals seeking to learn more about the challenge.

Ambassadors

This year's challenge featured three Saskatchewan Quits ambassadors. We are extremely grateful to our ambassadors for sharing their quit journeys and motivating participants throughout the challenge!



Rhonda Waditaka
2nd year ambassador & participant in the 2021 challenge.



Lesley Mulgrew
1st year ambassador & participant in the 2022 challenge.



Dale Roach
3rd year ambassador & a Lung Sask ambassador for many years.

Supports Provided

NRT Sample Kit

All participants could request a free Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) Sample Kit upon signing up for the challenge, courtesy of Nicorette. The kit contained 2 days of combination NRT therapy and a \$10 coupon for the purchase of Nicorette products. Of the 563 registered participants, 93.8% requested the NRT kit.

Facebook Support Group and Resources

The Saskatchewan Quits Facebook support group was the main platform used to communicate with the challenge participants in addition to weekly e-blasts to accommodate those who do not use Facebook. From November 1st, 2023 to January 31st, 2024 membership increased by 187%, from 208 to 597 members, with an active member engagement rate of 77% on peak days. During the challenge, the Facebook group emerged as a crucial resource, with 82% of participants finding member comments to be the most beneficial form of support. Additionally, 86% of participants planned to continue to be a part of the Saskatchewan Quits Facebook support group even after the challenge officially ended, while 90% said they would recommend the group to a friend.

Q & A Panel Discussion

In partnership with Nicorette, Lung Saskatchewan hosted an Ask the Experts Virtual Panel Discussion: *“Is it your time to quit smoking?”*. The discussion was moderated by Bethany Verma, Lung Saskatchewan’s Health Promotion Manager, and featured four panelists: Dr. Erika Penz (Respirologist), Kris Berg (PACT Trained Pharmacist), and ambassadors Lesley Mulgrew & Rhonda Waditaka. Topics included maintaining a smoke-free life, cravings and triggers, and navigating sacred ceremonies and cultural events involving tobacco or cigarettes.

Weekly Challenges & Prizes

Two \$50 gift cards were given to registered participants each of the ten weeks of the challenge. Following the challenge, we gave away grand prizes of one \$2400, one \$1000, one \$500, and two \$100 gift cards to participants who completed the post-challenge survey. Throughout the entire challenge, we gave away over \$5000 worth of prizes, courtesy of Nicorette.

Pre-Survey Data & Analysis

The following data and analysis are derived from 563 participants who registered for the 2023-2024 challenge and completed the pre-survey.

Age & Gender

Participants over the age of 40 comprised 73% of the total, whereas only 2% were between the ages of 18 and 24. The percentage of male participants has increased from 12% in 2022 to nearly 30% in 2023-2024.

Location

Participants came from 170 unique communities across Saskatchewan.

Indigenous Status

Over a quarter, 26%, of the challenge participants identified as Indigenous. According to the 2022 CTNS², the prevalence of smoking among Indigenous peoples is more than two times higher than that of non-Indigenous Canadians.

Annual Household Income

Participants reported varying annual household incomes, with 43% earning less than \$50,000 per year. This aligns with studies showing income-related disparities in smoking rates³.



Map of the province showing the 170 unique communities of Saskatchewan Quits Smoking Challenge participants.

Smoking History

Participants had smoked for an average of 29 years, with some having smoked for as little as a few months to up to 70 years. Participants had an average starting age of 16 years, with some taking up smoking as young as the age of 7 up to age 55. Eight in every ten challenge participants had reported trying to quit smoking before, with most having tried to quit up to 5 times. Over 80% of participants who had tried to quit previously had tried more than one method.

Post-Survey Data & Analysis

The following data and analysis are derived from the subset of 100 participants who completed both the pre- and post-surveys.

Smoking History

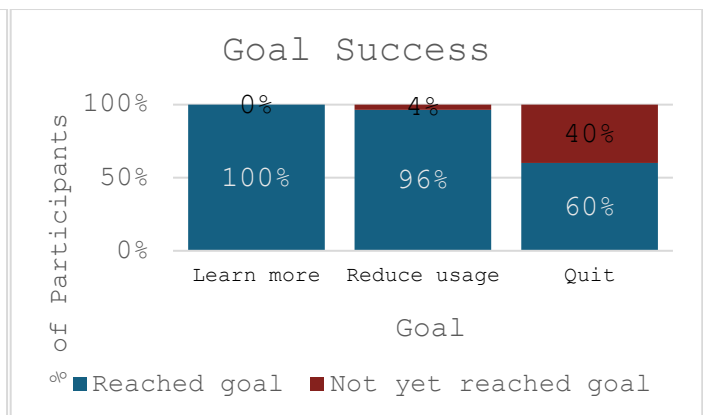
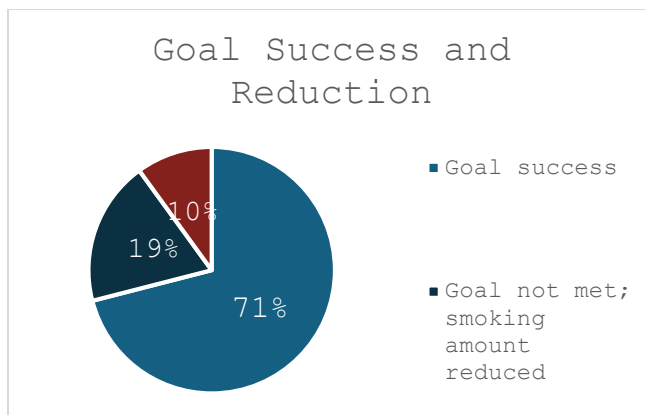
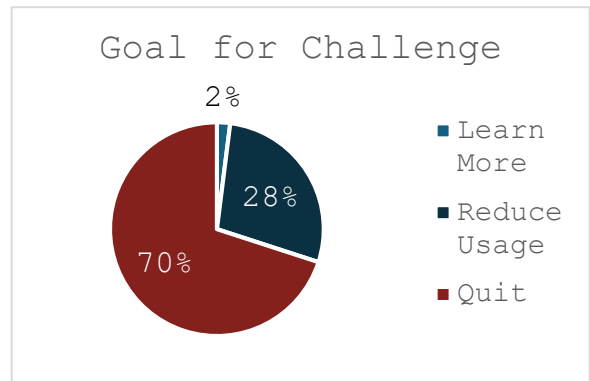
After the challenge, 18% of participants reported smoking 6-25 cigarettes per day (a 53% reduction), and only 4% smoking 1-2 packs per day (a 15% reduction). The number of participants who smoked 1-5 cigarettes per day increased from 10% to 36% as the result of many of the participants successfully achieving their goal of reducing use.

We are pleased to report that upon completion of the 2023-2024 Saskatchewan Quits Smoking Challenge, 42 participants reported smoking ZERO cigarettes per day and were successfully able to quit smoking.

This highlights the positive impact that this challenge has on the health and well-being of Saskatchewan people.

Goals for the Challenge

When signing up for the challenge, we asked participants what their goal was, whether that was learning more, cutting back on smoking, or quitting smoking altogether. Of the participants who completed the post-challenge survey, 71% of participants had achieved their goal, up from a reported 40% during the 2022 challenge. Of the 28% who had a goal to reduce their smoking, 96% had achieved their goal. Of the 70% who had a goal to quit smoking, 60% achieved their goal. Of the 29% who hadn't yet reached their goal, 66% had successfully cut back.



“Never in a million years did I think I could fully quit smoking. This group and support was a blessing in disguise.”

- K.B., Saskatchewan Quits Participant

Quit Methods Used

During the challenge, over half of the participants used the cutting back method to try to quit smoking, while many others used NRT patch, NRT gum, and cold turkey methods.

Participant success in achieving their goal to quit, cut back, or learn more was cross-referenced to determine which methods were most useful in achieving their goal. More than 30% of participants who used NRT patch, NRT gum, and cutting back were successful in achieving their goal of quitting or reducing their cigarette use. The cold turkey method was also relatively effective, with 18% of participants seeing success. Varenicline emerged as the most effective method for participants in achieving their goal. Of the ten people who used varenicline as a quit aid, nine achieved their goal.

Of the participants who received the NRT sample kit, 72% used the NRT kit. Participants who used the NRT kits were asked to rate how helpful the NRT kit was in this challenge on a scale of 1, not helpful, to 5, very helpful; 86% of participants found the kit to be helpful, rating it at a 3, 4, or 5.

Preparedness Levels

Average ratings of preparedness to quit smoking increased by 13% and feelings of support increased by 11% following the challenge. These improvements highlight the effectiveness of the program in equipping participants with the necessary resources and support to quit smoking.

Future Challenges

A significant 91% of participants expressed willingness to join future Saskatchewan Quits Smoking Challenges. Additionally, 58% showed interest in becoming a Saskatchewan Quits ambassador for future challenges where they would have the opportunity to share their story and experiences with others to inspire them on their quit-smoking journey.

“I smoked for 47 [years] and tried quitting many times [unsuccessfully]. Sask quits helped me quit by having weekly challenges to strive for. They were always there with words of encouragement which helped me tremendously. The Facebook group is great because I felt like I was not alone in the [struggle]. If you are thinking of quitting, join this group. It may be the thing you need to achieve your goal. It was for me!”

- S.F., Saskatchewan Quits Participant

THANK YOU!

Lung Saskatchewan wishes to extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Saskatchewan Quits ambassadors and all participants for their dedication and support throughout this challenge. Your commitment to quitting smoking and helping others on their quit journey has made a significant impact, and we thank you for being an integral part of this important initiative.

We also wish to express our sincere appreciation to **Nicorette, Heart & Stroke**, and the **Pharmacy Association of Saskatchewan** for their invaluable support and contributions which have made this program possible. Thank you from the bottom of our lungs for helping us make a difference in the lives of many.

References

1. Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada. (2023). Data from the Canadian Community Health Survey on cigarette smoking. Retrieved from <https://www.smoke-free.ca/2023/CCHS%20Smoking%20Data%202001-2023.pdf>
2. Statistics Canada. (2022). *Canadian Tobacco and Nicotine Survey (CTNS): summary of results for 2022*. Statistics Canada. Retrieved from <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/canadian-tobacco-nicotine-survey/2022-summary.html>
3. Callard, C. & Chaiton, M. (2016). *Mind the gap: Disparities in cigarette smoking in Canada*. Retrieved from <https://www.otru.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Mind-the-gap-disparities-in-cigarette-smoking-in-Canada.pdf>

Additional Participant Testimonies

- “Not going to participate again because I am no longer a smoker.” (-S.F., Post-Survey)
- “I only said no to participating in a quit challenge again because I plan to stay quit. But I will stay in the support group. I find because we are all from Saskatchewan I felt a kinship to everyone. As compared to joining a random support group online.” (-G.K., Post-Survey)
- “I liked the weekly challenges, they made me focus and gave me a goal to reach. I wanted to stay nonsmoking for the start of each week and once that passed the next week and so on.” (-S.F., Post-Survey)
- “I feel like a new person” (-S.F., Post-Survey)
- “Never in a million years did I think I could fully quit smoking. This group and support was a blessing in disguise.” (-K.B., Post-Survey)
- “I smoked for 47 years and tried quitting many times unsuccessfully. Sask quits helped me quit by having weekly challenges to strive for. They were always there with words of encouragement which helped me tremendously. The Facebook group is great because I felt like I was not alone in the struggle. If you are thinking of quitting, join this group. It may be the thing you need to achieve your goal. It was for me!” (-S.F., Post-Survey)
- “Thank you for the posts, they help me stay strong every day.” (Facebook group member)
- “Thank you! I plan to remain on this forum, gaining strength and experience from those who've gone before me” (Facebook group member)
- “I enjoyed the positivity of the Facebook group and I recommended it to family and friends that are trying to quit as well.” (-W.B., Post-Survey)
- “Thank you. You gave me the courage to be smoke free and I was desperate.” (-C.B., Post-Survey)
- “Joining SK Quits really helps boost my motivation to quit even though I had to restart during the process, my slip up/caving in period was much shorter and my awareness was more acute in quitting again very quickly. I gained extra skills and the support from all the members helped raise my spirits and keep me accountable and engaged. I am grateful that I learned about this group and joined. Thank you Lung SK! I hope my friends and family will also join me at some point on the road to health and greater happiness.” (-K.S., Post-Survey)
- “Thank you very much for being a significant partner in my quit-smoking journey forward!” (Facebook group member)

Thank You to our Community Partners:

