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Helping smokers quit: a study on tailoring anti-smoking campaigns to individual characteristics

Submission date
28/01/2026

Recruitment status
No longer recruiting

Registration date
30/03/2026

Overall study status
Completed

Last Edited
30/03/2026

Condition category
Mental and Behavioural Disorders

[ ] Prospectively registered
[ ] Protocol
[ ] Statistical analysis plan
[ ] Results
[ ] Individual participant data
[X] Record updated in last year

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims
Tailoring health communication is a promising way to help people quit smoking. This online study aims to evaluate whether showing anti-smoking messages that match a person's personality can increase the likelihood that they try to quit. The study focuses on daily smokers and aims to test whether tailored messages are more effective than generic ones.

Who can participate?
The study is open to daily smokers aged 18 to 75 years, living in France. All participants must have access to the internet and an email address. Both men and women can take part.

What does the study involve?
About 4,000 smokers will be recruited through an online panel. They will be randomly divided into three groups. In the intervention group, participants will see an anti-smoking video that has been tailored to match their personality. In the first control group, participants will see a randomly selected anti-smoking video. In the second control group, participants will see a video unrelated to tobacco. Before each exposure, all participants will report whether they have made a quit attempt, and they will rate their change in intention to quit smoking after each exposure. Both measures will be compared across the three groups.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
Participants may benefit by feeling more motivated or supported in their effort to quit smoking. There are no known risks associated with participating in the study, as it only involves watching videos and answering questionnaires.

Where is the study run from?
The study is jointly led by the Institut Jean Nicod (École normale supérieure, Université PSL, EHESS, CNRS) and Santé Publique France. Data collection will be handled by an external service provider, Ipsos-bva, a survey agency.

When is the study starting and how long will it run for?
February 2026 to March 2026

Who is funding the study?
Santé Publique France

Who is the main contact?
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Contact information

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Public, Scientific

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Study information

Scientific Title
An individually-tailored intervention to trigger smoking cessation attempts: a three-arm randomized controlled trial

Study objectives

Primary objective:
To evaluate whether exposure to personality-tailored anti-smoking advertisements increases the likelihood of making a quit attempt (at least 24 hours long) compared to exposure to a randomly selected anti-tobacco advertisement or a generic video.

Secondary objectives:
1. To assess whether individually-tailored messages increase intention to quit over repeated exposures compared to repeated exposure to a randomly selected anti-tobacco message or an unrelated video.
2. To replicate findings from a previous study (Study 1: https://osf.io/mqwu2) on changes in intention in a new sample. The previous study investigated which narrative cues encourage smoking cessation intentions across personality traits and perceived financial situations.

Ethics approval required
Ethics approval required

Ethics approval(s)
Approved 06/02/2026, Paris School of Economics Institutional Review Board (48 Bd Jourdan, Paris, 75014, France; -; irb@psemail.eu), ref: 2026-006

Primary study design
Interventional

Allocation
Randomized controlled trial

Masking
Blinded (masking used)

Control
Active

Assignment
Parallel

Purpose
Prevention

Study type(s)

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Smoking behaviour, tobacco use disorder

Interventions
A randomised controlled trial with three arms:
1. Tailored group: repeated exposure to an individually-tailored anti-tobacco advertisement
2. Random control group: repeated exposure to a randomly selected anti-tobacco advertisement (overall, the advertisements will be shown in the same frequencies as in the Tailored group)
3. Unrelated control group: repeated exposure to a video not related to tobacco cessation

Tailoring will be done using an algorithm taking into account different variables: personality traits (as defined by the Big Five), perceived financial situation and age. This algorithm was designed using results from the previous study mentioned above.

This study will be conducted online.

Step 1: Each participant will complete an initial questionnaire collecting sociodemographic information (including perceived financial situation), tobacco consumption, any intention to quit smoking, and a personality questionnaire.

In the treatment arm, the algorithm will deliver the advertisement best matched to the participants' profiles.
In the random control arm, an advertisement will be delivered at random (while maintaining the same distribution frequency across arms).
In the unrelated control arm, participants will be exposed to an unrelated video.
Following exposure, participants will report any change in their intention to quit smoking (as in Study 1).

Steps 2 to 5: 1 week later (Step 2), participants will be asked if they made a quit attempt of at least 24 hours since the beginning of the study (Possible answers: "No"; "Yes and I have not smoked since"; "Yes, but I have relapsed since") and how long it lasted. Then, they will be exposed to the same advertisement as in Step 1 on the digital platform. Viewing completion will be mandatory. After exposure, participants will report any change in their intention to quit smoking (as in Study 1).
This procedure will be repeated three times at 1-week intervals (Steps 3, 4 and 5).

At each step, participants will receive email reminders to fulfil the next step, and they will have a maximum of 3 weeks to complete it (before the questionnaire is closed).

T0: preexposure, personality questionnaire, intention to quit
T1: 1st exposure, change in intention
T2: 2nd exposure, quit attempt, change in intention
T3: 3rd exposure, quit attempt, change in intention
T4: 4th exposure, quit attempt, change in intention
T5: 5th exposure, quit attempt, change in intention

Intervention Type
Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)
1. Tobacco cessation attempt measured using declarative answer to the question: " Have you made a quit attempt of at least 24 hours since the beginning of the study?". Possible answers: "No"; "Yes and I have not smoked since"; "Yes, but I have relapsed since". For the purpose of the primary analysis, we will treat the second and third responses as quit attempts at T2, T3, T4 and T5

Key secondary outcome(s)
1. Change in intention to quit tobacco measured using the declarative answer to the question: "Now you have seen this video, what is your situation?". The answer is made on a 11-point scale ranging from "I want to quit smoking much less than before" to "I want to quit smoking much more than before" at T1, T2, T3, T4, T5

Completion date
23/03/2026

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
1. Daily smokers
2. 18-75 years old
3. Living in France
4. Access to a valid email address and internet connection
5. Able to provide informed consent
6. Sufficient proficiency in French to complete the questionnaires and understand the video materials

Healthy volunteers allowed
No

Age group
Mixed

Lower age limit
18 Years

Upper age limit
75 Years

Sex
All

Total final enrolment
0

Key exclusion criteria
1. Non-smokers or occasional smokers
2. Under 18 years
3. Over 75 years

Date of first enrolment
02/02/2026

Date of final enrolment
22/02/2026

Locations

Countries of recruitment
France

Sponsor information

Organisation
Institut Jean Nicod

ROR
https://ror.org/01qfab443

Organisation
Santé Publique France

ROR
https://ror.org/00dfw9p58

Funder(s)

Funder type

Funder Name
Santé Publique France

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan
The anonymised individual participant data (IPD) collected during this study (including demographic variables, personality traits, smoking behaviour, and outcomes related to smoking cessation intentions and quit attempts) will be stored in a publicly available repository after publication of the primary results.

The dataset will be made available on the Open Science Framework (OSF) platform (https://osf.io), and will include detailed variable documentation and a data dictionary.

Data will be available for academic and non-commercial research purposes. Access will be open, but subject to agreement with a standard data use policy, requiring proper citation and commitment to ethical use.

All shared data will be fully anonymised prior to upload. No direct or indirect identifiers will be included.

Data will become available within 6 months following publication of the main results and will remain accessible for at least 5 years.

For any specific questions, requests, or clarifications, please contact the principal investigator: Justine Avenel (aveneljustine@gmail.com).

IPD sharing plan summary

Stored in publicly available repository