



Secondhand Smoke Survey: Multi-Unit Housing

California Voters' Attitudes About Secondhand Smoke Exposure

Public Opinion Research Survey: November 2008

Background

There is a growing body of scientific evidence that documents the harmful effects of secondhand smoke exposure, including the US Surgeon General's finding that there is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke, and the California Air Resources Board designation of secondhand smoke as a toxic air contaminant. Yet Californians are still exposed to secondhand smoke in outdoor areas, in multi-unit housing and in Indian casinos. Many cities and counties throughout the state have passed laws to restrict smoking in outdoor areas such as parks, beaches, farmer's markets and outdoor seating at bars and restaurants and some cities have passed laws to create nonsmoking sections of apartments in multi-unit housing. In addition, some California Indian tribes have voluntarily created nonsmoking sections in Indian casinos.

In November 2008, the Center for Tobacco Policy & Organizing commissioned a survey of 600 California voters to assess their views about secondhand smoke and to gauge their level of support for reducing exposure to secondhand smoke. Specifically, the survey explored general attitudes about restricting smoking in outdoor areas, in outdoor dining areas, in multi-unit housing, and in Indian casinos.

This document highlights the Summary of Key Findings for multi-unit housing. Additionally, there are three other Summary of Key Findings that highlight the results for outdoor dining, the results for Indian casinos and the results for the entire secondhand smoke survey. The survey was conducted by Goodwin Simon Victoria Research. Complete survey results and the other summary documents are available at www.Center4TobaccoPolicy.org/polling-shs.

Summary of Key Findings

Secondhand Smoke Restrictions in Multi-Unit Housing

California voters are supportive of many types of policies to protect people from secondhand smoke exposure in multi-unit housing:

- 69% support a law to restrict smoking in outdoor common areas of apartments
- 78% support a law requiring apartment buildings to offer nonsmoking sections
- 74% support requiring 50 percent of apartments to be nonsmoking
- 58% support requiring 75 percent of apartments to be nonsmoking
- 42% support requiring 100 percent of apartments to be nonsmoking
- 56% feel that a law requiring apartment buildings to offer nonsmoking sections should apply to condominiums as well
- 70% think that a person moving into an apartment should be told if the tenant next door smokes

California voters are receptive to the arguments in support of restricting smoking in multi-unit housing. The support for each statement asked about in this survey is listed below:

- 76% were more likely to support smoking restrictions when they heard that scientific studies prove that secondhand smoke is harmful in apartment buildings and nonsmokers are exposed to dangerous secondhand smoke in the one place where they spend the most time
- 76% were more likely to support smoking restrictions when they heard that restricting smoking in apartment buildings will reduce the risk of fire
- 74% were more likely to support smoking restrictions when they heard that children are not protected from secondhand smoke exposure in apartment buildings and this can cause asthma and lung disease in children

Opposition statements to restricting smoking in multi-unit housing were less effective. In fact, opposition arguments were more likely to have no impact on voters or to make them more likely to support smoking restrictions. The support for each opposition statement asked about in the survey is listed below:

- 40% were more likely to oppose smoking restrictions when they heard that it would take away a person's right to smoke in their home if they wanted to, while 58% said the argument had no effect or made them more likely to support smoking restrictions
- 37% were more likely to oppose smoking restrictions when they heard that it would discriminate against smokers and make it difficult for them to find a place to rent, while 61% said this argument had no effect or made them more likely to support smoking restrictions
- 37% were more likely to oppose smoking restrictions when they heard that it would require someone who is elderly or disabled to leave their apartment to smoke, while 60% said the argument had no effect or made them more likely to support smoking restrictions
- 34% were more likely to oppose smoking restrictions when they heard that it would hurt landlords who may not be able to rent all of their apartment units, while 63% said the argument had no effect or made them more likely to support smoking restrictions

California voters were also asked about a problem faced by decision makers when considering whether to restrict smoking in public housing. 64% of California voters agree with those who argue that it is more important to protect low-income children and families who cannot move away from secondhand smoke exposure. Only 17% of voters agree with those who argue that it is more important to protect tenants who smoke and cannot afford to move and who might be evicted if they smoke in their apartment should it be designated as nonsmoking.