

Review of San Diego County Public Opinion Polls: June 2011

Background

Drifting secondhand smoke in multi-unit housing from neighboring units, balconies and outdoor areas is a health hazard for many tenants. The increasing awareness of the dangers of secondhand smoke and the acceptability of smokefree environments are encouraging tenants to seek out smokefree units and property owners to declare their buildings smokefree. In addition, several cities and counties have passed ordinances restricting smoking in multi-unit housing.

During 2008 – 2011, Public Opinion Polls were conducted of 1800 apartment tenants by six (6) community organizations in San Diego County: American Lung Association in CA/San Diego, Catholic Charities/Diocese of San Diego, Communities Against Substance Abuse, San Diego Tijuana Border Initiative, Social Advocates for Youth (SAY) San Diego, and Vista Community Clinic.

Surveys were collected at community events, apartment complexes, community forums, and by telephone call-in. The survey questions were grouped by common themes and the responses were aggregated. Percentiles were calculated by the number of responses within the grouped questions.

This data is presented as an overview of tenant attitudes regarding smoking in multi-unit housing and the impact of secondhand smoke on non-smoking residents. The review of the Public Opinion Polls is intended to inform decision makers that there is significant support for smokefree apartments and to encourage the adoption of no smoking policies in apartment complexes.

Summary of Key Findings

- 16% allow smoking inside their home
- 50% have been bothered by cigarette smoke in shared indoor areas of their apartment building such as the laundry room
- 59% have been bothered by cigarette smoke in shared outdoor areas of their apartment building such as courtyard, pool area, patio
- 54% have experience secondhand smoke drifting into their apartment
- 90% believe people who do not smoke have the right to live in smokefree apartments
- 16% would move if their apartment manager announced that the apartment building would become “smokefree” in 6 months
- 73% would like to live in an apartment building that does not allow smoking anywhere
- 75% feel that property owners/managers are allowed to designate units or any area of the complex as smokefree
- 10% of respondents currently smoke
- 65% would like all units to be smokefree
- 57% prefer that only some units are smokefree
- 49% have children living in their apartment
- 34% of households have someone living with a respiratory condition such as asthma, emphysema or chronic bronchitis
- 79% of respondents feel that laws are needed to protect non-smokers in apartment buildings from secondhand smoke