

Predictors of Public Support for Smoke-Free Public Housing

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Abstract

Background: The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) recently urged Public Housing Authorities (PHA) to prohibit smoking in their public housing units. According to HUD, 39% of the 1.2 million residents in public housing are aged 0-17. Policies that eliminate tobacco smoke pollution could improve the health of a substantial number of children.

Objective: To describe trends in public support for this emerging issue in children's environmental health, and to determine if attitudes and practices about tobacco smoke pollutions predict support for PHA smoke-free policies.

Design/Methods: Four consecutive cross-sectional household telephone surveys representing national probability samples of adults from all 50 states were conducted from 2006 to 2009.

Results: Cooperation rates among contacted households each year ranged from 59% to 98% from 2006 to 2009. Public support for prohibiting smoking in all private areas of public housing has remained consistent from 2007 (57%) to 2009 (58%), however support for prohibiting smoking in all public areas has increased from 2006 (54.3%) to 2009 (65%). Support for smoke-free policies in public and private areas of public housing was higher among people who prohibited smoking inside (71.5% for public areas, 63.4% for private areas) compared to those who did not (54.1% & 48.1%), those who believed that people should not smoke in indoor places if nonsmokers are present (74.4% & 65.8%) compared to those who did not (52.7% & 32.5%), and people who did not believe it was acceptable to smoke in the home even if children were not present at the time (72.9% & 64.1%) compared to those who did (51.4% & 49.6%), ($p < .05$ for each). These differences persisted after controlling for education, gender, smoking status, age, race, and child in home in multivariate logistic regression analyses.

Conclusions: These data have implications for implementing smoke-free policies in public housing. The majority of US adults believe that smoking should not be allowed in either public or private areas of public housing. Support was strongest among adults who did not allow smoking inside of their home and who held normative beliefs against smoking in the presence of nonsmokers or in places that nonsmokers would later occupy. Public health strategies that increased awareness about the harms of tobacco smoke pollution could increase public support further, and thereby increase the likelihood of PHAs implementing smoke-free policies for public and private areas as HUD has urged.

Detailed Methods

Social Climate Survey of Tobacco Control: The Social Climate Survey of Tobacco Control (SCS-TC) is an annual cross-sectional survey designed to operationalize the concept of social climate into a comprehensive set of quantifiable social and environmental indicators across the social institutions that characterize society.

Respondents: The SCS-TC was administered to a representative sample of U.S. adults in September-November. Households were selected using random digit dialing procedures. Once a household was reached, an adult to be interviewed was selected by asking for the person in the household 18 years of age or older who has the next birthday. The sample was weighted by age, race, and gender within each census region, based on current U.S. Census estimates.

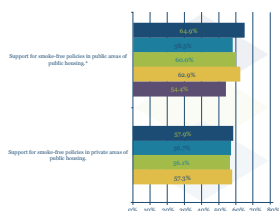
Measures: Two items assessed support smoke-free public housing. Two questions from the Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) and the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) were used to assess current smoking status. Respondents were asked, "Have you smoked at least 100 cigarettes in your entire life?" and if yes, were then asked, "Do you now smoke cigarettes every day, some days, or not at all?" Respondents who reported that they smoke every day or some days were categorized as current smokers. Respondents who reported that they did not smoke at all (but who had smoked at least 100 cigarettes in their lifetime) were categorized as former smokers.

Results

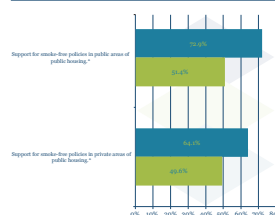
2009 Weighted Sample Characteristics

Demographics	Statistics (%)	Demographics	Statistics (%)
Gender		Education	
Male	45.9	Not a high school graduate	31.3
Female	54.1	High school graduate	68.7
Age		Some college	
18-24	11.1	College degree	35.9
25-44	36.5	Rural/Urban Status	
45-64	34.6	Rural	88.6
65 and older	17.8	Urban	
Race		Region	
White	84.4	Northwest	17.4
African-American	11.3	Midwest	20.9
Other	4.3	South	40.3
Smoking Status		West	21.4
Never smoker	55.5		
Former smoker	27.1		
Current smoker	17.4		

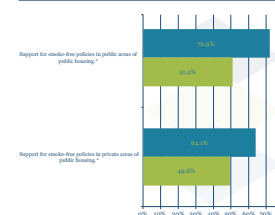
Trends in Support for Smoke-free Public Housing



Support for Smoke-free Public Housing



Support for Smoke-free Public Housing



Limitations

Limitations include response bias related to a cooperation rate of 59% and telephone coverage issues in random digit dialing surveys generally.

Discussion

- These data have implications for implementing smoke-free policies in public housing.
- The majority of US adults believe that smoking should not be allowed in either public or private areas of public housing.
- Support was strongest among adults who did not allow smoking inside of their home and who held normative beliefs against smoking in the presence of nonsmokers or in places that nonsmokers would later occupy.
- Public health strategies that increased awareness about the harms of tobacco smoke pollution could increase public support further, and thereby increase the likelihood of PHAs implementing smoke-free policies for public and private areas as HUD has urged.

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