Smoke-free Policies: Strong Support among High School Students

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Background

- Research suggests there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke (SHS), which can cause immediate and long-term negative health consequences.1,2
- Youth in the US report high SHS exposure: 41.1% exposure at home,5 54.9% exposure in public places.5
- Data from the Global Youth Tobacco Survey did not differentiate between indoor and outdoor policies and excluded US youth for these questions.3,5
- Very little is known about support for smoke-free policies among youth in the US. The Global Youth Tobacco Survey did not measure support for indoor or outdoor policies.

Methods

- Data come from the North Carolina Youth Tobacco Survey (NCYTS), a biennial paper-based public and charter school-based survey of students in grades 6-12.
- Data presented for only NC high school students (response rate = 79.2%).
- A multi-stage cluster sample design with corresponding sampling weights is used to produce representative data of high school (9th-12th grade) students for all North Carolina.
- Data analyzed using SAS survey procedures on 5 questions assessing support for smoke-free policies across 5 different venues (See Table 1).
- Statistics generated include percents, χ2, odds ratios, and 95% confidence intervals.

Table 1: Questions Assessing Support for Smoke-Free Policies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What do you think people should do about smoking in their home? People should...</td>
<td>4. Never allow smoking in their home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you think people should do about smoking in public places such as parks, movies theaters, clubs or restaurants?</td>
<td>4. Never allow smoking in public places</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you think employers should do about smoking in their offices?</td>
<td>4. Never allow smoking in their offices</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results

Figure 1: Support for Smoke-Free Policies by Venue

Table 2: Support for Smoke-Free Policies by Smoking Status and Venue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Smoking Status</th>
<th>Non-Smoker</th>
<th>Current Smoker</th>
<th>Allowing Smoking at Some Times</th>
<th>Always Allowing Smoking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never Allowing Smoking</td>
<td>81.04% (78.93, 83.16)</td>
<td>30.35% (25.68, 35.62)</td>
<td>3.15% (2.37, 3.93)</td>
<td>28.41% (24.84, 32.35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allowing Smoking at Some Times</td>
<td>12.53% (8.22, 17.87)</td>
<td>53.66% (48.17, 58.55)</td>
<td>2.12% (1.45, 2.78)</td>
<td>12.14% (9.70, 15.58)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always Allowing Smoking</td>
<td>6.5% (4.4, 8.6)</td>
<td>55.56% (50.38, 60.55)</td>
<td>1.67% (0.69, 2.63)</td>
<td>7.43% (5.16, 9.46)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table notes: * p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01; *** p < 0.001. All analyses were two-tailed. Sample n = 2,553.

Table 2: Support for Smoke-Free Policies by Smoking Status and Venue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Smoking Status</th>
<th>Homes</th>
<th>Vehicles</th>
<th>Indoor Work Places</th>
<th>Indoor Public Places</th>
<th>Outdoor Public Places</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never Allowing Smoking</td>
<td>42.6% (40.93, 44.32)</td>
<td>27.43% (25.68, 29.19)</td>
<td>18.12% (16.84, 19.40)</td>
<td>10.98% (10.07, 11.90)</td>
<td>80.98% (79.20, 82.77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allowing Smoking at Some Times</td>
<td>17.4% (15.61, 19.18)</td>
<td>25.3% (23.51, 27.09)</td>
<td>12.49% (11.21, 13.77)</td>
<td>16.99% (15.82, 18.16)</td>
<td>35.35% (33.60, 37.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always Allowing Smoking</td>
<td>40.1% (38.54, 41.67)</td>
<td>42.1% (39.81, 44.41)</td>
<td>6.4% (5.37, 7.40)</td>
<td>8.59% (7.96, 9.22)</td>
<td>45.01% (43.25, 46.77)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusions and Recommendations

- North Carolina high school students support smoke-free policies across venue types.
- North Carolina high school current smokers reported higher levels of support for total smoke-free policies in homes, indoor work environments, and outdoor public places than for partial or no-smoke-free policies.
- North Carolina high school students who want to stop smoking cigarettes are more likely to support smoke-free policies in indoor and outdoor public places and indoor private places compared to their peers who do not want to quit.
- Youth support of smoke-free policies should be captured and leveraged by tobacco control advocates for effective legislative advocacy efforts.

Limitations

- Descriptive results from a cross-sectional survey preclude conclusions about causality.
- Self-reported data are subject to honesty of student respondents.
- Results are specific to North Carolina and may not generalize to youth in other locales; however, results are similar to international results for youth ages 13-15 and for adults across the United States.1,2

References