

The Health Index

PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR BANNING SMOKING IN MULTI-UNIT DWELLINGS

June 2014

Key Points:

- Those living in MUDs are regularly exposed to second and third-hand smoke (Smoke-Free Ontario Scientific Advisory Committee, 2010).
- 43.6% of the Middlesex-London households are multi-unit dwellings (MUDs) (Statistics Canada, 2011).
- Nearly two thirds of multi-unit dwelling residents (60.1%) support banning smoking everywhere within multi-unit dwellings. The rates of support are higher in non-smokers and the general population.
- Nearly three quarters (73%) of those currently living in MUDs would prefer to live in a smoke-free dwelling (IPSOS Reid, 2010).

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BACKGROUND

The *Smoke-Free Ontario Act* that came into effect in May 2006 prohibits smoking in all enclosed workplaces and public places. Although the *Act* bans smoking in common areas (such as lobbies, elevators, stairwells, covered parking garages and hallways) of condominiums, apartments or post-

secondary residence buildings, there are currently no laws in Middlesex-London that explicitly regulate smoking in a private, self-contained unit within a multi-unit complex.

Any exposure to either second- or third-hand smoke may have negative consequences for health, particularly when exposed regularly in an enclosed space such as one's home. Chronic diseases such as respiratory conditions and lung cancer, or sudden infant death syndrome are just a few of the negative health outcomes associated with exposure to environmental tobacco smoke (US Department of Health and Human Service, 2006).

Second-hand smoke can drift into housing units through open windows, balconies, porches, shared ventilation systems or through cracks and crevices between units (Smoke-Free Ontario Scientific Advisory Committee, 2010). Cold air entering a

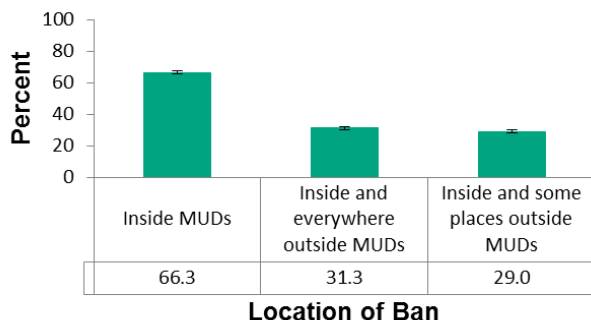
building will rise as it warms and carry second-hand smoke with it to upper levels of the building (Saltman, 2012).

Exposure to second hand smoke is not the only concerning issue; third-hand smoke, present for a prolonged period even after the second hand smoke has dissipated, contains carcinogenic pollutants which can produce secondary toxins when interacting with the air (OTRU, 2012).

SUPPORT FOR SMOKING BAN IN MULTI-UNIT DWELLINGS IN MIDDLESEX-LONDON

Figure 1 shows that 66.3% (95% CI, 64.0%-68.6%) of Middlesex-London adults aged 18 and over supported banning smoking in multi-unit dwellings in 2011 and 2012. Overall 31.3% (95% CI: 29.0%-33.6%) also supported banning smoking on the outside property of the MUDs, while 29.0% (95% CI: 26.5%-31.5%) supported banning smoking everywhere in MUDs and some places outside MUDs including near doors, windows or air vents.

Figure 1: Overall support for smoking ban in MUDs

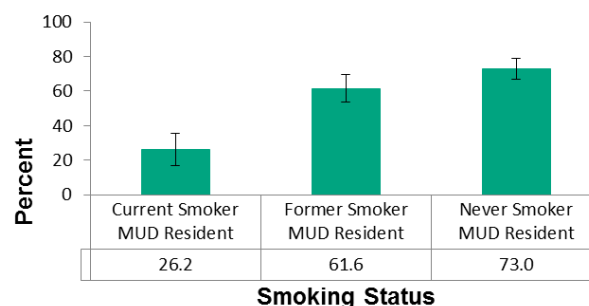


Those living in detached homes (69.0%, 95% CI: 66.3%-71.7%) were significantly more likely to support banning smoking everywhere in MUDs compared to those living in MUDs (60.1%, 95% CI: 55.5%-64.7%) (data not shown).

Former and never smokers were significantly more likely to support banning smoking in MUDs when compared to

current smokers. When looking specifically at those who live in multi-unit dwellings, those who were former (61.6%, 95% CI: 53.7%-69.5%) and never smokers (73.0%, 95% CI: 67.0%-79.0%) were significantly more likely to support the ban of smoking everywhere in MUDs than current smokers (26.2% 95% CI: 16.8%-35.6%) (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Support by MUDs residents for smoking ban inside MUDs, by smoking status



Additional analysis of support for smoking bans inside multi-unit dwellings showed no differences by age or sex. However, males were less likely to support banning smoking everywhere inside and outside multi-unit dwellings (26.2%, 95%CI 22.9-29.5) compared to females (34.8%, 95% CI 31.8-37.8).

DISCUSSION

There is a high level of public support for banning smoking in multi-unit dwellings. Two thirds of the total population in Middlesex-London believe that smoking should be banned everywhere inside multi-unit dwellings. Support is especially high in those most affected: non-smokers who live in multi-unit dwellings. It was also found that 60% of those living in MUDs supported the ban, a finding that is consistent with 2010 data from Southwestern Ontario MUDs residents showing 58% supported the ban (IPSOS Reid, 2010).

A large portion of the Middlesex-London population live in MUDs and are exposed to second- and third-hand tobacco smoke on a

regular basis. In 2011, 43.6% (N=78,755) of private households were MUDs (Statistics Canada, 2011). An IPSOS Reid poll from 2010 of MUDs residents indicated that 42% of respondents in multi-unit dwellings were exposed to second-hand tobacco smoke in their unit within the previous six months and 20% reported being exposed a few times a week or more.

According to London Community Housing Strategy's Community Update, in 2011, there were 8,085 units in the City of London Social Housing Program (London Canada, 2011); none of the units available have 100% smoke-free policies in place. This is often the only option for individuals or families who cannot afford to own detached homes. There is a substantial proportion of the Middlesex-London population, including families with young children, that have no option but to be exposed to tobacco smoke in multi-unit dwellings.

Residents of MUDs were more likely to complain to their landlords about exposure to second hand smoke in 2010 than in 2006 indicating an increasing demand for smoke-free multi-unit housing. When Ontarians were asked in 2010 to choose between two identical buildings, one that allowed smoking versus one that didn't allow smoking anywhere, 73% of respondents indicated that they were likely to choose the non-smoking building (IPSOS Reid, 2010).

A substantial proportion of the Middlesex-London population lives in multi-unit dwellings and is exposed regularly to second- and third-hand smoke. There is high support in this group for banning smoking everywhere within multi-unit dwellings and nearly three quarters of those currently living in MUDs would prefer to live in a smoke-free dwelling.

METHODS AND DEFINITIONS

The Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System (RRFSS) is a population health survey conducted in partnership by a number of health units in Ontario and administered by the Institute for Social Research (ISR) at York University. Each month, a random sample of approximately 100 people from Middlesex County and London aged 18 and older, are interviewed to find out their opinions on their health, their health behaviours, and their awareness of health-related issues.

The purpose of the "Smoking in Multi-Unit Dwellings" RRFSS module was to assess public support for legislation to make multi-unit dwellings smoke-free. The data collection period was January 2011 to April 2012. The sample size was 1,621.

A multi-unit dwelling was described to survey respondents as a residential building with shared walls or living spaces; this includes apartment buildings, condos, semi-detached houses, duplexes, townhouses, row houses, and seniors or retirement homes.

A 95% confidence interval (CI) refers to the range of values that has a 95% chance of including the "true" estimate. A large CI means that there is a large amount of variability or imprecision. When CI's do not overlap, the difference between estimates is significantly significant.

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