

At the frontier of tobacco control: A brief review of public attitudes toward smoke-free outdoor places

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Abstract

Introduction: Outdoor smoke-free areas have been adopted increasingly in North America, Britain, Ireland, Australasia, and elsewhere. Their use appears to be one of the frontier areas of tobacco control development. We briefly reviewed the available reports on public attitudes about smoke-free public outdoor areas.

Methods: We included surveys of the general population or of users of public outdoor locations, reported in English language publications to September 2008.

Results: We identified 16 relevant reports that used surveys from 1988 to 2007. Although the evidence remains limited, this research indicates that, in a number of jurisdictions, the majority of the public supports restricting smoking in various outdoor settings. Support for smoke-free outdoor public places appears to be increasing over time. Among respondents' reasons for support were the following: litter control, establishing positive smoke-free role models for youth, reducing youth opportunities to smoke, and avoiding exposure to secondhand smoke.

Discussion: Given the recent increase in outdoor smoking restrictions in many developed countries and the growing recognition of the importance of reducing smoking role models for children, this area needs further research related to attitudes and policy evaluation. Given the levels of public support, policy makers in some jurisdictions appear to have an opportunity to establish smoke-free outdoor public places, at least in areas frequented by children.

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