

Smoke-Free Cities

The Future of a Smoke-Free City



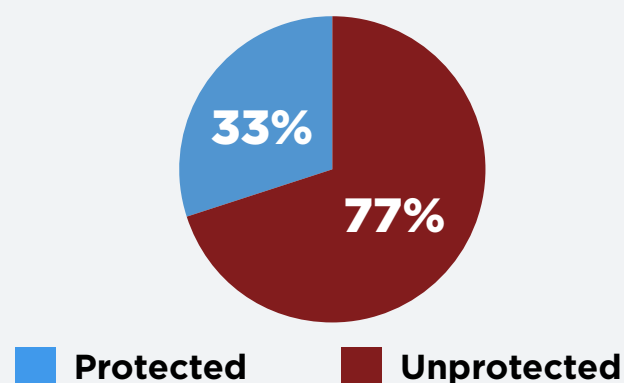
Comprehensive smoke-free laws have been adopted at the national, state/provincial, and local levels around the world to protect everyone's right to breathe clean air in all workplaces and public places.

As of the end of 2024, 33% of people around the world live in countries or local jurisdictions that have adopted comprehensive smoke-free laws. Since Ireland became the first smoke-free country in 2004, seventy nine countries have adopted smoke-free laws covering all workplaces and public places. Even with this progress, more than 3/4th of the world's population remains unprotected from the deadly harms of secondhand tobacco smoke.

Cities Play a Key Role in Protecting People from Secondhand Smoke

With so many still left unprotected, cities and other sub-national entities play a critical role in protecting the public from the proven harms of secondhand smoke. Not only can they protect their citizens from secondhand smoke in countries without smoke-free laws, cities have and must continue to provide the spark and momentum for state and national laws. Indeed, the movement to protect people from secondhand smoke began and flourished at the local level.

Global Population Protected by Smoke-Free Laws



Cities Can Act with Confidence that Smoke-Free Laws Will Be Successful and Popular

At every level around the world, in a wide variety of cultures and political systems, smoke-free laws have been implemented with high compliance and thus have resulted in immediate improvement in air quality, worker and public health, business success, and public support. The evidence is clear that when implemented effectively, smoke-free laws are a resounding success on every dimension.

The following outcomes are a direct result of effective implementation of smoke-free laws at the city level, as well in states and nations:

1 Compliance by establishments and smokers is high

With proper communication and support, businesses and other establishments comply as well as smokers, with the smoke-free law. With education and encouragement, they not only respect the law, but many embrace and celebrate it, which leads to the most positive outcomes. This is evidenced by the increasing number of countries and localities that adopt these lifesaving laws.

- The first country to pass a comprehensive national smoke-free law, Ireland, saw compliance levels as high as 95% a year after implementation.
- One year after passing a comprehensive smoke-free law in New York State, 97% of bars and restaurants complied.
- In the city of Xining, China, two years after significant smoke-free legislation revisions and enhancements in 2021, compliance ranged from 65.2% to 100% by venue type.

2 The air that workers and patrons breathe improves almost immediately

High compliance with smoke-free laws results in an almost immediate improvement in air quality, with the attendant decrease in exposure to the toxic chemicals in secondhand smoke. Pre/post air quality studies show a rapid improvement in air quality after cities or other entities implement their smoke-free laws. Surveillance surveys also show reduced self-reports of secondhand smoke exposure in the wake of the passage of these laws. These are just a few examples of what always happens when laws are passed and implemented effectively.

- A study conducted before and after the Delaware Clean Indoor Air law went into effect found a 95% drop in air carcinogen levels and a 90% drop in fine particle air pollution levels in the hospitality venues tested.

- An air quality study conducted in Puerto Rico documented an 82.2% reduction in PM2.5 levels and a 50.9% reduction in cotinine levels in casinos following a complete workplace smoking ban in 2007.
- Median air nicotine concentrations in public places in Montevideo, Uruguay, significantly decreased after the implementation of comprehensive smoke-free legislation in March 2006.

3 Worker & public health improves in the near and longer term

With immediately reduced exposure to the toxins in secondhand smoke, it is no surprise that workers experience improvement in health, some of it very quickly. Research has also documented declines in cardiovascular events in the general public in the wake of smoke-free laws.

- A study conducted in Scotland after implementing their national smoke-free law found rapid (within 2 months) improvements in several health outcomes in non-smoking bar workers, including: reductions in respiratory symptoms, improvements in lung function, reductions in inflammation or swelling of airways, and improved quality of life among bar employees with asthma.
- A Cochrane review of 12 studies found evidence of a significant reduction in hospital admissions for cardiac events following implementation of smoke-free laws.
- A meta-analysis of 45 studies of 33 smoke-free laws found that such laws were associated with lower rates of hospital admissions or deaths for: coronary events, other heart disease, cerebrovascular accidents, and respiratory disease.
- A recent meta-analysis conducted in 2024 found that smoke-free laws were significantly associated with reductions in the rates of hospital admissions for stroke.

4 Businesses prosper as customers are happy and costs are reduced

While some businesses, especially in the hospitality sector, may fear the change that comes with smoke-free laws, the evidence is clear that smoke-free laws do not harm the hospitality sector and likely improve business, as non-smokers outnumber smokers, and smokers respect the rights of non-smokers to breathe clean air. Hospitality and other businesses also reduce maintenance costs, health care costs, and employee absenteeism.

- In 2016, the U.S. National Cancer Institute and the World Health Organization conducted an extensive review of the economic literature on tobacco control and concluded that all of the best-designed studies establish that smoke-free laws “do not cause adverse economic outcomes for business, including restaurant and bars. In fact, smoke-free policies often have a positive economic impact on business.”
- A 2014 meta-analysis of 39 studies conducted around the world examined the economic impacts of smoke-free laws on bars and restaurants, finding there were no substantial changes to employment or sales for the hospitality industry overall following implementation and that restaurants experienced small economic gains.

5 Smokers are encouraged to quit and are more likely to succeed; fewer kids start smoking

Most smokers want to quit, and smoke-free laws give them more reason and motivation to do so. With their workplaces and public places smoke-free, there is also less encouragement to smoke and fewer opportunities for relapse, enhancing success rates among those who try to quit. This has the salutary impact of reducing secondhand smoke in homes, as smoke-free laws also encourage even smokers

who don't quit to smoke outdoors. These effects are even greater if encouragement to quit and support in doing so is promoted by employers, health professionals, and the government when smoke-free laws are implemented.

The smoke-free norms generated by smoke-free laws and other tobacco policies (e.g., marketing restrictions) also create an environment where young people are less likely to see smoking as normal and acceptable and thus to experiment and become addicted. Since most smokers start as kids, this means fewer smokers in the future.

Two U.S. Surgeon General reports find sufficient evidence to support smoke-free policies' impact on cessation and youth initiation:

- The 2020 U.S Surgeon General report, *Smoking Cessation*, found evidence “to infer that smoke-free policies reduce smoking prevalence, reduce cigarette consumption, and increase smoking cessation.
- The 2014 Surgeon General's Report, *The Health Consequences of Smoking—50 Years of Progress*, found that, smoke-free policies contribute to diminished social acceptability and social advantage for smoking.

6 Public support is high and grows after implementation

Most people dislike being exposed to secondhand smoke. As the public is educated about the harms of secondhand smoke, they become more comfortable expressing their right to breathe clean air and support for smoke-free laws. These laws thus receive strong public support which grows even stronger when people experience the benefits of smoke-free workplaces and public places. No one wants to go back, and smoke-free laws are seldom, if ever, weakened and virtually never repealed.

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