

Public Opinion and Lexington's Smoke-free Law

Executive Summary

The purpose of the research study was to evaluate changes in attitudes toward Lexington's smoke-free law, adults' social practices, protection from secondhand smoke (SHS) at work and home, and the effect of the law on adults' health.

Two groups of Lexington-Fayette County non-institutionalized adults (18 years or older) were randomly selected and invited to participate in a 10-15 minute phone survey. Group I ($N = 1,091$) was recruited and interviewed from July 19-August 17, 2003, prior to the original implementation date of the ordinance (September 26, 2003). Group II ($N = 1,055$) was recruited and interviewed from October 4-November 22, 2004, approximately six months after the ordinance had been in effect.

We found a significant increase in public support for our smoke-free law, from 56.7% pre-ordinance to 64.0% six months after the ordinance took effect in April 2004.

Since the smoke-free law took effect, we found a significant jump in perceived importance of smoke-free environments and concern about the harmful effects of exposure to secondhand smoke.

Given that Lexington has not launched a major public education campaign since the law took effect, this finding may mean that the ordinance itself has made Lexingtonians more aware of their health and the harmful consequences of breathing tobacco smoke.

As in other communities, we found that Lexingtonians have not changed their dining or entertainment practices. They eat out, go to bars, and visit other entertainment venues more or about as often as before the law went into effect.

Of those smokers who tried to quit in the past 12 months, 44% tried quitting since the law took effect. Of those, 25% have quit altogether.

This quit rate is comparable to even the most intensive and successful smoking cessation programs. Given that smoking is the single most preventable cause of death, the smoke-free law may result in a reduction in health care costs.

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For more information:

www.mc.uky.edu/TobaccoPolicy/NewRelease.HTM