



Public Opinion Research Survey: June 2005

Survey of California Apartment Owners and Managers

About Smokefree Multi-Unit Housing Laws

Background

Drifting secondhand smoke in multi-unit housing from neighboring units, balconies and outdoor areas is a health hazard for many tenants. The increasing awareness of the dangers of secondhand smoke and the acceptability of smokefree environments are encouraging tenants to seek out smokefree units and property owners to declare their buildings smokefree. In addition, several cities and counties have passed ordinances restricting smoking in multi-unit housing. Since 2003, the Center for Tobacco Policy & Organizing has commissioned a series of scientific public opinion research surveys to assess attitudes among tenants, voters, and apartment owners and managers about secondhand smoke exposure and what to do about it. The surveys were conducted by Goodwin Simon Victoria Research.

In June 2005, 300 apartment owners and managers in California were surveyed to assess their opinions about secondhand smoke, whether they had policies in place in their buildings to protect tenants from exposure, and what they would be willing to do to protect tenants in the future.

Summary of Key Findings

Secondhand Smoke Exposure in Multi-Unit Housing

Apartment owners and managers are aware of the harmful effects of secondhand smoke and that drifting secondhand smoke is a problem for tenants. Moreover, some of these owners and managers have taken action to restrict smoking in the apartment buildings they manage:

- 86% believe that secondhand smoke is harmful
- 69% think that secondhand smoke can drift from apartment to apartment
- 80% believe that secondhand smoke can drift from outside into an apartment unit
- 44% have had tenants complain about secondhand smoke drifting into their apartments
- 24% have some rules limiting smoking in outdoor common areas of their apartment complexes

Benefits of Smokefree Multi-Unit Housing

While the majority of apartment owners and managers have not taken specific steps to limit smoking in their apartments, this should not be viewed as opposition to these policies. In fact, a majority would be willing create non-smoking units under specific circumstances:

- 67% would set aside non-smoking units if they knew it would reduce fire and liability insurance rates
- 62% would do so if studies showed there was a high demand for non-smoking apartments
- 59% would do so if they knew that it would reduce costs associated with cleaning up apartments
- 56% would do so if tenants requested non-smoking units
- 58% would be more inclined to support a law creating non-smoking sections if they knew that the law would not affect current tenants, but take effect when units became vacant
- 57% would be more inclined if they knew that smokers could still rent non-smoking apartments, they could just not smoke in their unit

Smoking Restrictions in Multi-Unit Housing

There is strong support for laws to restrict smoking in multi-unit housing among apartment managers and owners:

- 67% support a law to prohibit smoking in outdoor common areas of multi-unit housing
- 57% support a law requiring apartment buildings to offer non-smoking sections of units
- After learning more about reasons that people support a law requiring non-smoking sections, the level of support grew to 66%
- 80% believe that if there is a law restricting smoking in apartments, that an individual who repeatedly violates those restrictions should be evicted

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