

# The More Parents Smoke, the Less Likely They Are to Have Rules Limiting Children's Smoke Exposure in Homes and Vehicles

Center For  
CHILD HEALTH  
RESEARCH

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## Objectives

- To determine the prevalence of rules against smoking in the presence of children in the home and in family vehicles: "home smoking bans" and "vehicle smoking bans".
- To determine how the prevalence of these rules varies by smoking status and smoking intensity of parents.
- We hypothesized that higher intensity of parental smoking would correspond to lower rates of home and vehicle smoking bans.

## Background

- Environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) has many negative effects on child health, including increased respiratory infections, otitis media, and asthma.
- Children and adolescents who are exposed to smokers in their household are three times more likely to initiate smoking themselves.
- One cigarette smoked in an enclosed room or vehicle results in unacceptable indoor air quality by EPA standards for >2 hours, yet parents often smoke in the presence of their children.
- Smoking bans, or rules limiting smoke exposure in the home or family vehicle, are methods to reduce children's exposure to smoke. Household and car smoking bans can help address the problem of parental smoking in at least three ways:
  - harm reduction to children and spouses by decreased exposure to ETS;
  - bans may reduce smoking rates and cigarette consumption among youth; and
  - by making smoking more difficult to perform, bans may also help the process of cessation for the parent who smokes.

## Methods

The Social Climate Survey of Tobacco Control (SCS-TC):

- The SCS-TC is an annual cross-sectional survey designed to assess tobacco attitudes across social institutions.
- Many tobacco measures selected from existing instruments: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Tobacco Use Supplement – Current Population Survey, California Adult Tobacco Surveys
- Representative national sample of U.S. adults.
- Random digit dialing telephone survey.
- These data are from the 2003 survey round, conducted July-September 2003.
- The sample was weighted by race and gender within each census region, to be representative of 2002 US Census estimates.

Chi square tests were used to compare smoking status and intensity with presence of smoking bans in home and vehicles.

## Results

3010 adult respondents (75% of eligible respondents) 1027 were parents and of these parents, 218 (21.3%) were smokers. 20% were some-day smokers, 11% smoked <10 cigarettes per day (Low intensity), 29% smoked 10 to 19 per day (Mid), and 40% smoked >20 per day (High).

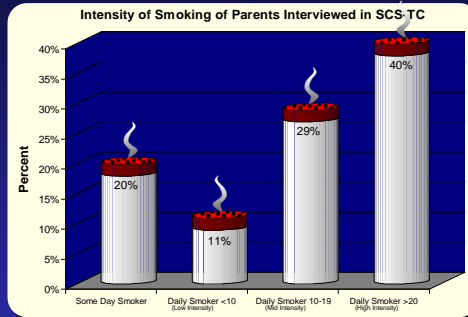
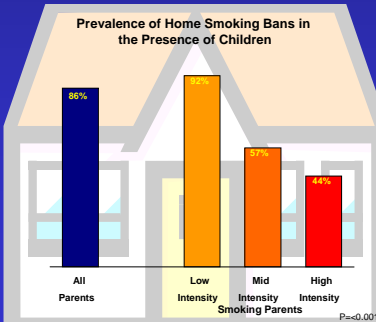
88.7% of all adults, 86% of all parents, and 64% of smoking parents reported rules banning smoking in the presence of children in the home.

Similarly, 87.5% of all adults, 85% of all parents, and 41% of smoking parents reported rules banning smoking in the presence of children in a vehicle.

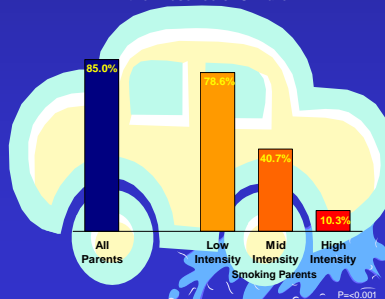
Rules about smoking in the home and vehicle while *not* in the presence of children were less prevalent:

Complete smoking bans in the home were reported by: 70.8% of low, 29% of mid, and 22.6% of high intensity smokers (p<0.001)  
Complete smoking bans in the vehicle were reported by: 36.4% of low, 12.9% of mid, and 3.2% of high intensity smokers (p<0.001)

Characteristic	Weighted Percent
Rural/Urban	
Rural	25.6
Urban	74.4
Smoking Status	
Non-Smoker	81.1
Smoker	18.9
Gender	
Male	47.7
Female	52.3
Race	
White	77
African American	11
Asian or Pacific Islander	3.4
American Indian/Alaskan	2.4
Other	4.7
Education	
Not a High School Graduate	7.8
High School Graduate	28.5
Some College	25.9
College Graduate	37.7
Age	
18-24 years	12
25-44 years	35.7
45-64 years	36.3
>65 years	16
Region	
Northeast	19
Midwest	22.4
South	35.8
West	22.7



## Prevalence of Vehicle Smoking Bans in the Presence of Children



## Abstract

**Background:** Adult tobacco use has many negative effects on child health, including increased respiratory infections, otitis media and asthma. One cigarette smoked in an enclosed room or vehicle results in unacceptable indoor air quality by EPA standards for >2 hours, yet parents often smoke in the presence of their children. Household smoking bans, rules limiting child exposure in the home or family vehicle, are methods to reduce children's exposure to smoke.

**Objective:** To determine the prevalence of smoking bans in the presence of children in the home or in vehicles, as compared to number of daily cigarettes smoked by parents, or smoking intensity. We hypothesized that higher intensity of parental smoking would correspond to lower rates of home and vehicle smoking bans.

**Design/Methods:** A national random digit dial telephone survey was administered to households between July and September 2003. The sample is weighted to be representative of the U.S. population based upon 2002 U.S. Census estimates.

**Results:** Of 3990 respondents contacted, 3010 (75%) completed surveys, 1027 were parents, and of these parents, 218 (21.3%) were smokers. Of the parent smokers, 20% were some-day smokers, 11% smoked <10 cigarettes per day (Low intensity), 29% smoked 10 to 19 per day (Mid), and 40% smoked >20 per day (High). 88.7% of all adults, 86% of all parents, and 64% of smoking parents reported rules banning smoking in the presence of children in the home. Home bans were reported by 82% of low, 57% of mid, and 44% of higher intensity parent smokers (p<0.001). Similarly, 87.5% of all adults, 85% of all parents, and 41% of smoking parents reported rules banning smoking in the presence of children in a vehicle. Vehicle bans were reported by 79% of low, 54% of mid, and 22% of high intensity parent smokers (p<0.001).

**Conclusions:** There are high rates of smoking bans in households with children, however parents who smoke have rules limiting children's exposure in the home or car significantly less often. Parents with higher intensities of smoking had the lowest rates of these rules. Lower rates of rules prohibiting smoking in the family vehicle are particularly alarming given the intensity of exposure that it represents. Healthcare providers should encourage smoking bans in the home and in the family vehicle for all children, particularly whose parents smoke.

## Conclusions

- In this sample, 21.3% of parents reported current smoking, while 18.9% of the entire sample reported current smoking.
- There are high rates of smoking bans in households with children, however parents who smoke have rules limiting children's exposure in the home or car significantly less often, with parents with higher intensities of smoking having the lowest rates of these rules.
- Complete bans against smoking anywhere in the home or anytime in the vehicle were less common in this sample.
- The lower prevalence of vehicle smoking bans among those who smoke more intensely is particularly alarming given the intensity of exposure that the contained space of a car provides.
- Child healthcare providers should inquire about home and vehicle smoking bans for all patients, and encourage complete smoking bans in the home and in the family vehicle. While there are high rates of these rules among non-smokers, many smokers continue to smoke in the presence of their children, putting the children at risk for ETS-related illnesses.