# Public Support *for* Smoke-Free Section 8 Public Housing

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## {ABSTRACT}

**Background:** Section 8 public housing vouchers are administered by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to provide subsidies for low-income residents. HUD encourages local public housing agencies to implement smokefree policies, but has proposed elimination of smoking in public housing which excludes Section 8 housing. This study examines U.S. adults' support for smokefree housing policy options.

**Methods:** Using a nationally representative survey in 2015, we explained Section 8 subsidies and asked respondents to agree or disagree with: 1) Smoking should not be allowed anywhere inside buildings that have Section 8 housing units, and 2) If a building has some units with Section 8 subsidies, smoking should not be allowed in the housing units with subsidies but should be allowed in those that are not subsidized. Chi-square analyses compared support across demographics groups, multiunit housing (MUH) residency and housing subsidy status.

**Results:** 3,070 adults completed the survey. The majority (71%) supported prohibiting indoor smoking everywhere inside buildings that have Section 8 housing units, with similar support among adults in MUH (71%) and in detached housing (70%). Adults who receive housing subsidies were marginally less supportive (65%) than those who do not (71%) (p=.09). Overall, adults were less supportive of a Section 8 policy to prohibit smoking only inside of units with subsidies, but allow smoking in non-subsidized units. Only 38% supporting such partial smoking bans, with MUH residents (33%) less supportive than non-MUH residents (40%) (p=.001).

**Conclusions:** Most U.S. adults support prohibiting smoking in all units in MUH buildings with any Section 8 subsidies. This policy preference has implications for protecting the health of the 4.9 million tenants who receive subsidies and their neighbors.

## {BACKGROUND}

- Tobacco smoke exposure is a significant source of morbidity within the pediatric population.
- Many US residents live in publicly subsidized multiunit housing; few have smoking restrictions.
- Section 8 public housing vouchers are administered by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to provide subsidies for low-income residents.
- HUD encourages local public housing agencies to implement smokefree policies, but has proposed elimination of smoking in public housing which excludes Section 8 housing.
- This study examines U.S. adults' support for smokefree housing policy options.

## {METHODS}

- Data are from the 2015 Social Climate Survey of Tobacco Control, a cross-sectional dual-frame survey administered to national probability samples of U.S. adults.
- The design included a Random Digit Dialing (RDD) frame and an internet panel frame developed from a probability sample of U.S. adults, in order to reduce non-coverage issues arising from wireless substitution.
- Data were weighted to adjust for age, race, sex, and region.
- We explained Section 8 subsidies and asked respondents to agree or disagree with:
  - o Smoking should not be allowed anywhere inside buildings that have Section 8 housing units, and
  - o If a building has some units with Section 8 subsidies, smoking should not be allowed in the housing units with subsidies but should be allowed in those that are not subsidized.
- Chi-square analyses compared support across demographics groups, multiunit housing (MUH) residency and housing subsidy status.

### TABLE 1. WEIGHTED SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

| | 2016 Unweighted N = 3,070 |
|---|---|
| **Smoking Status** | |
| Never Smokers | 60.7% |
| Former Smokers | 26.1% |
| Current Smokers | 13.2% |
| **Region** | |
| Northeast | 18.1% |
| Midwest | 21.4% |
| South | 37.0% |
| West | 23.5% |
| **Race** | |
| White | 65.0% |
| Black | 11.8% |
| Other | 23.3% |
| **Age** | |
| 18-24 | 13.1% |
| 25-44 | 34.0% |
| 45-64 | 35.5% |
| 65+ | 17.4% |
| **Sex** | |
| Males | 48.3% |
| Females | 51.7% |
| **Education** | |
| Less than HS | 7.4% |
| High School | 19.7% |
| Some College | 29.0% |
| College Degree | 44.0% |
| **Housing** | |
| Lives in Multiunit Housing | 26.3% |
| Lives in Detached Housing | 73.7% |
| **Subsidized Housing** | |
| Yes | 3.6% |
| No | 96.4% |

### TABLE 2. SUPPORT FOR PROHIBITING INDOOR SMOKING EVERYWHERE INSIDE BUILDINGS THAT HAVE SECTION 8 HOUSING UNITS.

| | Support | p |
|---|---|---|
| **Overall** | 70.8% | |
| **Housing** | | |
| Lives in Multiunit Housing | 70.4% | |
| Lives in Detached Housing | 71.0% | ns |
| **Subsidized Housing** | | |
| Yes | 64.5% | |
| No | 71.1% | p=.088 |
| **Smoking Status** | | |
| Never Smokers | 75.6% | |
| Former Smokers | 69.9% | |
| Current Smokers | 50.8% | p<.001 |
| **Region** | | |
| Northeast | 70.6% | |
| Midwest | 69.7% | |
| South | 71.3% | |
| West | 70.9% | ns |
| **Race** | | |
| White | 69.7% | |
| Black | 61.9% | |
| Other | 78.4% | p<.001 |
| **Age** | | |
| 18-24 | 74.4% | |
| 25-44 | 72.4% | |
| 45-64 | 65.5% | |
| 65+ | 75.3% | p<.001 |
| **Sex** | | |
| Males | 68.1% | |
| Females | 73.3% | p=.002 |
| **Education** | | |
| Less than HS | 61.6% | |
| High School | 72.6% | |
| Some College | 71.6% | |
| College Degree | 71.2% | p=.015 |

### TABLE 3. SUPPORT FOR A SECTION 8 POLICY TO PROHIBIT SMOKING ONLY INSIDE OF UNITS WITH SUBSIDIES, BUT ALLOW SMOKING IN NON-SUBSIDIZED UNITS.

| | Support | p |
|---|---|---|
| **Overall** | 38.2% | |
| **Housing** | | |
| Lives in Multiunit Housing | 33.3% | |
| Lives in Detached Housing | 40.0% | p=.001 |
| **Subsidized Housing** | | |
| Yes | 37.4% | |
| No | 38.4% | ns |
| **Smoking Status** | | |
| Never Smokers | 40.2% | |
| Former Smokers | 36.2% | |
| Current Smokers | 34.5% | p=.041 |
| **Region** | | |
| Northeast | 31.0% | |
| Midwest | 39.7% | |
| South | 40.6% | |
| West | 38.5% | p=.002 |
| **Race** | | |
| White | 36.0% | |
| Black | 36.2% | |
| Other | 45.6% | p<.001 |
| **Age** | | |
| 18-24 | 48.8% | |
| 25-44 | 41.1% | |
| 45-64 | 31.9% | |
| 65+ | 36.9% | p<.001 |
| **Sex** | | |
| Males | 42.5% | |
| Females | 34.2% | p<.001 |
| **Education** | | |
| Less than HS | 37.8% | |
| High School | 42.4% | |
| Some College | 37.1% | |
| College Degree | 37.2% | ns |

## {RESULTS}

- 3,070 adults completed the survey. Weighted sample characteristics are presented in Table 1.
- The majority (71%) supported prohibiting indoor smoking everywhere inside buildings that have Section 8 housing units, with similar support among adults in MUH (71%) and in detached housing (70%).
  - o Adults who receive housing subsidies were marginally less supportive (65%) than those who do not (71%) (p=.09). Support also varied by smoking status, race, age, sex, and education (see Table 2).
- Overall, adults were less supportive of a Section 8 policy to prohibit smoking only inside of units with subsidies, but allow smoking in non-subsidized units.
- Only 38% supporting such partial smoking bans, with MUH residents (33%) less supportive than non-MUH residents (40%) (p=.001).
  - o Support also varied by smoking status race, age, sex, and education. There were no differences between adults who receive housing subsidies and those who do not.

## {CONCLUSIONS}

- Most U.S. adults support prohibiting smoking in all units in MUH buildings with any Section 8 subsidies.
  - o Adults who would be impacted by a smoke-free rule, those who live in MUH buildings, are less supportive of a policy that would not apply to all units in buildings with Section 8 subsidies.
- This policy preference has implications for protecting the health of the 4.9 million tenants who receive subsidies and their neighbors.
- Smoke-free housing should be available to all.

## {LIMITATIONS}

- Self-report data
- Internet panel survey may also have bias

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