Gender Variations In Support For Tobacco Control: A National Social Climate Analysis

Liesel Ritchie, Robert McMillen, Angela Robertson, Social Science Research Center, Mississippi State University
Sheila Keller, Mississippi State Department of Health

ABSTRACT

In the first steps to reach a settlement with the tobacco industry, Mississippi was among the first to implement evaluation measures for statewide programs funded through dollars recovered from the tobacco industry. In the spring of 1999, the Mississippi State Department of Health contracted with the Social Science Research Center (SSRC) to conduct an evaluation research program for the 1999 Mississippi Tobacco Cessation Project. The program's objective was to develop a social climate survey to monitor the health climate across the state. The Social Climate Survey was designed to measure the extent to which the public supports key tobacco control policies and practices. The Social Climate Survey was designed to measure the extent to which the public supports key tobacco control policies and practices.

INTRODUCTION

Background

In the spring of 1999, the Mississippi State Department of Health contracted with the Social Science Research Center (SSRC) to conduct an evaluation research program for the 1999 Mississippi Tobacco Cessation Project. The program's objective was to develop a social climate survey to monitor the health climate across the state. The Social Climate Survey was designed to measure the extent to which the public supports key tobacco control policies and practices. The Social Climate Survey was designed to measure the extent to which the public supports key tobacco control policies and practices.

METHODS

Survey design

The development of the survey was determined from an extensive review of expert measurement instruments in the tobacco prevention research. Comments and measures were then solicited from senior scientists at the SSRC, who then composed the Social Climate Survey as a part of the Mississippi Tobacco Pilot Program.

Data Collection

The data collection for the 2000 National Social Climate Survey was done via telephone interviews with a simple random sample of Mississippi adults living in households with telephones. The telephone numbers were collected in 2000 (July and August) by the Social Science Research Center at Mississippi State University. Interviewers were instructed to continue making calls during business hours until a completed interview was obtained for 95% of the sample. The percentage of participants who refused to participate was less than 5% (a sample size of 1,549 split for the total data set is larger than 85% confidence interval).

RESULTS

The purpose of this report was to illustrate variations in the social climate of females and males within several societal institutions toward tobacco use and tobacco control in the state of Mississippi. We developed the following heuristic approach to assist in interpreting the Social Climate Survey data.

Heuristic Classification Scheme for Assessing the Social Dominance of Norms, Practices, and Beliefs:

Universal: norms, practices & beliefs held by the entire working majority of society members: 85% of 100%

Predominant: predominant norms, practices & beliefs held by a majority of society members: 65-84%

Contested: contested norms, practices & beliefs held by 1-5% of society members: 25-64%

Marginal: marginal norms, practices & beliefs held by 0-34% of society members

DISCUSSION

Our hypotheses that the 2000 National Social Climate Survey revealed gender variations was supported. First, we predicted that males would have more peers who smoked cigarettes than females, and that the physical environment would have a greater influence on male smoking behavior than on female smoking behavior. Second, we hypothesized that there would be gender variation in the attitudes toward tobacco control policies. Third, we predicted that males would be more likely to accept the health risks of tobacco use and environmental tobacco smoke than females. This was supported, although we did not predict that males would be more likely to support the policies that are designed to reduce tobacco use than females. While these results are generally consistent with previous studies, they also suggest that there may be some unique issues related to male smoking behavior.

REFERENCES