

## Public Support for Clean Air Practices and Actual Policy: A Report from the 2001 Social Climate Survey of Tobacco Control

The 129th Annual Meeting of APHA, Atlanta, GA

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### ABSTRACT

In order to monitor progress towards intermediate goals such as policy changes, changes in social norms, exposure of individuals to environmental tobacco smoke, and the impact of pro-tobacco influences, researchers at the SSRC developed a social organizational approach to monitor the social climate in which public health efforts take place. The survey identified normative beliefs about tobacco use, clean air practices, and health beliefs within important societal institutions, such as the household, education, work place, and recreational settings. Researchers at the SSRC administered the Social Climate Survey of Tobacco Control a representative sample of US adults in July of 2000, and intend to replicate the survey in July of 2001. The 2000 National Social Climate Survey revealed significant disparities in the support for clean air policies in convenience stores, restaurants, fast food establishments, bars, and outdoor parks and actual policy. A significantly higher percentage of respondents indicated that each of these venues should be smokefree than reported that these venues in their community are actually smokefree.

#### INTRODUCTION

This approach operationalizes the concept of social climate into a set of quantifiable social and environmental indicators. The Social Climate Survey provides a method to monitor changes in social and environmental objectives, as well as an institutional framework to organize and interpret these results. To illustrate, this approach surveys normative beliefs about a health risk behavior, institutional practices and policies concerning the behavior, and knowledge about the health risks of the behavior within each of the social institutions that impacts a person's daily life. The Social Climate Survey serves as one aspect of an objective and informed analysis of program outcomes and processes that can be utilized to enhance the capacity to design, implement, and evaluate health promotion interventions.

Applied to tobacco control, the social climate survey assesses these indicators within 1) households, 2) educational settings, 3) work sites, 4) health and medical care systems, 5) recreational settings, 6) government and political institutions, and 7) mass media and communication. This annual, cross-sectional survey assesses, and ultimately monitors these indicators in order to:

- 1) Categorize indicators by level of acceptance in order to identify potentially modifiable social climate factors
- 2) Identify disparities in health risk factors, knowledge of health risks, and support for smokefree environments
- 3) Identify successful tobacco control program impacts, and approaches to make these comprehensive programs better
- 4) Assesses the impact that health care providers have upon active and passive smoking
- 5) Use of continuous response options allows more sophisticated analyses to detect relationships among social climate variables and contextual factors

### METHOD

The concept and design of the Social Climate Survey were developed by a group of scientists at the SSRC. The Social Climate Survey measures the acceptability of tobacco use and the support for tobacco control in the following social institutions: family and friendship groups; education; work-place; government and political order; health and medical care; recreation, leisure and sports; and mass culture and communication. The development of the survey was determined not only from a reviews of extant measurement instruments in the tobacco prevention research, but also from a panel of consultants who have substantial expertise in the various areas of tobacco control research. Researchers at the SSRC worked closely with the Mississippi State Department of Health and The Partnership for a Healthy Mississippi (the two organizations responsible for statewide tobacco control programs in Mississippi) in the development of the Social Climate Survey. The CDC's Office on Smoking and Health and a panel of consultants provided comments and reviews of the survey instrument as well. Scientists at the SSRC developed many of the items included in the survey. Others were selected from existing measurement instruments with established validity. Specifically, the Social Climate Survey includes items from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (to establish if respondent is a smoker, former smoker, or never smoker), the Current Population Survey - Tobacco Use Supplement, and California Adult Tobacco Surveys.

Data were collected for the 2001 Social Climate Survey of Tobacco Control via telephone interviews with a simple random sample of adults. The data were collected in July and August by the Survey Research Unit in the Social Science Research Center at Mississippi State University. Households were selected using random digit dialing procedures. (This includes households with unlisted numbers.) Within a household the adult to be interviewed was selected by asking to speak with the person in the household who is 18 years of age or older, and who will have the next birthday.

### RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Of the eligible respondents contacted, 3,002 respondents completed the survey (84.2%) and 564 (15.8%) refused to participate. The sampling error (binomial questions with 50/50 split) for the total data set is no larger than  $\pm$  1.8 (95% confidence interval). Of the 3,002 respondents, 1,188 (39.6 percent) were male and 1,807 (60.2 percent) were female. The racial composition of the sample is as follows: white = 2,473 (82.4 percent), African American = 282 (9.4 percent), Asian or Pacific Islander = 35 (1.2 percent), American Indian or Alaskan Native = 36 (1.2 percent), other races = 115 (3.8 percent), and unknown (i.e., did not answer the question on race) = 61 (2.0 percent). The sample was weighted by race and gender within each census region, based upon 1999 U.S. Census estimates to ensure that it is representative of the U.S. population.

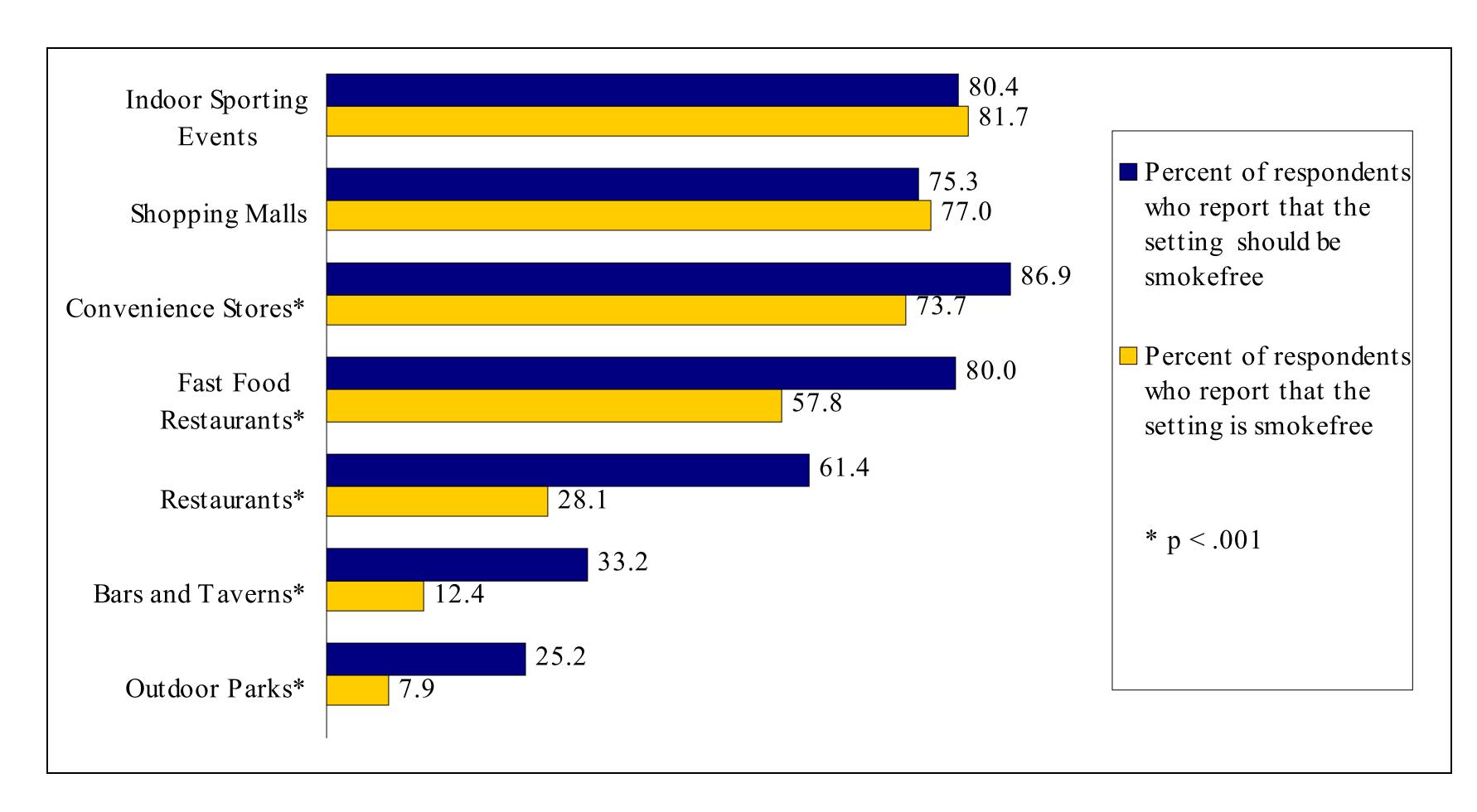
Support for smoking restrictions in the public settings is shown below. These figures demonstrate the percentage of adults living in communities with and without such restrictions who support such restrictions, as well as comparisons of support by respondent's smoking status.

Except for outdoor parks, a majority of all US adults favor restrictions in all settings shown. The majority of those living in communities with restrictions favor those restrictions, and they are more likely to be supportive of such restrictions than those living in communities without restrictions (p< .001 for all comparisons). Perhaps most importantly, except for bars and outdoor parks, the majority of individuals living in communities without restrictions are in support of them.

The last figure shows beliefs about restrictions in public settings among smokers and non-smokers. Non-smokers are less likely than smokers to support restrictions in each of these settings (again, p<.001 for all comparisons), but except for parks, bars, and restaurants the majority of adult smokers in the U.S. support restrictions in the remaining settings. These findings highlight that the majority of adult smokers in the United States support policies that would greatly reduce exposure to environmental tobacco smoke.

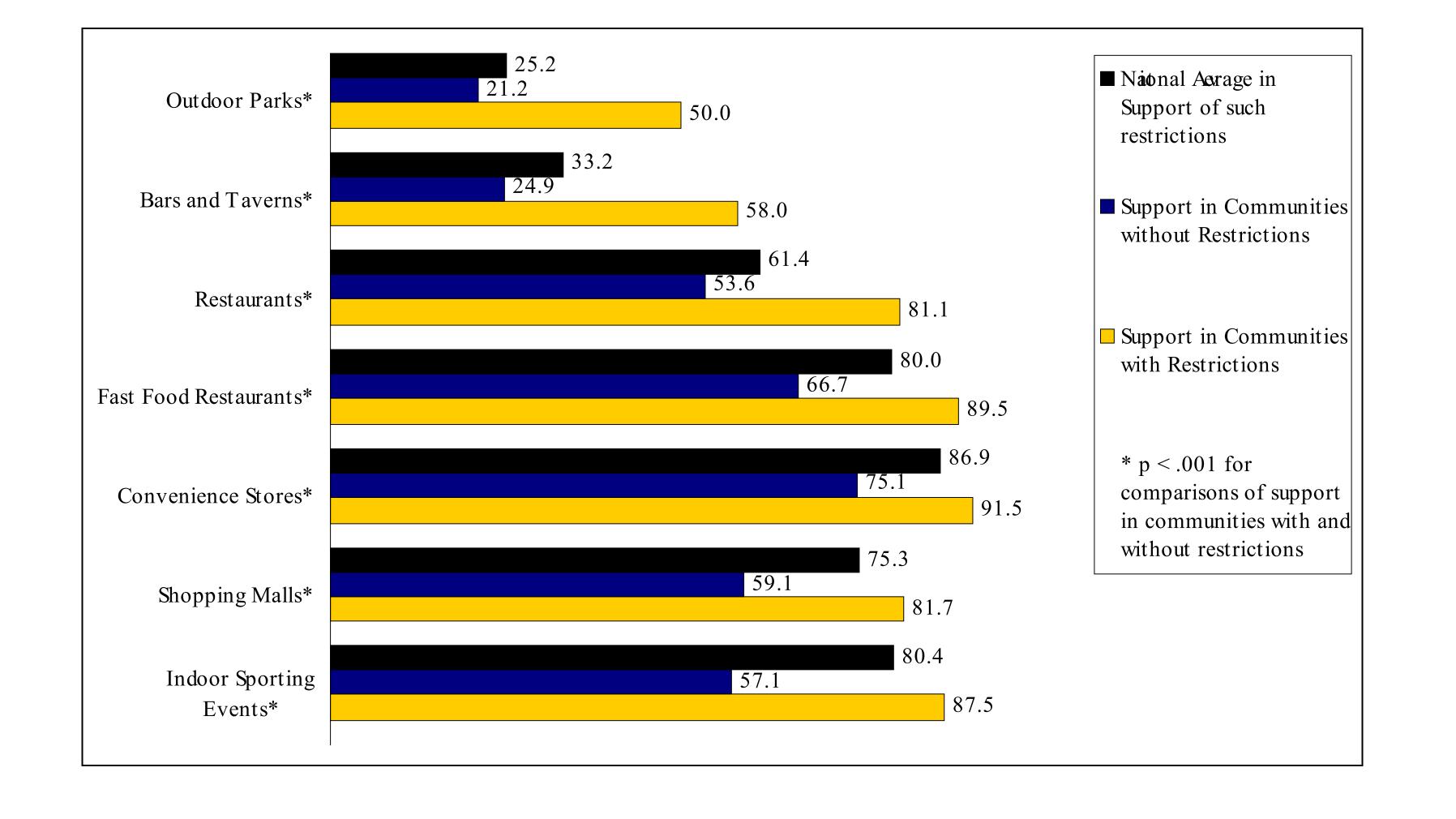
# Public Support for Clean Air Practices and Actual Policy

Percent of respondents who report that recreational settings in their community are smokefree and the percent of respondents who report that these settings should be smokefree.



# Support for Clean Air Practices in Communities With and Without Smokefree Policies

Percent of respondents who report that recreational settings in their community are smokefree and the percent of respondents who report that these settings should be smokefree.



# Support for Clean Air Practices among Smokers and Nonsmokers

Percent of respondents who report that recreational settings in their community are smokefree and the percent of respondents who report that these settings should be smokefree.

