

# Socioeconomic Variation in the Prevalence, Introduction, Retention, and Removal of Smoke-Free Policies among Smokers: Findings from the International Tobacco Control (ITC) Four Country Survey

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## Abstract

**Introduction:** Exposure to secondhand smoke causes premature death and disease in non-smokers and indoor smoke-free policies have become increasingly prevalent worldwide. Although socioeconomic disparities have been documented in tobacco use and cessation, the association between socioeconomic status (SES) and smoke-free policies is less well studied.

**Methods:** Data were obtained from the 2006 and 2007 Waves of the International Tobacco Control Four Country Survey (ITC-4), a prospective study of nationally representative samples of smokers in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. Telephone interviews were administered to 8,245 current and former adult smokers from October 2006 to February 2007. Between September 2007 and February 2008, 5,866 respondents were re-interviewed. Self-reported education and annual household income were used to create SES tertiles. Outcomes included the presence, introduction, and removal of smoke-free policies in homes, worksites, bars, and restaurants.

**Results:** Smokers with high SES had increased odds of both having [OR: 1.54, 95% CI: 1.27–2.87] and introducing [OR: 1.49, 95% CI: 1.04–2.13] a total ban on smoking in the home compared to low SES smokers. Continuing smokers with high SES also had decreased odds of removing a total ban [OR: 0.44, 95% CI: 0.26–0.73]. No consistent association was observed between SES and the presence or introduction of bans in worksites, bars, or restaurants.

**Conclusions:** The presence, introduction, and retention of smoke-free homes increases with increasing SES, but no consistent socioeconomic variation exists in the presence or introduction of total smoking bans in worksites, bars, or restaurants. Opportunities exist to reduce SES disparities in smoke-free homes, while the lack of socioeconomic differences in public workplace, bar, and restaurant smoke-free policies suggest these measures are now equitably distributed in these four countries.

**Keywords:** tobacco smoke pollution; smoking; public policy; socioeconomic factors; United States, Canada; Australia; United Kingdom

## Recommended Citation:

King BA, Hyland AJ, Borland R, McNeill A, Cummings KM. Socioeconomic variation in the prevalence, introduction, retention, and removal of smoke-free policies among smokers: findings from the International Tobacco Control (ITC) Four Country Survey. *International journal of environmental research and public health* 2011 Feb;8(2):411-434.

Link to PDF: <http://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/8/2/411>