

Longitudinal evaluation of smoke-free Scotland on pub and home drinking behavior: Findings from the International Tobacco Control Policy Evaluation Project

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Abstract

Introduction: On 26 March 2006, Scotland implemented a smoke-free policy prohibiting smoking in indoor public venues, including bars and pubs. Drinking and smoking are highly associated behaviors, so we evaluated whether the regulations would decrease drinking behavior among smokers in public venues. We further assessed whether this effect would be more pronounced in heavier drinkers and whether decreases in drinking behavior in pubs would be offset by increased drinking in the home.

Methods: Participants ($N = 1,059$) were adult smokers and nonsmokers from Scotland and from the rest of the United Kingdom, which did not have comprehensive smoke-free policies during the study period. Data were collected using a random-digit – dialed telephone survey from February to March 2006, just prior to the policy implementation in Scotland. Follow-up surveys were conducted in March 2007. Using baseline data, we categorized participants as abstainers, moderate drinkers, or heavy drinkers.

Results: Overall, results demonstrated that drinking behavior did not change significantly in Scotland compared with the rest of the United Kingdom following implementation of the smokefree policy in Scotland. However, planned comparisons examining mean changes in drinks consumed in pubs or bars following the legislation demonstrated that the smoke-free legislation was associated with reduced drinking behavior in pubs and bars among moderate- and heavy-drinking smokers in Scotland. These moderate- and heavy-drinking Scottish smokers also reduced their pub attendance following policy implementation

Discussion: The smoke-free Scottish law did not increase drinking in the home. These findings suggest that smoke-free policies may have additional public health benefits for those at greater risk for alcohol-related health problems.

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