

# Secondhand smoke exposure in European countries with different smoke-free legislation: Findings from the EUREST-PLUS ITC Europe Surveys

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## Abstract

**Introduction:** Exposure to secondhand smoke (SHS) poses serious and extensive health and economic-related consequences to European society and worldwide. Smoking bans are a key measure to reducing SHS exposure but have been implemented with varying levels of success. We assessed changes in the prevalence of self-reported SHS exposure and smoking behavior in public places among smokers in six European countries and the influence of the country's type of smoking ban (partial or total ban) on such exposure and smoking behavior.

**Aims and Methods:** The EUREST-PLUS ITC Europe Surveys were conducted among adult smokers in Germany, Greece, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Spain in 2016 (Wave 1, n = 6011) and 2018 (Wave 2, n = 6027). We used generalized estimating equations models to assess changes between Waves 1 and 2 and to test the interaction between the type of smoking ban and (1) self-reported SHS exposure, (2) self-reported smoking in several public places.

**Results:** A significant decrease in self-reported SHS exposure was observed in workplaces, from 19.1% in 2016 to 14.0% in 2018 (−5.1%; 95% CI: −8.0%; −2.2%). Self-reported smoking did not change significantly inside bars (22.7% in Wave 2), restaurants (13.2% in Wave 2) and discos/nightclubs (34.0% in W2). SHS exposure in public places was significantly less likely (adjusted odds ratio = 0.35; 95% CI: 0.26–0.47) in the countries with total bans as compared to those countries with partial bans.

**Conclusion:** The inverse association between smoking in public places and smoking bans indicates an opportunity for strengthening smoke-free legislation and protecting bystanders from exposure to SHS in public places.

**Implications:** Prevalence of smokers engaging in and being exposed to smoking in public places varied by type of smoke-free legislation across six European Union countries in our study; those with total smoke bans reported significantly less exposure to SHS than those with partial or no bans. Our results indicate room for improvement, not only to decrease the prevalence of exposure to SHS in Europe but also to diminish the variability between countries through common, more restrictive smoke-free legislation, and importantly, strong and sustained enforcement.

## Recommended Citation

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