

Extending smoking ban outside bars could help curb 'social smoking'

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Extending the smoking ban outside bars could help curb "social smoking" because this goes hand in hand with drinking, suggests a small qualitative study published online in *Tobacco Control*.

The international evidence suggests that while the prevalence of smoking per se has decreased, social smoking - smoking intermittently or only in given situations - has increased among [young adults](#), say the authors.

The authors carried out in-depth interviews in 2011 with 13 "social [smokers](#)," aged between 19 and 25, who were recruited through the online social network Facebook and via posters in cafes, supermarkets, and on community noticeboards.

Analysis of the transcripts showed that social smokers often had conflicted identities. They found it very difficult to reconcile their stated identity as non-smokers, who smoke.

They managed this conflict by limiting where and when they smoked and by sharply differentiating themselves from "addicted" smokers to whom, by and large, they felt superior, using several strategies.

These included claiming never to smoke alone; asserting that they controlled when, where, and how much they smoked; and defining their smoking as "a temporary phase."

They also rationalised their behaviour by saying that it only occurred

when they had been drinking, describing smoking and drinking as going "hand in hand." Some said that [alcohol](#) prompted cravings for a cigarette, which they wouldn't otherwise experience.

But alcohol also enabled them to absolve themselves of any responsibility for their actions, which they inevitably subsequently regretted.

Drinking therefore enabled them to "binge smoke," while also distancing them from this behaviour, so helping to maintain their "non-smoker" persona.

One respondent commented: "Some nights I can smoke 14/15 ciggies or a pack while I'm drinking but I can never do that without alcohol."

When asked for their views on mandating smoke free areas outside bars, which could help decouple smoking and [drinking](#), all but one participant strongly backed this proposal, and indicated that it would help them cut down or stop smoking.

"Introducing smoke-free outdoors bars could reduce social smoking by removing cues that stimulate this behaviour and changing the environment that facilitates it," suggest the authors.

"Such a policy would eliminate the current intersection between smoke-free and smoking spaces and create a physical barrier that, for some, would make accessing the [smoking](#) zone too difficult," they conclude.

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