

82 percent of adults support banning smoking when kids are in the car

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A new poll shows 82 percent of adults support banning smoking in cars when children under 13 are riding in the vehicle.

According to the latest University of Michigan Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health, support is strong for prohibiting drivers and passengers from [smoking](#) when kids are in the car. However, only seven states nationwide have laws banning the practice.

Also in this month's poll, 87 percent of adults said they'd support a ban on smoking in businesses where children are allowed. Seventy-five percent expressed support for banning smoking in homes where children have asthma or another lung disease.

"Smoke is a real [health hazard](#) for kids whose lungs are still developing, and especially for kids who have illnesses like asthma where the lungs are particularly fragile and flare up when exposed to [secondhand smoke](#)," says Matthew M. Davis, M.D., M.A.P.P., director of the C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health.

Even among current smokers in the poll, more than one half supported bans that would protect children from secondhand smoke. For example, 60 percent of current smokers said they'd strongly support or support a ban on smoking in cars with children under 13 years old present, compared with 84 percent of former smokers and 87 percent of never-smokers.

"Although the number of people smoking has dropped dramatically in the last 50 years, secondhand smoke remains a health risk," says Davis, who is associate professor of pediatrics and internal medicine at the U-M Medical School and associate professor of Public Policy at U-M's Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy.

In 2007 the American Academy of Pediatrics began advocating for specific legislation to prohibit smoking in cars with children present.

A 2006 study by researchers at the Harvard School of Public Health found "alarming" levels of secondhand smoke were generated in just five minutes in vehicles under various driving, ventilation, and smoking conditions. According to the California Environmental Protection Agency, secondhand smoke in cars can be 10 times more concentrated than the level considered unhealthy by the U.S. EPA—and it is dangerous even if the windows are open.

Between 2006 and 2011, four states (Arkansas, California, Louisiana and Maine) enacted statewide bans on smoking in vehicles carrying children. In 2013 three states (Utah, Oregon and Illinois) have enacted similar laws.

The violations usually carry a fine and often can be enforced only if a police officer has stopped the driver for a separate traffic violation or other offense, much like current seat belt laws.

Four other states (Hawaii, Indiana, New Jersey, New York) have cities or counties that ban smoking in vehicles with children present.

"But this is about children's health, not about writing tickets. Just having the laws in place raises awareness and discourages the behavior – reducing the chances that kids will be exposed to secondhand smoke," says Davis.

"Given the high level of public support for laws prohibiting smoking in vehicles with children in this poll, it may be that the bans enacted by a small number of states should be considered by many more states, and perhaps at the national level," Davis says. Currently, the federal government prohibits smoking on all commercial flights.

"Forty of the 50 states currently ban smoking in public places in one form or another. At this time, we are not aware of laws at this time that prohibit smoking in homes where children have asthma or other lung conditions. However, the level of public support for ways to reduce children's exposure to secondhand smoke is so high that now may be the time to for public health officials and legislators to move forward on ideas like these to protect children's health," Davis says.

More information: [mottnpch.org/reports-surveys/b ... ehicles-kids-present](https://mottnpch.org/reports-surveys/b...ehicles-kids-present)

Provided by University of Michigan Health System

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