

# Smoking allowed in growing number of restaurants, bars in Georgia

June 22 2015

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Despite the passage of Georgia's Smokefree Air Act in 2005, the number of restaurants and bars that allow smoking has doubled in recent years, according to researchers at Georgia State University's School of Public Health.

Researchers found a significant number of restaurant and bar owners have taken advantage of exemptions in the laws to create smoking zones.

"The increase in smoking-allowed establishments may be attributed to the increase in the percentage of establishments permitting smoking in designated dining areas and the large percentage of establishments that permit smoking in outdoor areas," the authors wrote.

Dr. Michael Eriksen, dean of the School of Public Health, was the senior author of the study, "Changes in Georgia Restaurant and Bar Smoking Policies From 2006 to 2012," which was published in the journal *Preventing Chronic Disease: Public Health Research, Practice and Policy*.

The researchers found the percentage of [restaurants](#) and bars in Georgia that allowed smoking nearly doubled, from 9.1 percent in 2006 to 17.6 percent in 2012. They also found "a significant increase in the percentage of establishments that allow smoking when minors are present," most likely in designated smoking areas and outdoor patios.

Georgia's Smokefree Air Act includes several exemptions that allow restaurants and bars to avoid a complete ban on smoking. The

establishments can allow smoking if they don't allow entry to people under 18, or if designated [smoking](#) areas are outside or in rooms with separate ventilation systems.

Research has found that the most effective way to protect children and others from secondhand smoke is to enforce laws that require all indoor public places to be completely smokefree.

The authors urge policymakers to reconsider the Smokefree Air Act and to strengthen it by making restaurants and bars 100 percent smokefree. They note that Georgia is one of "only 15 states that does not have a 100 percent smokefree restaurant or bar law."

Provided by Georgia State University

Citation: Smoking allowed in growing number of restaurants, bars in Georgia (2015, June 22) retrieved 19 April 2024 from

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