

Study finds growing public support in the US and Canada for smokefree outdoor laws

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A new study has found increasing support in the United States and Canada for smokefree laws for outdoor areas, especially in playgrounds and school grounds.

The collaborative study between the University of Otago, New Zealand and University of Alberta, Canada, provides new and some unexpected insights for [health promotion](#) in North America. A key finding is that most residents welcome smokefree laws. Support was strongest for smokefree playgrounds and school grounds, but there was also [majority support](#) for a range of other smokefree areas.

University of Otago, Wellington researcher Dr George Thomson said the study showed that there was substantial and growing [public support](#) for outdoor smokefree areas in the USA and Canada.

"This public support for outdoor smokefree areas indicates that politicians could introduce regulations for these areas, with a greater chance that they can be implemented effectively," Dr Thomson said.

In the review of 89 surveys, the researchers found especially high support for smokefree playgrounds and school grounds (including from smokers). There was generally a majority of support for smokefree building entrances, and for outdoor sports areas, dining patios and transit sites. Public support for smokefree [playgrounds](#) was consistently around 90%. In 25 surveys, the median support from smokers for smokefree school grounds was 83%.

Support for smokefree school grounds in the USA increased during 2002 to 2008 from 67% to 78%. In the surveys, the median support for smokefree outdoor events increased from 20% in 1993-99, to 56% in 2010-13.↵

Dr Damian Collins, from the University of Alberta noted that public [support](#) for smokefree outdoor areas is probably higher than politicians think.

"This research may help give greater confidence to introduce new smokefree rules," Dr Collins said.

The research showed that women were more supportive of smokefree outdoor regulations than men in all 51 results where gender attitudes were reported. Support was also stronger among Hispanic and African-Americans than Whites.

Canadians were more supportive of smokefree rules for building entrances, parks and sports fields, compared to those in the USA. Within the USA, Californians were often most supportive of smokefree areas.

The article is newly published in the leading international journal for smokefree research, *Tobacco Control*.

Provided by University of Otago

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