

Smoke-free policies help decrease smoking rates for LGBT population

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Tobacco use remains the leading preventable cause of death and disability in the United States. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, cigarette smoking among lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) individuals is higher than among heterosexual adults—nearly 24 percent of the LGBT population smoke compared to nearly 17 percent of the straight population. Now, researchers from the University of Missouri have found evidence of lower smoking prevalence and greater intentions to quit among the LGBT smokers who live in communities with smoke-free policies.

"Past research indicated despite overall declines in smoking, higher smoking rates persist in the LGBT community, due in part to social norms," said Jenna Wintemberg, instructor of health sciences in the School of Health Professions. "LGBT people face hostility and can feel excluded from social spaces, leading individuals to create their own spaces such as bars and nightclubs, which are often targets for marketing and promotion by the tobacco industry."

Researchers surveyed participants during Missouri Pride festivals with questions about where they live, personal tobacco use and support for smoke-free policies. They found that 94 percent of those who live in smoke-free communities were more likely to want to quit smoking compared to just 76 percent of those who lived in places without [smoking bans](#).

"Smoke-free policies have several positive outcomes for all people, not

specifically those who identify as LGBT," said Jane McElroy, principal investigator of the study and associate professor of family and community medicine in the School of Medicine. "These outcomes include overall lower smoking rates and changes in [social norms](#) regarding smoking."

Researchers also found that only 35 percent of Missourians from the study sample lived in an area with a comprehensive smoke-free law, compared to 82 percent of the population nationally.

Provided by University of Missouri-Columbia

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