

# Secondhand smoke exposure persists in multi-unit housing

11 September 2012, by Annie Deck-miller

(Medical Xpress)—A majority of Americans who live in multi-unit housing have implemented voluntary smoke-free rules in their private homes but millions remain involuntarily exposed to secondhand smoke in this environment, according to a study published in the most recent issue of the *American Journal of Public Health*. Researchers led by senior investigator Andrew Hyland, PhD, Chair of the Department of Health Behavior at Roswell Park Cancer Institute (RPCI), recommend smoke-free building policies to protect all multiunit residents from secondhand smoke exposure in their homes.

"A vast majority of multi-unit housing residents continue to be exposed to [toxic compounds](#) found in secondhand smoke in spite of the adoption of voluntary smoke-free rules for their private homes," said Dr. Hyland. "This study demonstrates widespread support of the adoption of smoke-free building policies."

The national study evaluated attitudes, experiences and acceptance of smoke-free policies among residents of multi-unit housing in the United States. Approximately 80 million Americans live in multi-unit housing. Using the results of this study, the researchers estimate that 30 million multi-unit housing residents with smoke-free rules in their homes may still be exposed to [tobacco smoke](#) that enters their residence from other areas of the building.

Hyland and colleagues conducted a nationally representative survey of multi-unit housing residents who live in apartments, duplexes, double/multifamily homes, condominiums or town houses was 2010. The study sample included both landline and cell-phone-only users. Overall, 29% reported living in smoke-free buildings. Among all respondents, 56% support the implementation of policies prohibiting smoking in all areas of their building, including living units and common areas.

The study also found that 79% of multiunit housing

residents have implemented voluntary smoke-free home rules. Those who have reported having these rules were more likely to be non-smokers, have higher education and live with children. Forty-four percent of those with smoke-free rules at home reported being exposed to secondhand smoke in the past year that originated from smoking in other parts of their buildings.

"Residents of multi-unit housing are particularly susceptible to [secondhand smoke exposure](#) from nearby units and shared areas such as hallways," said lead author Andrea Licht, MS, a doctoral student with the Department of Social and Preventive Medicine at the University at Buffalo. "These residents are trying to protect their families from the dangers of [secondhand smoke](#) by not allowing smoking in their homes and would welcome policies that support that goal."

The publication, "Attitudes, Experiences, and Acceptance of Smoke-Free Policies Among U.S. Multi-unit Housing Residents" can be found at [ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/.../105/AJPH.2012.300717](http://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/.../105/AJPH.2012.300717) .

Provided by Roswell Park Cancer Institute

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