

The effect of smoke-free policies on the behaviour of social smokers

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Abstract

OBJECTIVE: To test the hypothesis that proposed amendments to the Occupational Safety and Health Act making all enclosed workplaces in Western Australia smoke free would result in a decrease in cigarette consumption by patrons at nightclubs, pubs, and restaurants without adversely affecting attendance.**DESIGN:** Cross sectional structured interview survey.**PARTICIPANTS AND SETTING:** Patrons of several inner city pubs and nightclubs in Perth were interviewed while queuing for admission to these venues.**OUTCOME MEASURES:** Current social habits, smoking habits, and how these might be affected by the proposed regulations. Persons who did not smoke daily were classified as "social smokers."**RESULTS:** Half (50%) of the 374 patrons interviewed were male, 51% currently did not smoke at all, 34.3% smoked every day, and the remaining 15.7% smoked, but not every day. A clear majority (62.5%) of all 374 respondents anticipated no change to the frequency of their patronage of hospitality venues if smoke-free policies became mandatory. One in five (19.3%) indicated that they would go out more often, and 18.2% said they would go out less often. Half (52%) of daily smokers anticipated no change to their cigarette consumption, while 44.5% of daily smokers anticipated a reduction in consumption. A majority of social smokers (54%) predicted a reduction in their cigarette consumption, with 42% of these anticipating quitting.**CONCLUSIONS:** One in nine (11.5%) of smokers say that adoption of smoke-free policies would prompt them to quit smoking entirely without a significant decrease in attendance at pubs and nightclubs. There can be few other initiatives as simple, cheap, and popular that would achieve so much for public health.

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