

IN THEIR OWN WORDS: PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR SMOKEFREE LAWS

"We envision a world in which no one is forced to breathe tobacco smoke anywhere they have the right to be, including every place the public is welcome – all health-care facilities, all workplaces, all schools, all transportation facilities, all restaurants and pubs, all theatres, all sports facilities."

Dr. Sinead Jones, Director, Tobacco Control, International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease¹

It's not just health advocates who envision a smokefree world; business leaders, trade unions, hospitality workers, politicians, ministers and the overwhelming majority of the world's population all share the belief that comprehensive smokefree legislation is the only course of action governments can take to fully protect their citizens from the deadly effects of secondhand smoke. Smokefree laws are necessary, beneficial and popular.

The public overwhelmingly supports smokefree laws

Where smokefree laws have been introduced, they enjoy widespread public support. That support typically grows during the build-up to their introduction and increases still further after implementation.²

"I cannot stand breathing in other people's cigarette smoke, and I don't like to see my wife and children breathing it in when we go out. The smoking ban is fantastic and will do a lot to save lives in Scotland. Not only will people be able to breathe clean air, but it will also encourage people to give up smoking as has happened in other countries that have implemented a ban. - Alex Arthur, Scottish boxer."³

- **Scotland's** smokefree legislation was supported by 69 percent of bar workers prior to implementation rising to 79 percent 2 months after implementation of the ban.⁴
- In almost all the member States of the **European Union**, citizens are in favor of banning smoking in restaurants. This proportion is in excess of 90 percent in Malta (93 percent), Ireland (93 percent) and Slovenia (91 percent).⁵
- In **Lithuania**, a 2005 survey commissioned by the Ministry of Health found three out of four respondents supported the idea of a law forbidding smoking in bars, restaurants and other enclosed public places. Support reached 86 percent among non-smokers, while around 51 percent of smokers were also in favor.⁶
- A poll conducted in October 2005, more than one year after it went into effect, found 76 percent of Norwegians in favor of the smokefree legislation.⁷
- In 2007, 91 percent of respondents supported the introduction of comprehensive smokefree legislation in **Northern Ireland**.⁸

"When I get home I'm hardly coughing at all – not like before."⁹ – Greg Sperrin, Dublin bartender

- A survey conducted by the **Pan American Health Organization** (PAHO) found that eight out of ten Uruguayans support their country's comprehensive smokefree legislation, with almost two thirds of smokers (63 percent) supporting the policy.¹⁰
- The National Alliance for Tobacco Control in **Uruguay** launched a campaign called 'Un Millón de Gracias' to prepare the public support to accept the decree on smokefree environments. The proposal included collecting at least one million signatures to thank those who did not smoke in public places. At the end of the campaign, 1.3 million signatures had been collected.¹¹
- On 10 January 2005, **Italy** introduced legislation making all workplaces, including bars and restaurants, smoke free. This measure enjoys a high level of public support. Even before Italy introduced smokefree legislation, support for the law reached 86 percent.¹²
- Overall, 83 percent of smokers reported that the smokefree law was a "good" or "very good" thing, and 64 percent said they supported "the total ban on smoking inside pubs" in **Ireland**.¹³ A separate study released in March 2005 found that, overall, 96 percent of the Irish public felt that the law was a success and 93 percent thought that the law was a good idea.¹⁴
- A January 2006 poll in the **United States** found that nearly 7 in 10 voters (69 percent) favor a law in their state or community that would prohibit smoking in most indoor public places, including workplaces, public buildings, offices, restaurants and bars. This includes a 59 percent majority who strongly favor such a law.¹⁵

Trevor Maybee, of Ottawa, **Canada**, would never go out to bars and restaurants, for fear of having an asthma attack from all the smoke. Since passage of smokefree legislation, he says, "I've been able to indulge my passion for spicy food, thanks to the 100% smoke-free public places initiative."¹⁶

Ministers, politicians, and unions voice their support for smokefree laws

- According to Sean Power, Ireland's minister of state at the Department of Health and Children, "The Irish public's overwhelming acceptance of this historic public health measure sends a very clear message to legislators around the world who are considering the introduction of similar smoke-free workplace legislation. Not only is it very possible to implement such legislation but citizens fundamentally accept its validity and necessity in order to protect their health."¹⁷

"The Commission recognizes as a human right the right of all bar workers in Northern Ireland to protection from exposure to smoke. The government has ratified an international treaty on this topic and so is obliged to adopt and implement legislative or other measures providing effective protection."¹⁸ - Monica McWilliams, chief commissioner of the **Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission**

- The **Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions** (LO) as well as the trade union for employees in the hotel and restaurant business, supported the ban from the start, and were key allies in the successful fight for comprehensive smokefree legislation. The Hotel and Restaurant Workers' Union (HRAF) stated that a total ban was the only acceptable proposal, given current knowledge on passive smoking and a safe working environment. They said it was not possible to accept various risk levels for secondhand smoke, and that only a ban on smoking in workplaces was a viable option.¹⁹

"The response to date across all sectors in Ireland has been very positive with compliance at a very high level - well in excess of 90%. The successful introduction of the new measure reflects the widespread public support and goodwill that exists for a clean smoke-free environment in the workplace."²⁰ – Micheál Martin, Minister of Health and Children (2000 – 2004), **Ireland**

- On October 15, 2003, the **Irish Congress of Trade Unions** (ICTU) came out in support of Ireland's proposed smokefree law. In an article in the *Irish Times*, the union said 150 Irish pub workers died annually from the effects of secondhand smoke, and accused employers in the hospitality sector of putting profit before the health of employees. The ICTU said its grounds for supporting the law were simple: "passive smoking was a killer, it was the biggest health hazard in the workplace, and there could be no 'so-called compromise' on health and safety of Irish workers."

We have assumed the responsibility to promote smokefree environments, which require prohibiting smoking in all enclosed spaces, including workplaces, both public and private, as well as bars, restaurants, and other like places. We have done this because we are convinced that we are doing the right thing, and we have the support of the majority of our people and of civil society to accomplish it. – Dr. Tabaré Vázquez, President of **Uruguay**²¹

Businesses support smokefree laws

- According to a 2004 survey, 93 percent of employers in the U.K. favored a law banning smoking in the workplace.²² Over the first six months of England's smoking ban, six in 10 restaurants expected their business levels to increase or stay the same.

Costas Constantinou, Retail Director of Drucker's Patisserie Café in **England** says, "As the years have progressed, there has been a move to have non-smoking establishments and because of the greater risk to non-smokers. So we thought we have to do our job and introduce the ban. Cafés that we have opened recently have been non-smoking and we have had a positive feedback from customers. It just shows that people prefer a non-smoking environment. So soon, people in Worcester will be able to enjoy their food with a non-smoking experience."²³

- Moe Atallah, owner of the Newport Restaurant in **Ottawa**, states, "Since the implementation of the smoke-free bylaw, business has been very good. In fact when I compared September and October to last year at this time I found that business has actually improved. Business has not been hurt, we're busy, even the smokers are back."²⁴

"Opponents of smoke-free laws argue that these laws would hurt small businesses. The opposite is true. I spent three years as the chairman of NYC & Company, the official marketing, promotion and tourism arm of **New York City**. In that capacity I watched New York transition into a smoke-free city and witnessed the positive impact the law had on our restaurants and nightlife. After the law took effect, our 2004 New York City survey found that 96% of New Yorkers were eating out as much, or more, than before. Moreover, business receipts and employment increased for restaurants and bars, the number of liquor licenses increased and virtually all establishments were complying with the law."²⁵ – Tim Zagat, CEO, Zagat Survey

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