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# Secondhand Smoke at Worksites and Public Places: Kent County Opinion Survey

Prepared for CLEAN AIR NOW!

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## Community Research Institute

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The Community Research Institute (CRI) at Grand Valley State University, a partnership between the Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership and the Grand Rapids Community Foundation, serves the Greater Grand Rapids nonprofit and philanthropic community. CRI's mission is to assist nonprofit organizations with acquisition of information and technical skills that will help to understand the evolving needs of the community, plan programs and solve problems, and measure outcomes.

CRI engages in applied research and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) projects and is a clearinghouse for community data. The CRI web site provides a comprehensive overview of community indicators at [www.gvsu.edu/philanthropy/cri](http://www.gvsu.edu/philanthropy/cri).

Questions about **Secondhand Smoke at Worksites and Public Places: Kent County Opinion Survey** may be directed to Donna Vanlwaarden at (616) 336-7585 or [vaniwaad@gvsu.edu](mailto:vaniwaad@gvsu.edu).

# Secondhand Smoke at Worksites and Public Places: Kent County Opinion Survey

August 1, 2002

## Executive Summary

A scientific poll of over 400 randomly-selected Kent County registered voters was conducted in early June 2002 to identify beliefs and opinions about secondhand smoke and assess potential support for county regulation of smoking in worksites and public places.

Results of the study show that most Kent County voters believe that secondhand smoke is harmful, and they are concerned about the health effects of secondhand smoke on themselves and their families.

The majority of voters agree that a county regulation is needed to protect children and nonsmokers from exposure to secondhand smoke in public places and work sites, and over one third of voters would also be more likely to vote for a county commission candidate who favors county smokefree policies.

### Key Findings

#### *Concerns about secondhand smoking:*

- 91% of Kent County voters agree that secondhand smoke is harmful.
- 78% are concerned about the health effects of secondhand smoke on themselves and their families.

#### *Preferences for smokefree worksites:*

- 89% agree that indoor worksites should be smokefree.
- 69% would prefer to work in a smokefree worksite.

#### *Support for regulation to support smokefree worksites and public places:*

- 81% agree that a county regulation is needed to protect children and other nonsmokers from exposure to secondhand smoke in worksites and public places.

#### *Support for county commission candidates who favor smokefree regulations:*

- 38% of voters would be more likely to vote for a county commission candidate who favors banning smoking in all worksites and public places.
- 42% of voters say it would make no difference in their voting decision, and 16% say they would be less likely to vote for a candidate favoring smokefree regulation.

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## Background

A telephone survey of Kent County voters was conducted to identify beliefs and opinions about secondhand smoke and assess potential support for county regulation of smoking in worksites and public places. The study, which was commissioned by *Clean Air Now!(CAN)*, is described in this report. For more information about *CAN*, contact Krista Schaafsma at (616) 975-9620.

## Methodology

Using a questionnaire developed by Tobacco Free Michigan, researchers collected opinions from 404 randomly-selected registered voters in Kent County. Survey questions were modeled after similar studies conducted in Michigan and several other states. Precision Research, Inc., a Phoenix-based market research firm, conducted the interviews during the period of June 5-7, 2002, calling voters on both weekday and weekends at various times of the day in order to reduce "at home" bias. Questions in the survey were rotated to reduce order bias. The Community Research Institute of Grand Valley State University analyzed the data and prepared this report.

The survey has an error rate of  $\pm 5\%$ , and is geographically representative of the voting population in Kent County. Analysis of subgroups is subject to higher error margins.

## Survey Respondents

### ***Voting Behavior***

All survey respondents are registered voters in Kent County, Michigan. Over three quarters (77%) voted in the past two to three Kent County elections. Eighty-seven percent were very likely (63%) or somewhat likely (24%) to vote in the next county election (*Table 1*). Nine percent were not at all likely to vote. Respondents were most likely to be Republican (41%) followed by Independent (26%) and Democrat (21%).

Table 1.

<b>Likelihood of Voting in Next County Election</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very likely to vote	256	63.4
Somewhat likely to vote	95	23.5
Not at all likely to vote	38	9.4
No answer	15	3.7
Total	404	100.0

### **Smoking Behavior**

Forty-four percent had smoked at least 100 cigarettes or cigars in their lifetime. When asked about their current smoking habits, 8 out of 10 respondents said they “almost never or never” smoke cigarettes, cigars, or a pipe (*Table 2*). Five percent reported smoking “once in a while” and 14% smoked “every day” or “most days.” Sixty-five percent of nonsmokers were very likely to vote compared to 64% of occasional smokers and 52% of habitual smokers.

Table 2.

<b>Smoking Behavior</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Smoke every day or most days (habitual smokers)	56	13.8
Smoke once in a while (occasional smokers)	22	5.4
Almost never or never (nonsmokers)	323	80.0
No answer	3	0.7
Total	404	100.0

## Research Findings

### **Level of Concern about Secondhand Smoke**

Survey participants were asked for their opinions regarding secondhand smoke in the workplace and public places. Nine out of ten respondents believed secondhand smoke “can harm people other than the smokers” (*Table 3*). Seventy-five percent of habitual smokers share this opinion.

Table 3.

<b>Secondhand smoke can harm people other than the smokers.</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Agree strongly	323	80.0
Agree somewhat	46	11.4
Disagree somewhat	13	3.2
Disagree strongly	13	3.2
No answer	9	2.2
Total	404	100.0

The majority (78%) of respondents report some level of concern about the health effects of secondhand smoke on them and their families (*Table 4*). Eighty-eight percent of very concerned respondents are also likely voters in the next county election.

Sixty-six percent of habitual smokers are either very concerned or somewhat concerned about the health effects of secondhand smoking.

Table 4.

<b><i>How concerned are you about the health effects of secondhand smoke on you and your family?</i></b>	<b><i>Frequency</i></b>	<b><i>Percent</i></b>
Very concerned	188	46.5
Somewhat concerned	127	31.4
Not too concerned	56	13.9
Not at all concerned	27	6.7
No answer	6	1.5
Total	404	100.0

### ***Smoking and the Worksite***

Most respondents (89%) believe that indoor worksites should be smokefree (*Table 5*). This attitude is shared by 68% of habitual and 89% of very likely voters.

Table 5.

<b><i>Indoor worksites should be smokefree.</i></b>	<b><i>Frequency</i></b>	<b><i>Percent</i></b>
Agree strongly	308	76.2
Agree somewhat	51	12.6
Disagree somewhat	20	5.0
Disagree strongly	16	4.0
No answer	9	2.2
Total	404	100.0

Most respondents prefer a smokefree worksite, and all things being equal, 69% would be more likely to seek a job in a smokefree environment (*Table 6*). Sixty percent of habitual smokers say it would make no difference; 21% would be more likely and 18% would be less likely to seek a job in a smokefree worksite.

Table 6.

<b><i>If you were looking for a job and all other things were equal, would you be more likely to want a job in a smokefree work site, less likely to want a job in a smokefree work site, or would it make no difference?</i></b>	<b><i>Frequency</i></b>	<b><i>Percent</i></b>
More likely	280	69.3
Less likely	15	3.7
No difference	106	26.2
No answer	3	0.7
Total	404	100.0

***Opinions about Local Regulation to Prevent Secondhand Smoke Exposure***

Respondents were asked about the need for regulation of smoking sites and whether they would support county regulation to ensure smokefree worksites and public places.

Over 80% feel that a county regulation is needed to keep nonsmokers, including children, safe from exposure to secondhand smoke in public places and worksites (*Table 7*). Over 80% of likely voters and 55% of habitual smokers also hold this opinion.

Table 7.

<b><i>A county regulation is needed so children and nonsmokers don't have to be exposed to the hazards of secondhand smoke in public places and worksites.</i></b>	<b><i>Frequency</i></b>	<b><i>Percent</i></b>
Agree strongly	252	62.4
Agree somewhat	74	18.3
Disagree somewhat	32	7.9
Disagree strongly	35	8.7
No answer	11	2.7
Total	404	100.0

Over three quarters of respondents believe that a county regulation is needed to protect workers from secondhand smoke (*Table 8*). Nearly half (48%) of habitual smokers agree that regulation is needed.

Table 8.

<b><i>A county regulation that would prohibit smoking in worksites is needed so that employees are not exposed to secondhand smoke.</i></b>	<b><i>Frequency</i></b>	<b><i>Percent</i></b>
Agree strongly	257	63.6
Agree somewhat	63	15.6
Disagree somewhat	26	6.4
Disagree strongly	43	10.6
No answer	15	3.7
Total	404	100.0

Eight out of ten respondents support regulation that would provide smokefree public places in order to protect people from secondhand smoke exposure (*Table 9*). Seventy-nine percent of very likely voters and 52% of habitual smokers support regulation to prevent secondhand smoke in public places.

Table 9.

<b><i>A county regulation that would prohibit smoking in public places is needed so that the public is not exposed to secondhand smoke.</i></b>	<b><i>Frequency</i></b>	<b><i>Percent</i></b>
Agree strongly	230	56.9
Agree somewhat	82	20.3
Disagree somewhat	31	7.7
Disagree strongly	52	12.9
No answer	9	2.2
Total	404	100.0

Candidates for county commission who support regulations to prevent secondhand smoke exposure would find either additional support or no impact from their position. Thirty-eight percent say they would be more likely to vote for that candidate who supports smokefree policies for public places and worksites and 42% say it would make no difference in their support (*Table 10*). Fifty percent of habitual smokers report that they would either support a candidate who favors regulation, or that it would make no difference.



Table 10.

<b><i>If you knew a candidate for your county commission favored banning smoking in all worksites and public places, would this make you more likely to vote for them, less likely to vote for them, or would it make no difference?</i></b>	<b><i>Frequency</i></b>	<b><i>Percent</i></b>
More likely	152	37.6
No difference	170	42.1
Less likely	64	15.8
No answer	18	4.5
Total	404	100.0

***Sub-group Comparisons: Very Likely Voters and Habitual Smokers***

Opinions of the 256 “very likely” voters are very similar to the overall responses, showing strong support for smokefree worksites and public places. The 56 “habitual smokers” follow the same overall trend though in slightly smaller proportions. A summary of sub-group analyses of very likely voters and habitual smokers is shown below (Table 11).

Table 11.

<b><i>Opinion</i></b>	<b><i>Percent Very Likely Voters Who Agree (n=256)</i></b>	<b><i>Percent Habitual Smokers Who Agree (n=56)</i></b>	<b><i>Percent Total Sample Who Agree (n=404)</i></b>
Agree that secondhand smoke is harmful	91	75	91
Are concerned about health effects of secondhand smoke	80	66	78
Agree that indoor worksites should be smokefree	89	68	89
Would be more likely to choose a smokefree worksite if looking for a job (all other things being equal)	71	21	69
Agree that county regulation is needed to protect people from secondhand smoke exposure	80	55	81
Would be either more likely to vote for a county commission candidate who supports regulation – or say it would make no difference in their vote	82	50	80

## Conclusions

Over 400 registered voters in Kent County participated in this scientific survey. Nearly all (91%) believe that secondhand smoke is harmful to everyone, including those who do not smoke. Most respondents (78%) are concerned about the health effects of secondhand smoke on themselves and their families, and they (89%) believe indoor worksites should be smokefree.

Most (81%) registered voters feel that county regulation is needed to protect those who do not smoke from the hazards of secondhand smoke, preventing smoking both in public places and worksites. For 80% of voters, supporting a regulation that provided smokefree air would either improve or have no negative impact on a county commission candidate's chance for winning his/her election.

Sub-group analysis of "very likely" voters indicates a high level of concern (80%) about secondhand smoke exposure and shows strong support for smokefree policies (80%). Most (75%) habitual smokers also agree that secondhand exposure is harmful to children and those who do not smoke, and over half (52%) of them support regulation to prevent secondhand smoke exposure at work.