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Smoking bans in Victorian workplaces: Reduced disparities in exposure to secondhand smoke, 1998 to 2007

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ABSTRACT

Over the past decade there has been substantial reductions in exposure to secondhand smoke (SHS) within Victorian workplaces. In 2007, 95% of indoor workers reported smoking bans in their *usual* area of work, a significant increase from 91% in 1998.

Respondents who worked indoors have been the primary beneficiaries of the workplace bans, with these workers more likely to report a total smoking ban at their usual area of work (95%) compared with outdoor workers (50%) and those who work primarily in a vehicle (81%). However, there was a trend toward a significant increase in the proportion of both outdoor workers and vehicle workers reporting total smoking restrictions at their usual area of work between 1998 and 2007.

In 2007, it was evident that hospitality workers (those working in hotels, restaurants and clubs) had experienced substantial gains in protection against exposure to SHS in the workplace, with a significant increase in the proportion reporting total bans in their usual workplace, from 61% in 1998 to 94% in 2007. In the past decade there have also been significant increases in total smoking restrictions in the usual area of work for those working in warehouses/workshops, shops/supermarkets, and own office/home office.

Analysis of relative socio-economic disadvantage of respondents revealed significant increases in smoking bans in the usual area of work for all workers, regardless of their level of relative socio-economic disadvantage, with those in the most disadvantaged groups showing a slightly greater rate of change over the past 10 years.

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INTRODUCTION

The 2006 Surgeon General's Report on the health consequences of involuntary exposure to tobacco smoke states that there is no risk-free level of exposure to second-hand smoke (SHS), and that eliminating smoking in indoor spaces is the only way to fully protect non-smokers from exposure to SHS (USDHHS, 2006).

To reduce the harm from SHS among Victorians, over the past decade a number of legislative reforms enforcing smoking restrictions in various workplaces have been introduced in Victoria. Since July 1 2001, smoking has been banned in enclosed restaurants and cafes, and in dining areas in premises with a general or club licence, and in enclosed retail shopping centres since November 1 2002, through the Tobacco (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Tobacco (Further Amendment) Act 2001. From September 1 2002, smoking restrictions were also introduced in hotels and gaming venues, through the Tobacco (Miscellaneous) Act 2002.

In Victoria from March 1 2006, new legislation was introduced that prohibits smoking in any indoor workplaces (those that are substantially enclosed by a roof and walls) (see <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/tobaccoreforms/workplaces.htm>). However, a number of workplaces have been exempt from this legislation, including any business occupied by the sole operator, which is not for the use of the public, outdoor dining and drinking areas, vehicles, personal sleeping or living areas of hotels/motels, mental health and aged care facilities, prison and detention centres, and high roller rooms at the Casino. By 1 July, 2007, total smoking bans were also implemented in all indoor licensed venues in Victoria, however, partially enclosed areas remain exempt from smoke free legislation.

Since 1988 the Centre for Behavioural Research in Cancer (CBRC) has been monitoring the level of smoking restrictions in Victorian workplaces. Trends over time indicate that smoking restrictions in Victorian workplaces increased dramatically between 1990 to 2005, with total smoking bans reported by 73% of indoor workers in 2005, compared with just 34% in 1990 (Germain, 2007).

This paper reports findings from the 2007 Smoking and Health survey, regarding levels of smoking restrictions in the workplace reported by Victorian workers, to identify changes in overall exposure to SHS within workplaces. In the current paper there is a special focus on smoking bans in respondents' *usual* area of work, to identify changes over time in regular or sustained exposure to SHS within respondents' usual work environment.

METHOD

The data presented in this report are from telephone surveys of randomly sampled Victorian adults conducted from 1998 to 2007. These annual population surveys are commissioned by CBRC from a large market research company which interviews a representative sample of Victorians by telephone each year. The questions, designed by the CBRC, are asked in an eight to sixteen minute interview conducted on weekends and weeknights during November and December.

Definitions

Respondents who were in paid employment were asked about smoking restrictions in their workplace and their main workplace setting (whether they mainly worked indoors, in a vehicle, or in a varied work situation).

Respondents were asked to classify the smoking restrictions, if any, at their place of work, as follows:

- total ban on smoking
- a ban everywhere except for a smoking room
- a ban in some areas
- no restrictions

As in previous years, this paper examines smoking restrictions in a respondent's workplace as a whole, but unlike previous papers in this series, also examines in further detail restrictions in a respondent's usual area of work. Workers who reported some bans were asked to indicate whether or not the ban applied in the area where they usually worked, in order to ascertain smoking restrictions within their usual area of work. Indoor workers were also asked what their usual workplace was (for example, a shop, own office, open-plan office or workshop/factory floor). In 1999, all except those who worked mainly in a vehicle were asked this question.

Socio-Economic Index for Areas (SEIFA)

This paper includes an analysis of workplace bans among socio-economic groups. The Socio-Economic Index for Areas (SEIFA), developed by the ABS, has been used to classify respondents into socio-economic groups based on 2001 Census data of the area in which they live. In the following analyses, the Index of Relative Socio- Economic Disadvantage (one of the five ABS SEIFA indexes) has been used, based on the respondent's residential postcode. This index ranks postal areas (postcodes) on a continuum of disadvantage, taking into consideration characteristics such as income, education, occupation and housing (for example) that may enhance or reduce socio-economic conditions of the area. For the purpose of analysis we have grouped respondents into quintiles based on this scale.

Smoking status

The standard tobacco use question (AIWH, 1999) categorises smoking status into four groups: *Regular smokers* (smoke daily or at least weekly); *Irregular smokers* (smoke less

than weekly); *Former smokers* (do not smoke currently but have smoked at least 100 cigarettes in their lifetime regardless of whether they have ever smoked daily); and *Never smokers* (do not smoke at all and have not smoked 100 or more cigarettes in their lifetime).

Statistical analysis

A comparison of the sample socio-demographic characteristics with the Australian Bureau of Statistics counts of the Victorian population (ABS, 2001) revealed that women and older people were over represented in the telephone survey samples. To adjust for this, the data were weighted by age and sex according to ABS 2001 Census data for the Victorian population.

Logistic regression analyses were conducted to identify changes is smoking restrictions over time, reported by Victorian workers. For ease of reading, details of statistical tests of significance are not included in the report text. Where relationships between variables are reported, the p-value was less than 0.01. This indicates that the probability of obtaining a result at least as big as the one observed, assuming that there is no relationship, is less than 1 in 100. Where trends towards a relationship between variables are reported, the p-value was less than 0.05, indicating that the probability of obtaining a result at least as big as the one observed, assuming that there is no relationship, is less than 1 in 20.

RESULTS

Workplace bans for indoor and outdoor workers, 1998-2007

In 2007, 58% of respondents stated they were in full or part-time paid employment. Of these, 76% (n=1331) of workers reported they usually worked indoors (no change since 2006, at 75%).

When examining reported smoking restrictions across the entire workplace over the period 1998 to 2007, there was a trend toward a significant decline in the percentage of indoor workers reporting total smoking bans at their workplace (77% in 1998 and 71% in 2007), as seen in Table 1. However, the proportion of indoor workers reporting no smoking restrictions significantly declined over this period (6% in 1998 to 3% in 2007), while the proportion of respondents reporting partial smoking bans within their indoor workplace significantly increased (17% in 1998 to 26% in 2007).

The nature of workplace smoking bans reported by indoor workers differed between the years 2005, 2006 and 2007. The proportion of indoor workers reporting total bans at their workplace overall tended to decline between 2005 (73%) and 2006 (68%), however, significantly increased again to 71% in 2007. There was a significant increase in partial bans reported by workers between 2005 (23%) and 2006 (29%), however this tended to decline again down to 26% in 2007. The proportion of indoor workers reporting no

workplace smoking restrictions declined significantly from 2005 (4%) to 2006 (3%), and remained unchanged between 2006 and 2007 (3%).

Table 1:
Workplace smoking restrictions for indoor workers aged 18 years and over, 1998 to 2007^

	1998 (n=919)	1999 (n=899)	2001 (n=962)	2003 (n=1504)	2005 (n=1326)	2006 (n=1301)	2007 (n=1325)
Total Bans	76.5	70.4	69.0	67.8	72.5	67.8	70.7[t]
Partial Bans	17.2	21.8	25.0	27.6	23.2	29.3	26.1**
No restrictions	6.3	7.8	5.9	4.6	4.3	2.9	3.3**

Note: Due to rounding, not all columns sum to 100.
[t] Trend towards a significant change across 1998 and 2007, p<.05.
** Significant change across 1998 to 2007, p<.001.
^ Excludes those workers who did not state current restrictions.

Smoking restrictions within usual area of work

Respondent's usual area of work was chosen as a special focus for this report, as the trends in smoking bans within the entire workplace suggested that respondents may have had some difficulty distinguishing between a workplace with a total smoking ban plus a designated *outdoor* smoking area, and a workplace with a partial smoking ban. As the prevalence of indoor workplaces with total smoking bans have increased over the years, it is likely that the number of outdoor designated smoking areas at workplaces have also increased. The presence of these smoking areas may result in the false perception to some respondents that smoking is still allowed in areas of the workplace. Additionally the focus on smoking bans within respondent's usual area of work gives an indication of the degree of regular or 'usual' exposure to SHS.

The proportion of indoor workers who reported total smoking restrictions at their usual area of work, increased significantly between 1998 and 2007, from 91% to 95%, respectively (Table 2). There were no differences found between 2005, 2006, and 2007, at around 95% for each year.

Table 2:
Smoking restrictions at *usual area of work* for indoor workers aged 18 years and over, 1998 to 2007^

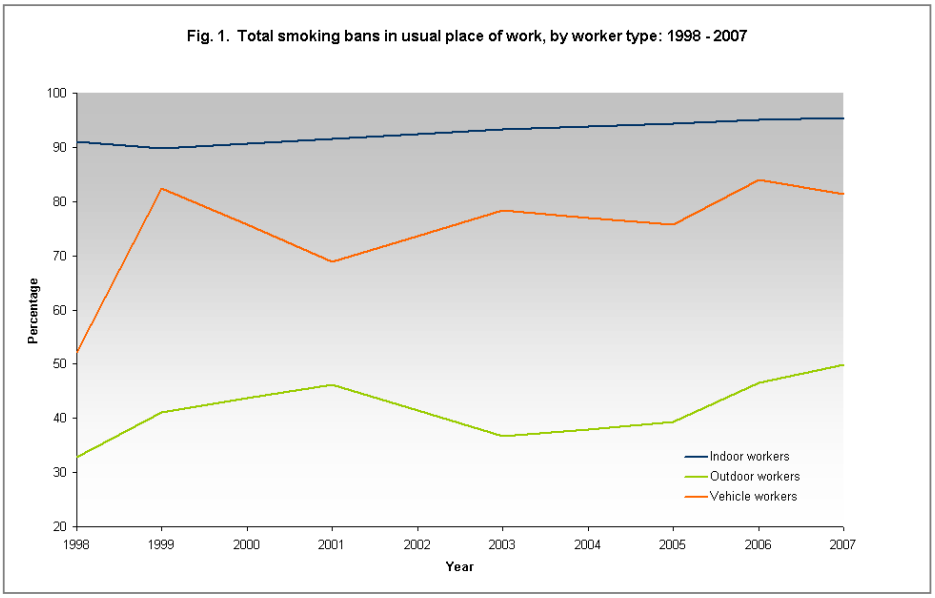
	1998 (n=914)	1999 (n=896)	2001 (n=958)	2003 (n=1501)	2005 (n=1323)	2006 (n=1300)	2007 (n=1321)
Total Bans	91.1	89.8	91.5	93.4	94.3	95.0	95.4**
No restrictions	8.9	10.2	8.5	6.6	5.7	5.0	4.6**

^ Excludes those workers who did not state current restrictions.
** Significant change across 1998 to 2007, p<.001.

As in previous years, in 2007 respondents who worked indoors were more likely to report a total smoking ban at their usual area of work (95%) compared with vehicle workers (81%) and outdoor workers (50%). Vehicle workers were also more likely to report total smoking restrictions than outdoor workers.

There was a trend toward a significant increase in the proportion of both outdoor workers and those who work primarily in a vehicle reporting total smoking restrictions at their usual area of work between 1998 and 2007 (see Appendix A, Table A.2 for further detail).

Smoking restrictions by workplace type, 2007



Across the period 1998 to 2007, reporting of total smoking restrictions increased significantly among warehouse/workshop, shop/supermarket, own office/home office and hotel/restaurant/club workers. However, total smoking bans at usual area of work reported by indoor workers varied depending on workplace type, as indicated in Table 3. In 2007, those who worked in schools/classrooms were the most likely to report total smoking bans in their usual area of work (100%). Warehouse/workshop/factory workers were less likely to work in a smoke free environment, with total bans in their usual area of work reported by 91% of these workers, respectively, compared to an average of 95% of all indoor workplaces.

The impact of the indoor smoking bans introduced on July 1, 2007 to all hospitality venues across Victoria can be seen in the sharp increase of respondents working in these venues (eg. hotels, restaurants and clubs) reporting a total smoking ban in their usual area of work over the previous two years, from 63% in 2005 to 94% in 2007.

Table 3:

Total smoking bans in *usual area of work* reported by indoor workers, by workplace type: 1998 – 2007

		1998	1999	2001	2003	2005	2006	2007
Workplace Type	(*n* range)	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Warehouse/workshop	*(99 – 203)*	82.9	82.9	80.7	87.1	91.3	94.1	91.1***
Shop/supermarket	*(42–154)*	87.5	91.1	90.4	91.6	97.6	95.8	95.1**
Open plan office/office	*(176 – 468)*	97.9	94.7	98.3	96.6	99.1	96.3	96.8
Own Office/home office	*(114 – 239)*	87.8	81.7	92.8	91.6	91.8	93.1	94.2***
Hotel/restaurant/club[a]	*(15 – 62)*	61.0	64.1	66.7	88.1	62.7	79.4	93.8***
School/classroom	*(48 – 134)*	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	99.1	100.0	100.0
Hospital/medical centre	*(49 – 149)*	97.5	98.8	98.0	97.3	99.2	98.3	99.2
Other (incl. 'can't say')	*(18 – 96)*	77.8	76.3	78.2	86.6	87.2	87.1	90.8**
Total	*(585 – 1505)*	91.1	89.7	91.4	93.4	94.3	94.9	95.4**

[a] Small cell sizes – interpret with caution.
.. Not asked in this year.
** Significant difference between 1998 and 2007, $p<=.01$.
*** Significant difference between 1998 and 2007, $p<=.001$.
(*) Significant difference since 2005, $p<.05$.
Note: due to rounding, not all rows sum to 100.

Indoor workplace smoking restrictions (usual area of work), by smoking status

In 2007, indoor workers who were regular smokers were significantly less likely to report total smoking bans in their usual area of work than those who did not regularly smoke (90% compared with 97%, respectively) (Table 4).

An analysis of respondent's workplace type in 2007 found that warehouse/factory workers had the highest proportion of regular smokers at 35%, compared to an average of 18% across all indoor workers.

Table 4:

Level of restrictions in usual area of work, by smoking status for indoor workers, 2007

	Regular Smoker (*n*=237)	Not Regular Smoker* (*n*=1084)
Level of Ban	%	%
Total ban in usual area of work	90.0	96.5
No bans in usual area of work	10.0	3.5

*Respondents other than regular smokers, including non-smokers and irregular (less than weekly) smokers.
Note: due to rounding percentages may not add up to 100.

Indoor workplace smoking restrictions (usual area of work), by socio-economic status, 2007

In 2007 there was no difference in the proportion of indoor workers reporting total smoking bans within their usual area of work according to respondents' relative socio-economic disadvantage as measured by SEIFA, shown in Table 5.

Between 1998 to 2007, reported total smoking bans increased significantly among those living in areas of high disadvantage (89% in 1998 to 95% in 2007), medium disadvantage (90% in 1998 to 95% in 2007) and to a lesser extent among those living in areas of low disadvantage (94% in 1998 to 96% in 2007).

Interaction analyses indicated no significant differences across SEIFA groups in terms of the rate of change in reported total smoking bans across time. This suggests a uniform increase in indoor workplace smoking bans across socio-economic groups.

Table 5:

Proportion of indoor workers who have a total smoking ban at their usual area of work, by socio-economic status (SES), 1998 to 2007

		1998	1999	2001	2003	2005	2006	2007	Linear
	n	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	OR
SEIFA 1 & 2 (high disadvantage)	*296-599*	89.0	87.4	92.0	90.7	92.1	95.4	95.1***	1.107
SEIFA 3 & 4	*278-506*	90.2	91.6	91.4	96.5	95.8	94.4	95.2***	1.101
SEIFA 5 (low disadvantage)	*265-396*	94.1	90.9	90.9	93.7	95.2	95.2	95.9**	1.074

** Significant difference between 1998 and 2007, $p<=.01$.
*** Significant difference between 1998 and 2007, $p<=.001$.

Differences in workplace smoking bans across socio-economic groups were also measured by highest level of education achieved. As shown in Table 6, there was a significant increase in the number of indoor workers who had an education of Year 12 or less reporting total smoking bans at their usual workplace (89% in 1998 to 95% in 2007). Similarly, among those with a tertiary level education, the proportion of indoor workers reporting total smoking bans at their usual workplace also increased (93% in 1998 to 96% in 2007).

Interaction analyses indicated no significant differences across education groups in terms of the rate of change in reported total workplace smoking bans over time.

Table 6:

Proportion of indoor workers who have a total smoking ban at their usual area of work, by highest education level achieved, 1998 to 2007

		1998	1999	2001	2003	2005	2006	2007	Linear
	n	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	OR
Year 12 or lower	*379-539*	88.7	85.6	87.3	90.4	92.8	93.1	95.2***	1.11
Tertiary	*500-962*	92.7	93.0	94.3	95.2	95.2	95.9	95.5**	1.06

** Significant difference between 1998 and 2007, $p<=.01$.
*** Significant difference between 1998 and 2007, $p<=.001$.

DISCUSSION

Over the past decade, there has been a decline in the proportion of indoor workers reporting smoking bans at their workplace overall, with 71% reporting total smoking bans in 2007 compared to 77% in 1998. As smoke-free workplace legislation has increased over time, it is possible that the number of outdoor designated smoking areas have also increased, leading to the perception that smoking is still allowed in some areas of the workplace. In light of this, this paper has further examined smoking bans at workers' usual area of work to estimate a worker's *usual* exposure to second-hand smoke when at work.

When asked about smoking bans at their usual area of work, 95% of respondents working in indoor settings said there was a total smoking ban in place, a significant increase since 1998. Indoor workers were more likely to report a total smoking ban in their usual area of work compared with vehicle workers and outdoor workers. However the proportion of vehicle workers reporting total smoking bans in their usual area of work was also high at over 80%, considering that vehicles are exempt from current smoke free legislation. Similar to indoor workers, both outdoor workers and vehicle workers experienced a trend toward a significant increase in total smoking restrictions at their usual area of work between 1998 and 2007.

Legislation introduced in March 2006, encompassing total smoking bans at all indoor workplaces, has resulted in increases of reported total smoking bans in the normal area of work for workers across socio-economic groups. Results suggest a relatively uniform rate of increase across these groups over the past 7 years, illustrating the effectiveness of legislation change for prompting behaviour change across all socio-economic groups, including lower socio-economic groups with higher levels of smoking prevalence.

However disparities in exposure to SHS between workplace types still exist, with those working in warehouses, workshops and factories less likely to work in a smoke free environment. Ninety-one percent of these workers reporting total bans in their usual place, compared to an average of 95% of all indoor workplaces, suggesting that implementation of the bans may not be occurring uniformly across workplace types.

Overall, smoke free workplace legislation implemented gradually over the past decade has seen a substantial increase in indoor workers reporting total smoking bans in their usual workplace, helping to further limit Victorian workers exposure to SHS, especially among those from lower socio-economic groups. However, despite comprehensive smoke free workplace laws implemented in Victoria in March 2006, exemptions under the legislation have meant that a proportion of Victorian indoor workers are still being exposed to SHS.

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APPENDIX A

Table A.1:

Levels of workplace smoking bans, by location of work: 1998-2007

	1998	1999	2001	2003	2005	2006	2007
	(*n*=1196)	(*n*=1198)	(*n*=1227)	(*n*=1844)	(*n*=1772)	(*n*=1734)	(*n*=1731)
Total smoking bans (%)							
Indoor	76.5	70.4	69.0	67.8	72.5	67.7	70.7[t]
Outdoor	20.4	19.8	29.8	25.4	15.4	24.6	30.7
Vehicle	35.5	55.3	48.6	45.1	61.1	39.3	51.0
Varies/Other	51.4	58.7	39.9	47.9	45.6	44.9	54.6
Partial smoking bans (%)							
Indoor	17.2	21.8	25.1	27.7	23.2	29.3	26.0**
Outdoor	25.0	25.7	28.6	25.4	39.4	36.3	32.7*
Vehicle	29.0	29.8	37.1	39.2	16.7	48.2	43.1
Varies/Other	18.1	19.3	35.0	40.5	33.2	40.5	33.7**
No smoking restrictions (%)							
Indoor	6.3	7.8	5.9	4.6	4.3	2.9	3.2**
Outdoor	54.6	54.5	41.7	49.2	45.1	39.2	36.7**
Vehicle	35.5	14.9	14.3	15.7	22.2	12.5	5.9[t]
Varies/Other	30.4	22.0	25.2	11.7	21.2	14.6	11.7**

* Significant difference since 1998, $p<.01$
** Significant difference since 1998, $p<.001$
[t] trend toward a significant difference since 1998, $p<.05$

Table A.2:

Levels of smoking bans (usual area of work), by location of work: 1998-2007

	1998	1999	2001	2003	2005	2006	2007
	(*n*=1196)	(*n*=1198)	(*n*=1227)	(*n*=1844)	(*n*=1772)	(*n*=1734)	(*n*=1731)
Total smoking bans (%)							
Indoor	91.0	89.7	91.5	93.5	94.3	95.0	95.4
Outdoor	32.7	41.0	46.4	36.5	39.4	46.8	49.7
Vehicle	51.6	83.0	68.8	78.4	75.9	83.9	81.6
Varies/Other	64.7	70.3	72.9	83.0	71.9	78.2	83.3
No smoking restrictions (%)							
Indoor	9.0	10.3	8.5	6.5	5.7	5.0	4.6
Outdoor	67.3	59.0	53.6	63.5	60.6	53.2	50.3
Vehicle	48.4	17.0	31.3	21.6	24.1	16.1	18.4
Varies/Other	35.3	29.7	27.1	17.0	28.1	21.8	16.7

* Significant difference since 1998, $p<.01$
** Significant difference since 1998, $p<.001$
[t] trend toward a significant difference since 1998, $p<.05$

APPENDIX B

Table B:

Levels of smoking bans by indoor workplace type: 1998-2007

Workplace Type	1998 (*n*=919)	1999 (*n*=899)	2001 (*n*=963)	2003 (n=1505)	2005 (*n*=1330)	2006 (n=1301)	2007 (n=1325)
Total smoking bans (%)							
Warehouse/workshop/factory	52.7	49.6	46.3	39.9	49.5	43.4	46.3
Shop/supermarket	75.5	68.5	76.6	72.7	76.2	65.0	75.4
Open plan office/office	85.6	78.9	78.2	77.8	82.2	70.5	75.2**
Own Office/home office	75.7	66.7	73.7	70.3	79.3	76.4	78.5[t]
Hotel/restaurant/club	35.7[a]	26.2[a]	34.1[a]	43.5	28.3	27.3	55.3
School/classroom	94.9	93.8	92.5	88.8	91.5	93.7	90.4
Hospital/medical centre/lab	83.8	82.7	66.7	65.1	62.8	61.3	65.0**
Other	60.7[a]	52.5[a]	53.2[a]	54.2	68.6	61.3	62.9
Partial smoking bans (%)							
Warehouse/workshop/factory	38.2	35.9	39.7	50.7	44.6	51.5	48.8*
Shop/supermarket	12.3	27.0	13.8	22.7	21.4	33.3	19.7[t]
Open plan office/office	13.1	16.7	20.4	20.1	16.8	27.7	22.5**
Own Office/home office	13.5	18.3	19.8	23.0	12.5	18.1	16.8
Hotel/restaurant/club	38.1[a]	50.0[a]	50.0[a]	51.6	51.7	66.7	44.7
School/classroom	5.1	6.2	7.5	11.2	7.7	6.3	9.6
Hospital/medical centre/lab	13.8	16.0	32.3	32.2	36.4	38.7	35.0**
Other	32.1[a]	32.5[a]	36.4[a]	35.4[a]	22.1	32.3	29.5
No smoking restrictions (%)							
Warehouse/workshop/factory	9.1	14.5	14.0	9.4	6.0	5.1	5.0*
Shop/supermarket	12.3	4.5	9.6	4.5	2.4	1.7	4.9*
Open plan office/office	1.2	4.3	1.4	2.1	0.9	1.7	2.3
Own Office/home office	10.8	15.1	6.6	6.7	8.2	5.6	4.7*
Hotel/restaurant/club	26.2[a]	23.8[a]	15.9[a]	4.8	20.0	6.1	0.0*
School/classroom	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.9	0.0	0.0
Hospital/medical centre/lab	2.5	1.2	1.0	2.7	0.8	0.0	0.0
Other	7.1[a]	15.0[a]	10.4[a]	10.4[a]	9.3	6.5	7.6

Note: Other includes 'don't know/can't say'

* Significant difference since 1998, p<0.01

** Significant difference since 1998, p<.001.

[t] Trend toward a significant difference since 1998, p<0.05.

[a] Cell counts are small (denominator = n<50) and should be interpreted with caution.