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# **Public opinion about smokefree policies in bars, nightclubs and gambling venues, 2000–2003**

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## ABSTRACT

Public opinion related to the introduction of smoking bans in hospitality venues was examined using data from population surveys conducted among Victorian adults in 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2003. The data indicate strong public support for bans on smoking in bars, nightclubs and gambling venues. Over three-quarters of the sample agreed with the most recent legislative amendments restricting smoking in licensed and gambling venues. Approximately seven out of ten respondents in the sample approved of the introduction of smoking bans in bars and nightclubs in 2003, while support for bans in gambling venues was higher, at around 80%. There has been a significant overall linear increase in public approval for the introduction of bans in bars, nightclubs and gaming venues between 2000 and 2003 among both smokers and non-smokers. Less than half of smokers reported disapproval of smoking bans in bars, only a third reported disapproval of bans in nightclubs, and less than a quarter disapproved of bans in gaming venues in 2003. This has followed a steady decline in disapproval of bans in hospitality venues from 2000 to 2003. While smokers were less likely to approve of bans compared with non-smokers, the level of approval among smokers has also increased over time. The increases in community support for smoking bans in public places have occurred in a climate of legislative reform in tobacco control, including increasing smoking bans in public places, further restrictions on tobacco advertising and promotion, and tougher penalties for sales to minors. While current Victorian legislation restricts smoking in hospitality venues, only total smoking bans will fully protect patrons and staff from the hazards of exposure to tobacco smoke.

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## INTRODUCTION

The harmful effects of exposure to environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) have been clearly established for almost two decades [1,2]. ETS was classified as an environmental carcinogen in the early 1990s by the US Environmental Protection Agency [3]. In addition to these scientific reports, recent legal decisions in Australia related to exposure to ETS in hospitality venues have raised greater awareness of the issue among the media and the public (e.g., Crawford and Videnieks, 2001 [4]; Wakefield et al., 2003 [5]).

During the last few years the Victorian Government has introduced a range of legislative reforms related to exposure to ETS in public places. Through the *Tobacco (Amendment) Act 2000* and the *Tobacco (Further Amendment) Act 2001*, these reforms have included the introduction of a ban on smoking in enclosed restaurants and cafes, and in dining areas in premises with a general or club licence, from July 1, 2001; and the prohibition of smoking in enclosed retail shopping centres from November 1, 2001.

Additional smokefree policies in hospitality venues were introduced under the *Tobacco (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act 2002*. Applicable from September 1, 2002, these entailed restrictions on smoking in licensed venues such as hotels and clubs, bans on smoking in the gaming machine areas of gaming venues, bans on smoking in bingo centres, and smoking restrictions with areas of exemption at Crown Casino.

The current report presents Victorian population survey data on public opinion related to the introduction of smoking bans in hospitality venues, from a population survey conducted among Victorian adults in November 2003. The data reported from 2003 include public level of agreement with the latest smokefree legislation, and the level of support for bans on smoking in hospitality venues such as bars, nightclubs and gambling venues. The report also covers changes over time in the level of public opinion related to such bans, including data from similar surveys conducted in 2000, 2001 and 2002.

## METHOD

The data presented in this report are from telephone surveys of randomly sampled Victorians conducted in November 2000 ( $n=2000$ ), November 2001 ( $n=2000$ ), November 2002 ( $n=2000$ ), and in November and December 2003 ( $n=3001$ ). These annual population surveys are commissioned by CBRC from a large market research company which interviews a representative sample of 2000 Victorians by telephone each year. The questions, designed by CBRC, are asked in an eight-to-ten-minute interview conducted during weekends and weeknights in November.

The standard tobacco use question [6] has been used to determine smoking status. In this report the 'tobacco smoker' category consists of those who smoke daily, weekly or less than weekly. The 'former smoker' category consists of anyone who has smoked at least 100 cigarettes or an equivalent amount of tobacco in their lifetime, regardless of whether they have ever smoked daily. Anyone who has smoked less than 100 cigarettes is classified as a 'never-smoker'.

In this report, those who smoke less than weekly are included in the category of tobacco smoker, rather than being presented separately as we do in our reports on smoking prevalence. This is because behaviour and beliefs that relate to ETS are more likely to be influenced by whether or not a person smokes at all than how frequently they smoke. For example, it is likely that many 'less than weekly' smokers do so in some type of social context, and may therefore be less inclined to support the restriction of smoking in hospitality venues than former or never-smokers. They may also be less bothered by ETS than someone who does not smoke at all. For these reasons, it has been decided that, in considering issues related to ETS, anyone who smokes at all should be regarded as a smoker.

## Sample

In each previous year (2000, 2001, and 2002), 2000 Victorian adults aged 18 years and over completed a telephone survey, while in 2003, 3000 Victorian adults aged 18 years and over completed a telephone survey.

## Statistical analysis

A comparison of the sample socio-demographic characteristics with the Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates of the Victorian population [7,8,9,10] 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 the population census data. When data are presented for the single year 2003, the data were weighted to the population census data for that year. When data from more than one year are presented together, data from all years were weighted to the latest year (2003). Where we have examined whether changes in levels of support for smoking bans over years were statistically significant, 95% confidence intervals are reported.

# RESULTS

## Approval for smoking restrictions in licensed, gambling and bingo venues

In 2003, respondents were reminded 'On September 1 2002, the Victorian Government introduced a law that restricts smoking in gambling venues (with some exemptions), licensed venues, and bingo venues'. They were then asked, 'Do you agree with this law, disagree, or have no strong view either way?'. As indicated in Table 1, Overall, there was a high level of agreement with the law to ban smoking in such venues (76.4%), especially among never-smokers (84.3%) and former smokers (75.6%). Over half of smokers (53.6%) also agreed with the introduction of the restrictions. The proportion of respondents who disagreed with the introduction of the restrictions was very small (6.8%); even among smokers, fewer than one-fifth disagreed with recent amendments (18.8%).

Table 1:

**Views on the introduction of legislation to restrict smoking in gambling venues (with some exemptions), licensed venues, and bingo venues, by smoking status, 2003**

Response*	Total (n=3001) %	Tobacco smokers (n=522) %	Former smokers (n=886) %	Never- smokers (n=1593) %
Agree	76.4	53.6	75.6	84.3
Disagree	6.8	18.8	6.8	2.9
No strong view	16.0	26.7	16.7	12.1

\* 'Can't say' not presented if <1%.

Data are weighted by age and sex to Victorian ABS 2003 figures.

Due to rounding, not all columns sum to 100.

Table 2 shows the level of agreement with the new smoking restrictions in gaming venues introduced in September 2002, over time from 2002 to 2003. Around three-quarters of Victorians agreed with the implementation of these smoking restrictions in gaming venues, with the level of agreement not statistically significantly different in 2003 (76.4%, 95% CI 74.9-77.9%) compared to immediately after the introduction of restrictions in 2002 (73.7%, 95% CI 71.8-75.6%).

Table 2:

**Views on the introduction of legislation to restrict smoking in gambling venues (with some exemptions), licensed venues, and bingo venues, 2002-2003**

Response	2002 (n=2000) %	2003 (n=3001) %
Agree	73.7	76.4
Disagree	8.5	6.8
No strong view	17.1	16.0

\* 'Can't say' not presented if <1%.

Data are weighted by age and sex to Victorian ABS 2003 figures.

Due to rounding, not all columns sum to 100.

## Bans on smoking in bars

To gauge public response to the idea of the government banning smoking in hotels and bars, all respondents were asked, 'Would you approve or disapprove of the government banning smoking in hotel bars and licensed bars?'. In 2003, approximately seven out of every ten respondents reported approval for smoking being banned in these venues, including 83.3% of never-smokers (Table 3). It is also notable that nearly 40% of smokers approved of bans in bars and over 10% of smokers were ambivalent. Overall, only 18.6% of respondents disapproved of bans in bars; disapproval was highest among smokers (48.1%) and lowest among never-smokers (8.7%).

Table 3:

**Views of smoking bans in bars by smoking status, 2003**

Response	Total (n=3001) %	Tobacco smoker (n=522) %	Former smokers (n=886) %	Never-smokers (n=1593) %
Approve	71.6	39.7	69.3	83.3
Neither	8.3	11.1	10.2	6.4
Disapprove	18.6	48.1	19.0	8.7
Can't say	1.5	1.1	1.5	1.7

Data are weighted by age and sex to Victorian ABS 2003 figures.

Due to rounding, not all columns sum to 100.

Data presented in Table 4 indicate the level of approval for the introduction of bans on smoking in bars over time, from 2000 to 2003. In 2000, 56.7% of respondents said that they approved of the government banning smoking in bars (95% CI 54.5–58.8%); this rose significantly to 63.1% in 2001 (95% CI 61.0–65.2%), increased to 67.5% in 2002 (95% CI 65.5–69.6%), and increased significantly again to 71.6% in 2003 (95% CI 70.0–73.2%). The percentage of respondents who disapproved of banning smoking in bars showed a significant decline from 30.8% in 2000 (95% CI 28.8–32.8%) to 25.1% in 2001 (95% CI 23.2–27.0%); there was a further significant decrease to 21.0% in 2002 (95% CI 19.2–22.8%), and 18.6% (95% CI 17.2–20.0%) in 2003. Logistic regression analyses indicated that there has been an overall significant linear increase in approval and decrease in disapproval for smoking bans in bars from 2000 to 2003.

*Table 4:*  
**Support for government-introduced smoking bans in bars, 2000–2003**

Response	2000 (n=2000) %	2001 (n=2000) %	2002 (n=2000) %	2003 (n=3001) %
Approve	56.7	63.1	67.5	71.6
Neither	10.9	10.7	10.6	8.3
Disapprove	30.8	25.1	21.0	18.6
Can't say	1.6	1.1	0.9	1.5

Data are weighted by age and sex to Victorian ABS 2003 figures.  
Due to rounding, not all columns sum to 100.

Respondents' views of smoking bans in bars, by smoking status, for the years 2000 to 2003, are presented in Table 5. The level of approval among smokers and non-smokers has increased over time. Almost 40% of smokers approved of smoking bans in bars in 2003 (95% CI 35.5–43.9%). This represents a non-significant increase from around 33% in both 2002 (95% CI 28.7–37.9%) and 2001 (95% CI 28.6–37.5%), and is a significant increase to around double the approval level in 2000 (95% CI 15.4–23.0%). In 2003, among non-smokers, almost 80% (95% CI 76.6–79.9%) approved of smoking bans in bars, a slight rise on approval levels in 2002 (76.3%, 95% CI 74.2–78.4%), and a significant increase from 71.6% in 2001 (95% CI 69.3–73.8%), and 66.6% in 2000 (95% CI 64.3–68.9%). Over the 2000 to 2003 period, logistic regression analyses indicated that there has been a significant linear increase in approval among both smokers and non-smokers.

Disapproval decreased over time among both smokers and non-smokers. Less than half of smokers disapproved of smoking bans in bars in 2003 (48.1%, 95% CI 43.8–52.4%), following a downward trend from 51.7% in 2002 (95% CI 46.8–56.5%), 55.5% in 2001 (95% CI 50.8–60.1%) and 67.8% in 2000 (95% CI 63.4–72.3%). For non-smokers, disapproval levels have decreased over time with a significant drop from 21.0% in 2000 (95% CI 19.0–23.0%) to 16.6% in 2001 (95% CI 14.7–18.4%), a small significant decrease to 13.1% in 2002 (95% CI 11.5–14.8%), and a further slight non-significant decrease to 12.4% in 2003 (95% CI 11.1–13.7%). Logistic regression analyses revealed that there was an overall linear decrease in disapproval over the last four years.

Table 5:

**Support for government-introduced smoking bans in bars by smoking status, 2000–2003**

Smoking status	Response*	2000	2001	2002	2003
		(n=2000) %	(n=2000) %	(n=2000) %	(n=3001) %
<b>Smokers</b>	Approve	19.2	33.1	33.3	39.7
	Neither	11.2	9.5	14.1	11.1
	Disapprove	67.8	55.5	51.7	48.1
<b>Non-smokers</b>	Approve	66.6	71.6	76.3	78.3
	Neither	10.9	11.0	9.7	7.7
	Disapprove	21.0	16.6	13.1	12.4

\* 'Can't say' not presented as <2%, and no pattern of difference by year or smoking status.

Data are weighted by age and sex to Victorian ABS 2003 figures.

Due to rounding, not all columns sum to 100.

## Bans on smoking in nightclubs

All survey participants were asked 'Would you approve or disapprove of the government banning smoking in nightclubs?'. The results for this question in the 2003 survey are presented in Table 6, by smoking status. Overall, more than 70% of respondents approved of bans in these venues. Approval was highest among those who had never smoked (81.2%), followed by former smokers (68.9%) and tobacco smokers (44.9%). Fewer than 15% of the whole sample disapproved; this was highest among tobacco smokers and lowest among those who had never smoked.

Table 6

**Support for government-introduced smoking bans in nightclubs by smoking status, 2003**

Response	Total (n=3001) %	Tobacco smoker (n=522) %	Former smokers (n=886) %	Never-smokers (n=1593) %
Approve	71.3	45.0	68.9	81.2
Neither	10.4	14.0	12.9	7.9
Disapprove	14.5	36.0	13.6	8.0
Can't say	3.7	5.1	4.6	2.8

Due to rounding, not all columns sum to 100.

As shown in Table 7, public support for bans on smoking in nightclubs increased over the period between 2000 and 2003. In 2000, 54.4% of respondents said that they approved of the government banning smoking in nightclubs (95% CI 52.3–56.6%); this rose significantly to 62.7% in 2001 (95% CI 60.6–64.9%), was 66.0% in 2002 (95% CI 63.9–68.1%), and increased significantly to 71.3% in 2003 (95% CI 69.7–72.9%). The percentage of respondents who disapproved of banning smoking in nightclubs in 2003 (14.5%, 95% CI 13.3–15.8%) was significantly lower than the level of disapproval in previous years (2002: 18.0%, 95% CI 16.3–19.7%; 2001: 20.3%, 95% CI 18.5–22.1%; 2000: 25.8%, 95% CI 23.9–27.7%). Overall, this represented a significant linear increase in approval and decrease in disapproval over the 2000 to 2003 period.

Table 7:

**Support for government-introduced smoking bans in nightclubs, 2000–2003**

Response	2000 (n=2000) %	2001 (n=2000) %	2002 (n=2000) %	2003 (n=3001) %
Approve	54.4	62.7	66.0	71.3
Neither	15.4	13.7	14.0	10.4
Disapprove	25.8	20.3	18.0	14.5
Can't say	4.3	3.3	1.9	3.7

Data are weighted by age and sex to Victorian ABS 2003 figures.  
Due to rounding, not all columns sum to 100.

Respondents' support for government-introduced smoking bans in nightclubs between the years 2000 and 2003 is presented by smoking status in Table 8. Among both smokers and non-smokers, there was an increase over time in the percentage who approved of smoking bans in nightclubs, and a reduction in the percentage who disapproved. In 2003, 45% of smokers approved of smoking bans in nightclubs (95% CI 40.7–49.2%), a significant increase from just over a third in 2002 (34.2%, 95% CI 29.6–38.8%) and 2001 (35.1%, 95% CI 30.6–39.6%), and more than double the approval levels in 2000 (19.7%, 95% CI 15.9–23.5%). In 2003 over three quarters of non-smokers approved of nightclub smoking bans (76.8%, 95% CI 75.2–78.5%); this is a slight increase from 74.2% in 2002 (95% CI 72.1–76.3%), a significant increase from 70.5% in 2001 (95% CI 68.2–72.7%), and from around two-thirds of non-smokers in 2000 (63.6%, 95% CI 61.3–66.0%). Overall, there has been a significant linear increase in approval for bans in nightclubs over the last four years among both smokers and non-smokers.

Disapproval followed a similar pattern: among smokers, a significant decrease was observed from over half in 2000 (57.6%, 95% CI 52.8–62.3%) to around 44% in both 2001 (95% CI 40.0–49.3%) and 2002 (95% CI 39.3–48.9%), and a further non-significant decrease to just over a third in 2003 (95% CI 31.8–40.1%). Only one-tenth of non-smokers disapproved of such bans in 2003 (95% CI 8.8–11.2%); this is a slight decrease on 2002 approval levels 2002 (11.3%, 95% CI 9.8–12.9%) and a significant decrease compared to 2001 (13.5%, 95% CI 11.8–15.2%) and 2000 (17.4%, 95% CI 15.5–19.3%). This represents a significant overall decrease in disapproval for smoking bans in nightclubs over 2000 to 2003 in smokers and non-smokers.

Table 8:

**Support for government-introduced smoking bans in nightclubs by smoking status, 2000–2003**

Smoking status	Response*	2000 (n=2000) %	2001 (n=2000) %	2002 (n=2000) %	2003 (n=3001) %
<b>Smokers</b>	Approve	19.7	35.1	34.2	45.0
	Neither	18.3	16.6	19.2	14.0
	Disapprove	57.6	44.7	44.1	36.0
<b>Non-smokers</b>	Approve	63.6	70.5	74.2	76.8
	Neither	14.7	12.8	12.7	9.7
	Disapprove	17.4	13.5	11.3	10.0

\* 'Can't say' not presented as <5%, and no pattern of difference by year or smoking status.

Data are weighted by age and sex to Victorian ABS 2003 figures.

Due to rounding, not all columns sum to 100.



## Bans on smoking in gaming venues

All respondents were asked 'Would you approve or disapprove of the government banning smoking in gaming venues?' The majority of respondents in 2003 (80.9%) reported approval for the introduction of smoking bans in gaming venues (Table 8). This was the case for smokers (61.7%), former smokers (80.5%) and never-smokers (87.5%). Overall, only 8.8% of respondents reported disapproval for such bans, ranging from 4% of never-smokers to 24% of smokers.

Table 9

**Support for government-introduced bans in gaming venues by smoking status, 2003**

Response	Total (n=3001) %	Tobacco smoker (n=522) %	Former smokers (n=886) %	Never-smokers (n=1593) %
Approve	80.9	61.7	80.4	87.5
Neither	9.0	12.5	10.0	7.2
Disapprove	8.8	23.5	8.5	4.1
Can't say	1.3	2.3	1.1	1.2

Due to rounding, not all columns sum to 100.

The data presented in Table 10 show the changes over time in support for smoking bans in gaming venues. As observed for approval for smoking bans in bars and nightclubs, the approval for bans in gaming venues increased from 2000 to 2003. Two-thirds of all respondents approved in 2000 (66.1%, 95% CI 64.0–68.2%), with a significant increase to almost three-quarters in 2001 (74.4%, 95% CI 72.5–76.3%), a smaller significant increase to 78.3% in 2002 (95% CI 76.5–80.1%) and 80.9% in 2003 (95% CI 79.5–82.3%), representing a significant linear increase in approval from 2000 to 2003. Disapproval followed a similar but decreasing pattern: in 2000, 17.9% of respondents disapproved of smoking bans in gaming venues (95% CI 16.2–19.6%); this decreased significantly to 12.2% in 2001 (95% CI 10.8–13.7%), was 10.4% in 2002 (95% CI 9.1–11.7%), and by 2003 was 8.8% (95% CI 7.8–9.8%), an overall significant linear decrease in disapproval over the four year period.

Table 10:

**Support for government-introduced smoking bans in gaming venues, 2000–2003**

Response	2000 (n=2000) %	2001 (n=2000) %	2002 (n=2000) %	2003 (n=3001) %
Approve	66.1	74.4	78.3	80.9
Neither	13.8	12.1	10.4	9.0
Disapprove	17.9	12.2	10.4	8.8
Can't say	2.2	1.3	0.9	1.3

Data are weighted by age and sex to Victorian ABS 2003 figures.

Due to rounding, not all columns sum to 100.

Respondents' views on smoking bans in gaming venues by smoking status are presented in Table 11 for the years 2000 to 2003. The percentage of both smokers and non-smokers who approved of smoking bans in gaming venues increased from 2000 to 2003, as observed in the overall sample. Among smokers, almost two-thirds approved of smoking bans in gaming venues in 2003 (61.7%, 95% CI 57.5–65.9%), which maintains the level of approval found in 2002 (55.6%, 95% CI 50.8–60.5%). There was a significant increase in approval from 2002 compared to 2001 (53.0%, 95% CI 48.4–57.7%) and a large increase from 2000 levels (36.1%, 95% CI 31.5–40.7%). Among non-smokers, 85.0% reported approval for bans in 2003 (95% CI 83.6–86.4%); this maintains 2002

levels (84.1%, 95% CI 82.3–85.9%), and is a significant increase from 2001 levels (80.4%, 95% CI 78.4–82.4%) and 2000 levels (74.0%, 95% CI 71.9–76.2%). Overall, among both smokers and non-smokers there has been a significant linear increase in approval for smoking bans in gaming venues.

There was a significant reduction in the percentage of smokers who disapproved of the bans between 2000 (37.4%, 95% CI 32.8–42.0%) and 2003 (23.5%, 95% CI 19.9–27.2%). Among non-smokers, disapproval for such bans halved from 2000 (12.7%, 95% CI 11.1–14.4%) to 2003 (5.7%, 95% CI 4.8–6.6%). Logistic regression analyses indicated that there has been a significant linear decrease in disapproval among smokers and non-smokers over the past four years.

Table 11:

**Support for government-introduced smoking bans in gaming venues by smoking status, 2000–2003**

Smoking status	Response*	2000	2001	2002	2003
		(n=2000) %	(n=2000) %	(n=2000) %	(n=3001) %
<b>Smokers</b>	Approve	36.1	53.0	55.6	61.7
	Neither	23.6	19.4	15.3	12.5
	Disapprove	37.4	24.8	27.4	23.5
<b>Non-smokers</b>	Approve	74.0	80.4	84.1	85.0
	Neither	11.2	10.0	9.2	8.2
	Disapprove	12.7	8.7	6.0	5.7

\* 'Can't say' not presented as <3%, and no pattern of difference by year or smoking status.

Data are weighted by age and sex to Victorian ABS 2003 figures.

Due to rounding, not all columns sum to 100.

## DISCUSSION

The data indicate that, in 2003, over three-quarters of the sample agreed with the September 2002 legislative amendments restricting smoking in licensed and gambling venues, maintaining the approval level from November 2002, two months after the restrictions were introduced. The high level of support also concurs with our data on support for legislated smoking restrictions in dining areas; in November 2001, four months after the introduction of smokefree dining, 84% of respondents agreed with the law, including 70% of smokers [11]. Support for further bans in these venues was shown with over 80% of Victorians reporting they would approve of banning smoking in gaming venues.

The most recent data show that approximately seven out of ten respondents in the sample approved of the introduction of smoking bans in bars and nightclubs in 2003, while support for bans in gambling venues was higher, at around 80%. The magnitude of the increase in approval, and decrease in disapproval for smoking bans over time has been similar across bars, nightclubs and gaming venues. The general pattern is of significant overall increase in public approval for the introduction of bans in bars, nightclubs and gaming venues between 2000 and 2003 among both smokers and non-smokers. Less than half of smokers reported disapproval of smoking bans in bars, only a third reported disapproval of bans in nightclubs, and less than a quarter disapproved of bans in gaming venues in 2003. This has followed a steady linear decline in disapproval for smoking bans from 2000 to 2003.

The increases in community support for smoking bans in public places among both smokers and non-smokers are encouraging. They have occurred in a climate of legislative reform in tobacco control, including increasing smoking bans in public places, further restrictions on tobacco advertising and promotion, and tougher penalties for sales to minors. Increased litigation related to ETS exposure has also garnered attention from the community, media, employer groups and unions.

The data indicate strong public support for bans on smoking in bars, nightclubs and gambling venues. While current Victorian legislation imposes smoking restrictions in hospitality venues, only total smoking bans will fully protect patrons and staff from the hazards of exposure to tobacco smoke.

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