

LGBT People & Clean Indoor Air

LGBT communities are among the populations most severely impacted by tobacco use.

- LGBT are 40-70% more likely to smoke than non-LGBT.^{1, 2}
- This is one of the highest smoking rates even of all the disproportionately affected sub-populations.³
- LGBT adolescents are taking up smoking at an alarming rate, in a recent national study 45% of females and 35% of males reporting same-sex attraction or behavior smoked. In comparison, only 29% of the rest of the youth smoked.⁴
- American Cancer Society estimates that over 30,000 LGBT people die each year of tobacco-related diseases.⁵

Tobacco companies have targeted LGBT populations, compromising our communities' work against this major health threat.

- Tobacco companies offer an unknown amount of financial support to LGBT festivals, bars, media, and local organizations.¹ Sometimes this money comes with conditions, for example, some gay bars are prohibited from allowing any anti-tobacco promotion onsite.
- As early supporters of LGBT causes, the Tobacco companies garnered appreciative community response, since many other funders avoided LGBT issues.^{6, 7}
- An early Tobacco industry document described the plan for increasing sales among San Francisco's gay and homeless populations, it was labeled "Project SCUM".⁸
- Tobacco industry funding can compromise anti-tobacco activities by LGBT community organizations (for example, while major TV networks refused to air an ad exposing "Project SCUM", GLAAD was taking tobacco industry money in support of their annual gala).⁹

Negative health impacts of tobacco continue to be under-estimated.

- Up to ½ of people who smoke will die early as a result, losing an average of 10-20 years of their life.¹⁰
- Tobacco is the number one cause of mortality in this country.¹²
- In the United States, tobacco kills more people each day than AIDS, alcohol, car accidents, firearms, and illegal drugs – combined.¹¹
- The tobacco industry spends almost \$14 billion each year on promotion and marketing.¹³ This dollar amount is bigger than the budget for CDC or HRSA. The money is spread liberally to groups that assist tobacco industry objectives, such as fighting clean indoor air laws, or helping defuse public outcry over the health impacts and costs of smoking.¹⁴

Environmental smoke has a proven negative health effect.

- Secondhand smoke is the third leading preventable cause of death in the nation, closely trailing active smoking and alcohol use.¹⁵
- The most heavily exposed workers inhale the equivalent amount of carcinogens as if they actively smoked 1½ to 2 packs of cigarettes a day.¹⁶
- JAMA found that bar and restaurant workers face up to twice the risk of dying of lung cancer than they would face if their workplaces were smoke-free.¹⁶

Secondhand smoke may have added impact in the LGBT communities.

- Emphasis on bars and restaurants as social opportunities for LGBT people create added exposure to secondhand smoke.¹
- There is evidence that these laws may help reduce smoking among youths by making tobacco use socially unacceptable, this is especially needed to counter the alarmingly high rates of LGBT youth smoking.^{17, 18}
- Also, it has been hypothesized that LGBT people disproportionately work in the restaurant and bar industries, creating added exposure to high smoke environments.

It has been proven that passing indoor clean air legislation motivates people to quit smoking.

- Smoking rates drop in localities that pass this legislation.¹⁹
- This is likely to disproportionately benefit LGBT, due to their higher initial smoking rates and higher potential reliance on restaurant industry employment.

It has been proven that bar and restaurants do not lose business when clean indoor air legislation is passed.

- While tobacco-funded lobbying groups will often claim otherwise, independent scientists have consistently proven that businesses do not lose money or patrons with passage of clean indoor air legislation.²⁰⁻²²
- In some localities, long-term grossing receipts have even risen after clean-indoor air legislation is passed.

LGBT people want clean indoor air

- A recent national survey by Harris Interactive found that exactly one set of respondents were more willing to pay extra to go to a bar that was smokefree, LGBT people.²³

For more information on any of the facts quoted in this factsheet, please contact Donald Hitchcock at the National Coalition for LGBT Health at coalition@lgbthealth.net. This factsheet was prepared by Scout and Donald Hitchcock on 1/10/05, with assistance from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, www.smokefree.net, the American Cancer Society, and the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids.

Citations

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