

Introduction

The City of Minneapolis Health Department surveyed rental property owners to assess the smoke-free status of their properties. Scientific evidence indicates there is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke.¹ Eliminating smoking in indoor spaces is the only way to fully protect people from secondhand smoke exposure.² While the Minnesota Clean Indoor Air Act prohibits smoking in public areas such as apartment lobbies, property owners may choose to prohibit smoking in all individual units.

Survey Sampling and Methods

The Health Department mailed surveys to all property owners, approximately 1,845, who owned a building in Minneapolis with at least four units. The Department also mailed surveys to a random selection of 1,160 owners who owned duplexes or triplexes. If applicable, up to six properties owned by the property owner were included in the survey. Surveys were mailed out between November 2015 and January 2016. The survey asked the following main questions:

- Does the property have subsidized or Section 8 units?
- Does the lease (or house rules if section Section 8) prohibit smoking in all individual units?

If the owner affirmed having a lease that prohibits smoking in all units, the owner was also asked if the policy extended to balconies and porches and if the policy prohibits the use of e-cigarettes in all units. The survey also asked if the owner was interested in smoke-free resources. Property owners were informed that completed surveys received by the deadline would be entered into a drawing for one of 15 \$50 giftcards.

Results

The Health Department received 888 surveys providing information on 1,305 rental properties. Findings outlined below are from owner reported information regarding their properties.

Most properties have smoke-free indoor policies

66%, (861 of 1305) of properties have a lease that prohibits smoking in all individual units.

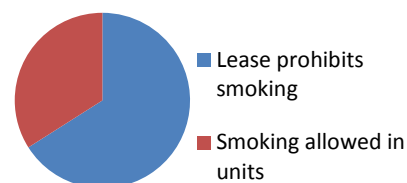
Subsidized and Market-rate housing

The survey was sent to privately owned rental properties and did not include any Public Housing.

Subsidized housing is housing that receives some form of financial assistance from the government through the use of operating subsidies, tax credits or rent payments in order to make the rent affordable to low-to-moderate income renters. Section 8 is one of the most common types of subsidized housing.

Market-rate housing refers to properties that do not have any units taking part in subsidized housing programs.

All Properties (n=1305)

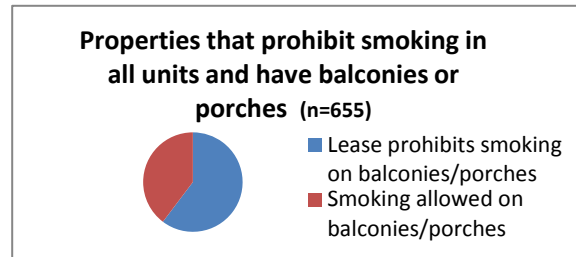
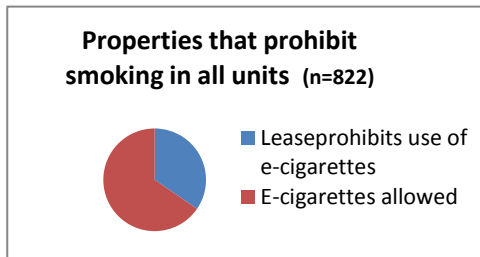


¹ U.S. DHHS. *The Health Consequences of involuntary Exposure to Secondhand Smoke: A Report of the Surgeon General*. Atlanta, Georgia: U.S. DHHS, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Coordinating Center for Health Promotion, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2006.

² Ibid.

Most properties that prohibit smoking in all units do not include e-cigarettes, but many extend their policy to balconies and porches.

- 35% (284 of 822) of the properties that prohibit smoking in all individual units also prohibit e-cigarette use in all individual units.
- 60%, (395 of 655) of the properties that prohibit smoking in all individual units also prohibit smoking on all balconies or porches. (Properties for whom the owner reported having no balconies or porches were excluded in this analysis.)

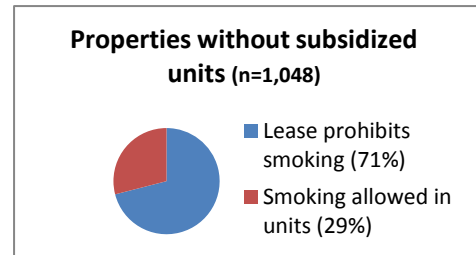
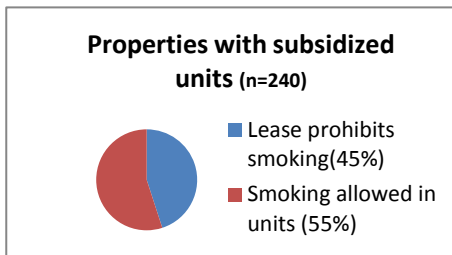


Property owner interest in going smoke-free

Of the property owners who allow smoking in individual units, 26% indicated interest in learning about the benefits of smoke-free policies.

Fewer smoke-free policies in properties with subsidized units

Overall, a higher proportion of market rate properties prohibit smoking in all individual units (71%), as compared to subsidized properties (45%). There was no difference between market-rate and subsidized properties with 2-3 units (the rate was 84% in both market rate and subsidized groups). The difference was only observed when comparing market rate and subsidized properties with at least four units, where the smoking was prohibited in 64% of market-rate properties and 38% of subsidized properties.



Discussion

Income gap in availability of smoke-free buildings: Survey results indicate a possible gap in access to smoke-free housing between market-rate and subsidized renters. Research shows that nationally over 30% of residents who do not allow smoking in their individual unit experience second hand smoke (SHS) incursions (smoke entering from outside the unit). SHS incursions are more likely to occur in lower income communities.³ A lack of access to subsidized rental units in buildings with smoke-free policies may be part of the reason.

³ Nguyen, Kimberly H., Gomez, Yessica., Homa, David M., King, Brian A., *Tobacco Use, Secondhand Smoke, and smoke-free home rules in Multi-unit housing*. American Journal of Preventative Medicine. 2016

Health advocates need to generate smoke-free policy interest: With only one in four property owners interested in learning about the benefits, more effort is needed to raise awareness about the importance of smoke-free buildings and clarify any misperceptions regarding smoke-free policies.

Updating policies: Additionally, property owners may need support updating their smoke-free policies to include e-cigarettes to protect indoor air quality and prohibit smoking on balconies and porches for both air quality and fire prevention.

Strategies Moving Forward

As part of a comprehensive strategy, the Health Department and community partners are following up with the 279 property owners who indicated interest in going smoke-free. In addition, the Health Department and community partners will implement a campaign to highlight the benefits of clean indoor air and encourage property owners to adopt smoke-free policies, with a focus on privately owned subsidized housing. The campaign will be piloted in the Whittier and Lyndale neighborhoods as well as other neighborhoods with a high renter population and high Housing Choice Voucher use (a subsidized housing program).