



REPORTS OF TOBACCO SMOKE ENTERING ONTARIO HOMES

The Issue

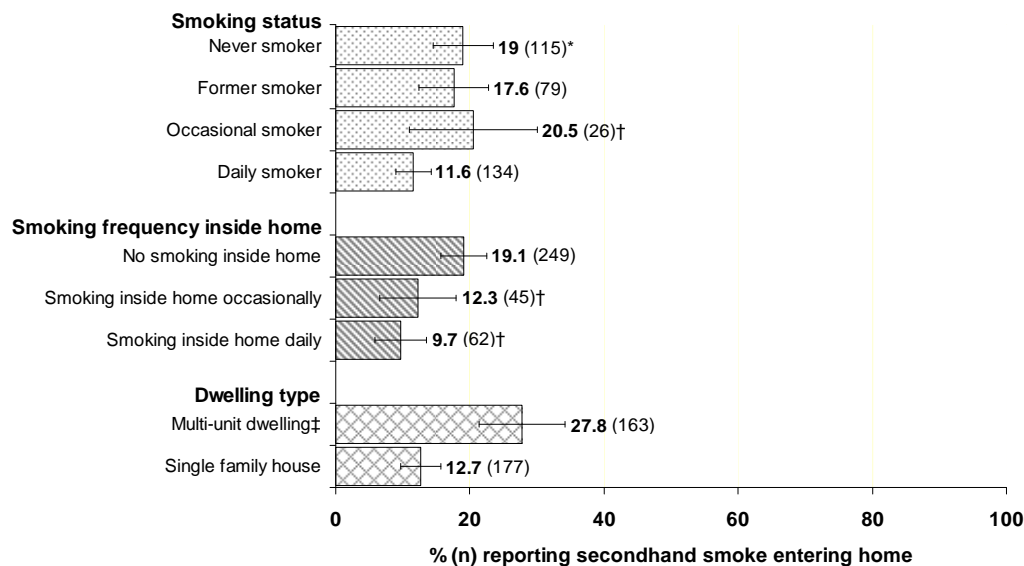
Most non-smokers in Canada and the United States are protected from second hand smoke exposure at work and in indoor public places, but many are still exposed to smoke entering their homes from neighbouring dwellings, shared indoor spaces, ventilation systems, and through windows and doors.^{1,2,3} There is no risk-free level of exposure to second hand smoke, and breathing even a little can be harmful to health.⁴ Smoke causes numerous cancers, heart disease, chronic respiratory disease, asthma and other conditions.^{4,5} In this *Update*, we report on the experience of Ontario residents with exposure to second hand smoke in their homes from external sources.

Data Source and Methodology

We used cross-sectional data (July 2007 to June 2008) from 1500 smokers and 1000 non-smokers, from the Ontario Tobacco Survey⁶, an ongoing random-digit-dialling telephone survey of Ontario adults. Both smokers and non-smokers were asked “In the past six months, how often have you noticed any tobacco smoke entering your home from a neighbour, neighbouring unit or from outside the building?” Reports of noticing second hand smoke entering the home were examined by respondents’ demographic, residential and smoking related characteristics using design-based chi-square analyses. The data were weighted to reflect the Ontario adult population (18 years and older) according to 2006 Census counts.

Findings

Figure 1: Prevalence of noticing tobacco smoke entering home in past six months, by smoking status, frequency of smoking inside home, and dwelling type



— 95% confidence interval

* Percentages are weighted; "n"s are un-weighted numerators (i.e., respondents who reported noticing smoke entering their home).

† High coefficient of variation; interpret these estimates with caution.

‡ A multi-unit dwelling is a building containing more than one residential unit. It includes apartments, condominiums, duplexes, row or townhouses and semi-detached dwellings.⁷

- Almost 1 in 5 Ontarians (18%) reported noticing second hand smoke entering their homes from an external source.
- Daily smokers (12%) and respondents who reported smoking occurring inside the home daily (10%) were least likely to notice smoke entering their homes (Figure 1).
- Respondents who lived in multi-unit dwellings were most likely to notice smoke entering their homes (28%) (Figure 1).
- Age, gender, marital status, education, home ownership, and children in the home were not significantly related to noticing SHS entering homes.

Discussion

Tobacco smoke entering homes from external sources is relatively common in Ontario. Based on the Ontario Tobacco Survey, over 1.6 million Ontario adults (18%) reported noticing second hand smoke entering their homes daily or occasionally between July 2007 and June 2008. Ontarians living in multi-unit dwellings were more than twice as likely as those living in single family homes to notice smoke entering their unit. With almost a third of Ontarians⁸ living in multi-unit dwellings, there is significant potential for exposure to second hand smoke from external sources. Further, particulate matter from smoke can contaminate house dust and household surfaces for weeks and months after smoking has occurred.⁹ More effort is needed to raise awareness about the hazards of second hand smoke in homes and encourage smoke-free building policies to protect residents from involuntary exposure.

References

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Acknowledgement

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