Public Support for Smoke-Free Section 8 Public Housing

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Background: Section 8 public housing vouchers are administered by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to provide subsidies for low-income residents. HUD encourages local public housing agencies to implement smoke-free policies, but has proposed elimination of smoking in public housing which excludes Section 8 housing. This study examines U.S. adults’ support for smoke-free housing policy options.

Methods: Using a randomly representative survey in 2015, we examined Section 8 subsidies and asked respondents to agree or disagree with: 1) Smoking should not be allowed anywhere inside buildings that have Section 8 housing units, and 2) If a building has some units with Section 8 subsidies, smoking should not be allowed in the housing units with subsidies but should be allowed in those that are not subsidized. Chi-square analyses compared support across demographic groups, multunit housing (MUH) residency and housing subsidy status.

Results: 3,070 adults completed the survey. The majority (71%) supported prohibiting indoor smoking everywhere inside buildings that have Section 8 housing units, with similar support among adults in MUH (71%) and in detached housing (70%). Adults who receive housing subsidies were marginally less supportive (59%) than those who do not receive subsidies (66%). Overall, more adults supported a Section 8 policy to prohibit smoking only inside of units with subsidies, but allow smoking in non-subsidized units. 38% supporting such partial smoking bans, with MUH residents (37%) less supportive than non-MUH adults (40%) (p=.061).

Conclusions: Most U.S. adults support prohibiting smoking in all units in buildings with any Section 8 subsidies. Adults who support prohibiting smoking in all units in MUH buildings with any Section 8 subsidies.

Acknowledgements: Funded by Grants from the Flinders University/William M. Keck Foundation, Institute for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, and the California Tobacco Related Disease Research Program (2016-563). The authors report no conflicts of interest.

American Academy of Pediatrics
Julius B. Richmond Center of Excellence
American Academy of Pediatrics
Research by Members of the Faculty
(July 2018)

Abstract

Background: This study examined public support for smoke-free housing policy options. The majority (71%) supported prohibiting indoor smoking everywhere inside buildings that have Section 8 housing units, with similar support among adults in MUH (71%) and in detached housing (70%). Adults who receive housing subsidies were marginally less supportive (59%) than those who do not receive subsidies (66%). Overall, more adults supported a Section 8 policy to prohibit smoking only inside of units with subsidies, but allow smoking in non-subsidized units. 38% supporting such partial smoking bans, with MUH residents (37%) less supportive than non-MUH adults (40%) (p=.061).

Conclusions: Most U.S. adults support prohibiting smoking in all units in MUH buildings with any Section 8 subsidies. Adults who support prohibiting smoking in all units in MUH buildings with any Section 8 subsidies.

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