

# Smoking policy

## Indicator overview

VicHealth Indicators Survey

VicHealth Indicators are used to measure community wellbeing with a focus on social determinants of health.

Survey topic areas include: wellbeing, healthy eating and sedentary behaviour, use of green space and safety, smoking policy, alcohol, using of social networking, participation in arts activities and the community, social attitudes, and work, life and time.

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### Introduction

Tobacco use (including smoking cigarettes, cigars, and using other tobacco products) is the single largest preventable contributor to death and illness in Australia (AIHW 2010a). Smoking is known to contribute to a wide range of diseases such as cardiovascular disease (including heart attacks and stroke), cancer (including lung, mouth, liver, bladder and bowel cancers), lung disease (including chronic bronchitis and emphysema) and circulation problems (Scollo and Winstanley 2008).

### Smoking in Australia

The number of people in Australia who smoke has been steadily decreasing since the 1970s (Germain et al. 2008). In 2010, 15.1% of the population aged over 14 years of age reported smoking at least daily; down from 24.3% in 1991 (AIHW 2010b). This reduction reflects both an increase in ex-smokers, and fewer people becoming smokers.

### Passive smoking

Exposure to second-hand smoke (also called passive smoking) occurs when individuals inhale other people's tobacco smoke. Second-hand smoking is known to cause premature death and poor health in adult non-smokers, including heart disease and lung cancer. The health risk to children includes Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), lower birth weight, lung and respiratory infections, asthma and ear problems (US Department of Health and Human Services 2006). There is no safe level of passive smoking: exposure to even small amounts of second-hand smoke is potentially harmful (US Department of Health & Human Services 2006).

### Smoking in outdoor areas

Maintaining a smoke-free environment is the best way to prevent the harms of second-hand smoke (Quit Victoria et al. 2012). Over the past two decades, Australia has introduced a number of restrictions on public locations in which people are able to smoke, including banning smoking in workplaces, on public transport, and in restaurants, pubs and clubs. Across Australia, all states have implemented or have declared intent to implement restrictions on smoking in some outside areas. In several states this has included bans on smoking in outside dining and drinking areas.

## Find out more

Quit.  
[www.quit.org.au/](http://www.quit.org.au/)

Department of Health, Canberra.  
<http://health.act.gov.au/c/health?a=sp&did=10152911>

*The health consequences of involuntary exposure to tobacco smoke: a report of the Surgeon General*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.  
[www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/reports/secondhandsmoke/factsheet6.html](http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/reports/secondhandsmoke/factsheet6.html)

## References

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AIHW 2010b, *National drug strategy household survey report*, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Canberra.

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Quit Victoria, Cancer Council Victoria, Heart Foundation (Victoria) & AMA Victoria 2012, *Smokefree outdoor dining and drinking and other public outdoor areas in Victoria*, Quit Victoria, Melbourne.

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