

NEWS RELEASE

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Poll Shows Strong Support for Smoke-Free Apartments

New Statewide Survey Reveals Renters Ready for Reduced Exposure to Secondhand Smoke

(SACRAMENTO, CA 9/7/04) – Renters throughout California want no smoking sections in their apartment complexes according to the results from a statewide survey commissioned by the American Lung Association of California’s Center for Tobacco Policy and Organizing. In addition, apartment tenants want to limit smoking in outdoor common areas.

The telephone survey of 602 apartment residents found that 69 percent would favor requiring all apartment buildings to offer non-smoking sections and 67 percent would favor limiting smoking in outdoor common areas such as pool areas, entryways, and courtyards.

“We are not surprised that renters in California are aware of the dangers of secondhand smoke and want to protect themselves in their apartments. We are surprised by the overwhelming support for smoke-free apartments expressed in the survey,” said Brian Peterson, Project Director for the Center for Tobacco Policy & Organizing.

Nearly 90 percent of tenants believe exposure to secondhand smoke is harmful, with nearly two-thirds of those (63 percent of all tenants) saying it is “very harmful.” Of these tenants who believe exposure to secondhand smoke is very harmful, 81 percent endorse separate non-smoking sections in apartment buildings.

In addition, fully 96 percent of those who favor non-smoking sections agree that secondhand smoke is harmful. Among those who support non-smoking sections, 84 percent had experienced secondhand smoke drifting into their apartment.

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The broad support for non-smoking sections and smoke-free common areas in apartments has been forged through 20 years of education about the dangers of breathing secondhand smoke, plus the personal experience of about half of the tenants surveyed who indicated they experienced secondhand smoke drifting into their apartments.

Support for separate non-smoking sections in apartments was even higher among the 14 percent of respondents who live in public housing.

“The question of differing attitudes towards non-smoking sections and common areas among residents of market-rate and public or non-profit housing deserves further research. However, these results may help explain the growing trend of local public housing authorities and municipalities adopting non-smoking sections or entire non-smoking buildings in the affordable housing developments,” said Peterson.

A growing number of affordable housing apartment complexes are setting aside non-smoking sections or non-smoking buildings for tenants who want smoke-free environments, including those in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, Madera, Belmont, Sebastapol (and soon Thousand Oaks).

“Pressure for smoke-free common areas and smoke-free sections in apartment buildings can only increase as awareness grows about successful experiences with these policies throughout California,” added Peterson.

The survey was conducted by Goodwin-Simon Strategic Research and has a four percent margin of error at a 95 percent confidence level. Survey data is available online at http://www.californialung.org/thecenter/community/documents/SFH-Survey-Data_001.doc

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