

Profile

Second-hand smoke

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This profile highlights material from the third edition of AADAC's *Tobacco Basics Handbook*,¹ which provides information on current tobacco issues.

What is second-hand smoke?

Second-hand smoke (SHS) is made up of two types of smoke: "sidestream" and "mainstream." Sidestream smoke comes from burning tobacco in a cigarette, pipe or cigar. Mainstream smoke is the smoke exhaled from the smoker. Sidestream smoke makes up approximately 85% of SHS, and has higher levels of cancer-causing chemicals than mainstream smoke.

What are the health consequences of second-hand smoke?

The health of both smokers and non-smokers is affected by SHS as they breathe in sidestream and mainstream smoke. It is estimated that SHS exposure causes over 1,000 deaths per year in Canada. In 2006, the U.S. Surgeon General's office released a report on the health consequences of SHS exposure, and made the following conclusions:

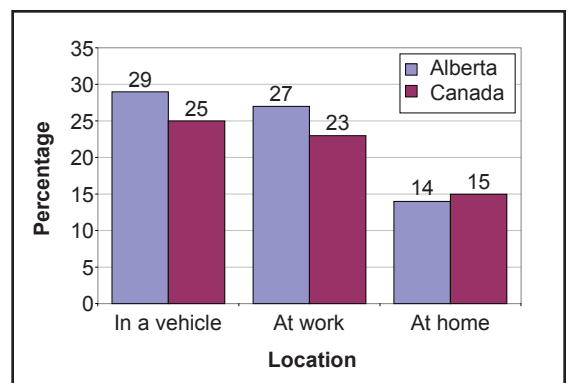
- SHS causes death and disease in people of all ages who do not smoke.
- Babies and children exposed to SHS are at an increased risk for sudden infant death syndrome, respiratory infections, ear problems and severe asthma.
- Exposure to SHS has immediate adverse effects on the cardiovascular system, and causes coronary heart disease and lung cancer.
- There is no safe level of exposure to SHS.

Most Canadians know that SHS is related to health problems in non-smokers. In a national survey by Health Canada (1999), 70% of current smokers and 88% of non-smokers said that they believe there is a link between SHS and health problems in non-smokers.

How many Albertans and Canadians are exposed to second-hand smoke?

Albertans and Canadians are exposed to SHS in a variety of places. The rates of exposure depend on the setting and restrictions. As shown in Figure 1, vehicles, workplaces and homes are common settings for exposure to SHS. In 2006, the most common place for Albertans and Canadians to be exposed to SHS was in a vehicle, and the least common place was in their homes.

Figure 1: Rate of exposure to second-hand smoke in Alberta and Canada, 2006



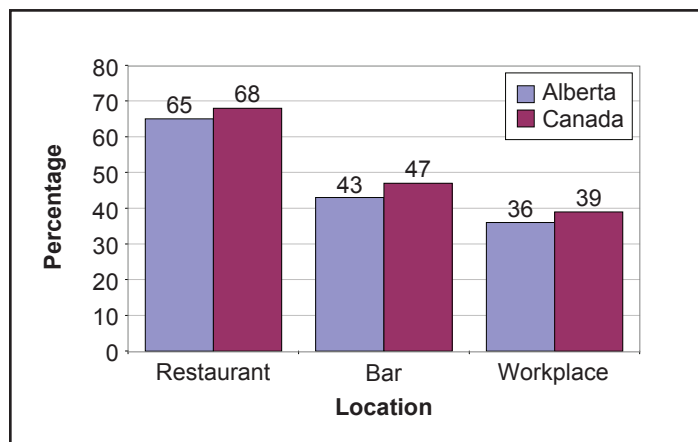
Source: Statistics Canada. (2007). Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey, 2006.

How do Albertans and Canadians feel about smoking in public places?

Figure 2 shows the percentages of Albertans and Canadians who feel smoking should not be allowed in restaurants, bars and workplaces. Most Albertans (65%) and Canadians (68%) agreed that smoking should not be allowed in restaurants.

Because of the implementation of the Tobacco Reduction Act in Alberta on January 1, 2008, there may be a change in Albertans' opinions of, and exposure to, smoking in public places.

Figure 2: Percentage of Albertans and Canadians who think smoking should not be allowed in restaurants, bars and workplaces, 2006



Source: Statistics Canada. (2007). Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey, 2006.

Summary

- SHS affects the health of both smokers and non-smokers.
- There is no safe level of SHS.
- Most Canadians know that SHS is related to health problems in non-smokers.
- Many Albertans and Canadians report being exposed to SHS in a variety of places, such as in a vehicle, at work and in the home.
- Most Albertans and Canadians feel that smoking should not be allowed in restaurants.

For further information, contact AADAC Research Services at 780-427-0116.

¹ Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission. (2008). *Tobacco basics handbook: Third edition*. Edmonton, AB: Author.