



# HEALTH BRIEFS

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## PUBLIC HEALTH SOLUTIONS' REPORT ON NEW YORKERS' ATTITUDES ABOUT SMOKE-FREE OUTDOOR AIR IN AND AROUND THEIR WORKPLACES

Most New Yorkers, including a large number of smokers and e-cigarette users, favor New York City policies that prohibit smoking and vaping outside workplace entrances and on workplace grounds

### KEY FINDINGS

A new report released by Public Health Solutions (PHS) sheds light on New Yorkers attitudes about smoke-free outdoor air in and around their workplaces. Key findings from the report include:

- Working in a place that maintains a smoke-free outdoor space is important and has a positive impact on employees.
- Not all New Yorkers currently have an outdoor smoke-free policy in place at their workplace.
- Employers do a good job communicating smoke-free workplace policies.
- For most New York workers, their employer enforces the non-smoking policies. Peer pressure and government forces have less impact on enforcement of these policies.

### BACKGROUND

New York City (NYC) has long served as a leader in its efforts to protect the health of residents from the harmful effects of smoking. Thanks to state and local taxes, cigarettes cost about \$5 more in NYC than the national average, and over the past 15 years, laws and regulations have made it illegal to smoke in public areas. This has drastically reduced outdoor smoking, protecting against the deadly health effects of secondhand smoke. In July 2019, New York State raised its legal smoking age from 18 years to 21 years.

### EVOLUTION OF TOBACCO-FREE OUTDOOR SPACES IN NYC

Smoking in outdoor spaces is a health hazard that exposes thousands of New Yorkers to secondhand smoke every day. PHS' NYC Smoke-Free program has engaged and educated communities for more than 20 years, leading to many successes in tobacco control from behavior change to broad-reaching policy change.

- **1995** The Smoke-Free Air Act of 1995 limits smoking to designated "smoking" areas in several public spaces and commercial buildings
- **2002** The Smoke-Free Air Act of 2002 builds on past laws to ban smoking in outdoor spaces, such as parks, beaches, and restaurants
- **2014** Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS) are adopted into the Smoke-Free Air Act
- **2016** The Smokeless Tobacco Law goes into effect, making it illegal for anyone to use smokeless tobacco at a sports or recreational arena
- **2018** The New York Housing Authority's (NYCHA) Smoke-Free Policy goes into effect, prohibiting smoking in all NYCHA buildings, including outdoor areas on the premises

## STATUS TODAY

Recent data from the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene reveals that 13.4% of adults — more than 800,000 people — continue to smoke in New York State, accounting for over \$10 billion in annual health care costs. More than a quarter of cancer deaths in New York are directly attributed to smoking. Use of e-cigarettes or vaporizers among youth has also reached epidemic proportions, with a 160% increase between 2014 and 2018, according to the NYS Youth Tobacco Survey.

## FINDINGS

### Working in a place that maintains a smoke-free outdoor space is important and has a positive impact on employees



Nearly  
**80%**  
of New Yorkers surveyed say that it is important that their workplace maintain a smoke-free outdoor space.

- A smoke-free outdoor environment was considered important for all groups surveyed. This includes 58% of current smokers supporting smoke-free workplace entranceways and grounds
- Over two-thirds (68%) of respondents claimed smoke-free outdoor policies have had a positive impact on their work life.

### Most New Yorkers currently have an outdoor smoke-free policy in place at their workplace

- Seven in ten (72%) respondents said their employer has a non-smoking entranceway policy and six in ten (63%) have a smoke-free grounds policy.
- The Bronx has the highest rate of workplaces that still allow smoking in at least some areas (33%), followed by Queens (28%), Brooklyn (27%), Staten Island (26%), and Manhattan (22%).
- Most workers are fully aware of these policies; only 10% are unaware of any entranceway policy and 5% are unaware of any grounds policy.

### Employers do a good job communicating about and enforcing smoke-free workplace policies

- Most New Yorkers (81%) said that their employer effectively communicates their smoking policies. The most common

method used by employers was posting signage in non-smoking areas (48%), followed by displaying posters (33%), and internal human resources departments ensuring that all new employees are advised of the regulations (33%).

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(68%)**  
claimed smoke-free outdoor policies have had a positive impact on their work life.

## RECOMMENDED INTERVENTIONS

### Smoke-free workplaces are good for health and business

100% smoke-free workplace policies are the only effective way to eliminate secondhand smoke exposure in the workplace. Smoke-free policies not only protect the health of employees, but also lower costs for cleaning, maintenance, and insurance premiums.

**Employers can revise their indoor smoke-free policy** to designate outdoor spaces on building property, such as outdoor terraces, plazas, parking lots, or within 15 feet of the building's entrances or exits, as no-smoking areas. Employers can also ask their landlord to post smoke-free signs at the entrances and exits to their building and other outdoor locations.

To learn more about PHS' NYC Smoke-Free program and for sample policies to adopt, please visit [NYCSmokeFree.org](https://nycsmokefree.org) or connect with us at **646-619-6400** or [nycsmokefree@healthsolutions.org](mailto:nycsmokefree@healthsolutions.org).

## SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The objective of the survey was to measure the level of overall knowledge among working consumers regarding smoke-free policies for outdoor grounds around their workplace, determine the extent to which employers have implemented smoke-free outdoor area policies and to understand whether NYC workers support smoke-free policies.

1,949 individuals aged 18 or older and employed full-time in a large business were surveyed across all NYC boroughs through an online questionnaire. 13% of the surveyed individuals were current smokers, commensurate with current percent of smokers across NYC. The survey defines smokers as those who smoke either traditional or electronic cigarettes. It was conducted through June 2019, in partnership with Dynata, a market data service company, and was funded by the New York State Department of Health.

Health disparities among New Yorkers are large, persistent and increasing. **Public Health Solutions (PHS)** exists to change that trajectory, and support vulnerable New Yorkers in achieving optimal health and building pathways to reach their potential. We improve health outcomes and help communities thrive by providing services directly to vulnerable low-income families, and supporting 200 community-based organizations through our long-standing public-private partnerships. We focus on a wide range of public health issues including food and nutrition, health insurance, maternal and child health, sexual and reproductive health, tobacco control, and HIV/AIDS. Your support helps us to realize our vision for health equity in New York City. Visit [healthsolutions.org](https://healthsolutions.org) to learn more.