

Monitoring & Evaluation Program



UW-Extension
UW Comprehensive Cancer Center
Center for Health Policy and Program Evaluation

Program Brief
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Results of 2003 Survey of Tobacco Policies in Wisconsin County and Municipal Buildings

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In 2001, the Monitoring and Evaluation Program conducted a state-wide survey to determine the prevalence of smoke-free government-owned municipal buildings. The results of this survey provided a baseline for the Wisconsin Tobacco Control Board goal of establishing 100% smoke-free municipal government-owned buildings by 2005. In addition, the survey also obtained information regarding smoking policies in government-owned vehicles and the enforcement of existing smoking policies.

In 2003, the municipal government survey was repeated in order to monitor progress on this goal. The results indicate we have only increased the percentage of municipalities with smoke-free government-owned buildings from 52% to 56% in two years. This report provides outcomes from the 2003 survey and compares them to 2001 results.

Major findings for 2003:

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- **By 2003, approximately 56% of all municipalities had banned smoking in all government-owned buildings, an 8% relative increase from the 2001 overall level of 52%.**
- **Results varied by type of municipality - 67% of counties, 75% of cities, 58% of villages and 52% of towns ban smoking in all their government-owned buildings.**
- **Forty-one percent of all municipal governments ban smoking in all their vehicles.**
- **Over four-fifths (81%) of municipal governments that ban smoking in all buildings indicate they strictly enforce the policy.**

Background

The Wisconsin Tobacco Control Board set a goal to achieve 100% smoke-free municipal government-owned buildings by 2005. The Board set this ambitious goal because it expected municipal governments to serve as role models to other local employers in guaranteeing a work environment free from secondhand smoke. In October 2001, the Monitoring and Evaluation Program surveyed municipalities in the state and found that 52% of government-owned buildings were smoke-free.

In December 2001, coalitions received a Monitoring and Evaluation Program report¹ detailing the smoking policy in all their surveyed municipalities and encouraging them to work with those that did not have a policy or did not ban smoking. In 2002, the Tobacco Control Board directed local tobacco control coalitions to focus on clean indoor air as a condition of future funding. The current survey was conducted to gauge progress in the percent of smoke-free municipal government-owned buildings since the 2001 survey.

Methods

In July 2003, brief surveys were mailed to the same municipalities as in 2001.² In all, surveys were mailed to the municipal clerk for 72 counties, 190 cities, 398 villages and 320 towns (randomly selected from a universe of 1263 towns). The 2003 survey contained the same questions as the 2001 survey, for comparability of results.

The survey asked about the current smoking ordinance/policy in buildings owned or leased by the local municipality and in municipality-owned vehicles. Questions were also included regarding enforcement of existing policies for those municipalities with a smoking policy. Results were weighted for sampling (towns) and for non-response. A 97% overall response rate was obtained from surveys returned by mail and follow-up telephone calls. This compares to a 96% response rate in 2001.

For both the 2001 and 2003 surveys, responses indicating a policy/ordinance exists prohibiting smoking in any building at any time were coded as “banned in all buildings”. If ANY exceptions were noted, the municipalities were counted as not being smoke-free.

Results

The overall response rate of 97% varied by the type of municipality surveyed. A 100% response rate was obtained from counties and cities, while responses were obtained from 96% of villages and 94% of towns. This varied only slightly from the municipality response rate for the 2001 survey – 100% counties and cities, 96% villages and 92% towns.

Smoking policy data are reported as a dichotomous variable – either allowed (banned in some buildings/vehicles, restricted to designated areas, or no ordinance/policy) or not allowed (banned in all buildings/vehicles). By collapsing to two responses, the distinction can be made that public employees either are or are not exposed to environmental tobacco smoke in their workplace, regardless of whether the exposure is restricted to certain locations.

Figure 1 provides a comparison between the 2001 and 2003 survey data for municipalities that ban smoking in all buildings they own or lease. Figure 2 provides the same comparison for municipalities that ban smoking in vehicles they own.

Figure 1. Percent of Municipalities Banning Smoking in all Government-owned Buildings, 2001 and 2003

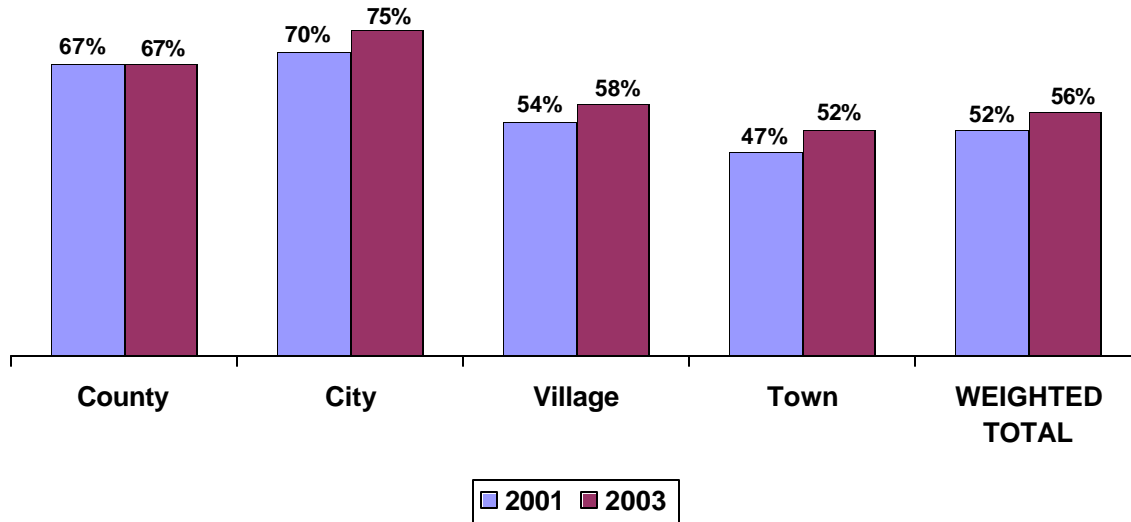
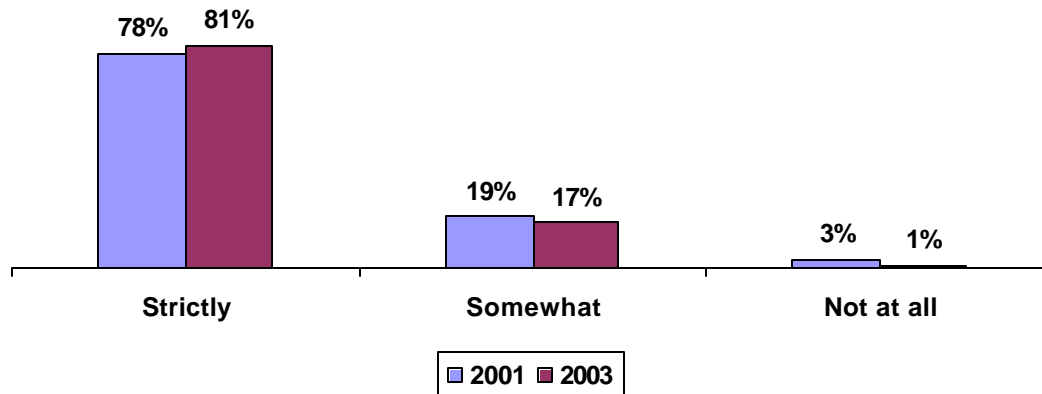


Figure 2. Percent of Municipalities Banning Smoking in all Municipal Vehicles, 2001 and 2003



A building smoking policy that is not enforced continues to endanger the health of those working or visiting the building. For that reason, municipal clerks were also asked about enforcement of their indoor smoking policy. Figure 3 demonstrates the comparison of building smoking policy enforcement between 2001 and 2003.

Figure 3. Smoking Policy Enforcement for Municipalities that Ban Smoking in all Government-owned Buildings, 2001 and 2003.



Comment

The results of this survey indicate little progress has been made in establishing smoke-free municipal buildings in Wisconsin. Even taking into account limitations such as clerks that do not know their municipality's policy or different interpretations of the question, an increase from 52% to 56% smoke-free municipal buildings in almost two years demonstrates there is still much work needed to attain the goal of 100% smoke-free government-owned municipal buildings by 2005.

In order to protect the health of government workers, municipalities should provide smoke-free environments in both government-owned buildings and vehicles. Although some progress has been made with smoke-free vehicles since the 2001 survey, more than 50% of municipalities continue to allow smoking in their vehicles. Data indicate that most municipalities with policies that ban smoking in buildings and/or vehicles strictly enforce their policy (81% for buildings and 74% for vehicles). Since enforcement does not appear to be the major issue, coalitions should focus their efforts on assisting municipalities to adopt written policies or ordinances that ban smoking in all government-owned buildings and vehicles.

The original goal of attaining 100% smoke-free municipal buildings was developed by the Tobacco Control Board to demonstrate their priority for clean indoor air related activities. This goal is consistent with the current 2010 Objective for Wisconsin which states "By 2010, decrease the proportion of non-smokers exposed to secondhand smoke" and the US Healthy People Objective for 2010 (#27-12) to "Increase the proportion of worksites with formal smoking policies that prohibit smoking or limit it to separately ventilated areas." Clearly, more progress is needed in Wisconsin municipalities over the next several years if these goals are to be reached.

¹ Hill, BL, Moberg DP. *Tobacco Policies in Wisconsin Municipal Buildings, 2001*. Monitoring and Evaluation Program Report, Madison, WI: UW Medical School, December 2001.

² Slight variations occurred in the 2003 sample due to migration of three towns to village status. Also, six additional towns were included that had been surveyed by a coalition in 2002.