

Choosing Among Evaluation Studies for Smokefree Policies

There are five broad studies that state or local tobacco control programs can conduct to prepare for a smoke-free law or to evaluate the law's effects after its implementation. Most sites will not need to conduct all five studies. Each site should decide which studies best meet its needs and can be implemented feasibly with its resources. The purpose of this section is to discuss several factors that sites should consider when developing an evaluation plan for a smoke-free law. After reading this section, a decision maker should understand how the local context—including the stage the site has reached in the policy process; the kinds of information that are being requested by policy makers, the news media, the business community, and the public; the specific provisions of the law in question; and the resources available to a site—helps determine what outcomes to assess.



The five types of studies are as follows:

- **Public Support.** These studies use surveys to assess public awareness of the health effects of secondhand smoke and of the proposed policy and public support for smoke-free environments and for a smoke-free law. They are useful before a law has been passed to determine if support is sufficiently high to warrant moving forward and to document the levels of support. After a law has been passed and implemented, these studies track levels of support and changes in these levels over time.
- **Compliance.** These studies are useful for assessing compliance with a smoke-free law in hospitality venues and other workplaces and public places. They can be used to document compliance rates, to assess how implementation is proceeding, to identify types of venues and geographic regions where increased educational and enforcement efforts are needed, and to monitor trends in compliance over time.
- **Environmental Monitoring.** These studies are conducted to observe and measure impact tobacco use has on the physical environment. The study results can be used before a law takes effect to document affect on venues that allow smoking. After a law has taken effect, these studies can be used to assess environmental changes in these venues.
- **Employee/Client Health.** These studies can be used before a law takes effect to assess secondhand smoke exposure and related health problems among nonsmoking employees in hospitality venues that allow smoking. After a law has been implemented, these studies can measure changes that occur in employees' secondhand smoke exposure and related health outcomes. For employee health studies, it is critical to collect data before and after the law goes into effect. (May only be applicable to tobacco free properties).
- **Economic Impact.** These studies use objective data on employment levels and taxable sales revenues to assess the economic impact of a smoke-free law on hospitality venues such as restaurants, bars, and casinos.