



Research and Evaluation Unit

Changing support for smokefree bars among a cohort of New Zealand bar managers

Summary Report

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Key findings from surveys of bar managers undertaken before and after the introduction of smokefree bars

What was the purpose of the Bar Manager Study?

In December 2003, amendments to the Smoke-free Environments Act (1990) required all workplaces in New Zealand, including bars, to be completely smokefree indoors from 10 December 2004.

Before this requirement came into effect, the Ministry of Health wanted to find out how bar managers felt about the introduction of smokefree bars. They focused on bar managers because this group of workers was expected to be in the 'front-line' when bars became smokefree. This front-line role meant that bar managers were likely to hear first-hand what staff and patrons thought about the changes. Bar managers would also play a key role in implementing the changes to the law by enforcing smoking bans and this role, along with their responsibility for ensuring that businesses continued to be profitable, meant that they would have important insights into the *actual* implementation of smokefree bars.

How was the Study conducted?

The Ministry of Health commissioned the Health Sponsorship Council to conduct a nationwide survey of bar managers, drawn from a cross-section of New Zealand's hospitality venues. The survey was undertaken the month before smokefree bars were introduced (November 2004) and repeated five and eleven months after smokefree bars came into effect (May and November 2005). Participants in the first survey were invited to take part in the follow-up surveys. Interviews were by telephone and similar questions were asked in each of the three surveys.

Who participated in the Study?

255 bar managers, representing licensed hotels, taverns, chartered clubs and country clubs from across New Zealand, participated in all three surveys.

When the first survey was carried out (the month before the introduction of the smoking ban in December 2004):

- 87% of bar managers had worked in the hospitality industry for more than two years
- 80% were aged 31 years and over
- 41% were owners of the venue, as well as bar managers
- 59% were non-smokers
- 47% were from taverns, 36% from hotels and 16% from chartered or country clubs
- 56% were from urban venues and 29% from rural venues
- 76% of venues had an outdoor area where smoking was allowed
- 66% allowed smoking only in set areas inside and 26% allowed smoking anywhere inside.

What were the key findings?

1. Support for smoking bans

The month before smoking bans came into effect, 4 out of 10 (44%) bar managers supported smoking bans in pubs and bars. This increased to 6 out of 10 (61%) five months after the ban came into force and support remained at this level six months later, when the third survey was carried out. Bar managers were more likely to **approve** of smoking bans if they were non-smokers, instead of smokers, and from urban, instead of rural, hospitality venues.

2. Perceptions of the economic implications of smoking bans

Five months after smoking bans came into force, just over one-half (53%) of bar managers believed that the economic impact of smoking bans on their venue had been negative.* This view was more likely to be held by bar managers who were smokers and those who worked in rural, rather than urban, venues.

Bar managers' views about the economic impact changed after the smoking ban came into force, as responses to the following statements show. Agreement with the statement:

- '*Bans on smoking in pubs and bars has no effect on patron numbers*' **increased** from 14% before smoking bans came into effect to 37%* five months afterwards.
- '*Bans on smoking in pubs and bars does not affect the overall profits of these venues*' **increased** from 15% before the introduction of smoking bans to 31%* five months after smoking bans came into force.
- '*Bans on smoking in bars and pubs mean patrons spend less*' **decreased** from 75% the month before smoking bans came into effect to 62%* five months afterwards.
- '*Bans on smoking in pubs and bars put pubs and bars out of business*' **decreased** from 60% before smoking bans to 49%* five months afterwards.

3. Perceptions of smoking ban compliance and enforcement

Five and eleven months after smoking bans in pubs and bars came into force, around 9 out of 10 bar managers reported that they 'very rarely' or 'never' observed patrons smoking inside their venue (86% of bar managers from the five-month follow-up survey and 91% from the eleven-month follow-up survey).

Agreement with the statement:

- '*I am confident patrons will respond positively when I ask them to smoke outside*' **increased** from 37% the month before the introduction of smokefree bars to 79%* five months after their introduction.
- '*Having to ask people to go outside to smoke makes my job a lot harder*' **decreased** from 80% before smoking bans came into force to 51%* five months after.
- '*I would ignore the smokefree legislation if I could get away with it*' **increased** initially, from 27% before the legislation came into force to 35% five months afterwards, and then **decreased** to 24% eleven months after the introduction of smoking bans.

* This figure did not change significantly between the five-month and eleven-month follow-up surveys.

What can we learn from these findings?

Findings from this study suggest that support for smokefree bars has increased among bar managers following the introduction of smoking bans. Bar managers have become more positive about their role in enforcing smoking bans and are less likely to think that the economic impact of smoking bans on their venues is negative. Views vary among bar managers, with managers who are smokers and work in rural venues less likely to be positive about smokefree bars than those who do not smoke and those who work in urban venues.

Perceptions of patron compliance were positive, with very few bar managers reporting violation of the smoking ban five and eleven months after its introduction.

How can I find out more?

About the Smokefree-Environments Act (1990):

Visit www.moh.govt.nz/smokefreelaw

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