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## **Households that impose smoking bans report less smoking**

*Is it because the ban curtails smoking or do lighter smokers adopt at-home bans?*

A pair of studies involving more than 450 parents in Philadelphia that examined the effects of household smoking bans found that homes that voluntarily imposed smoking bans reduced the number of cigarettes smoked at home.

A study to be published in the American Journal of Public Health (AJPH) and [posted online Feb. 13](#) considered the origins and effects of home smoking bans. The study found that the amount of smoking in a household had no effect on whether that household implemented a smoking ban. In other words, the researchers found no evidence that homes with more smoking were less likely to adopt a household smoking ban – or that homes with less smoking were more likely to put a ban in place.

“Smoking levels in these Philadelphia households do not determine whether someone implements a home-smoking ban,” said Michael Hennessy, lead author of the study and a senior researcher at the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania. “This is good non-experimental evidence that having the ban causes the reduction in smoking.”

Hennessy noted that there were two main ways to get people to reduce the harmful effects of smoking: through government regulation and through voluntary behavior. Behavioral change is a kind of non-legislative regulation of tobacco products, he said. “If you can get smokers and non-smokers to change their behavior in relation to smoking in the home, you don’t need legislation, lawyers, or government to intervene,” he said.

### **A second study examines the nature of home-smoking policies**

The AJPH study was one of two recently published studies on household smoking bans from researchers at the Annenberg Public Policy Center and the Philadelphia Department of Public Health. The second study, to be published in Preventive Medicine (and [posted online Feb. 25](#)), examined different kinds of household smoking policies among the same group of Philadelphia parents and caregivers who lived in a household with at least one smoker and a child under 13 years old.

The Preventive Medicine study, led by senior research scientist Amy Bleakley, found that 48 percent of those surveyed had a full ban on smoking in the home, 42 percent had a partial ban, and 10 percent allowed smoking everywhere in the home. In homes that didn’t have a full ban, policies existed about smoking in the presence of children. In more than half of the homes that did not have a full ban (54 percent), smoking was allowed in front of children.

Even households that reported having a full ban on indoor smoking said there was some amount of smoking at home. People living in homes with a full ban on smoking indoors said an average 1.8 cigarettes were smoked inside anyway. There were 8.8 cigarettes a day smoked in homes where smoking was allowed but not around children, and 13.3 cigarettes a day smoked in households where there was no smoking ban, according to the study.

Homes in which both parents smoked and homes where no outdoor space was available for smoking were less likely to have a household smoking ban. In homes that did not have full smoking bans, parents may have mistakenly believed that they were protecting their children from secondhand smoke by not smoking in front of them, the researchers suggested. The Preventive Medicine study authors said there was potential for having more homes implement full smoking bans by increasing awareness of the lingering effects of secondhand smoke, even when smoking does not occur in front of a child.

“Even with these household regulations, there are still a large number of children exposed to secondhand smoke in their homes,” Bleakley said. “These studies suggest that there’s great potential to reduce that exposure, especially in households where both parents smoke.”

Both studies were based on a telephone survey from May 15, 2012 through June 10, 2012 of 456 parents and caregivers in Philadelphia. The AJPH analysis used a subsample of 339 people from that survey.

The authors on both studies were Hennessy, Bleakley and Dan Romer, all of the Annenberg Public Policy Center, and Giridhar Mallya of the Philadelphia Department of Public Health. The Philadelphia Department of Public Health and the Pennsylvania Department of Health provided support for the studies.

The **Annenberg Public Policy Center** ([www.annenbergpublicpolicycenter.org](http://www.annenbergpublicpolicycenter.org)) was established in 1994 to educate the public and policy makers about the media’s role in advancing public understanding of political and health issues at the local, state and federal levels.