



**An Assessment of Attitudes towards  
Smoke-free Outdoor Dining in the City of Sacramento:  
2018 Public Opinion Poll Results**

**Background**

The Sacramento County Tobacco Education Program (TEP) aims to protect individuals and communities from the harmful effects of tobacco. One important way that this is accomplished is through policy measures, many of which focus on secondhand smoke prevention and reduction. While smoking inside restaurants and bars was banned in the state of California many years ago, there are currently no state or federal restrictions on smoking in outdoor areas of restaurants and bars. Because of this, several jurisdictions have passed smoke-free outdoor dining ordinances at the local level to protect patrons and employees alike from the dangers of secondhand smoke. In Sacramento County, there are two jurisdictions with existing smoke-free outdoor dining ordinances: the City of Elk Grove and the City of Rancho Cordova.

**Introduction**

A public opinion poll survey instrument was created and distributed by TEP staff in order to assess opinions on smoke-free outdoor dining among individuals who live and/or work in the City of Sacramento. One of the objectives in the 2017-2021 TEP Scope of Work (SOW) is as follows:

*“By June 30, 2021, at least two jurisdictions in Sacramento County such as (the cities of Sacramento, Elk Grove, Citrus Heights, Folsom, Galt, Isleton, Rancho Cordova, or the County of Sacramento) will adopt and implement a policy designating all outdoor dining areas, including patios, as smoke-free.”*

The City of Sacramento was chosen as the first target jurisdiction for this objective for several reasons. For one, the TEP had previously conducted public opinion polls in the City of Sacramento as part of its smoke-free outdoor dining objective in the 2007-2010 SOW cycle. Survey results indicated strong support for a smoke-free outdoor dining policy. The SOL (Saving Our Legacy) Project: African Americans for Smoke Free Places, a local California Tobacco Control Program (CTCP) competitive grantee and community partner of the TEP pursued this same policy and jurisdiction a few years later. Their public opinion poll results also showed high support for smoke-free outdoor dining policy in the City of Sacramento. At the time of their survey, there was some existing political momentum among some of the city councilmembers, but ultimately, the policy was not pursued. This was in part due to resistance and opposition from some of the prestigious restaurants and bars in the jurisdiction.

Recently, there has been momentum with Councilmember Steven Hansen, who has remained a supporter of a smoke-free outdoor dining policy in the City but has requested more current data. Upon discussion with the SOL Project, the TEP determined that it would focus its initial efforts for its smoke-free outdoor dining objective in the City of Sacramento. This was done in hopes of obtaining current and compelling data that would continue to reflect the promising results of past surveys in this jurisdiction and prompt action.

## **Methods**

A total of five data collectors (three TEP staff members and two SOL Project staff members) participated in the implementation of the public opinion polls. TEP staff reached out to the SOL project (who as previously mentioned, completed outdoor dining surveys in the City of Sacramento a few years ago) and requested a copy of the survey instrument to review. The three TEP staff data collectors then met with the TEP project director to review the former outdoor dining survey instrument utilized by TEP in the 2007-2010 SOW cycle as well as the one provided by the SOL Project. In this meeting, TEP staff made a few changes such as the inclusion of language on Electronic Smoking Devices (ESDs), the removal of certain questions to fit the survey to one page, etc. (see Appendix A for a copy of the final survey instrument). TEP staff planned to partner with the SOL Project at an upcoming community event to share a booth space and to conduct surveys for both programs. It was determined that it would be best to implement the TEP outdoor dining survey as a pen and paper instrument (as opposed to on a handheld device) to mirror the survey format that the SOL Project was planning to use.

Public opinion polls were conducted at a number of tabling events in the City of Sacramento as well as one in the City of Mather (41 surveys at the Black Expo on 2/24/18 and 2/25/18, 15 surveys at a Black History Luncheon on 2/26/18, nine surveys at Central Library on 4/4/18, 22 surveys at a Sacramento Republic FC game on 4/7/18, 31 surveys at a Sacramento County Office of Education (SCOE) Employee Health and Wellness event on 4/11/18, 11 surveys at a Kids' Day at the Capitol Event on 4/19/18, four surveys at a Promise Zone Health Fair at Urban League on 5/16/18, and eight surveys at a Promise Zone Health Fair at La Familia on 6/27/18. The surveys conducted at the Black Expo were conducted by both TEP staff and SOL Staff as part of the shared booth agreement; however, all other surveys were completed by TEP staff alone. TEP staff were required to complete 100 public opinion polls as outlined in its current SOW, but ended up exceeding this amount. A total of 141 surveys were completed.

Data collectors were instructed to mention the survey to all individuals, if possible, that visited the booth. In some cases, when booth traffic was slow, data collectors also walked around at the event and approached individuals to ask if they were interested in taking the survey. Data collectors were instructed to ask each potential survey participant if they lived or worked in the City of Sacramento in order to screen for survey eligibility. Incentives were offered to survey participants, and depending on the event, included either a grocery tote or a chance to win a gift card raffle.

## Results

### *Demographic Characteristics*

The first survey question asked participants to specify their connection to the City of Sacramento by indicating whether they lived and/or worked in the City. Results show that sixty-nine participants (48.9%) lived in the City, 20 (14.2%) worked in the City, and 52 (36.9%) both lived and worked in the City. The second question asked participants to record their residential zip code. This was primarily done to allow data sorting by zip code upon request by city councilmembers, community partners, etc. in the future. There were a total of 42 different zip codes reported in the sample. The most frequent zip code (13 responses, 9.2% of the sample) was 95823, but the majority of zip codes only had between one and three participant responses each. Participants were also asked about their tobacco use. The majority of the sample (96 participants, 68.1%) reported that they had never used tobacco. Thirty participants (20.3%) reported that they were not current users, but were former users. Fifteen participants (10.6%) indicated that they were current tobacco users. It can be inferred that this last group of participants consider themselves to be fairly regular tobacco users since there were no participants that selected the fourth answer choice, "Yes, but only socially or on occasions."

### *Awareness of Secondhand Smoke Risks and Exposure while Dining Outdoors*

Participants were asked two questions regarding their opinions on secondhand smoke outdoors. The first question asked if participants are bothered when someone smokes tobacco near them in an outdoor dining area. Most participants (125, 88.7%) stated "Yes," 14 (9.9%) said "No," and two participants did not answer. The second question asked if participants thought that breathing other people's tobacco smoke was safe, unsafe, or if they were not sure. All but one participant indicated that breathing other people's tobacco smoke was "Unsafe," (140, 99.3%). The remaining participant responded "Not Sure." No one reported breathing other people's tobacco smoke as "Safe."

### *Current Outdoor Dining Patterns*

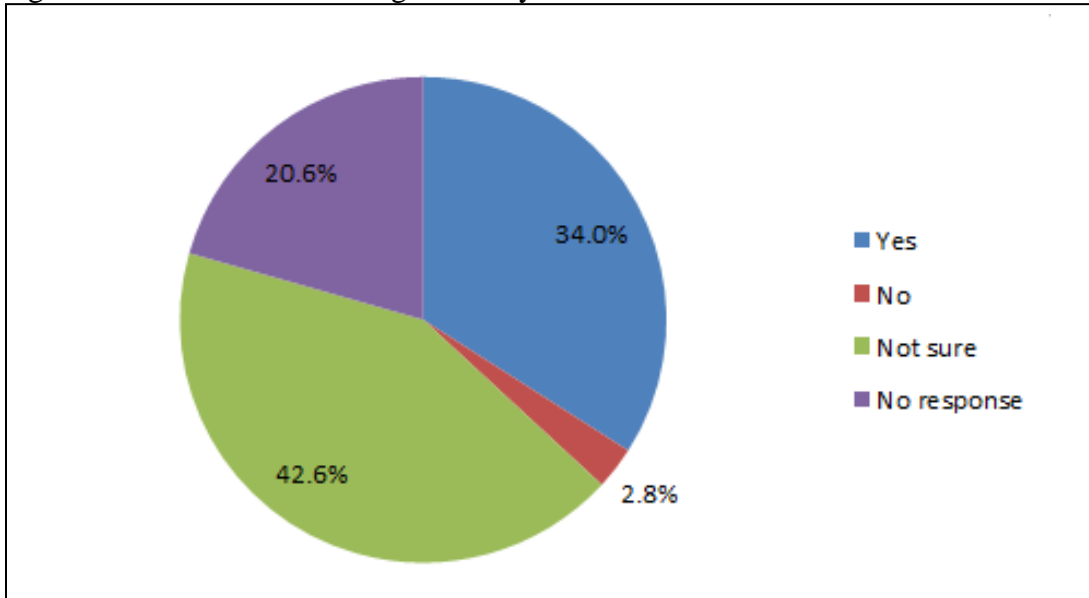
Three questions were presented to respondents inquiring about their current outdoor dining patterns and preferences. The first question asked how often respondents frequented restaurants or bars with outdoor dining areas. Sixty-nine individuals (48.9%) indicated that they visited these places "Less than once a week," 58 individuals (41.1%) responded "1 to 3 times a week," 12 individuals (8.5%) responded "4 to 6 times a week," and two individuals (1.4%) stated that they went to restaurants or bars with outdoor dining areas "More than 6 times a week." Participants were then asked whether or not there were any "No Smoking" signs in the outdoor dining areas when they visited restaurants or bars with outdoor dining. Fifty-three (37.6%) of respondents answered

“Yes,” 24 (17.0%) answered “No,” 61 (43.3%) were not sure, and three respondents did not provide an answer.

Lastly, participants were asked to name their favorite restaurant or bar in the City of Sacramento with outdoor dining, with a follow-up question asking whether or not the outdoor dining area was smoke-free. A wide variety of bar and restaurant names were identified as the top choice for outdoor dining, with over 70 different bars and restaurants listed among participants. Most of these bars and restaurants received between one and two mentions, with a couple receiving between three and four mentions such as Zocalo, Tower Café, and Chevy’s on the River. Approximately ten participants stated that they have several/many favorite restaurants, and 28 participants left this question blank.

Participants were then asked whether or not the outdoor dining area in their favorite restaurant or bar with outdoor dining in the City of Sacramento was smoke-free. Results are shown in Figure 1.

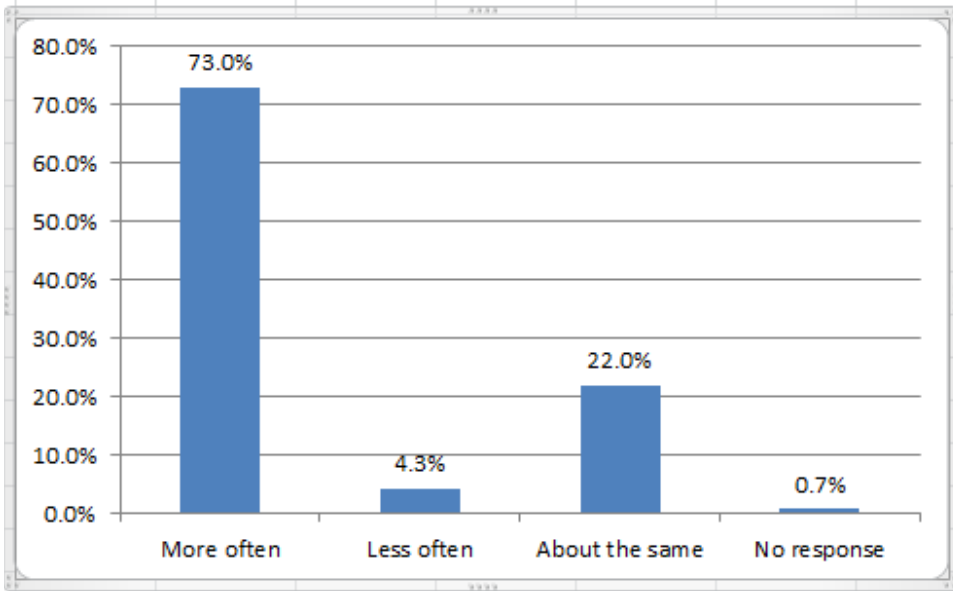
Figure 1. Is the Outdoor Dining Area in your Favorite Bar or Restaurant Smoke-free?



*Support for Smoke-free Outdoor Dining*

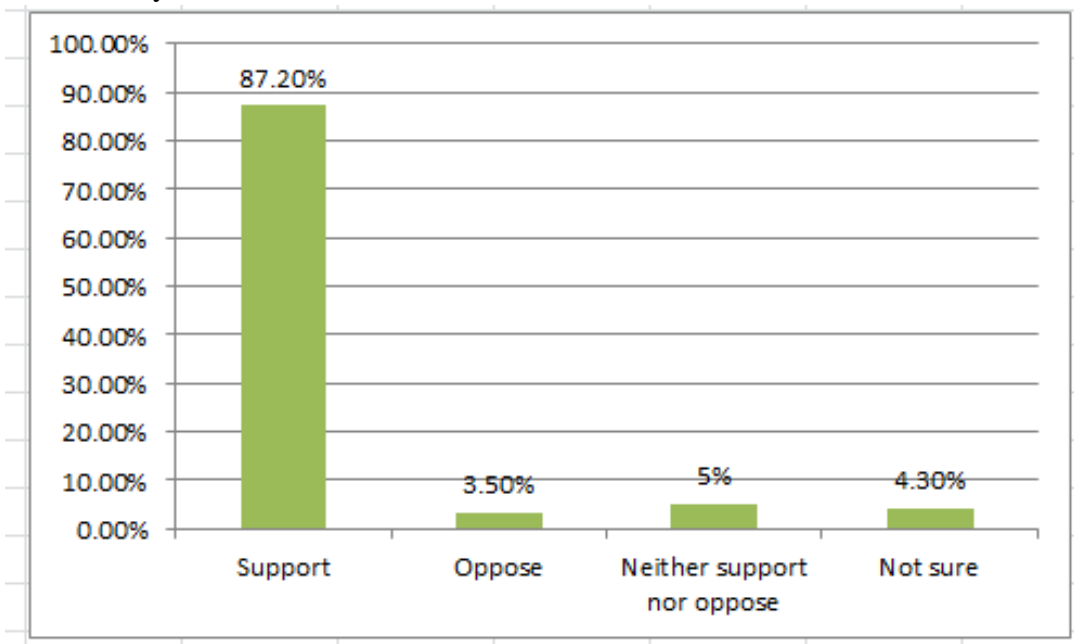
Participants were next asked about whether or not they would support outdoor dining policies in the City of Sacramento. First, participants were asked if they would be more or less likely to visit a particular restaurant or bar if the outdoor dining area was smoke-free. Results are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Would you visit a restaurant or bar more or less often if the outdoor dining area was smoke-free?



Next, participants were asked if they would support or oppose a law that would make all outdoor dining areas smoke-free in the City of Sacramento (a legislative policy). Results are shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Would you support or oppose a law that makes outdoor dining areas smoke-free in the City of Sacramento?



Finally, at the end of the survey, participants were given an opportunity to write comments. A total of 24 comments were received (responses such as “no” or “N/A” were excluded). All of the comments were in support of smoke-free outdoor dining and included statements such as “Yes I don't like cigarette smoking in my face,” “Smoking is bad indoor or out. Working on quitting myself,” “Finally, we as non-smokers have a voice and opportunity to do something about it,” “So glad I quit,” and “Please pass this!”

## **Discussion**

Overall, the results from the public opinion polls were widely supportive of smoke-free outdoor dining policies. There was no one that stated that secondhand smoke was safe, and only one person who was unsure. The vast majority indicated (some very strongly in the comment section) that secondhand smoke is a major health concern. Results showed very high level of support for both individual bars/restaurants making their outdoor dining areas smoke-free and a city-wide policy that would make all outdoor dining areas smoke-free. Interestingly this view was also shared by many of the current and former smokers in the sample. Another notable result was that while there was high awareness of the risks of secondhand smoke and strong support for smoke-free outdoor dining policies, almost half of participants were unsure whether or not their favorite restaurant with outdoor dining was smoke-free. This suggests a need for restaurants to increase their signage regarding their outdoor smoking policy so that patrons can stay informed. This is an important business consideration because based on survey results, knowing that a restaurant or bar had smoke-free outdoor dining would increase an individual's likelihood to visit the establishment.

These survey results reflect similar opinions gleaned from the previous surveys in the City conducted by TEP staff and the SOL Project. Results are supportive of smoke-free outdoor dining as an important measure to protect individuals and the community from secondhand smoke. TEP staff is in the process of assessing the current outdoor dining environment in the City of Sacramento by calling all restaurants and bars with a valid license and inquiring whether or not they have smoke-free outdoor dining policies. TEP staff plans to combine this information with the public opinion poll results and create fact sheets and educational packets to inform key decision makers such as city councilmembers.

## *Limitations*

As with any evaluation measure, there are some important limitations regarding this public opinion poll survey. One limitation is that the results came from a convenience sample. Convenience sampling, while cost effective and easy to carry out, typically introduces sampling error, selection bias, and limited generalizability. Because of this, survey results may not be representative of those working and or living in the City of Sacramento as a whole. Another potential limitation is the differences among data collectors, settings, and incentives. While all data collectors were instructed to screen participants by first ensuring that only those who lived and/or worked in the City of Sacramento completed the survey, it is possible that data collectors forgot to screen or people who do not live/work in the city



completed the survey despite not meeting survey qualifications. Also, the fact that individuals were usually informed of what their incentive would be prior to actually completing the survey could have influenced the type of individuals that made up the sample. Lastly, this survey did not include demographic questions which may have been helpful or of interest to councilmembers.

**Appendix A: Public Opinion Poll Survey Instrument**

**What Do you Think About Smoking in Outdoor Dining Areas?**

The Sacramento County Tobacco Education Program is conducting a survey to see what people think about smoking in outdoor dining areas in the City of Sacramento. This survey is open to those who live and/or work in the City of Sacramento. Taking this survey is voluntary, and your name will not be recorded. Your responses will be combined with other responses and may be used to inform lawmakers about what the community wants. Please note that in this survey, the term "tobacco" applies to all tobacco products including cigarettes, cigars, hookah, electronic cigarettes, etc.

1. Please indicate your connection(s) to the City of Sacramento.

- I live in the City of Sacramento
- I work in the City of Sacramento

2. What is your residential zip code? \_\_\_\_\_

3. How often do you go to restaurants or bars with an outdoor dining area?

- Less than once a week
- 1 to 3 times a week
- 4 to 6 times a week
- More than 6 times a week

4. Does it bother you when someone smokes tobacco near you in an outdoor dining area?

- Yes
- No

5. Do you think that breathing other people's tobacco smoke is safe or unsafe?

- Safe
- Unsafe
- Not Sure

6. When you go to restaurants or bars with outdoor dining areas, are there any "No Smoking" signs in the outdoor dining areas?

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure

7. If a restaurant or bar's outdoor dining area was smoke-free, would you go there more often or less often?

- More Often
- Less Often
- About the Same

8. Would you support or oppose a law that makes outdoor dining areas smoke-free in the City of Sacramento?

- Support
- Oppose
- Neither Support nor Oppose
- Not Sure

9. What is your favorite restaurant or bar in the City of Sacramento with outdoor dining?

\_\_\_\_\_

Is the outdoor dining area smoke-free?  Yes  No  Not Sure

10. Do you currently use tobacco?

- Yes
- Yes, but only socially or on occasions
- No, but I am a former tobacco user
- No, and I have never used tobacco

11. Do you have any comments?

**Thank you for your time!**

Staff Only-Location: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_