

Survey of Apartment Owners, Property Managers And Strata Corporations/Agents



About the Survey

In support of this initiative, NRG Research Group conducted a web survey of apartment owners, managers and condominium owners/councils/agents on behalf of the Heart and Stroke Foundation. The goal of this survey is to help develop resources that owners and managers can use to implement smoke-free policies in their buildings.

Two hundred and twenty seven online surveys were completed between February 22 and April 16, 2008. Of the 227 respondents:

- 38 percent were apartment building owners
- 29 percent were apartment building managers, and
- 33 percent were strata council members/strata owners/strata agents.

Participants were recruited through industry Associations, including:

- The Rental Owners and Managers Association
- The BC Apartment Owners and Managers Association
- The Condominium Home Owners Association of BC, and
- The Professional Association of Managing Agents.

(Note: Results of this survey should be interpreted with caution given the small sample size, especially among the strata Council/owner/Agent respondents)

The Role of the Heart and Stroke Foundation of B.C. & Yukon

The Heart and Stroke Foundation of B.C. & Yukon is the lead organization responsible for implementing the Smoke-Free Housing in Apartments and Condominiums. The goal of this two-year initiative is

- To increase the availability of smoke-free living options in condominiums and apartments, and
- To encourage more voluntary smoke-free policies in multi-unit dwellings.

Survey Highlights

The Survey found that there is a strong market for smoke-free housing:

- 82 percent of all respondents believe that there is either a very big (54 percent) or some (28 percent) market demand for smoke-free housing
- 88 percent of strata corporations and 74 percent of apartment owners/managers expect the issue of smoke-free housing to become more important



*Smoke-Free Housing in Apartments and Condominiums Initiative:
Survey of Apartment Owners, Property Managers and Strata Corporations*

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- Despite recognition by all respondents that there is a strong demand and that the issue will only become more important, only 17 percent of apartment owners/managers and 13 percent of strata corporations plan to implement a smoke-free policy in the future

Smoke-Free Policies Today

The survey found that there is a **patchwork of policies that exist across the province**, but notably, more apartment owners than strata corporations have some type of smoke-free policy:

- 61 percent of apartment owners/managers have a smoke-free policy at all of their buildings;
- 9 percent have a policy at some of their buildings; and
- 31 percent do not have a smoke-free policy at all.

In contrast, three quarters (75 percent) of strata owners live in buildings that do not currently have a smoke-free policy.

Of respondents with smoke-free policies, there are notable differences between apartment owners/managers and strata corporations regarding where smoking is banned: (See Table)

TABLE: Comparison of Smoke-Free Areas in Apartments Versus Condominiums

Areas Designated As Smoke-Free	Apartment Owner/Manager	Strata Owner/Agent
Inside all suites	77 percent	16 percent
Inside some suites	18 percent	11 percent
On balconies and patios	35 percent	21 percent
In indoor common areas	60 percent	84 percent
In outdoor common areas	25 percent	26 percent
Outside building entrances	31 percent	21 percent
The entire outdoor property	42 percent	16 percent
Total	105	19

Concerns with Adopting Smoke-free Policies

- Among all respondents who intend to implement a smoke-free policy in the future, the most commonly mentioned concern is conflict with residents.
- Among strata owners/agents, the next biggest concern is whether smoke-free policies are permitted by provincial law, mentioned by five respondents.
- Among both groups, other concerns included losing sales/business and the financial costs of smoke-free policies.
- Among all respondents without smoke-free policies, there is considerable uncertainty about smoke-free policies: 71 percent of strata corporations and 36 percent of apartment owners/managers do not know if their corporation will adopt a smoke-free policy in the future.

Benefits of Adopting Smoke-Free Policies

The most commonly identified benefits of having smoke-free policies cited by:



Cited by Apartment Owners/Managers*

- Reduced risk of fires (79 percent)
- Attract more non-smokers (76 percent)
- Lower maintenance costs (75 percent)
- Impact on resident health (50 percent)
- Reduced staff time to manage building (28 percent)
- Lower turnover (26 percent)
- Increased prices (17 percent)

Cited by Strata Corporations*

- Reduced risk of fire (58 percent)
- Fewer conflicts between residents (53 percent)
- Lower maintenance costs (53 percent)
- Attract more non-smokers (53 percent)
- Impact on resident health (42 percent)
- Increased prices (21 percent)
- Lower turnover (11 percent)

** Note: Percentages cited above are from multiple response tables, so percent may not sum to 100*

Most Effective Smoking Policies

Smoking policies that were most comprehensive, such as banning smoking in indoor units and outdoor balconies, resulted in the most benefits, including:

- Reduced complaints from residents about second-hand smoke
- Lower maintenance costs
- Reduced risk of fires
- Impact on resident health
- Lower turnover

Second-Hand Smoke Complaints

Strata corporations report more complaints from residents about second hand smoke than Apartment Owners/Managers:

- 70 percent of strata corporations receive complaints about second-hand smoke (yet only 25 percent have a smoke-free bylaw).
- Only 21 percent of apartment owners/managers receive complaints about second-hand smoke.
- While 78 percent of Apartment Owners/Managers rarely or never receive complaints, this mirrors the percentage of tenants (77 percent) who suffer from second-hand smoke but do not complain to the landlord (2008 BC Stats Survey)

The most effective policy in terms of reducing complaints of second-hand smoke is to ban smoking in all units and balconies:

- 74 percent of respondents with a total smoking policy rarely or never receive complaints.
- 50 percent of respondents with policies that restrict smoking in either some suites or only in common areas receive complaints sometimes or often.



Sources of Second-hand Smoke Transfer

Second-hand smoke can enter units via a variety of routes. Respondents reported that the most common sources of second-hand smoke transfer include patios, balconies and open windows.

TABLE: Comparison Of Source of Smoke Transfer in Apartments Versus Condominiums

Source of Smoke Transfer	Apartment Owners/Managers	Strata Corporations
Patios and balconies	58 percent	87 percent
Open windows	46 percent	63 percent
Via corridors/hallways	38 percent	45 percent
Air heating or ventilation systems	28 percent	21 percent
Cracks in walls, floors, electrical	15 percent	44 percent
Outside close to building	37 percent	37 percent

Note: multiple response tables, so percentages may not sum to 100.

Responses to Complaints of Second-Hand Smoke

Among Apartment Owners/Managers, the most common steps taken to address complaints included*:

- 83 percent talked to the tenants who smoked.
- 17 percent reported that they evicted the smoking tenant after all attempts to resolve the problem.
- 25 percent sealed points of entry or made modifications to the building.
- 14 percent suggested smoker move to another location within the building or another building.
- 6 percent did nothing in response to complaints.

**Note: multiple response tables, so percentages may not sum to 100.*

Where Apartment Owners/Managers issued notices to end tenancy because the smoke significantly interfered with other tenants, in most cases, the issue is successfully resolved:

- In eight of the cases the tenant moved in accordance with the notice.
- In three cases the tenant agreed to modify their behavior.
- Of four reported cases where the tenant applied for dispute resolution, the tenant's application was successful in only one case.

Strata Councils/Agents were less likely to take action in response to complaints of second hand smoke. While 27 percent of respondents took no action, for those that did take action, the most commonly taken steps included*:

- 50 percent talked directly to the resident who smoked (a response much less frequent than apartment owners/managers).
- 26 percent sent warning letters and 18 percent issued fines if warnings went unheeded.
- 23 percent sealed points of entry or made modifications to the building.
- 8 percent enforced the SPA Bylaw concerning nuisances.

**Note: multiple response tables, so percentages may not sum to 100.*

Of Strata Councils/Agents who took action in response to complaints about second-hand smoke, six reported issuing a notice to a tenant to rectify their behavior:



- In four cases, the owner agreed to modify their behavior, the most commonly reported outcome.
- In one case, the owner moved from the building. In another, the owner did not move or modify their behavior.

Summary of Survey Implications

- A majority (61 percent) of apartment owners and managers have a smoke free policy. This policy can restrict smoking in all suites/patios; in some suites only, or only in common areas.
- A smaller proportion (25 percent) of strata corporations have adopted a smoke-free policy/bylaw.
- Nearly three quarters of apartment owners and managers (74 percent) and nearly nine in ten strata owners (88 percent) expect that the issue of smoke free housing will become more important in the future.
- There is a great deal of uncertainty about non-smoking policies among strata owners. 71 percent of strata owners do not know if their corporation will adopt a smoke-free policy in the future, compared to 36 percent of apartment owners/managers.
- The most restrictive smoke-free policies, where smoking is prohibited in all suites, appear to provide the most benefits. These benefits include reduced maintenance costs, reduced fire hazards, fewer complaints about second hand smoke and improved health for residents.
- Strata owners receive significantly more complaints about second hand smoke than apartment owners/managers, yet have fewer smoke-free policies than apartments owners.
- Strata corporations are less likely to take action in response to complaints about second hand smoke.
- In cases where apartment owners/managers have issued a notice to end tenancy, the most common result was that the tenant moved in accordance with the notice. In only one case did the tenant successfully dispute the notice.
- Strata owners report that when a notice was sent to an owner who smokes to rectify their behaviour, the most common result was that the owner complied. In only one reported case did the owner fail to modify their behaviour.