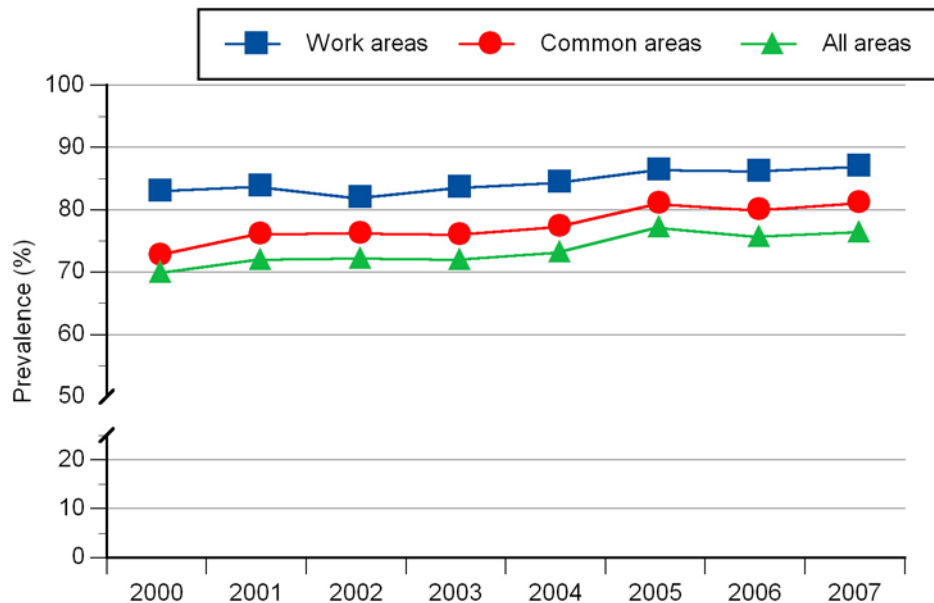


# Non-Smoking Policies in the Workplace in Virginia

The majority of workers in Virginia are protected from secondhand smoke through workplace policies.

- According to a 2007 Virginia health behavior survey, 87% of adults employed in indoor workplaces reported that smoking was banned in work areas, and 81% reported smoking bans in non-work areas, such as restrooms and break rooms.<sup>1</sup>
- 77% of Virginians (~ 2 million) report that their workplace has a comprehensive ban on smoking in all indoor areas work.<sup>1</sup> The remaining 647,000 adult employees are not fully protected from secondhand smoke at work. This includes nearly 475,000 non-smokers (~21% of the population).
- Since 2000, the percentage of adults reporting smoking bans - in both work and common areas -- in the workplace has increased (Figure 1).

Figure 1 - Percentage of Adults Employed in Work Places with Smoke-Free Policies, Virginia, 2000-2007



Source: Virginia Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System. Prevalence estimates are weighted.

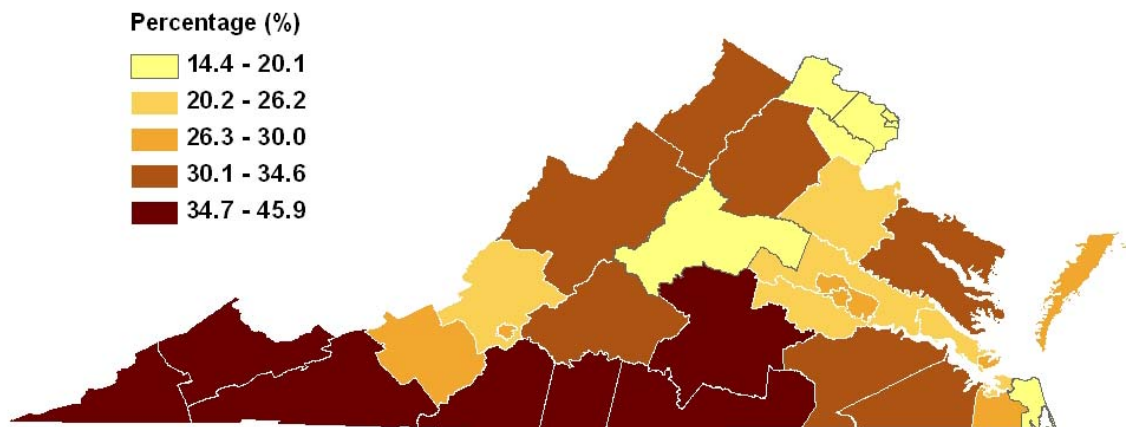
The following groups are more likely to work in places where smoking is allowed:

- Low-income (<\$35,000) workers were twice as likely to work in a place that allowed smoking than adults with a higher income (40% vs. 20%).
- Adults with a high school degree or less were twice as likely to work in a place that allowed smoking than better educated adults (41% vs. 19%).
- Black and other racial minority workers were 52% more likely to work in a place that allowed smoking than white employees (32% vs. 21%).

## *Non-Smoking Policies in the Workplace in Virginia*

- Young adults (18-24 years) were almost 2-1/2 times more likely to work in a place that allowed smoking than older adults (43% vs. 22%).
- Health districts in southwest and south central Virginia have higher rates of adults working in places where smoking is allowed (Figure 2).<sup>2</sup> Rates range from 14% in Arlington Health District to nearly 43% in Piedmont Health District.

Figure 2 - Percentage of Adults Employed in Work Places That Allow Smoking, By Health District, Virginia, 2003-2007



Source: Virginia Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System. Prevalence estimates are weighted. Percentages based on data from 2003 through 2007 combined.

Virginians still experience exposure to secondhand smoke while at work.

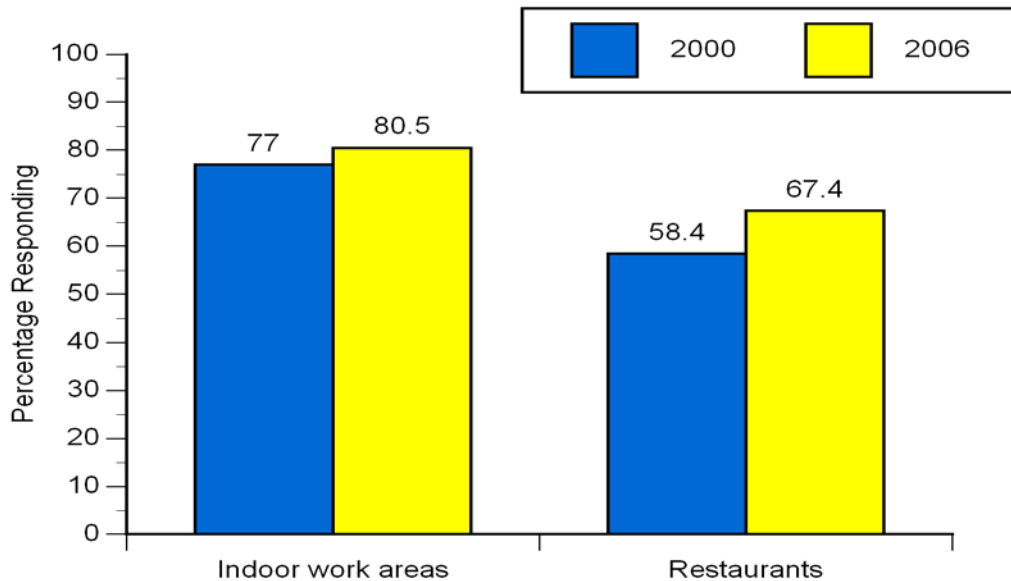
- Eleven percent (10.5%) of all adult employees recently saw smoking by another person occurring in their work area while they were there. Eight percent of non-smokers (~235,000) said the same recently occurred in their work area.<sup>3</sup>
- 14% of high school students said they were recently exposed to secondhand smoke while at work.<sup>4</sup>

As of 2006, the majority of Virginians favored policies that ban smoking in workplaces and in restaurants:

- 80% said that smoking should not be allowed in indoor work areas, and 67% said that smoking should not be allowed in restaurants.<sup>5</sup> This is a significant increase in support for smoking bans since 2000 (Figure 3).
- Even smokers are supportive: 57% say that smoking should not be allowed in workplaces, and 39% say that smoking should not be allowed in restaurants.<sup>5</sup>

## Non-Smoking Policies in the Workplace in Virginia

Figure 3 - Percentage of Adults Who Favor Tobacco-Free Policies in Work Places in Virginia: 2000 vs. 2006



Source: Virginia Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System. Prevalence estimates are population-weighted.

- According to a statewide public opinion poll in 2008:
  - 75% of Virginia voters favored a law that prohibited smoking in all public places, including workplaces, public buildings, offices, bars and restaurants.
  - 88% of voters agree that all workers in the state should be protected from secondhand smoke in the workplace.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Virginia Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), 2007. Percentages are weighted. Respondents were asked which best described their work's official smoking policy: not allowed in any work (or common) areas, allowed in some areas, allowed in all work (or common) areas, or no policy. Having a smoke-free policy is defined as not allowing smoking in any (work or common) area.

<sup>2</sup> Virginia BRFSS. Data for 2003 through 2007 are combined for more accurate rate estimates.

<sup>3</sup> Virginia BRFSS, 2008. Percentages are weighted. Respondents were asked "on how many of the past 7 days, did someone smoke in your indoor workplace while you were there?".

<sup>4</sup> Virginia Youth Tobacco Survey, 2008. Percentages are weighted. Respondents were asked "on how many of the past 7 days did you breathe the smoke of someone who was smoking in the place where you work?".

<sup>5</sup> Virginia BRFSS, 2006. Percentages are weighted. The survey respondent was asked "do you think that smoking should be allowed in all areas, some areas, or not allowed at all" for select locations (indoor work areas, restaurants).

<sup>6</sup> Virginians for a Healthy Future. Telephone public opinion poll (January 22-24, 2008) conducted by the Mellman Group, among a sample of 500 registered voters in Virginia. Margin of error is  $\pm 4.4\%$  (<http://smokefreevanow.org/poll08/>).