

Do Workplace Smoking Bans Reduce Smoking?

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William N. Evans, Matthew C. Farrelly, Edward Montgomery

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----- Abstract -----

In recent years there has been a heightened public concern over the potentially harmful effects of environmental tobacco smoke (ETS). In response, smoking has been banned on many jobs. Using data from the 1991 and 1993 National Health Interview Survey and smoking supplements to the September 1992 and May 1993 Current Population Survey, we investigate whether these workplace policies reduce smoking prevalence and smoking intensity among workers. Our estimates suggest that workplace bans reduce smoking prevalence by 5 percentage points and average daily consumption among smokers by 10 percent. The impact of the ban is greatest for those with longer work weeks. Although workers with better health habits are more likely to work at establishments with workplace smoking bans, estimates from bivariate probit and two-stage least square equations suggest that these estimates are not subject to an omitted variables bias. The rapid increase in workplace bans can explain all of the recent sharp fall in smoking among workers relative to non-workers.

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