



# Minneapolis Health Department E-Cigarette Policy Survey of Bar and Restaurant Owners

Research Brief, February 2014

## Introduction

Several cities in Minnesota have amended their clean indoor air laws to prohibit the indoor use of e-cigarettes. To assess the support for such an amendment in Minneapolis, the Minneapolis Health Department conducted a survey with a random sample of local bars and restaurants. Establishment managers or owners were asked about their experience with customers using e-cigarettes, their current policies regarding e-cigarette use, and whether they would support laws prohibiting the indoor use of e-cigarettes in Minneapolis.

## Survey Sampling and Methods

A Minneapolis Food, Liquor and Wine licensing database was used to identify restaurants to be surveyed. The list included 782 restaurants that operated independently and 275 restaurants that were part of 81 chains; one restaurant was selected from each chain. A random selection process resulted in a survey sample of 19 chain restaurants and 87 independent restaurants. Telephone surveys with managers or owners were conducted by a Minneapolis Health Department staff member and a consultant. The 76 surveys completed represent a 72% response rate – about 7% of the original total.

### Most establishments have not encountered e-cigarette use by customers.

Most respondents (62%) indicated that they had not encountered use in their establishment, while 29 (38%) indicated that they had. Of those who had encountered customers using e-cigarettes, 10 (34%) said these encounters were rare or infrequent.

*“[There is] not enough information out there. Kids and families are in restaurants and they should not be exposed to the e-cigarette smoke.”*

*“They are brand new and we don’t know what the effects are yet....Best to keep it outside with the other smokers.”*

### Most establishments do not allow e-cigarette use.

When asked whether they allowed e-cigarette use in their establishments, 44 respondents (58%) indicated that they did not, 15 (20%) indicated that they did, and 17 (22%) indicated that they were unsure. Five of the 15 chain establishments (33%) indicated that there was a chain-wide policy regarding e-cigarette use; two indicated that it was allowed and three indicated it was not allowed.

### Majority of respondents support laws prohibiting the indoor use of e-cigarettes.

44 respondents (58%) indicated that laws should be amended to prohibit indoor use. Their reasons for supporting laws that prohibit their use included:

- Lack of information about e-cigarettes, the chemicals contained in them, the health risks of exposure to the vapor.
- Concern about nuisance to other customers, especially children.

*“If you make the regulation, then we don’t have to argue with patrons about whether it is allowed or not.”*

- Benefits of having consistent laws regarding indoor smoking.
- Helpful to individual establishments so they not have to enact their own policies regarding e-cigarette use indoors.
- Concern about e-cigarettes as a mechanism for hiding drug use.

Another 20% of respondents did not know, did not have an opinion about it, or did not answer the question. Only 22% indicated that laws should not be amended. Stated reasons for not supporting

laws that prohibit the indoor use of e-cigarettes included:

- Supporting people using e-cigarettes to try to quit smoking tobacco.
- Overreaching government.
- Desire for individual autonomy to set their own policy.
- Feeling bad about people going outside in the winter.
- Not enough information indicating e-cigarettes are dangerous, harmful or unhealthy.
- Perception that they do not bother other people.

*“I would rather smell e-cigarettes than real cigarettes. I don’t think it is necessary.”*

## Summary

Despite little exposure to e-cigarette use in their establishments, the majority of respondents supported laws that would prohibit use indoors. Overall, there was a wide-range of unfamiliarity with e-cigarettes and a general lack of understanding about possible risks associated with them.

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