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Wis. residents prefer smokefree workplaces *94 percent see secondhand smoke as harmful*

According to a report released today, based on the 2003 Wisconsin Tobacco Survey (WTS), Wisconsin residents agree that secondhand smoke is harmful and that workplaces (including restaurants and bars) should restrict smoking. The report, "Secondhand Smoke: Awareness, Attitudes and Exposure Among Wisconsin Residents," found that exposure to secondhand smoke occurs most often among workers with less education and income, primarily those working in the service/hospitality and manufacturing sectors. These workers are most likely to support increased restrictions on smoking at the worksite.

"The data indicate that over 75 percent of Wisconsinites want smokefree workplaces," said David Ahrens, lead author of the report. "This includes 55 percent of smokers. Wisconsinites also recognize by a huge margin that smoking is damaging to their health."

Wisconsin residents are in favor of smokefree homes, workplaces, and restaurants, according to the WTS. Three-quarters of those answering the survey believed that smoking *should not* be allowed in any part of indoor work areas. Even smokers supported restrictions in indoor work areas and, by a two-to-one margin, preferred to strengthen smoking policies in the workplace.

More than 70 percent of Wisconsin residents reported support for local laws making restaurants smokefree. Support for these laws was the same across all socio-economic levels. Nearly half of all respondents said that they are more likely to dine in a smokefree restaurant while only six percent said they would be less likely.

Two-thirds of respondents supported policies that require bars and taverns to be either smokefree or only allow smoking in specific areas.

Exposure to secondhand smoke was strongest among workers with less education, particularly those in the hospitality and manufacturing sectors of the economy. Thirty percent of workers with a high school education or less were employed

in areas where they were exposed to tobacco smoke, compared to only 16 percent of those with a college degree. Similarly, 34 percent of respondents with less than a high school education prefer stronger workplace policies while only 27 percent of college graduates do so. This disparity likely results from the fact that those with higher levels of education are already less exposed.

Exposure to secondhand smoke in the home varied by income level, smoking status and family status. Close to 70 percent of Wisconsin residents had a total ban on smoking in their homes and only 3 percent allowed smoking at all times in their homes. Adults with children were more likely to ban smoking in their home as were non-smokers and persons with higher incomes.

The report recommended a series of actions to improve health, including requiring smokefree workplaces, encouraging smokefree homes and broadening public education campaigns about smokefree policies. Also recommended was providing access to resources for quitting smoking.

This paper is based on the 2003 Wisconsin Tobacco Survey conducted with 8111 Wisconsin residents by the University of Wisconsin Survey Center for the UW Center for Tobacco Research and Intervention and UW Comprehensive Cancer Center. The report was funded by the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Copies of the report are available online at www.ctri.wisc.edu and www.tobwis.org or can be obtained by calling 608-262-8673.

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(see attached graphs)