



Decima's Ottawa Market Pulse

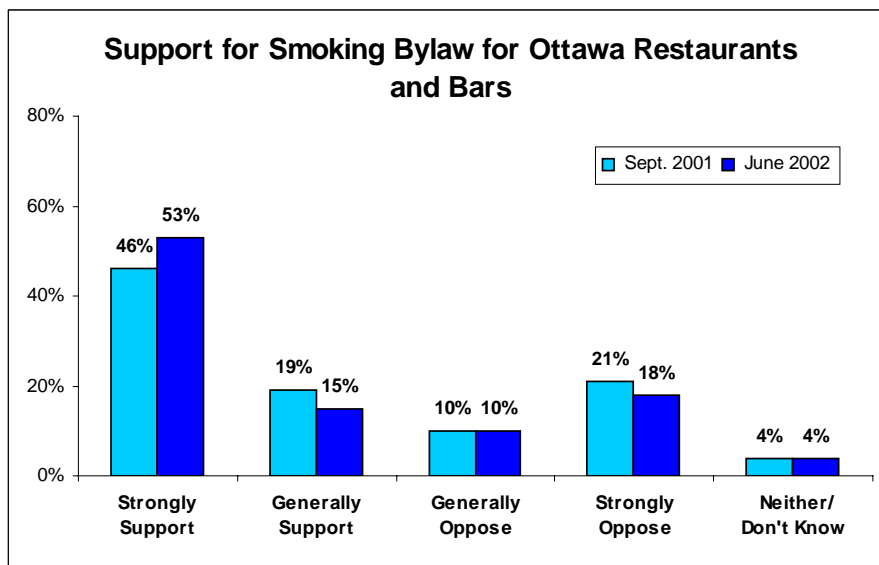
A Decima Quarterly Report on National Capital Region

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Public Support Grows for City's Smoking By-law No net reduction city-wide in visits to bars and restaurants

Ottawa: Public support for the City of Ottawa's by-law prohibiting smoking in enclosed public places has strengthened since being introduced almost a year ago, according to a survey completed last month by Decima Research Inc.

Close to seven in ten City residents now strongly (53%) or generally (15%) support the by-law restricting smoking in all public places and work places (including restaurants, bars, bingo halls, bowling alleys and taxis). This is a stronger level of support than was recorded on a previous Decima survey last September, shortly after the measure was introduced. The percentage who *strongly* support the smoking ban has risen by 7 percentage points over this period of time (to 53%), while the percentage who generally or strongly oppose it has declined marginally to 28 percent (compared with 31%).



Personal use of tobacco continues to be a key factor influencing attitudes about this issue, but support for the by-law has risen among smokers as well as non-smokers. This measure is backed by almost all (89%) residents who have never smoked, with three-quarters (74%) of this group indicating they *strongly* support it (up from 69% last September). A clear majority (68%) of former smokers also support the by-law (virtually unchanged from the 69% who expressed this support last September).



Current smokers (who make up 22% of the City population) are much less apt to endorse this by-law, but the degree of opposition within this group has diminished over the past 10 months. Among current smokers, one-third (33%) now support the by-law, compared with 27% last September. By comparison, the proportion of smokers who *strongly oppose* this measure has declined markedly to 38 percent (down from 55% in September).

The Ottawa bylaw also receives majority support from residents across the river in the City of Gatineau. More than six in ten Gatineau residents strongly (39%) or generally (23%) support the Ottawa smoking ban, compared with three in ten who generally (10%) or strongly (21%) oppose it.

Apart from how citizens feel about the smoking by-law, it does not appear to have any net impact city-wide on the frequency with which residents are visiting City restaurants and bars since it was introduced last August. When asked generally about whether or not their frequency in visiting such establishments has changed in the past year (for any reason), more than one in four (27%) say they are now going less often, compared with 17 percent who report to be doing so more often than before. A slim majority (53%) say they are going as often as before.

However, the reasons given for changing the frequency of such visits are primarily due to personal circumstances (such as the availability of time and money to go out), rather than specifically because of the restrictions on smoking. Overall, only 8 percent of area residents specifically identify the smoking by-law as a reason why they are spending *less time* in Ottawa restaurants and bars, compared with 7 percent who say this is a reason why they are visiting such establishments *more often*.

"This survey tells us that the City's smoking by-law has been accepted by the critical mass of area residents during its crucial early period of implementation", comments Dr. Keith Neuman, Senior Vice President with Decima Research. "While specific establishments may have experienced a decline in business, across the City overall the loss of customers due to this restriction is largely offset by others who are now more likely to visit bars and restaurants because they are smoke-free."

These results are drawn from Decima's new ***Ottawa Market Pulse***, a quarterly survey of the National Capital Region. This survey was conducted between June 4-11, 2002 with a representative sample of 501 residents (18 years and older) of Cities of Ottawa and Gatineau. A sample of this size drawn from the population will provide results accurate to within plus or minus 4.4 percent, in 19 out of 20 samples (+/-4.9% for the subsample of 400 in the City of Ottawa).

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