

City's youngsters stub out after ban

Eighty per cent respondents of DNA survey claim the smoking ban has helped them quit

Apoorva Dutt

The smoking ban enforced in public areas two and a half years ago seems to have been effective, according to the results of the DNA-IMRS Youth Attitudes survey. Eighty per cent of respondents claim they've begun smoking less after the enforcement of the ban.

Smriti Jhunjhunwala, 23, started smoking at 18, when she entered smoke-filled pubs with friends. "I couldn't resist the temptation," she recalls. "It soon turned into a habit. But, once the ban was in place, I realised it was more of a habit than an addiction."

Jhunjhunwala successfully quit a year ago. "I'm glad the ban is still in effect because it helps people like me who have just quit: the temptation isn't there anymore if we go out to party," she points out.

Of course, there are many people in the city who are not bothered about the ban. Media person Sohaila Manjul, 21, has been smoking for the past four years, and doesn't believe the ban has affected "hardcore" smokers. "Everyone knows it's a filthy habit, but it's called an addiction for a reason," she points out. Manjul's main grouse with the ban is that she no longer sees the attraction of sitting down at Cafe Coffee Day, now that the experience of a coffee and cigarette has been denied to her. "I go more frequently to places which provide a separate smoking lounge, such as Shisha and Timbuktu," she explains. Manjul still

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smokes an average of eight cigarettes a day.

It's been two months since Rohit Mahajan, 28, an events manager in Bandra, quit smoking. He insists that it only takes

some will-power to quit, something most smokers shy away from. But he can't comprehend how effective the ban has been on a larger scale. "Yeah, people might stop smoking in pubs and bars, but if you don't have a stronger reason to quit, no ban is going to make you stop," he says unequivocally.

Dr Vidya Pai, a general practitioner, says that in her experience, the ban has had no effect on her patients who indulge in the habit. Rather, the frequency has increased alarmingly amongst the youth. "I see young schoolchildren smoking at Carter Road," she recounts. "The ban, in my opinion, has been ineffective. The problem is that if somebody violates the ban, how and to whom can we report them? There is no infrastructure supporting this arbitrary ban."

Manjul admits that she understands the positive effects of the ban. "Non-smokers are now in peace. The whole experience of clubbing has gotten better. The air is cleaner," she says.

Himanshu Goenka, 26, a television producer, has been smoking for ten years now, and doesn't like that smoker's rights are being ignored. "We have a right to smoke. I understand the perils of passive smoking. But the ban is ridiculous given the levels of pollution we are all subjected to everyday," he observes.

All names changed on request