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Smokers are the new pariahs

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Middle-Class May Shun Smokers, But Tobacco Use Among Street Children Still A Problem

Smokers are the new pariahs

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: Be it the boss or the best friend, Mumbaikars will not hesitate in telling off smokers lighting up in public places. This was one of the key findings of a survey—conducted by the NGO, Salaam Bombay Foundation—which was released on Thursday.

The NGO interviewed around 2,000 people in the 18 to 40 age-group—mainly hailing from Mumbai's middle-class—at various malls and railway stations with the aim of finding out what action individuals would take if they found someone smoking around them.

The results, which were released on the eve of World Anti-Tobacco Day observed on May 31, found that 43% of the adults interviewed "would ask their boss or senior to go and smoke somewhere else". In other words, it found an overwhelming support for a smoke-free environment.

"A few years ago, people were not aware of the fact that they could take a stand against smoking. Now, they have a legislation supporting their aversion to the smoking and tobacco habit," said Devika Chadha, project director of the Salaam Bombay Foundation. Mumbaikars, she added, "obviously understand that smoking can have harmful side-effects. Our survey even found opposition to second-hand smoke, especially from women."

Furthermore, about 70% of the adults who participated in the survey claimed that they would make time to sit down and explain to their children the ills of smoking—especially if the child was emulating this habit

after seeing his or her favourite hero light up.

The smoking ban was introduced on October 2, 2008, in reaction to the slew of health problems associated with tobacco. Recent studies have shown that second-hand smoke can affect the fetus, while the correlation between tobacco and cancer was established long ago. Lung cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder and an increased risk of heart diseases and stroke have been associated with tobacco.

A fortnight ago, a survey by another non-governmental organisation, Healis India, along with the Tata Memorial Hospital and the civic authorities, revealed that the smoking ban was being stringently observed in over two-thirds of the restaurants surveyed. "It is not possible to achieve 100% compliance in such a short time," said Dr P C Gupta of Healis. "But, like the Salaam Bombay Foundation's findings, we too had found over 90% support for anti-smoking rules, not just in Mumbai, but across the country," he said. So, is the smoking ban effective?

Gupta believes that the answer depends on the social strata a person hails from. "Among the unlettered who don't know about the harmful effects of smoking and tobacco chewing, the habit is bound to be high. But among the educated, the awareness has certainly increased and this has resulted in a dip in the tobacco habit."

The ban can achieve 100% compliance only if non-smokers decide to protect their rights and seek its implementation, added Chadha.



A DANGEROUS ADDICTION

- 13.4% children were addicted to tobacco
- 47 of the 500 street kids screened in the state had pre-cancerous lesions
- A child from a shelter in CST said he started taking tobacco at the age of three
- The average age of street children using tobacco is 11.3 years
- 46.2% of children said their family members used tobacco

GROWING AWARENESS	Percentage	Findings
	51%	Of the people interviewed said they had no qualms about asking their best friends to move out if they smoked in a closed room
	52%	Would not hesitate in requesting an elder to not smoke when children are around
	43%	Said they would have no problem asking their boss or senior colleague to smoke somewhere else
	70%	Said they were keen on explaining to their children the ills of smoking especially when they find that their child is emulating this habit after seeing his favorite hero using tobacco
	58%	Said they would not think twice before acting if they found a person smoking in the presence of a child
	40%	Expressed the need for including tobacco control as a part of the school curriculum
A large percentage of women said they were averse to second-hand smoke		

SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS		
4 out of 5 Mumbaikars are aware of the ills of tobacco	3 out of 5 are extremely worried about tobacco smoke around them	4 out of 5 are not using any form of tobacco
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In the survey, which was conducted by the NGO Salaam Bombay Foundation, around 2,000 Mumbaikars in the age-group of 18 to 40 years were interviewed ● Another survey was conducted by the NGO, Healis India, along with the Tata Memorial Hospital and the civic authorities. The results revealed that the smoking ban was being stringently observed in over two-thirds of the restaurants surveyed 		