

DON'T SMOKE IN CARS URGES SMOKEFREE COALITION

**Media Release
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The Smokefree Coalition is urging smokers to consider the health of other passengers by not smoking in cars.

The results of a Wellington study published this week in the international journal *Tobacco Control* by the University of Otago indicate that at any one time, up to 6 percent of cars on the road have someone smoking in them. The authors of the study say that this is likely to greatly underestimate the prevalence of smoking per car trip. A quarter of these cars have other occupants who are being exposed to the effects of second-hand smoke which causes coronary heart disease and lung cancer, and can lead to acute stroke, even in non-smokers.

Commenting on the study's findings, Coalition Director Mark Peck said that while many smokers show concern for others by not smoking around them at work, at home or in bars, some think that smoking is still okay in the car.

"A car is an extremely confined place, and having the window down achieves very little in reducing the accumulation of the harmful chemicals such as arsenic, hydrogen cyanide, ammonia and carbon monoxide," he said.

"It is particularly distressing to see some parents exposing their children to the effects of second-hand smoke in the car. We know that second-hand smoke causes chest infections, glue ear, asthma, and even cot death."

Mr Peck is urging non-smoking passengers to speak up. "The dangers of second-hand smoke are now well-known and people should feel empowered to ask others to respect their health and comfort."

During the study, more than 16,000 cars were observed by medical students from the University's Wellington School of Medicine and Health Sciences at five sites in the Wellington region.

Car smoking rates reached over 6 percent in the high deprivation area of Wainuiomata, and 4 percent in Wellington's Central Business District, but were only 2 percent in the affluent suburb of Karori.

The study's results were published in the international journal *Tobacco Control*. It is believed to be the first anywhere in the world where traffic was actually observed and rates smoking by drivers and passengers measured. Previous research has relied only on survey responses.

Further information:

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For further information about the study, contact Dr Nick Wilson, Wellington School of Medicine and Health Sciences, University of Otago, 021 2045 523

A copy of the study is available by emailing nick.wilson@otago.ac.nz or on the journal website:

<http://www.tobaccocontrol.com/cgi/content/abstract/15/5/409?etoc>.