



TPCP

Tobacco Prevention & Cessation Program

Act 13 Survey Among Childcare Personnel

Report Prepared by
Rosa Pippin, MD

Contributors
Miriam Karanja, MBA
Bill Lieblong, BS
Wanda Simon, MS
Hilda Douglas, BS

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INTRODUCTION

Today there is solid and conclusive scientific evidence documenting the serious health risks that secondhand smoke poses to children. The list of these health risks only continues to lengthen. The 2006 Surgeon General's report on *The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke* concludes that children who are exposed to secondhand smoke are at an increased risk for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, lower respiratory infections, middle ear disease, severe asthma, respiratory symptoms, and slowed lung growth and pulmonary function. [1] According to the American Lung Association, secondhand smoke is responsible for between 150,000 and 300,000 lower respiratory tract infections in infants and children under 18 months of age, resulting in between 7,500 and 15,000 hospitalizations each year in the United States. Secondhand smoke can also aggravate symptoms in 400,000 to 1,000,000 children with asthma.[2] Scientific evidence has firmly established that there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand tobacco smoke, a pollutant that causes serious illness in adults and children. [3] Vehicles can be a significant source of secondhand smoke exposure for children. According to the California Environmental Health Protection Agency, the concentration of secondhand smoke in cars can exceed that in homes and bars by 10 to 100 times. Cigarettes are very strong sources of particulate pollution. Because a car is a small, confined space as compared to a home or other buildings, the levels from a single burning cigarette can build to toxic levels in a very short period of time. [4] To protect children from secondhand smoke in cars, Arkansas passed the Arkansas Protection from Secondhand Smoke for Children Act (Act 13) in April, 2006. This Act prohibits smoking in cars where children under six years of age and under 60 pounds are present. According to a 2010 Arkansas Department of Health survey, awareness of Act 13 among Arkansas Adults is 60%. In preparation for a statewide educational campaign to increase awareness of Act 13 among licensed childcare related personnel, the Arkansas Department of Health, Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Program (TPCP) in partnership with the Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education and the Arkansas Early Childhood Comprehensive System implemented an online survey from January 5 - 27, 2011 to assess the knowledge and support for smoke-free car policies among childcare related personnel.

OBJECTIVE

The objective was to determine the childcare related personnel's knowledge and opinions of the harm of secondhand to children, as well as the support for the current Act 13 of 2006, and for other stronger policies to protect children older than 6 while they are inside a vehicle.

SCOPE OF WORK

In collaboration with the DHS/Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education and the Arkansas Early Childhood Comprehensive System, the Arkansas Department of Health-Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Program, TPCP implemented an online survey among 2,143 DHS childcare personnel and other childcare related contacts in their database.

METHODOLOGY

A survey questionnaire was developed utilizing SurveyMonkey. The link to the online survey was provided to the Program Development Administrator of the Arkansas Department of Human (DHS) Services, Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education Program. The Administrator assumed responsibility for providing the link and requesting participation from childcare related contacts. The Arkansas Department of Health, Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Program would perform data collection, analysis, recommendations and distribution of results.

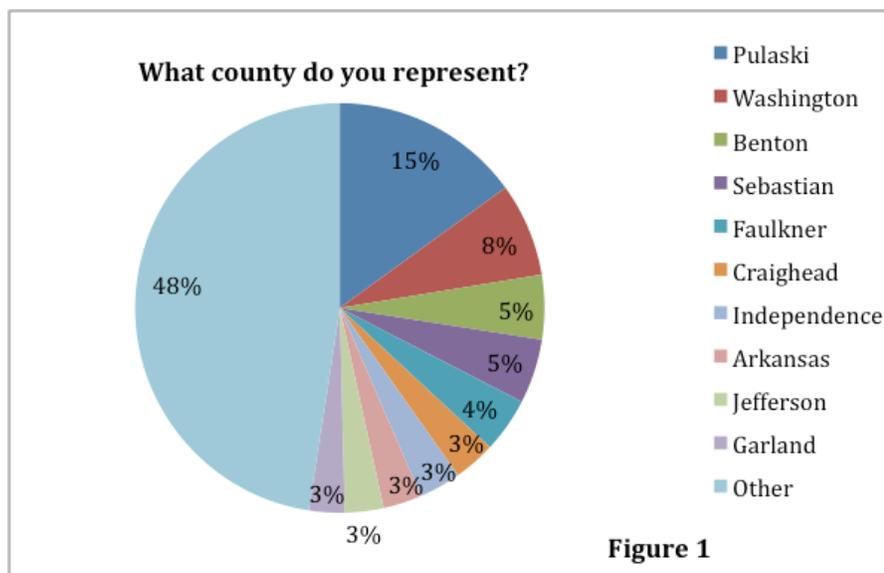
The link to the online survey was electronically sent to DHS/Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education Program Development Administrator who sent it to 2,143 childcare related contacts. Descriptive statistics were used to compare answers for the questions.

RESULTS

The email containing the link was sent to 2,143 childcare related email contacts, and 703 opened it and 395 completed the survey.

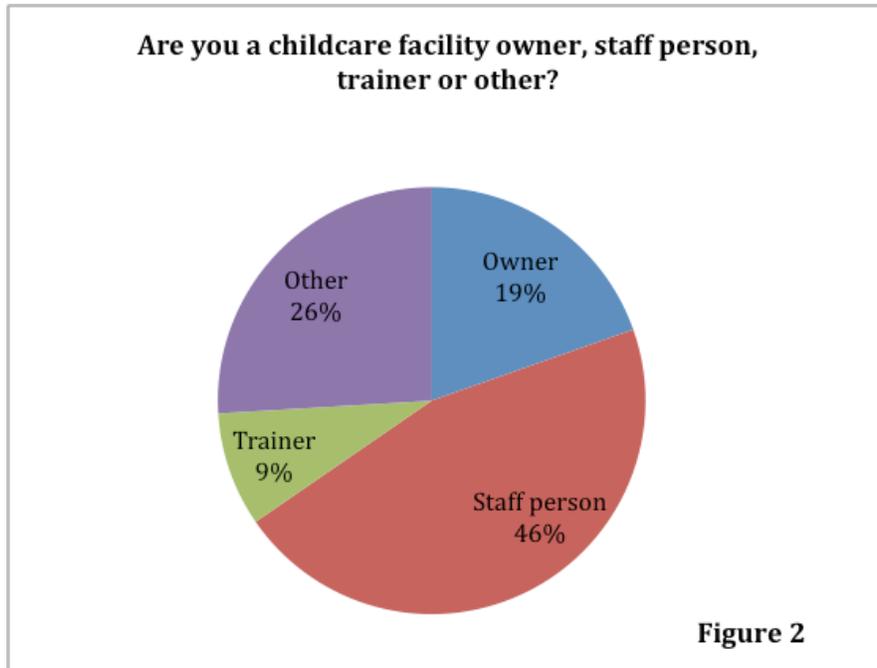
Geographic Responses:

Respondents to the survey represented 63 of the 75 Arkansas counties, a county representation rate of (84%), with Pulaski, Washington, Benton, Sebastian and Faulkner ranking 1-5 respectively (Figure 1). The top five reporting counties accounted for 36.9% of the total responses. The total responses from the top 10 counties accounted for 52% of the total and all others accounting for 48%.



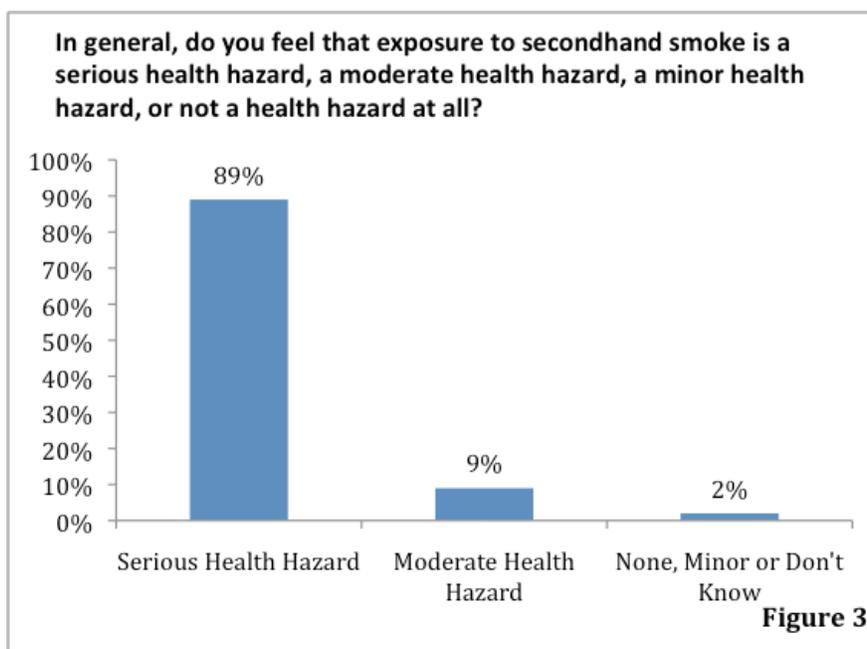
Responses by Category:

Among the respondents, 74% of them were either a childcare facility owner (20%), or staff person (46%) or a consultant/trainer (9%), (Figure 2).



Secondhand Smoke Belief:

Eighty-nine percent (89%) of the respondents believe secondhand smoke poses a serious health hazard, 9% a moderate health hazard, and 2% believe secondhand smoke poses no risk, minor risk or didn't know (Figure 3).



Concerning secondhand smoke and harm to children, 99% strongly agree or agree that secondhand smoke is harmful to children (Figure 4).

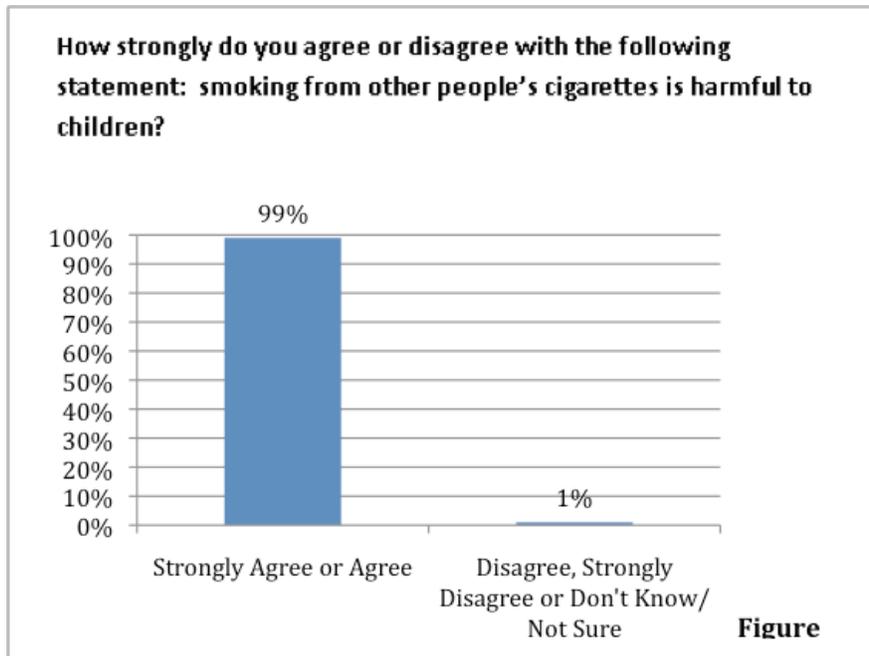
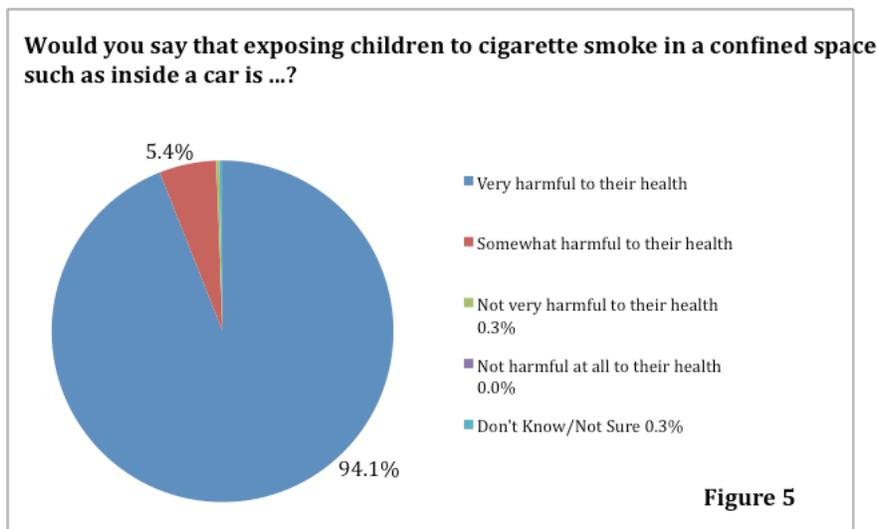
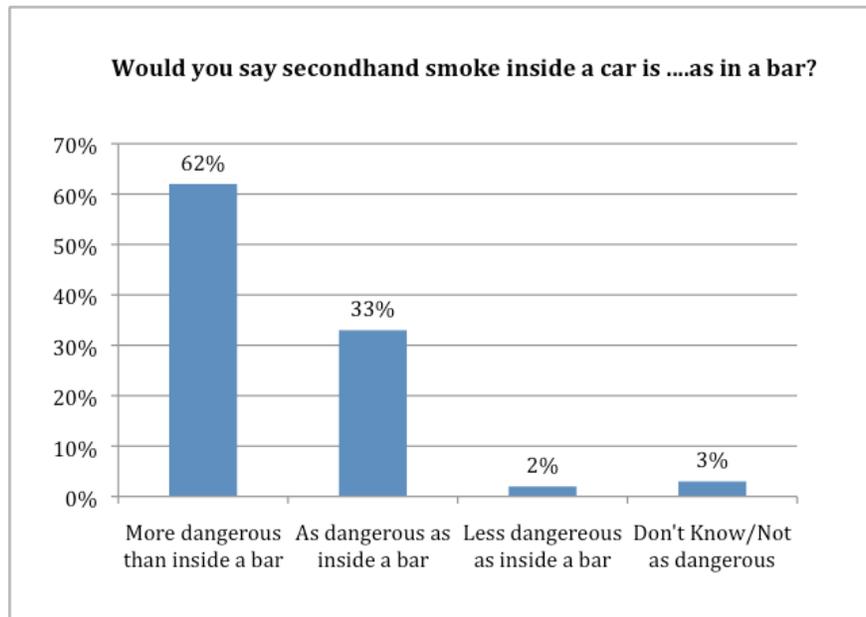


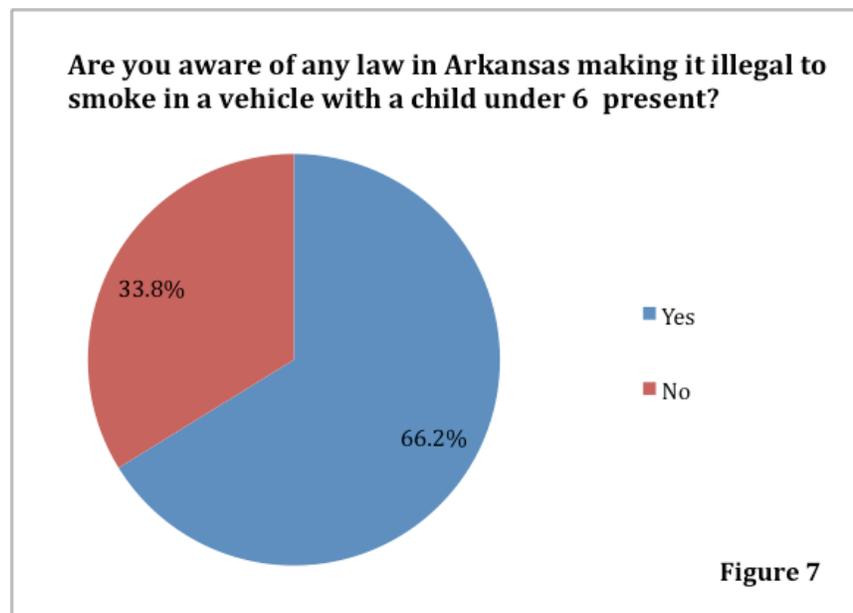
Figure 5 shows 99.5% of the respondents consider secondhand smoke inside a car to be very or somewhat harmful to children's health; and 95% consider exposure to secondhand smoke as dangerous or more dangerous than exposure to secondhand smoke inside a bar (Figure 6).

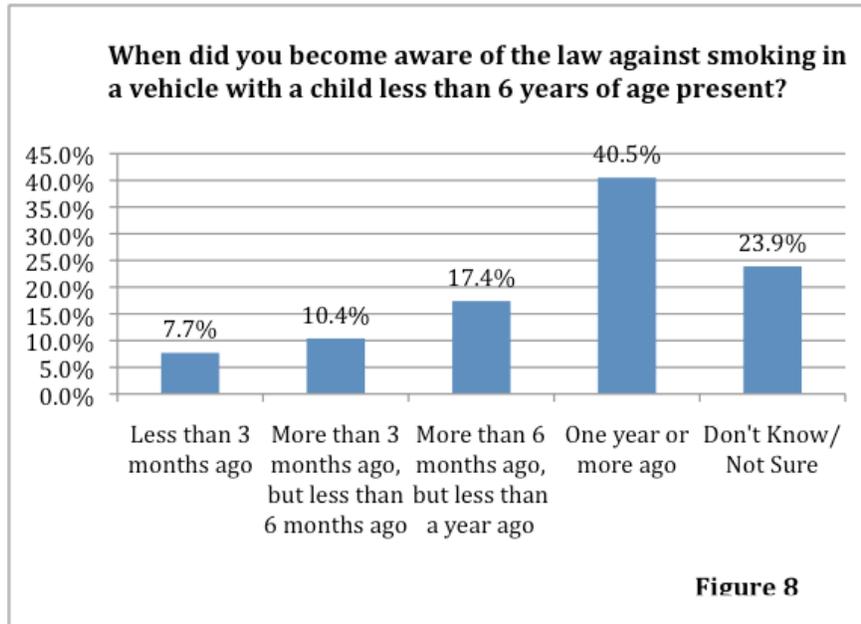




Awareness of the Smoke-free Cars with Children Law and Timeframe of Awareness:

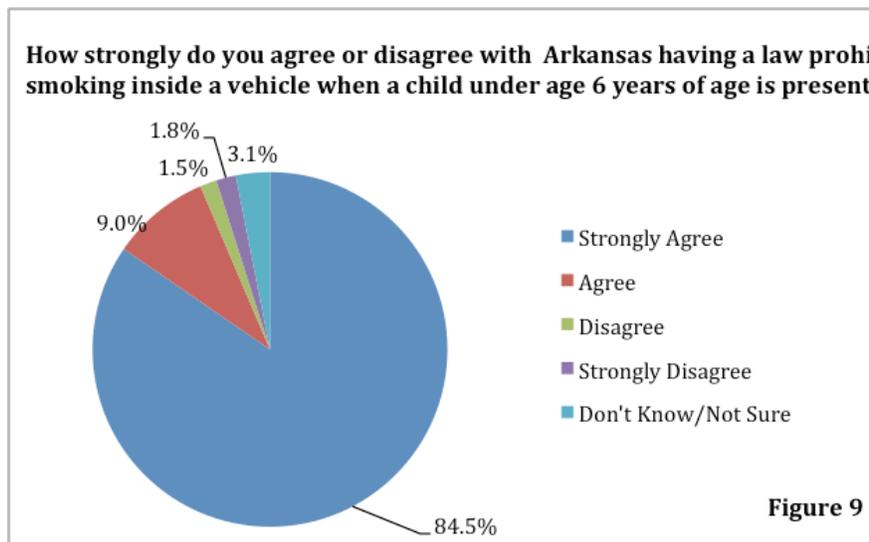
Figure 7 shows 66 % of the respondents were aware of Arkansas Protection from Secondhand Smoke for Children Act of 2006 (Act 13). Of those being aware of the law, 35% became aware less than a year ago; 41% became aware more than one year ago; and, 24% don't know or were not sure when they became aware (Figure 8).



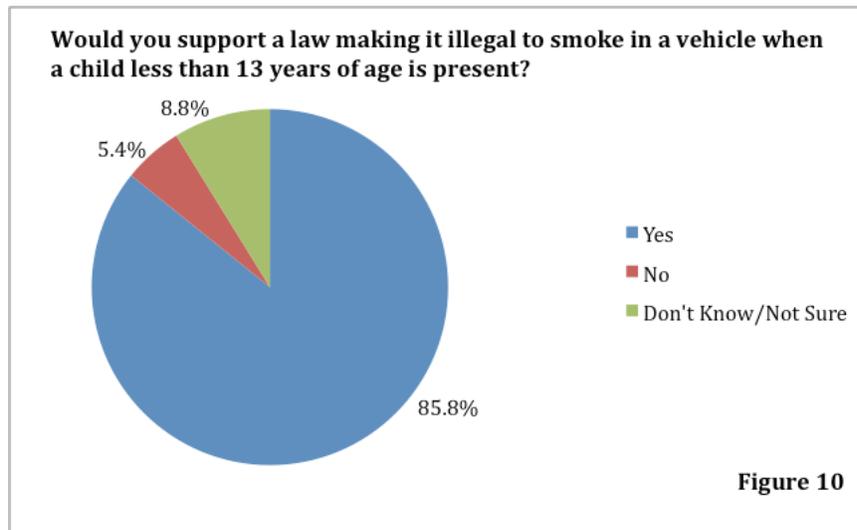


Support for Smoke-free Policies in Cars:

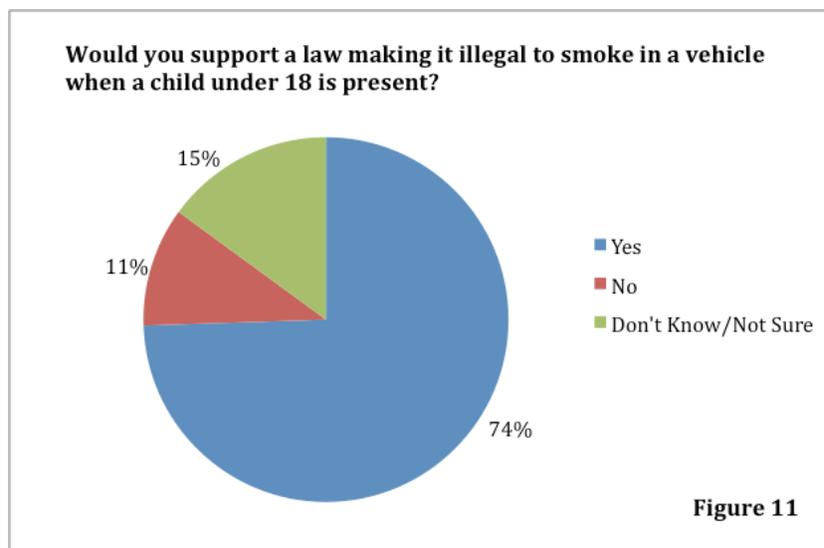
More than ninety percent (93.5%) of respondents support the prohibition of smoking in cars while children under 6 years of age are present (Act 13 of 2006) (Figure 9).

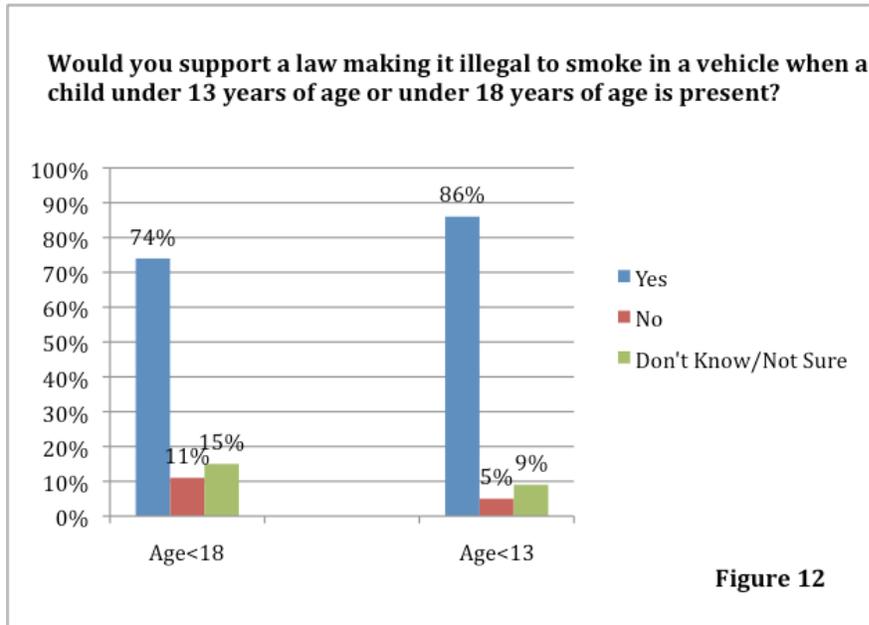


Almost 86% of the respondents would support a law prohibiting smoking in cars with children under 13 present (fig. 10).



Seventy-four percent (74%) of the respondents would also support a law making it illegal to smoke in a vehicle when a child under 18 is present (Fig. 11 and 12).





ANALYSIS

It is reassuring that the vast majority (89%) of the childcare related personnel believe secondhand smoke exposure is a serious health hazard; furthermore, almost all (99%) of the respondents strongly agree or agree that smoke from cigarettes is harmful to children. Also, the overwhelming majority (94%) of the respondents consider exposure to secondhand smoke inside a car to be very harmful to children's health. Similarly, almost all (95%) of the respondents consider exposure to secondhand smoke inside a car to be as dangerous as or more dangerous than exposure to secondhand smoke in bars. Also, the majority (66%) of the respondents were aware of the current law prohibiting smoking in cars with children less than 6. Of those who were aware, more than a third of them (35%) became aware within the year previous to the survey. The support for smoke-free cars with children was high with 94% supporting current law protecting children under 6 when riding with a smoker. Furthermore, the vast majority of the respondents (86%) would support a law prohibiting smoking in cars with children under 13 years of age; and a majority (74%) would support a law prohibiting smoking in cars with children under 18 years of age.

DISCUSSION

The results of this survey shows that although the majority of the childcare related personnel recognize the hazards of secondhand smoke to the health of a child, there is still one third of the respondents unaware of the smoke-free car law (Act 13). This is remarkable since the majority of the respondents to this survey would agree or strongly agree with Arkansas having such a law and respondents were people who work with children to which the law applies.

CONCLUSIONS

The overwhelming majority of the childcare related personnel recognizes the harm of secondhand smoke, especially to children's health. Still more than one third of the survey respondents remain unaware of the current law prohibiting smoking inside car when children under 6 are present. An educational campaign among this group about "Act 13" law would be beneficial to increase awareness of this law. Implementation of smoke-free policies in cars to protect children under 18 year of age would have good support from this group.

REFERENCES

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2. American Lung Association: *Secondhand Smoke and Children*, Available at <http://www.lungusa.org/stop-smoking/about-smoking/health-effects/secondhand-smoke.html>
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4. California Environmental Protection Agency, Air Resources Board: *Secondhand Smoke in Cars Fact Sheet*. Available at http://www.arb.ca.gov/toxics/ets/documents/ets_cars.pdf



Arkansas Department of Health