

Smoking on Campus

UASU Perks survey, September 7-10, 2021 (n=2173)

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Context

The UAlberta Clean Air Working Group is proposing a complete smoking ban on campus. The UASU has consistently opposed a complete ban on various equity grounds. A complete smoking ban would impose greater burdens or disadvantages on some equity-seeking groups than on the rest of the University community, which would violate the *Discrimination, Harassment and Duty to Accommodate Policy*.

In 2018, the University responded to the legalization of marijuana by implementing designated smoking areas. The UASU supports applying this strategy.

Faced with incomplete and ambiguous data, the UASU has opted to run a survey for a clearer picture of student attitudes toward a smoking ban or the implementation of designated smoking areas. **In this survey, students overwhelmingly support designated smoking areas.**

Sample and Platform

UASU Perks (perks.uasu.ca) is a gamification platform. UAlberta students earn points for activities like checking in at events, participating in a donor-backed vaccination promotion contest, or taking small surveys. Students can redeem points for real-world goods (e.g. branded socks or mugs).

This survey (September 7-10, 2021) received 2173 unique responses, a 58% response rate among Perks users in that date range.

Most respondents were undergraduates; around 5% identified as graduate students or recent graduates. Apart from faculty and gender, the survey collected relevant demographics suggested by research and equity concerns:

- Disabled (n=82)
- First Nations, Métis, or Inuit identity (n=79)
- Respondents who had been pregnant (n=12)
- Gender minorities (n=54)

> The UASU does not support a complete smoking ban on campus, for equity reasons.

> The UASU and the general student body, especially disabled and Indigenous students, strongly support the implementation of designated smoking areas.

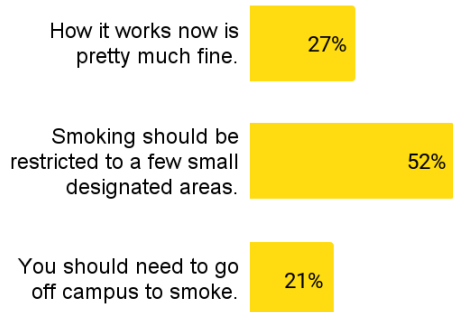
> Convenience sample collected through UASU Perks, a gamified student engagement platform.

> 58% response rate.

> Primarily undergraduate students, distributed across faculties and years of study.

Overview

“How should the University handle smoking on campus (other than smudging and other Indigenous cultural requirements)? Pick the answer that comes closest to your opinion.”



> The majority of respondents (52%) support designated areas.

Disabled Students

82 respondents (3.8%) answered ‘yes’ to “Do you identify as disabled?”

> Disabled students strongly favour designated areas or the status quo.

This is proportionate to the broader student body: disabled students comprised 4.0% of the UASU 2018 Annual Survey (n=5042).

- Support for status quo: 35% (8% above average)
- Support for designated areas: 46% (6% below average)
- Support for ban: 18% (3% below average)

The UASU is concerned that needing to go off-campus would inequitably impact many disabled students, including those with mobility impairments.

> A smoking ban would inequitably impact many disabled students.

Needing to physically leave campus to smoke would jeopardize academic and employment outcomes, and can even compound health impacts.

Indigenous Students

79 respondents (3.6%) answered 'yes' to "Are you First Nations, Métis, or Inuit?"

> Indigenous students strongly favour designated areas or the status quo.

This is proportionate to the broader student body: by official figures, 4.0% of UAlberta undergraduates are Indigenous.

- Support for status quo: 41% (14% above average)
- Support for designated areas: 43% (9% below average)
- Support for ban: 16% (5% below average)

After speaking with Indigenous student leaders, the UASU is concerned that needing to go off-campus would inequitably impact Indigenous students. Proportionally more Indigenous students smoke. The reasons for this are complex, and it is often an informal part of their culture. Only allowing for ceremonial tobacco use does not address Indigenous students' concerns. At minimum the University should consult thoroughly with Indigenous students and elders, and incorporate their feedback, before any decision is made.

> A smoking ban would inequitably impact Indigenous students.

Previously or Currently Pregnant Students

12 respondents (0.6%) answered 'yes' to "Have you been pregnant while studying at UAlberta?"

> Respondents who have been pregnant while studying at UAlberta strongly favour the status quo (i.e. no ban).

- Support for status quo: 50% (23% above average)
- Support for designated areas: 17% (35% below average)
- Support for ban: 33% (12% above average)

Gender Minority Students

54 respondents (3.1%) answered 'yes' to "Have you been pregnant while studying at UAlberta?"

> Gender minority respondents strongly favour designated areas or the status quo.

- Support for status quo: 39% (12% above average)
- Support for designated areas: 51% (1% below average)
- Support for ban: 10% (11% below average)

Variation by College

1456 respondents were identified as part of a college.

> Results were consistent across colleges.

Support for a smoking ban remained low (21-24%) across all colleges. Designated smoking areas had consistently high support (46-55%).

How it works now is pretty much fine. Smoking should be restricted to a few small designated areas. You should need to go off campus to smoke.

