

# Smoking and liberty

Business



Smoking has been banned in numerous places in the western world. In many countries, it's illegal to smoke in restaurants, bars, and even parks. It's led to questions over whether these bans are justified or whether they're taking away the liberty and freedoms of the general population. The main argument against the removal of freedom and liberty is the fact studies have shown smoking, as well as second-hand smoke, is bad for us.

It leads to lung disease, cancer, and poor oral health. One has to consider whether removing one supposed freedom, the freedom to smoke, is actually a step forward for the greater good. Furthermore, most people in 2013 don't smoke. Smoking has evolved into a social faux pas. Most people have become sensitive to the smell again. During the decades where the majority smoked, people were desensitised to the smells and the potential health risks of smoking.

If the majority of people have moved away from smoking, this must be considered a democratic step by people who no longer consider smoking as a positive thing. Another aspect of the debate over smoking and liberty is whether smokers are infringing on the freedom of other people. Anti-smoking groups claim smokers are taking away the right of people to breathe clean air in favour of their own selfish desires. Combine this argument with the fact most people either don't smoke or are looking to quit smoking and it's easy to see this argument has weight. Current legislation hasn't actually banned smoking itself. It's moved it to a place where the fumes from cigarettes no longer bother other people.

Some would argue this has enabled non-smokers to breathe clean air and smokers to still smoke. Although there was never any sort of nationwide referendum over whether smoking should be banned, those who did push laws through were democratically elected officials. Smoking bans didn't appear overnight. The debates were already present when we, the general public, elected these officials. These officials all had their own views on the matter.

If we voted for them, it means they speak for the people. Technically, we have exercised our democratic right in the form of electing these officials with these beliefs. As well as the fact we elected the people who drafted anti-smoking laws, look at the aftermath of the bans. In no area of the world has there been a concerted attempt to reverse the laws. The organisations arguing that smoking is infringing on our rights are a vocal minority. The wider public are generally accepting of the smoking ban.

And this has been demonstrated by the significant decrease in the number of people smoking on a regular basis. The health benefits revealed in various scientific studies have swayed the general public into accepting these anti-smoking laws. In conclusion, smoking isn't an infringement on our rights or freedoms. Anti-smoking laws were brought in only after many years of debate. And these debates were held by politicians the general public elected to speak for them. Rather than infringing on our freedoms, anti-smoking laws appearing in the manner they have done have actually demonstrated we do have the democratic right to determine our own destinies.