

California Home Appraisers Support Including Tobacco Smoke Damage in Appraisal Reports

The Policy Research Center for Tobacco and the Environment asked California appraisers to weigh in on whether sellers should be required to disclose toxic tobacco smoke residue and if appraisers include it in their reports.

Background



Smoking indoors leads to the buildup of **tobacco smoke residue**, toxic chemical residue that lingers in building materials and on surfaces for years after smoking has stopped.



A 2021 survey of 1,800 California residents showed that **96% of Californians want to know** if there is tobacco smoke residue in a home they are buying or renting.



Unlike other environmental hazards, there is currently **no legal requirement for sellers to disclose** toxic tobacco smoke residue or for buyers to receive education about it.

Home appraisals do not currently account for the lost value and costly renovations that can result from tobacco smoke residue.

What do Appraisers Do?

An appraiser's role is to assess a home's value, which determines the amount of money a buyer will be able to borrow to purchase the home.

When determining the appraised value of a home, appraisers consider the purchase price of similar homes that have recently been sold and basic features such as the location, land, size, amenities, age, and overall condition.



Methods

In 2024, the Policy Research Center for Tobacco and the Environment asked 17 California home appraisers, ranging from 32 to 79 years old who primarily appraise single-family homes, a series of questions in an online survey.

Results



While 88% agreed tobacco smoke residue can be absorbed by building materials

and 88% agreed tobacco smoke residue contains **dangerous chemicals**,

only 35% always include tobacco smoke damage in their appraisal report, **and 24%** never include it.

A majority did **support including evidence of tobacco smoke damage** in appraisal reports.

53% of appraisers answered **"Definitely Yes"** or **"Yes"** when asked if they support including evidence of tobacco smoke damage in the appraisal report as part of standard industry practice.



Participant

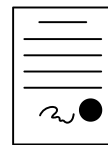
Real California Appraiser

"I am unaware if smoke residues harm people or animals if the house has been repainted and cleaned up. I would like to know or be educated on that information as I would disclose it in the appraisal."

On average, participants believed tobacco smoke damage could **lower the value of a home by**



11% to 18%



29% support requiring seller disclosure of tobacco smoke residue in homes.

47% or almost half, were undecided on requiring disclosure.

Conclusion

Overall, the beliefs and attitudes of appraisers surveyed were sometimes **inconsistent** and point to an **need for education** about toxic tobacco smoke residue in homes.

A majority of appraisers surveyed support including signs of tobacco smoke residue as part of standard appraisal reports, which could be an important step toward informing consumers and real estate professionals about tobacco smoke residue.

Published May 2025. Funded by the Tobacco-Related Disease Research Program #T33PC6863 and #T32PT6244.