



## Factsheet 2.

# Smokefree policies

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A doctor points to no-smoking signage at his clinic in Punjab, India. Effective signage is vital to enforcing smokefree law. Credit: Matthieu Zellweger

## What is a smokefree policy?

A smokefree policy bans smoking in a certain establishment, venue or defined area. It is most effective when mandated by legislation, with penalties for non-compliance. A comprehensive smokefree law prohibits smoking in indoor workplaces (including bars and restaurants), public places and public transport. A comprehensive law does not permit any smoking area, even if separately ventilated. Designated smoking rooms substantially reduce the effectiveness of a law.<sup>1,2</sup>

## The need for smokefree laws

Exposure to second-hand smoke causes a number of serious diseases including lung cancer, coronary heart disease and cardiac death. In children it causes Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, middle ear infections, acute lower respiratory tract infections and exacerbation of asthma.

There is no safe level of exposure to second-hand smoke.<sup>3</sup> In places with second-hand smoke, people are exposed to significant levels of pollution, including cancer causing chemicals and carbon monoxide.

## Status of smokefree policies

Comprehensive smokefree legislation is the most widely adopted tobacco control policy measure, with 1.1 billion people, or 16% of the world's population now covered. Since 2010 350 million people have been protected by new smokefree laws. As of 2012, 44 countries have policies ensuring that all public places are 100% smokefree

In China, the world's most populous nation, eight cities – Guangzhou, Harbin, Lanzhou, Nanchang, Shenyang, Tianjin, Shenzhen and Jinan – have developed comprehensive smokefree legislation, due to protect 70 million people. Three of the cities – Guangzhou, Harbin and Tianjin – have begun implementing their new laws. The success of this work has led to the development of a national smokefree law, which is currently being developed by the Chinese authorities.

Despite the success and popularity of this tobacco control measure, almost half of the world's countries have yet to implement effective smokefree laws. Nearly two-thirds of low-income countries remain unprotected.<sup>4</sup>

## Key Facts

- Exposure to second-hand smoke [SHS] causes cancer, heart disease and other serious illnesses in non-smokers.
- There is no safe level of exposure to SHS.
- Comprehensive smokefree laws, motivate smokers to quit, reduce tobacco consumption and exposure of non-smokers to SHS.
- Smokefree laws are popular and compliance is high.
- Article 8 of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control [WHO FCTC] establishes 100% smokefree work and public places as a best practice to protect people from SHS.

Public transport in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, is now smokefree thanks to tobacco control legislation. Credit: Matthieu Zellweger



## Benefits of comprehensive smokefree laws

Numerous studies demonstrate their positive impact on health, especially through reduction of exposure to second-hand smoke.<sup>5</sup> For example:

- Hospital admissions for heart attacks were reduced after the introduction of smokefree legislation in several countries including Scotland, New Zealand, Italy and the USA.<sup>6 7 8 9 10</sup> And bar workers' health was observed to improve in Ireland<sup>11 12</sup>, California<sup>13</sup>, New York<sup>14</sup> and Scotland<sup>15</sup> after smokefree laws were introduced.
- Smokefree workplaces help motivate smokers to quit and those who have quit remain non-smokers<sup>16</sup>.
- Smoking prevalence can be cut by 4%.<sup>17</sup>
- Smokefree laws help to reduce tobacco consumption. The World Bank estimates that smoking restrictions reduce overall tobacco consumption by an estimated 4-10%.<sup>18</sup> Smokefree workplaces may reduce overall tobacco consumption by as much as 29%. The number of cigarettes smoked by people who continue to smoke is also likely to fall.<sup>16</sup>
- They reduce overall tobacco sales, as has occurred in Ireland,<sup>19</sup> Norway<sup>20</sup> and Italy<sup>21</sup>.
- Children benefit from reduced exposure to second-hand smoke when fewer adults smoke.<sup>22</sup>
- Smokefree policies in the workplace are likely to increase the number of smokefree homes.<sup>23 2 24 25</sup>
- Smokefree policies have either a neutral or positive impact on business.<sup>9 24</sup>
- Smokefree legislation is popular wherever it is enacted, and compliance is high.<sup>25 26</sup>
- Support for smokefree legislation tends to increase after implementation.<sup>27</sup>

WHO recommends that countries prepare appropriately for implementation of smokefree laws as follows:<sup>2 28</sup> (1) educate the public and businesses about the dangers of second-hand smoke; (2) after building widespread support for smokefree workplaces and public places, draft legislation for public comment; (3) pass comprehensive smokefree legislation; (4) once enacted, maintain strong support for the law by uniform and aggressive enforcement – this generates high levels of compliance.

WHO recommends emphasizing that the main purpose of smokefree workplaces is to protect workers' health. It also stresses that countering false arguments by the tobacco industry is crucial to gaining support for smokefree legislation.

## Best practice WHO FCTC Article 8 guidelines

Article 8 of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) addresses measures to protect people from exposure to second-hand smoke. The key principles of the guidelines are<sup>29</sup>:

- Protection against exposure to second-hand smoke requires the total elimination of smoking and tobacco smoke in a particular space or environment.
- Ventilation or designated smoking rooms do not offer protection.
- All people should be protected from exposure to second-hand smoke. All indoor workplaces, indoor public places and public transport should be smokefree.
- Legislation is needed to protect people from second-hand smoke. Voluntary agreements are ineffective.
- Good planning and adequate resources are needed for implementation and enforcement of legislation.
- Civil society should be an active partner in developing, implementing and enforcing smokefree legislation.
- Smokefree legislation should be monitored and evaluated to assess its impact and build support for the most effective possible measures.
- The protection of people from second-hand smoke should be strengthened and expanded if needed. This may require new or amended legislation or improved enforcement measures.

# References



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