

# Smoke-Free Laws

## ESSENTIAL FACTS

**T**here is no safe level of exposure to tobacco smoke. Article 8 of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control and its Guidelines obligates Parties to enact and implement comprehensive smoke-free policies for all indoor public places, including workplaces and public transportation, without exception in order to prevent exposure to secondhand smoke, improve public health and save lives. Comprehensive smoke-free laws improve public health by reducing the public's exposure to secondhand smoke, helping smokers quit or reduce their consumption, preventing youth from taking up smoking and making smoking less socially acceptable.

### Global exposure to secondhand smoke

- About 43% of women and 30% of men worldwide were exposed to secondhand smoke in 2017.<sup>1</sup>
- About 56% of youth (ages 12–15) across 68 low- and middle-income countries were exposed to secondhand smoke in 2016.<sup>2</sup>
- In many countries, the primary source of secondhand smoke exposure occurs at the workplace.

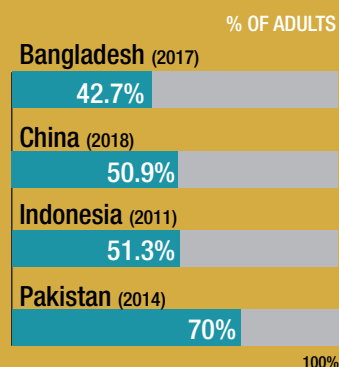
### Secondhand smoke harms health

- Secondhand smoke contains a complex mixture of more than 7,000 chemicals, including about 70 known carcinogens.<sup>3</sup>
- In adults, exposure to secondhand smoke causes lung cancer, stroke and heart disease (including heart attacks).<sup>4</sup>
- In children, secondhand smoke causes sudden infant death syndrome, low birth weight, impaired lung function, respiratory infections (such as bronchitis and pneumonia), chronic and acute respiratory symptoms (such as coughing and breathlessness), ear infections, and exacerbated asthma attacks that occur more often.<sup>4</sup>
- Exposure to secondhand smoke kills an estimated 1.2 million people every year.<sup>5</sup>

### Comprehensive smoke-free laws improve public health

- In Montevideo, Uruguay, after a comprehensive national smoke-free law was implemented in 2006, the concentration of airborne nicotine particles (a marker for secondhand smoke) fell by 91% in public spaces.<sup>6</sup>
- It is estimated that smoke-free laws that include workplaces, restaurants and bars reduce the risk of heart attack by 85%.<sup>4</sup>
- The evidence suggests that comprehensive smoke-free laws reduce the risk of stroke by 81%.<sup>2</sup>

### EXPOSURE TO SECONDHAND SMOKE AT THE WORKPLACE AMONG ADULTS WHO WORK INDOORS



SOURCES: Global Adult Tobacco Survey.

## SMOKE-FREE LAWS: ESSENTIAL FACTS

- Smokers who work in smoke-free environments reduce their cigarette consumption by 2 to 4 cigarettes a day on average.<sup>7</sup>

### Partial smoke-free laws do not work

Partial smoke-free laws exempt certain types of public places from smoking bans or allow venues to have designated smoking areas (DSAs). DSAs, even when equipped with ventilation systems, do not prevent exposure to secondhand smoke because tobacco smoke moves easily from DSAs to non-smoking areas in the same venue and workers still need to enter DSAs to provide services.

- Shenyang, China implemented a partial smoke-free law that allows for DSAs in restaurants in 2008. The latest wave of the International Tobacco Control China Survey conducted in 2013-2015 indicates that exposure to secondhand smoke in restaurants remains very high at 72%.<sup>8</sup>

### Smoke-free laws do not harm businesses

#### Allowing smoking in workplaces and public places is a drain on the economy

- It imposes a heavy financial burden through increased medical costs, lost productivity due to illness, higher insurance premiums, and increased cleaning and property maintenance costs.<sup>7</sup>

#### Smoke-free laws do not harm the hospitality industry

- In 2016, the U.S. National Cancer Institute and the World Health Organization conducted an extensive review of the economic literature on tobacco control and concluded that, “smoke-free policies have no negative economic impact on restaurants, bars, and other segments of the hospitality industry [...] Indeed, many studies provide evidence of a small positive effect of smoke-free policies on business activity.”<sup>7</sup>

## Key Messages

- **There is no safe level of exposure to tobacco smoke.**
- **Article 8 of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control and its Guidelines obligate Parties to enact and implement comprehensive smoke-free policies without exception to protect public health and save lives.**
- **Exposure to secondhand smoke causes death, disease and disability among nonsmokers, including children.**
- **Only comprehensive smoke-free laws protect public health.**
- **Comprehensive smoke-free laws do not harm businesses.**

## References

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