

TOBACCO CONTROL

Global smoking prevalence set to fall only marginally by 2030 without concerted action

But prevalence could be as low as 13% if WHO measures adopted

[The potential impact of smoking control policies on future global smoking trends Online First doi 10.1136/tobaccocontrol-2011-050147]

The global prevalence of cigarette smoking among adults is set to fall by just 1.7 percentage points by 2030 if governments do not do more to intervene, finds research published online in **Tobacco Control**.

But if World Health Organization (WHO) measures are adopted, global prevalence would fall from just under 24% in 2010 to just over 13% by 2030, predict the researchers.

Smoking kills more than 5 million people every year around the globe, which is more than the death toll from HIV/AIDS, TB, and malaria combined.

In 2003, the World Health Assembly - the annual meeting of the member countries of the WHO - adopted a treaty to curb the supply and demand of tobacco products.

Five years later, the WHO developed a comprehensive package of six measures to help those countries make good on their promises, known as MPOWER.

These were: tobacco use monitoring; protection from second hand exposure to tobacco smoke; help to quit; warnings about the dangers of tobacco; enforcement of tobacco advertising/promotion and sponsorship bans; and tax hikes on tobacco products.

The researchers wanted to know what impact adoption of MPOWER would have on the global prevalence of smoking among adults over the next two decades, and conversely, what would happen if governments did nothing.

They used WHO data to estimate the global prevalence of smoking among adults based on the 60 countries that account for 90% of the world's smokers and 85% of the global population.

Countries which contribute the most to the global smoking tally include China (28%), India (11%), Indonesia (4.8%), USA (4.7%), and the Russian Federation (4%). Germany, Turkey, Brazil, Pakistan and Bangladesh all contribute 1.5-1.9%.

In total, the global smoking prevalence was estimated at just under 24% (around 794 million smokers) in 2010.

Their calculations showed that this would fall to just under 23% in 2020 and to 22% in 2030 without any further government action.

Countries in Europe would remain top of the league, with just under 30% of the world's smokers by 2030, while countries in the African region would show the fastest growth from just under 16% of the world's smokers in 2010 to just under 22% in 2030.

But if MPOWER measures were adopted everywhere, the global prevalence of smoking would fall to 15.4% in 2020 and to just over 13% by 2030.

And the largest fall in the proportion of the world's smokers would be in European countries, where this would almost halve to just over 15% by 2030, estimate the authors.

They caution that their figures should not be taken as forecasts, but as an indication of the scale of what could be achieved.

And they conclude: "If we assume that MPOWER strategies have similar effects on other tobacco product use, the reduction in global tobacco consumption could be much greater. As approximately half of lifetime smokers die of tobacco related diseases, implementation of MPOWER would prevent many millions of premature tobacco related deaths."