

Smoke-free Environments

One of Six Cost-Effective Actions Endorsed by WHO to Reduce Tobacco's Deadly Toll



Only 5 percent of the world's population is covered by comprehensive smoke-free laws.¹ More than half of countries allow smoking in government offices, workplaces and other indoor places.²

WHO FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON TOBACCO CONTROL (FCTC)

Article 8 of the FCTC guides parties on minimum standards for adopting and implementing effective smoke-free policies "providing for protection from exposure to tobacco smoke in indoor workplaces, public transport, indoor public places and, as appropriate, other public places." Governments should build public support through educational campaigns, pass comprehensive legislation, and maintain public support through enforcement.

KEY MESSAGES

- Smoke-free laws help guarantee the fundamental right to breathe clean air for all.
- Smoke-free laws protect the health of workers and non-smokers and encourage smokers to quit.
- All countries regardless of income level can implement smoke-free laws effectively.

THE CASE FOR SMOKE-FREE ENVIRONMENTS

- **There is no safe level of exposure to tobacco smoke.**³ Secondhand smoke contains at least 69 known carcinogens and is a major cause of disease, including many types of cancer and coronary heart disease.^{4,5}
- **The only effective way to protect people is to provide 100% smoke-free air. Designated smoking rooms and similar approaches do not work.**⁶ The international standard-setting body for indoor air quality concluded that ventilation and other air filtration technologies cannot eliminate the health risks caused by secondhand smoke exposure.⁷
- **Smoke-free laws help the economy and do not harm businesses like restaurants and bars.** A comprehensive review of all available studies on the economic impact of smoke-free workplace laws concluded that: "All of the best designed studies report no impact or a positive impact of smoke-free restaurant and bar laws on sales or employment."⁸
- **Smoke-free environments are popular.**⁹ Where smoke-free laws have been introduced, they enjoy widespread public support. In 2006, Uruguay became the first country in the Americas to go 100% smoke-free. The ban won support from 8 out of 10 Uruguayans, including nearly two-thirds of the country's smokers.¹⁰

"The evidence is clear. There is no safe level of exposure to second-hand tobacco smoke. Many countries have already taken action. I urge all countries that have not yet done so to take this immediate and important step to protect the health of all by passing laws requiring all indoor workplaces and public places to be 100% smoke-free."

Dr. Margaret Chan,
Director-General, WHO,
May 29, 2007.

¹WHO Report on the Global Tobacco Epidemic 2008: The MPOWER package. Geneva:World Health Organization; 2008. ²Ibid, 46. ³Ibid. ⁴National Cancer Institute. Risks Associated with Smoking Cigarettes with Low Machine-Measured Yields of Tar and Nicotine. Smoking and Tobacco Control Monograph No. 13. Bethesda, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health, National Cancer Institute, NIH Pub. No. 02-5074, October 2001. ⁵Protection from Exposure to Second-hand Tobacco Smoke. Policy Recommendations. Geneva: WHO; 2007. Available from: http://www.who.int/tobacco/resources/publications/wntd/2007/who_protection_exposure_final_25June2007.pdf. ⁶Ibid. ⁷Samet J et al. ASHRAE position document on environmental tobacco smoke. American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE). Atlanta, GA: 2005. Available from: http://www.ashrae.org/content/ASHRAE/ASHRAE/ArticleAltFormat/20058211239_347.pdf. ⁸Scollo M, Lal A, et al. Review of the quality of studies on the economic effects of smoke-free policies on the hospitality industry. Tobacco Control. 2003;12:13-20. Available from: <http://www.tobaccoscans.ucsf.edu/pdf/ScolloTC.pdf>. ⁹Hilton S, Semple S, Miller BG, et al. Expectations and changing attitudes of bar workers before and after the implementation of smoke-free legislation in Scotland. BMC Public Health. 2007;7:206. Available from: <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2458/7/206>. ¹⁰Organización Panamericana de la Salud (Pan American Health Organization). Estudio de "Conocimiento y actitudes hacia el decreto 288/005". (Regulación de consumo de tabaco en lugares públicos y privados). 2006 Oct [in Spanish]. Available from: http://www.presidencia.gub.uy/_web/noticias/2006/12/informeo_dec268_mori.pdf.