

Tobacco use will continue, possibly grow, during recession, expert says

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Even though tobacco use is expected to kill 6 million people worldwide and drain \$500 billion from the global economy each year — according to a new report co-authored by a Georgia State University tobacco expert — the recession will most likely do nothing to reduce use.

The third edition of The [Tobacco](#) Atlas, co-authored by Michael Eriksen, director of Georgia State's Institute of Public Health, lays out a comprehensive picture of global tobacco use, regulations, financial costs and health tolls.

The new edition of the atlas was launched this week in Mumbai, India. Eriksen's work and travel is sponsored by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

In an economic downturn, products seen as giving comfort in the midst of stress tend to sell very well. In the U.S. and abroad, tobacco is no exception.

"It's not well understood, but as people lose jobs, the unemployed and others affected by tough economic times may rely on 'affordable pleasures,'" Eriksen said. "The irony is that the more deprived someone is, people will rely on simple pleasures that are unfortunately deadly pleasures."

Since the last edition of the atlas was released in 2006, changes in issues around global tobacco use have been a mixed bag, Eriksen said.

Positive changes include the relatively rapid ratification of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, the world's first public health treaty developed by the World Health Organization. The treaty obligates signatories to commit to actions such as advertising bans and indoor clean air laws to stem tobacco use, illness and death. Excluding the United States, 163 nations have ratified the treaty.

Another positive outcome has been the \$500 billion investment by Bill Gates and Michael Bloomberg's philanthropic activities in tobacco control.

On the other hand, tobacco companies since 2006 have been able to adapt to changes, and continue to profit from a preventable cause of illness and death, to the tune of \$30 billion in profits.

"At one level, they have figured out how to work in a new regulatory environment," Eriksen said, "and on another level, there are active attempts to undermine nations' attempts to fulfill their obligations around the treaty."

Source: Georgia State University ([news](#) : [web](#))

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