

Real price of each pack of cigarettes is more than 100 euro: scientists

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The average cost of a pack of cigarettes is not in fact €3-4, but €107 for male smokers and €75 for female smokers. Credit: SINC

Researchers from the Polytechnic University of Cartagena (UPCT) estimate that each pack of cigarettes really costs €107 for men and €75 for women, when premature death is taken into account. These figures confirm previous studies, and are of key importance in the cost-benefit analysis of smoking-prevention policies.

"One of the conclusions of the article is that the price one pays for each pack of [cigarettes](#) at a newsstand is only a very small price of the true price that smokers pay for their habit", Ángel López Nicolás, co-author of the study that has been published in the Revista Española de Salud Pública and a researcher at the UPCT, tells SINC.

"Given that [tobacco consumption](#) raises the risk of death in comparison with non-smokers, it can be assigned a premature death cost for people who do smoke", the researcher explains.

According to the study, the average cost of a pack of cigarettes is not in fact €3-4, but €107 for male smokers and €75 for female smokers.

The study questions the axiom of classic economics on "consumer sovereignty", saying that those who smoke do not do so because the pleasure of smoking is greater than its cost, but rather because of the addictive power of nicotine and their failure to understand its true cost.

In order to determine the mortality cost associated with tobacco consumption in Spain, the experts used the so-called Value of a Statistical Life (VSL), in other words the amount that people are prepared to pay in order to reduce their risk of death. The VSL estimates the average price to be €2.91 million. "For smokers this is €3.78 million", López Nicolás explains.

"But one must not confuse the cost of premature death with the cost of healthcare. The cost of premature death is borne by the smokers themselves", López points out.

The team also handled the information on workers in the European Community Household Panel (ECHP) for the 1996-2001 period, and the results of the Ministry of Labour and Immigration Survey on Occupational Accidents.

Understanding the costs helps to prevent smoking

"The estimated cost of [premature death](#) from a pack of cigarettes is a key element in the cost-benefit analysis of policies designed to prevent and control smoking", the researchers say.

In this sense, the study indicates that the taxes and smoking restrictions imposed in public places strengthen smokers' self-control mechanisms. According to the study, "smoking prevention and control policies could generate considerable social benefits, since the wellbeing losses associated with tobacco consumption are much greater than suggested by the external costs".

"Despite the law on healthcare measures to combat smoking having come into effect in 2006, more can still be done in Spain on measures to control tobacco consumption", the experts conclude.

More information: M Belén Cobacho Tornel, Ángel López Nicolás, José María Ramos Parreño. "El coste de la mortalidad asociado al consumo de tabaco en España", Revista Española de Salud Pública 84(3): 271-280, 2010.

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