

Hundreds of millions of Chinese men could die from tobacco related diseases

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More than 50 per cent of Chinese men smoke cigarettes, placing hundreds of millions at serious risk for heart disease, cancer, other lung diseases, and many more serious illnesses, according to the American Cancer Society (ACS) and World Lung Foundation (WLF), co-publishers of The Tobacco Atlas – 4th Edition. Representatives from China Centers for Disease Control, the World Health Organization and the Chinese Association on Tobacco Control joined WLF and ACS in the release of the Chinese version of the Atlas.

The Tobacco Atlas, and its companion website, TobaccoAtlas.org graphically detail the scale of the [tobacco](#) epidemic, progress that has been made in [tobacco control](#), and the latest products and tactics being deployed by the [tobacco industry](#) – such as the use of new media, trade litigation, and aggressive development of smokeless products. It also outlines steps governments can take to reduce deaths from tobacco use, such as increasing [tobacco taxes](#), warning people about the harms of tobacco use, protecting people from secondhand smoke and banning [tobacco advertising](#).

The World's Largest Consumer and Producer of Tobacco

According to The Tobacco Atlas, 38 per cent of all cigarettes consumed in the world are smoked in China, more than the other top four countries combined. 50.4 per cent of all men smoke, meaning that approximately

340 million people are at significant risk for death from tobacco-related diseases. Tobacco use is already responsible for 12 percent of all deaths among men in China, and that number could rise significantly.

China also produces 41 per cent of the world's cigarettes, and 43 per cent of the world's tobacco, which is more tobacco leaf than the other top nine producing countries combined.

Exposure to secondhand smoke is also a significant cause of mortality in China. According to The Atlas, 600,000 people die in China every year from [secondhand smoke exposure](#), most of them women and children. In China, 47% of youth ages 13-15 are exposed to secondhand smoke in the home, further increasing the risk of tobacco related diseases and death for this generation.

Recent Progress in China

Despite its huge tobacco epidemic, advances have been made in China, particularly in protecting people from [secondhand smoke](#): several major cities, such as Harbin, Tianjin, Guangzhou, Lanzhou have passed smoke-free laws. And Shenzhen recently passed a 100% smoke-free law which will come into effect on March 1, 2014.

Impact assessments have also been carried out in several cities, including Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Tianjin, to assess the implementation of smoke-free legislation in workplaces, public places and public transport.

China has also begun evaluating economic costs of widespread tobacco use. The China Central Party School recently released "Legal and Economic Thinking on Smoking Control." Recent research published in the *American Journal of Public Health*, showed that farmers at three sites in a crop substitution project in Yuxi, Yunnan increased their annual income by 21 -110 per cent when they grew something other than

tobacco. This is encouraging news for tobacco farmers, especially if other efforts are made to reduce tobacco production in the country.

"China has made progress, but even a national smoke-free law is not nearly enough," said John R. Seffrin, PhD, chief executive officer of the American Cancer Society. "With more than 300 million smokers, a staggering death toll and economic cost looms China. We urge the government to implement evidence-based policies that increase the price of cigarettes by raising tobacco taxes, warn people about the harms of tobacco and restrict advertising, promotion and sponsorship."

Peter Baldini, chief executive officer, World Lung Foundation, said. "Tobacco kills more than 50 per cent of the people who use it which, in China, adds up to one of the biggest health crises in the history of mankind. With the publication of this Atlas, we are placing into the hands of governments, journalists and advocates a blueprint to help reduce the massive wave of death and disease that is coming should no actions be taken. We urge leadership and political will to follow this blueprint before it is too late."

Judith Mackay, Co-author and Senior Advisor, World Lung Foundation noted, "The costs of tobacco use to Chinese society are only now really being understood, and they are alarming. Pockets of progress in cities are encouraging, but only a concerted effort from the national government can truly save the many millions at risk."

Provided by World Lung Foundation

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