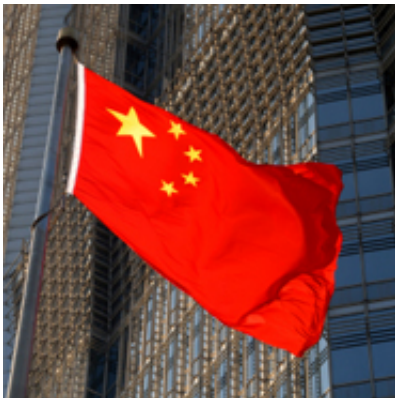


# Pollution, smoking, roads, obesity kill 4.7m Chinese a year

August 29 2014

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Air pollution, smoking, obesity and accidents, especially on the road, kill at least 4.7 million Chinese a year and cost the country tens of billions of dollars, researchers said on Friday.

In an overview published in *The Lancet*, they said China had in some respects made great strides in health, boosting the [average lifespan](#) from 40 years in 1950 to 76 years in 2011 and rolling back many infectious diseases.

On the other hand, the risk of [premature death](#) and sickness from pollution, smoking, road crashes and "lifestyle" ailments is worse than before.

The trio of Chinese and US experts said China had the chance of learning from rich countries which had already been down this path, a by-product of rising prosperity.

"Many of these risks can be lowered by interventions with shown effectiveness," they said.

"China has the opportunity to avoid repetition of the full toll of preventable disease burdens suffered by [high-income countries](#) from non-communicable diseases."

The research, led by Jeffrey Koplan, a professor at Emory University in Atlanta, provides the following snapshot, which includes figures that have been published previously:

— Air pollution: A million deaths annually are attributable to inhaling indoor smoke from solid fuels, and another 1.2 million from inhaling [fine particulate matter](#) outdoors.

The economic cost from particulate [air pollution](#) among urban dwellers was 341 billion yuan (\$55 billion, 42 billion euros) in 2006, according to the paper.

— Smoking: 1.4 million premature deaths each year, costing 41 billion yuan annually on the basis of values for 2000.

— Road fatalities: China has more than 800,000 deaths annually from accidents, which are "mainly" accounted for by road accidents, according to the report. (Separately, the United Nations estimated 275,000 road deaths in China in 2010).

Accidents of all kinds are the leading cause of death in the 1-39 age group and cost 65 billion yuan in medical expenses alone, said the study.

— Obesity: 363,000 fatalities each year attributable to high body-mass index, a condition linked to heart disease, diabetes and other ailments. The cost —in 2003—was 21 billion yuan.

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