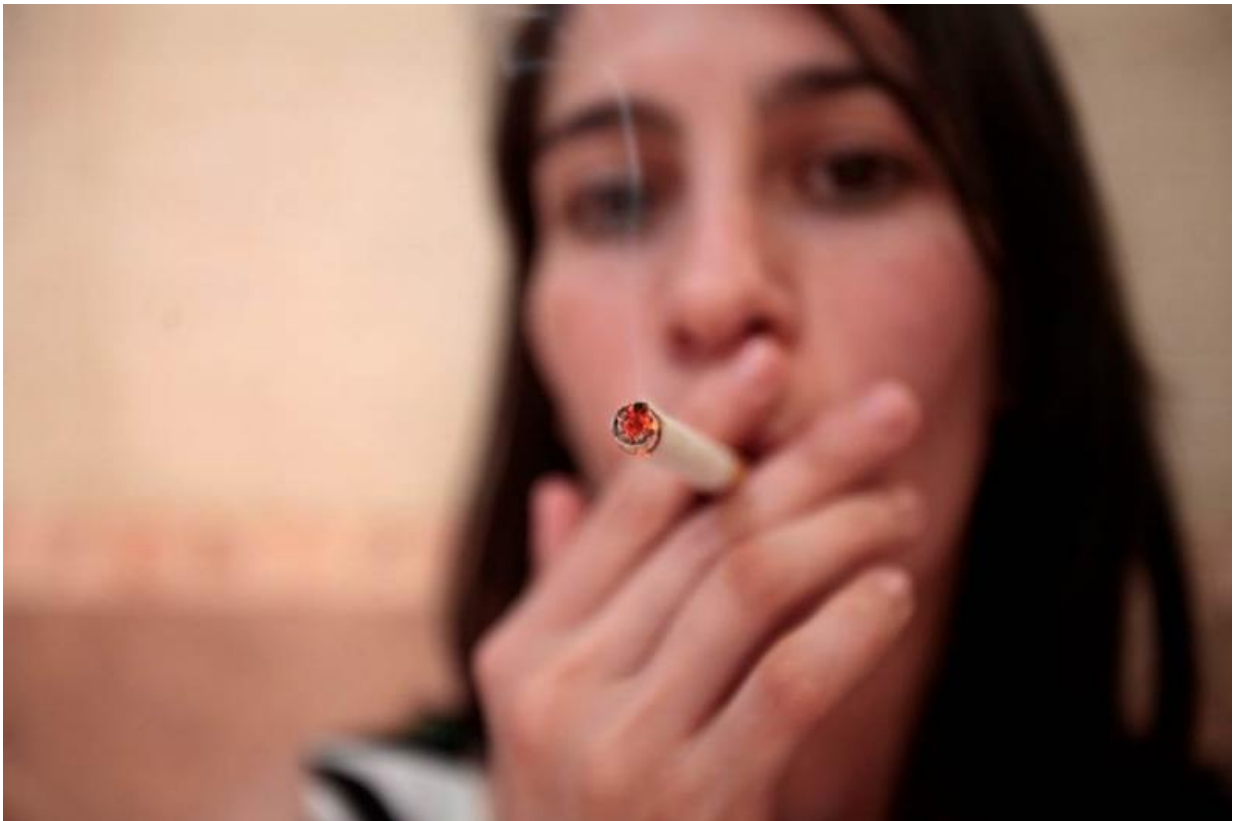


Highly educated women stop smoking if the cost goes up

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Cigarette prices and pictorial labels are good tools for reducing smoking rates among women. Credit: Olmo Calvo-Sinc

Cigarette prices and images on cigarette packets have an impact on women in terms of continuing to smoke or quitting. In fact, less educated

women are more responsive to pictorial labels on cigarette packets, as revealed by a study that has analysed, for the first time, the generation differences among female smokers, a group which, despite policy measures, has not stopped growing.

In Spain, smoking levels are declining among men, but this is not true for [women](#). In the face of this phenomenon, experts claim that policy measures are needed to tackle such gender disparity, in order to protect women from the habit of smoking and the consequences of tobacco on health.

A new study led by two sisters from the University of Zaragoza (Unizar) has analysed how policy actions affect [tobacco consumption](#) decisions among Spanish women. For this purpose, the researchers focused on four different generation cohorts: women born prior to 1950; those born between 1951 and 1964; between 1965 and 1983; and between 1985 and 1999.

The results, published in *Addictive Behaviors*, show that the determining factors behind smoking that are influenced by anti-smoking campaigns vary as a function of when a woman was born.

As Ana Isabel Gil-Lacruz, the main author of the study, explains to SINC: "Women from different generations have experienced different policy interventions, marketing strategies and cultural changes that have determined their behaviour."

The younger, the more likely to smoke

The study is based on the premise that general adoption of unhealthy behaviours (smoking, drinking and lack of physical activity, among others) begins by causing more health problems to people with high incomes.

In the long run, however, "the majority of chronic diseases are suffered by the most financially disadvantaged," the expert says, adding that women, especially those of low socioeconomic conditions, are a population cohort vulnerable to tobacco products.

In terms of the rates of smoking, women over 65 years old smoke the least. However, those between 16 and 50 years old are the most likely to smoke, "even if they have high levels of education," Gil-Lacruz reports.

According to the researchers, this is because older women, who grew up under Franco's dictatorship, were conditioned by society and, consequently, have lower rates of smoking. But from the liberation in the 1960s, women of subsequent generations took up the habit of smoking as an act of rebellion and modernity.

From this information, the scientists noticed that anti-tobacco strategies targeted towards product labelling, prices and accessibility impact differently upon each of these generation cohorts.

After analysing 48,755 responses from women in Spanish National Health surveys in 2001, 2003, 2006 and 2011, the team concludes that cigarette prices and pictorial labels are good tools for reducing smoking rates among women.

"Highly educated women are more sensitive to prices and less educated women to pictorial labels," the expert says, so both policies are effective in reducing tobacco consumption among women. But pictorial labels have a double value: "They are targeted towards the most vulnerable (less educated women)," says Marta Gil-Lacruz from the Unizar Department of Psychology and Sociology.

According to the two researcher sisters, we must differentiate smoking habits across generations, genders and countries to achieve more

effective anti-[smoking](#) policies. Furthermore, "it is necessary to come up with the strategies most suited to them and include them in national policy," they say.

More information: "Women and smoking - Prices and health warning messages: Evidence from Spain" *Addictive Behaviors* 45: 294-300 [DOI: 10.1016/j.addbeh.2015.01.016](#)

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