

Global anti-smoking measures quadruple since 2007: WHO report

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Warnings about the dangers of smoking and restrictions on tobacco use have quadrupled worldwide since 2007, but more needs to be done to curb this deadly habit, the UN health agency said Wednesday.

Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death around the globe, taking seven million lives per year, according to the World Health Organization (WHO)'s latest report on the [global tobacco epidemic](#).

Today, some 4.7 billion people—or 63 percent of world's [population](#)—are covered by at least one [tobacco control](#) measure, which may include strong graphic warnings or smoke-free public places.

That's a "dramatic increase in life-saving tobacco [control](#) policies in the last decade," said the report, recalling that in 2007, only one billion people, or 15 percent of the world's population, were covered.

But problems persist, and the [tobacco industry](#) continues to employ a series of tactics to thwart anti-smoking policies, including "exaggerating the economic importance of the tobacco industry, discrediting proven science and using litigation to intimidate governments," said the report.

"Tobacco industry interference in government policy making represents a deadly barrier to advancing health and development in many countries," said Douglas Bettcher, director of WHO's Department for Prevention of Noncommunicable Diseases.

"But by monitoring and blocking such activities, we can save lives and sow the seeds for a sustainable future for all."

'Waste no time'

Millions of lives have been saved in the last decade due to ramped up tobacco control.

But just one third of countries have comprehensive systems to monitor tobacco use, and only 15 percent of the world's population is currently covered by a comprehensive ban on advertising and promotion.

Fewer than half (43 percent) of the world's population is covered by two or more effective tobacco control measures, said the report.

"Comprehensive smoke-free legislation is currently in place for almost 1.5 billion people in 55 countries," it added.

"Since 2007, dramatic progress has been witnessed in low- and middle-income countries, 35 of which have adopted a complete smoke-free law since 2007."

More people are protected by strong graphic pack warnings than ever before, with almost 3.5 billion people in 78 countries—almost half the global population—exposed to these vivid and often disturbing images on packaging.

But the most effective form of tobacco control—price increases—is one of the least used worldwide, said the report.

"Governments around the world must waste no time in incorporating all the provisions of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control into their national tobacco control programs and policies," said WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

"They must also clamp down on the illicit tobacco trade, which is exacerbating the global tobacco epidemic and its related health and socio-economic consequences."

One in 10 deaths around the world is caused by tobacco.

The economic costs of [tobacco](#) total more than \$1.4 trillion in [health](#) care costs and lost productivity worldwide, the WHO [report](#) said.

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