



## Frequently asked questions

### Protect people from second-hand smoke through enforcing a total ban on tobacco use in all public places, with no designated areas for smokers

#### Q: Why is exposure to second-hand smoke a health hazard?

**Exposure to second-hand smoke is a health hazard.** The global evidence is indisputable: second-hand smoke is not only harmful to health; it kills. Nearly 600 000 people die each year from exposure to second-hand smoke. Every major scientific body in the world, including WHO, the International Agency for Research on Cancer and the United States Department for Health and Human Services clearly state that it is a serious health threat and a significant cause of death and disease. The list of diseases and adverse health effects from exposure to second-hand smoke is long and growing, and includes cancer, heart disease, stroke and sudden infant death syndrome. There are at least 69 established cancer-causing chemicals in tobacco smoke, and hundreds of recognized human toxins. No level of exposure is safe.

#### Q: Do smoke-free laws infringe on an individual's right to smoke?

**Smoke-free laws do not infringe on an individual's right to smoke.** All constitutions recognize the right to health. In contrast, there is no international human rights instrument or constitutional right to smoke. Non-smokers, especially children, have the right to breathe clean and safe air. When smoking is allowed in public places, it threatens the health of non-smokers and infringes on their right to a safe and healthy environment. Smoke-free laws do not prohibit a smoker from smoking; they prevent smokers from smoking in public areas where both smokers and non-smokers are harmed by second-hand smoke. Subsequently, no one should have the freedom to harm others.

#### Q: What is the impact of smoke-free policies on businesses?

**Smoke-free laws do not harm businesses.** Smoke-free laws do not harm business, including the hospitality and tourism industries. Smoke-free laws may even have a positive impact. A systematic review of 97 studies on the economic impact of smoke-free laws showed that there was no impact or a positive impact of smoke-free restaurant and bar laws on sales and employment. This review also documented that all the studies reporting a negative effect were funded by the tobacco industry. Further, the WHO International Agency for Research on Cancer reviewed 165 studies and concluded that smoke-free policies do not have an adverse economic impact on the business activity of restaurants, bars, or establishments catering to tourists, with many studies finding a small positive effect of these policies. Moreover, the evidence shows that smoke-free laws are good for health and good for business.

#### Q: Is there a safe level of exposure to second-hand smoke?

**Ventilation systems do not reduce second-hand smoke exposure to safe levels.** Scientists and engineers alike agree: there is no safe level of exposure to second-hand smoke. The American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air Conditioning Engineers, the leading association of ventilation professionals, concluded that the only means of effectively eliminating the health risk associated with indoor exposure is to ban smoking activity. Ventilation systems and air-purifying technologies are not only expensive but also incapable of eliminating exposure to second-hand smoke.



## Q: Do people support smoke-free laws?

**People support smoke-free laws.** Globally, data consistently show strong public support for smoke-free laws. A recent national survey in Turkey documented that over 91% of non-smokers and nearly 70% of smokers supported the new smoke-free law. Data in the Region likewise reveal high levels of support for smoke-free laws: in Alexandria, Egypt, 98% of survey respondents endorsed 100% smoke-free legislation in all public places and on public transport.

© World Health Organization 2015. All rights reserved.

All reasonable precautions have been taken by the World Health Organization to verify the information contained in this publication. However, the published material is being distributed without warranty of any kind, either expressed or implied. The responsibility for the interpretation and use of the material lies with the reader. In no event shall the World Health Organization be liable for damages arising from its use.