Studying Tobacco users Of Pakistan

STOP survey facts

10 most populous cities in Pakistan were surveyed

316 union councils were randomly selected

97,345 households were approached

6,014 smokers were randomly selected and interviewed

8,589 cigarette packs were analyzed

7 months were spent surveying between Sept 2019 and March 2020

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Factsheet | Pakistan   **2019-20**

Smoking Behaviours - key findings

STOP survey interviewed regular smokers, of whom 98.5% were male.

The average age of smokers was 44.5 years. 30.6% were aged 35 years or less.

33.8% of smokers received no formal education. Primary and secondary education were completed by 22.9% and 25.6% respectively, while 8.6% completed high school education; 9.0% were graduates.

Smokers reported an average consumption of 12.6 cigarettes per day, and an average spending of Rs. 1813 on cigarettes per month (10% of average monthly income).

65.6% smokers reported a desire to quit, with 10% having an intention to quit in the near future. 28.0% attempted to quit at least once in the past 12 months.

Quit attempts were often short lived and unsuccessful. In their most recent attempt, 30.4% went back to smoking within one day and 58.1% went back to smoking within a week.

98.1% smokers were in support of tobacco control measures, with at least 93.7% demonstrating strong support for at least one of the proposed measures (ban, taxation, smoke free cars, increasing legal age to 21).

Illicit Tobacco Trade - key findings

15.9% cigarette packs met at least one illicit criteria* indicating the likely proportion of illicit cigarette packs in the market.

30% smokers purchased loose cigarettes from the market.

15.1% smokers purchased packs less than the government minimum price of PKR 63

*Absence of retail price; text health warning; graphic health warnings; text prohibiting sale to minors; and manufacturer's details on the pack. The first four criteria were applied to packs collected from recycle markets and all five to those collected from smokers.

Background

In Pakistan, 19.1% adults consume tobacco causing around 160,000 deaths/year. Tobacco industry constantly interferes in policymaking – a key reason for ineffectual tobacco control. For example, a recent move to impose higher taxes on cigarettes was blocked on the basis of a fictitious industry 'report'. This report (never made public) asserted that illicit trade constitutes 41% of the cigarette market share and an increase in taxes will lead to more smuggling – a claim often made by the industry and constantly refuted by independent research in other countries. The Ministry of Health is keen to propose higher taxes again in the next budget but will need to be supported by an unbiased evidence of the scope and magnitude of the illicit tobacco trade in Pakistan.

"In Pakistan,

tobacco causes

160,000 deaths

per year"

(Tobacco Atlas)

STOP survey - Aims

The STOP survey has a long-term aim to provide objective, regular and timely information on tobacco users of Pakistan to help key policy decisions.

STOP survey - Objectives

Its specific objectives for the current study are to assess the:

1. Proportion of cigarette smokers who use illicit cigarettes

2. Nicotine dependence and motivation to quit among smokers

3. Triggers to, the methods used in, and the success of quit attempts

4. Attitude of smokers towards tobacco control policies and cessation aides (including willingness to pay) e.g. counselling, medication.

Methods

STOP survey is a cross-sectional face-to-face household survey. It was conducted in the ten most populous cities of Pakistan representing 55% of all urban population. Our participants were people aged 15+ who smoke on a regular basis i.e. at least 25 out of the last 30 days for at least six months. We recruited one participant per household. We esti-mated the required sample size using statistical methods. Using a conventional average intake of 20 households per primary sampling unit (PSU), a sample size of 6,313 households and 316 PSUs was estimated.
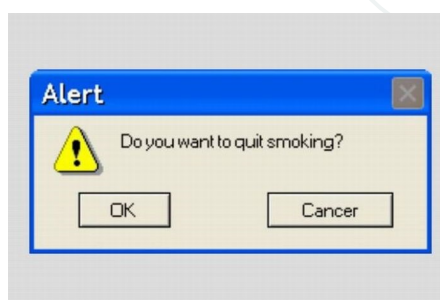
Sampling strategy

Households were identified using a two-stage random probability sampling. At the first stage, we used stratified random sampling to select 316 Union Councils (PSUs) from the ten cities proportional to their population size. We assessed which households were eligible (at least one regular smoker aged 15+) in these PSUs and then randomly selected 20 households at the second stage. One participant per household was identified using Kish Grid method. All eligible households were offered written study information and those selected were consented to participate in the survey.

STOP survey will provide objective, regular and timely information on tobacco users of Pakistan to help key policy decisions

Data collection

Data were collected using a digital application in password-protected tablets by a team of field investigators in real time. The participants were asked about their: socio-demographic and household characteristics; nicotine dependence and the strength of urges to smoke; their attitude (including willingness to pay) towards cessation and previous quit attempts; use of cessation aids and attitude towards tobacco control policies. In addition, our team also took photographs of the participants' cigarette packs, where available.

In each city, we also collected used cigarette packs available from the recycling markets. All cigarette packs were analyzed for signs of illicit tobacco trade. These included absence of retail price, manufacturer's details, text health warning, graphic health warnings and text prohibiting sale to minors.

Recommendations

- Introduce a health tax on cigarettes. It will be supported by the majority of smokers. A health levy will raise revenue which can be spent on priorities such as COVID-19 and will not increase illicit tobacco trade.

- Offer smoking cessation support. Most smokers are willing to quit and with the right support will turn their quit attempts into success.

- Consider introducing ban on smoking in private cars and increasing the age of purchasing and selling cigarettes to 21; the vast majority of smokers support these policies.

- Enforce ban on selling loose cigarettes and introduce heavy penalties for vendors violating this provision.

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