

TOBACCO CONSUMPTION IN INDIA

NEWS: 1 in 2 men, 1 in 10 women in state smoke, finds study; docs flag lung cancer risk

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

Tobacco consumption in India poses a major health and economic challenge, worsened by low taxes, single-stick sales, and weak enforcement. Despite this, India remains a top global tobacco producer and exporter, with regulatory oversight by the Tobacco Board under the Ministry of Commerce.

Context

- Tobacco consumption in India remains a **serious public health issue**, compounded by factors like **low taxation, high affordability**, and **poor enforcement of control policies**.
- Current policy discourse is focused on aligning India's efforts with **global best practices**, such as the **WHO MPOWER strategy**, to mitigate the rising **health and economic burden** caused by tobacco.

Tobacco Use in India (GATS-2 Data Highlights)

- **Prevalence:**
 - 42% of men and 14% of women consume tobacco.
- **Form of Usage:**
 - India accounts for **70% of the world's smokeless tobacco (SLT) users**.
 - SLT usage is **more common than smoking**, especially in rural areas.
 - Among smoked products, **bidis are more popular than cigarettes** in rural regions.

Health Implications of Tobacco Use

- **Disease Burden:**
 - Both SLT and smoked tobacco are major contributors to **oral, lung, head & neck, stomach, and pancreatic cancers**.
- **Global Ranking:**
 - India ranks **first globally in male cancer incidence and mortality**, much of it attributed to tobacco.
- **Most Affected Cancer Types:**
 - **Lip and oral cancers** are the most common tobacco-related cancers in Indian men.
 - Followed by **lung cancer**.
- **Second-hand Smoke Exposure:**

- Workplace exposure to second-hand smoke remains a **significant health risk**.

Economic Burden of Tobacco Use

- In FY 2017–18, the **economic cost of tobacco use** in India was ₹77 lakh crore (equivalent to **1.04% of GDP**).
- **Cost Breakdown:**
 - Smoking-related cost: 74%
 - Smokeless tobacco-related cost: 26%

Policy and Regulation Issues

- **Taxation Deficit:**
 - WHO recommends **75% tax on MRP** for tobacco products.
 - India's current taxation falls **below global standards**.
 - The **2024 Union Budget** did not raise tobacco taxes.
 - Tobacco firms engage in “**undershifting**” to keep products affordable by absorbing tax increases.
- **Single Stick Sales:**
 - Despite global best practices, **India has not banned the sale of single cigarette sticks**.
 - **88 countries** have enforced such bans.
 - In India, **87% of vendors sell single sticks**, especially near **tea stalls**, reinforcing habits like “chai-sutta”.
- **Packaging and Warnings:**
 - Single-stick sales allow vendors to **bypass statutory warnings and pictorial health messages**.
 - Encourages **impulse consumption**, especially among youth and lower-income groups.

Tobacco Board of India – Key Institutional Details

- **Legal Basis:** Constituted under the **Tobacco Board Act, 1975**.
- **Date of Establishment:** 1st January 1976.
- **Type:** Statutory body under the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry**.
- **Headquarters:** Located in **Guntur, Andhra Pradesh**.

- **Governance:** Administered by a **Chairman appointed by the Central Government.**

Functions of the Tobacco Board

1. Promotion of Exports:

- Facilitates export of various tobacco products.
- Ensures adherence to **global quality standards** for competitiveness.

2. Regulation of Production (Especially FCV Tobacco):

- Oversees **Flue-Cured Virginia (FCV)** tobacco production.
- Controls production areas via **licensing and quota systems.**

3. Support to Farmers:

- Ensures **fair and remunerative prices.**
- Facilitates access to **bank and cooperative credit.**
- Provides **agricultural inputs** and guidance.

4. Sustainability and Extension Services:

- Implements **development and extension programs.**
- Offers **technical support and training** to farmers for global compliance.

India's Position in Global Tobacco Trade

- India is the **second-largest tobacco producer** and **third-largest exporter** globally.
- Indian FCV tobacco is in demand in **Belgium, Egypt, Russia, Indonesia, and the USA.**
- The export sector is vital for **rural income**, especially in tobacco-growing regions like Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.

Source: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/1-in-2-men-1-in-10-women-in-state-smoke-finds-study-docs-flag-lung-cancer-risk/articleshow/121525418.cms>