

SMOKING

Tobacco kills nearly 6 million people each year, of whom more than 5 million are from direct tobacco use and more than 600 000 are non-smokers exposed to second-hand smoke. It is a major risk factor for at least two of the leading causes of premature mortality – circulatory disease and cancer, increasing the risk of heart attack, stroke, lung cancer, and cancers of the larynx and mouth. In addition, smoking is an important contributory factor for respiratory diseases. It remains the largest avoidable risk to health in OECD countries.

Overview

Fifteen of the 34 OECD countries had less than 20% of the adult population smoking daily in 2011. Rates were lowest in Sweden, Iceland and the United States (less than 15%). Rates were also less than 15% in India, South Africa and Brazil. Although large disparities remain, smoking rates across most OECD countries have shown a marked decline. On average, smoking rates have decreased by about one-fifth over the past ten years, with a steeper decline in men than in women. Large reductions occurred since 2000 in Norway, Denmark and the Netherlands. Greece maintains the highest level of smoking among OECD countries, along with Chile and Ireland, with around 30% (although the latest figure for Ireland dates from 2007). Smoking rates were even higher in the Russian Federation.

In the post-war period, most OECD countries tended to follow a general pattern marked by very high smoking rates among men (50% or more) through to the 1960s and 1970s, while the 1980s and the 1990s were characterised by a marked downturn in tobacco consumption. Much of this decline can be attributed to policies aimed at reducing tobacco consumption through public awareness campaigns, advertising bans and increased taxation, in response to rising rates of tobacco-related diseases. In addition to government policies, actions by anti-smoking interest groups were very effective in reducing smoking rates by changing beliefs about the health effects of smoking, particularly in North America.

Smoking prevalence is higher among men compared to women in all OECD countries except Norway, although male and female rates are similar in Denmark, Iceland and the United Kingdom. Female smoking rates continue to decline in most OECD countries. However, in three countries, female smoking rates have been increasing over the last ten years (the Czech Republic, Portugal and Korea), but even in these countries women are still less likely to smoke than men. In 2011, the gender gap in smoking rates was particularly large in Korea, Japan, Mexico and Turkey, as well as in the Russian Federation, India, Indonesia and China.

Definition

The proportion of daily smokers is defined as the percentage of the population aged 15 years and over reporting smoking every day.

Comparability

International comparability is limited due to the lack of standardisation in the measurement of smoking habits in health interview surveys across OECD countries. Variations remain in the age groups surveyed, the wording of questions, response categories and survey methodologies. For example, in some countries, respondents are asked if they smoke regularly, rather than daily.

The proportion of daily smokers among the adult population varies greatly, even between neighbouring countries. There is strong evidence of socio-economic differences in smoking and mortality. People in less affluent social groups have a greater prevalence and intensity of smoking, and higher smoking-related mortality rates.

Sources

- OECD (2013), *OECD Health Statistics* (Database).

Further information

Analytical publications

- OECD (2013), *Cancer Care: Assuring Quality to Improve Survival*, OECD Publishing.
- OECD (2010), *Health Care Systems: Efficiency and Policy Settings*, OECD Publishing.

Statistical publications

- OECD (2013), *Health at a Glance 2013: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing.
- OECD (2012), *Health at a Glance: Asia/Pacific 2012*, OECD Publishing.
- OECD (2012), *Health at a Glance: Europe 2012*, OECD Publishing.

Online databases

- OECD Health Statistics.

Websites

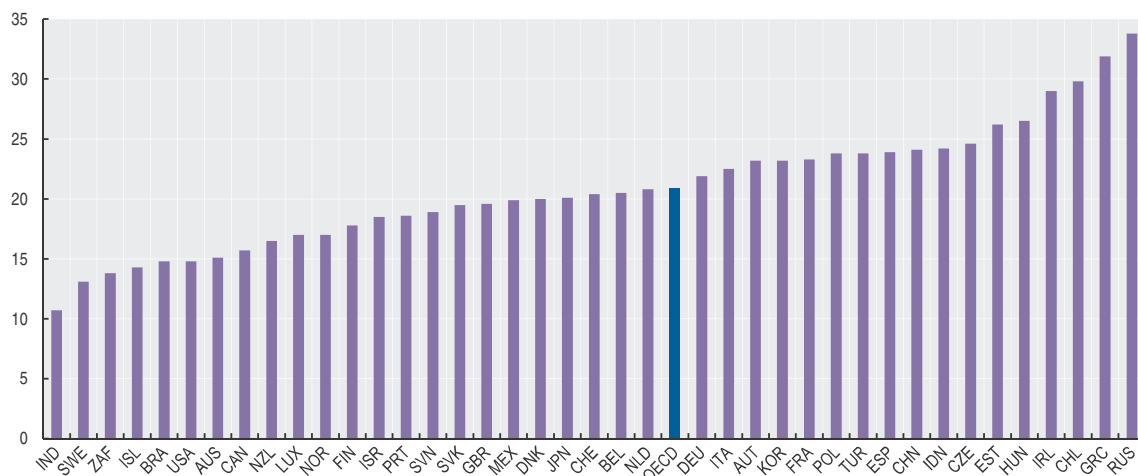
- OECD Health Data (supplementary material), www.oecd.org/health/healthdata.
- Health at a Glance, www.oecd.org/health/healthataglance.



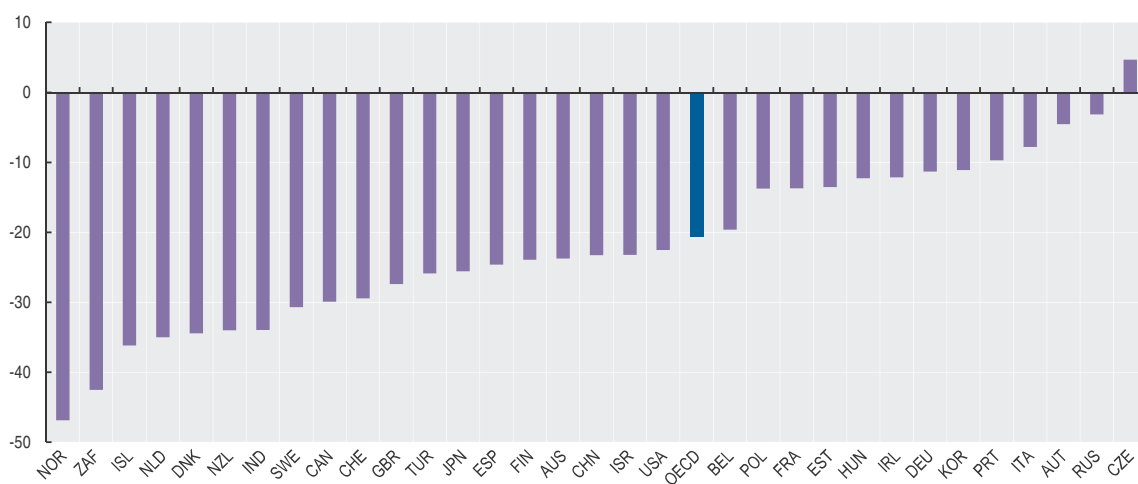
SMOKING

Adult population smoking daily

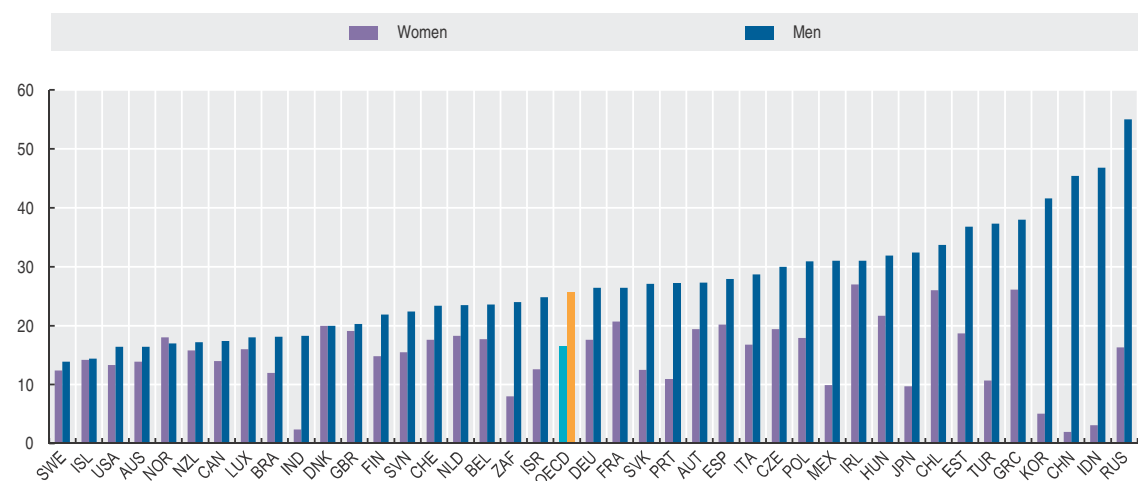
As a percentage of adult population, 2011 or latest available year

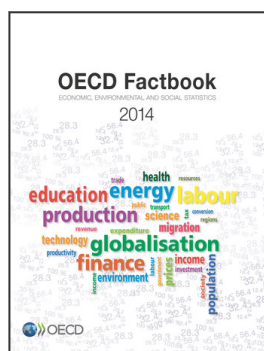
StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933026905>**Change in smoking rates**

Percentage change over the period 2000-11 or latest available period

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933026924>**Adult population smoking daily by gender**

Percentage of population aged 15 years and over, 2011 or latest available year

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933026943>



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