

Department of Health Integrated Smoking Cessation Hotline **1833 183**

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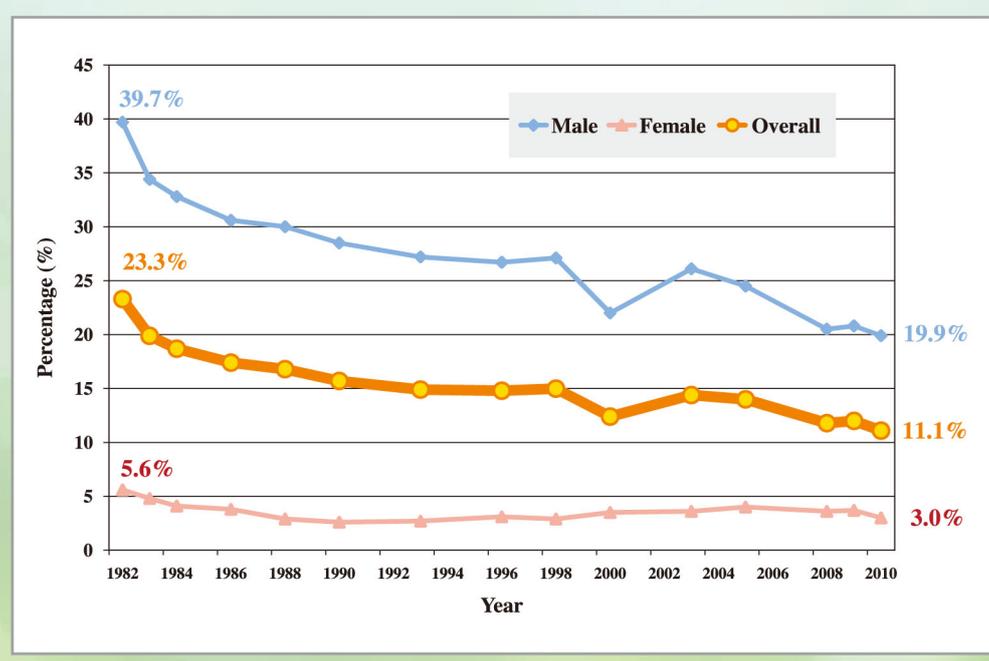
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Latest Findings of Census and Statistics Department Survey: Smoking Rate Hits 30-year Low

The daily cigarette smoking prevalence among the Hong Kong population has dropped to 11.1% in 2010, hitting a low in the past 30 years! According to the latest Thematic Household Survey Report published by the Census and Statistics Department on 24 August 2011¹, daily smokers accounted for 11.1% of the population aged 15 and over, i.e. 657,000 (Figure 1). The percentage of male smokers had been decreasing steadily from 39.7% in 1982 to 19.9% in 2010, while that of female smokers had been decreasing from 5.6% in 1982 to 3.0% in the year when the latest survey was conducted.

Figure 1 Prevalence of daily cigarette smokers in the population (aged 15 and over) from 1982 to 2010



¹ Thematic Household Survey Report No. 48. Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. 2011.



Of the 657,000 daily smokers, males accounted for 86.1% (about 565,300) and females accounted for 13.9% (about 91,600). Analysed by age group, smoking prevalence of most age groups has dropped as compared with the findings in the previous 2009/10 survey (Table 1), while smoking prevalence of the two groups aged 15-19 and aged 60 and over has slightly increased by 0.7 and 0.1 percentage point respectively.

Table 1 Daily cigarette smokers by age and sex (%)*

Age group	Survey conducted during Nov 2009 – Feb 2010			Survey conducted during Oct – Dec 2010		
	Male	Female	Overall	Male	Female	Overall
15 - 19	2.7	0.8	1.8	3.7	1.3	2.5
20 - 29	16.3	5.8	11.0	15.2	4.5	9.7
30 - 39	26.2	6.6	15.6	25.4	5.2	14.4
40 - 49	25.9	3.6	14.0	24.3	2.8	12.7
50 - 59	26.1	2.6	14.3	24.3	1.9	13.1
≥ 60	17.0	1.7	9.1	17.1	1.8	9.2
Overall	20.8	3.7	12.0	19.9	3.0	11.1

* As a percentage of all persons in the respective age groups. For example, among all aged 15-19, 2.5% were daily smokers based on the 2010 survey.

The average daily consumption of cigarettes by smokers has followed the decreasing trend of overall smoking prevalence. The daily smokers consumed an average of 13.4 cigarettes in a day, dropped when compared to 13.9 and 13.7 in the 2007/08 and 2009/10 survey. Over half (52.9%) of the daily smokers consumed 1-10 cigarettes in a day; 43.7% consumed 11-20 cigarettes and only 3.4% consumed more than 20 cigarettes in a day. The most common reason for starting smoking was “influence of friends”(61.0%), with “out of curiosity” being the next common reason (45.5%), followed by “necessity in social functions”(13.6%), “refreshing one’s mind”(13.1%) and “influence of family members”(9.6%).

In addition, the survey also looked at whether there were changes in the quantity of smoking as compared to that before the extension of statutory no smoking areas to covered public transport facilities with superstructures and hospitality establishments in 2009. Among the over 600,000 daily smokers, around 56,000 persons (8.5%) reported that they had smoked less.

It has also been found from the survey that nearly half (44.3%) of the daily smokers had tried or wanted to give up smoking. Of the 285,900 ex-daily smokers (who had quit smoking), 89.3% were males while 10.7% were females; nearly half (48.2%) of them were aged 60 and over; 38.7% were aged 40-59 and 13.1% were aged 15-39. Over one-third (36.2%) of them gave up smoking on their own accord because of “health has not yet been harmed by smoking, but want to prevent from being harmed”; another 34.4%, “health has already been harmed by

smoking”; other reasons included “objection from family members/friends or concerned about exposing family members and friends to second-hand smoke” (20.8%); “tobacco products are too expensive” (17.2%) and “health reason (with advice from doctor/nurse/other health care professional)”(13.8%).

The decreasing trend of the overall smoking prevalence over the past three decades has been the result of the concerted efforts made by the Government and different sectors of the community over the years. A progressive and multi-pronged approach comprising legislation, taxation, enforcement, publicity, education and launching of smoking cessation programmes has been adopted. To enhance the provision of smoking cessation services in an evidence-based manner, we will continue our co-operation with the Hospital Authority, the Hong Kong Council on Smoking and Health, community groups and universities by adopting various measures and studying different methods. The survey has also found that nearly 70% (68.2%) of the daily smokers started smoking weekly at age below 20. As such, reducing youth smoking and preventing youngsters from contacting cigarettes and picking up the smoking habit are of utmost importance and also very effective in controlling the use of tobacco in the long term. We will provide the youth with an appropriate cessation counselling telephone hotline and launch health promotion programmes in schools which aim at encouraging them to support a smoke-free environment and living style and to promote a smoke-free culture.

Figure 2 The Head of the Tobacco Control Office, Dr Raymond Ho (centre), attended a press conference on 24 August 2011 to explain the latest smoking situation in Hong Kong and introduce various smoking prevention and cessation services together with different community groups



Looking forward, the Government will, with the collaboration of various partners in the community, continue to devote resources to promoting a smoke-free culture and building a “smoke-free Hong Kong”!

Smoking Ban at Public Transport Facilities

To further protect the public from the harm of second-hand smoke, the Government has designated public transport facilities (i.e. public transport interchanges or bus termini that consist of 2 or more modes of public transport or more than one specified route) as no smoking areas in phases. Smoking ban for the first batch of 54 indoor public transport facilities has been implemented since January 2007. Since September 2009, 48 public transport facilities with superstructures have also been designated as no smoking areas. Starting from December 2010, the Department of Health has further extended smoking ban to over 120 open-air public transport facilities. According to the Smoking (Public Health) Ordinance, no person shall smoke or carry a lighted cigarette, cigar or pipe in designated no smoking areas, or else will be liable to a fixed penalty of \$1,500.

From January to September 2011, the Tobacco Control Office had received over 620 complaints concerning smoking in the no smoking areas of public transport facilities, representing about 5% of the total number of complaints. The number of inspections was about 740 and over 470 fixed penalty notices had been issued to smoking offenders. A new series of promotional and educational materials has been introduced recently to raise public awareness of the smoking ban at public transport facilities and within the compartments of public transport, and to ask for co-operation with enforcement officers in case of prosecution or else serious legal consequences will be caused.



Quit Smoking App

Smoke-free culture is a leading trend in Hong Kong community and local demand on smoking cessation services is also on the surge. The Department of Health has attached great importance to smoking cessation work by providing various smoking cessation services for the public through different channels, including smoking cessation hotline, smoking cessation clinics and interactive online cessation centre. Users are provided with information about smoking cessation, psychological counselling and drug treatment. With the increasing popularity of smart phones, the Tobacco Control Office launched the Quit Smoking App in early August 2011 to assist smokers to overcome tobacco dependence. Smokers can obtain information about smoking cessation from this new app which also offers them tips to cope with withdrawal symptoms through video clips featuring local celebrities. The app also offers appropriate quitting advice, keeps track of smokers' quitting progress and issues regular reminders according to their smoking habit. On the other hand, non-smokers can learn more about quitting smoking and recommend it to their family and friends!

Over 6,000 downloads has been recorded (as at 30 November 2011) since the launch of this Quit Smoking App. We encourage smokers and non-smokers to download the new app to quit smoking habit or learn about various information on smoking cessation so that they can assist their family and friends to quit smoking. For more information about this app, please visit the website of the Tobacco Control Office: www.tco.gov.hk.



Tobacco duty successfully increased

According to the World Health Organization, an increase on tobacco duty is the most direct and most effective way to reduce tobacco use. World Bank's findings indicated that, on average, a price rise of 10% on a pack of cigarette is expected to reduce demand for cigarette by about 4% in high-income countries.

To protect public health and go in line with Government's tobacco control measures, the Financial Secretary announced in his 2011-12 Budget in February 2011 that the duty on cigarettes was further increased by 41.5%. The duty on each stick was increased from \$1.2 to about \$1.7. Currently, the proportion of tobacco duty against the retail price of each pack of cigarette is about 69%. The impact of higher cigarette price is more likely to be felt by youngsters who are more sensitive to price changes. Previous surveys also illustrated that a sharp price rise on tobacco products is an effective means of deterring young people from picking up the habit in the first place, or curbing young smokers to stop smoking after picking up the habit. It is believed that such measures can further help reduce the number of young smokers.





Special Topic

Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme 2011

'Enforcement Unit of Tobacco Control Office of the Department of Health' proudly wins the Meritorious Award under the 'Regulatory/Enforcement Service Award'

Since 1999, the Civil Service Bureau has been organizing the 'Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme' (the Award Scheme) on a biennial basis. The objectives of the Award Scheme are to promote the spirit of customer-focused service in the civil service. This Award Scheme not only aims to recognize the efforts of award-winning government departments and teams which provide excellent service, but also to inspire our colleagues to emulate the best practices of award winners for continuous improvement in the delivery of public services.

The Prize Presentation Ceremony of the Award Scheme was held on 12 September 2011 at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre. The 'Enforcement Unit of Tobacco Control Office of the Department of Health' proudly won the Meritorious Award under the 'Regulatory/Enforcement Service Award' over a total of 110 nominations from various policy bureaux and departments. Ms CHAU Po-wah, Senior Tobacco Control Inspector represented our office to receive the prize on stage. Dr LAM Ping-yan, Director of Health, Dr Cindy LAI, Assistant Director of Health and Dr Raymond HO, Head of Tobacco Control Office also attended the Prize Presentation Ceremony by invitation to express their compliments to the award-winning Enforcement Unit of Tobacco Control Office, sharing the joy of victory altogether.

The Tobacco Control Office always upholds the belief of 'promoting a smoke-free culture and protecting public health' after it was set up in 2001. We take forward the tobacco control work through a multi-pronged approach comprising enforcement, publicity, education and promotion of smoking cessation, aiming at protecting public health by reducing the number of smokers and public exposure to second-hand smoke.



Words from Editor

It is encouraging to note that figures from a survey showed that the smoking population in Hong Kong has dropped to 11.1%, which is the lowest in the past 30 years, as announced by the Census and Statistics Department in August 2011. It proves that the tobacco control measures taken over the years are fairly effective. We would like to extend our thanks to all of you who always render support to our tobacco control work. The Cover Story of this issue is a brief summary of the survey and the Tobacco Control Stories introduces the latest situation of smoking ban at public transport facilities. Also, a quit smoking app and matters concerning tobacco duty increase will be reported in Local News on Tobacco Control. Moreover, there is a special topic on the prize we won in an award scheme. Lastly, we certainly won't miss the readers' favourite 'Game Zone'.

How time flies! The publication of Tobacco Control Bulletin is about to celebrate its 10th anniversary. This 20th issue serves as a digest of our efforts in tobacco control work. There will be a great change on the contents of Tobacco Control Bulletin starting from the next issue. Your continuous support is certainly important to us!

Game Zone

Please fax your answers to 2575 8944 with your name, address and contact no., or send by post to: Tobacco Control Office, 18th Floor, Wu Chung House, 213 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai on or before 31 May 2012. Readers who answer all questions correctly will receive a souvenir. Join us and have fun!

Limited sets of souvenirs are available, while stocks last.

All answers can be found in this issue of Tobacco Control Bulletin.

1. What is the proportion of daily cigarette smokers aged 15 and over of the Hong Kong population in 2010?

2. How many cigarettes are consumed in a day on average by the daily cigarette smokers in 2010?

3. What is the most common reason for starting to smoke cigarette?

4. What is the approach adopted by the government and different sectors of the community for years that contributed to a downward trend in the overall smoking prevalence over the past 30 years?

5. When were over 120 open-air public transport facilities designated as statutory no smoking areas?

6. What is the name of the app for smoking cessation?

7. List one of the functions of the app for smoking cessation.

8. Currently, what is the proportion of tobacco duty against the retail price of each pack of cigarette?

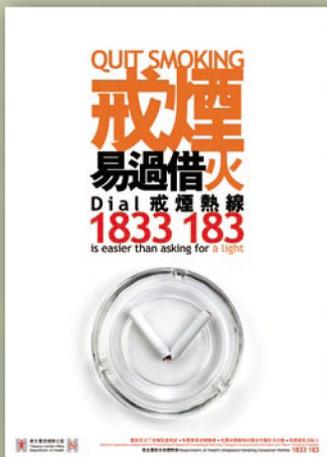
Please check the answers for this issue on the website of Tobacco Control Office (www.tco.gov.hk) after the closing date.

Name: _____ Contact no.: _____

Address: _____

Answers for last issue:

a



c



b



a



c



a



b



b



a



a

