

Annual Training Programme on Tobacco Control

Tobacco and Alcohol Control Office, Department of Health, HKSAR, China

History and future of tobacco control, and overcoming obstacles

Hong Kong, July 2026



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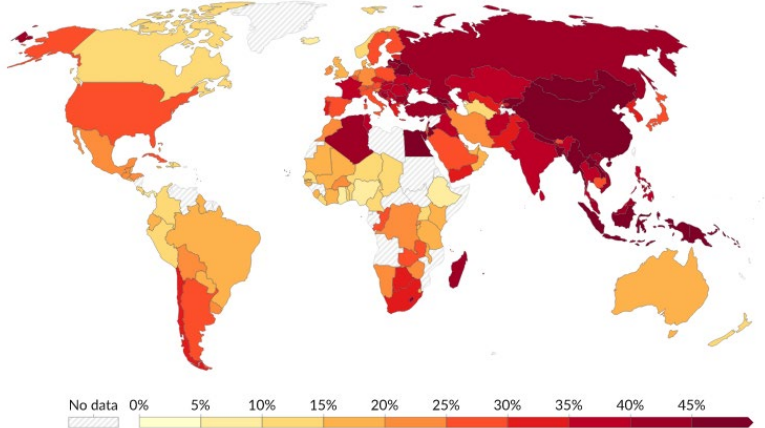
1. The Global Problem

Adult smoking: 27% in 2000 to **17% in 2025**

Share of men who smoke or use tobacco, 2022

Estimated percentage of men aged 15 years and older who currently use tobacco. This includes all forms of tobacco use, such as smoking, chewing or snuffing, but excludes products that do not contain tobacco, such as e-cigarettes.

Our World
in Data



Data source: World Health Organization - Global Health Observatory (2024)

OurWorldinData.org/smoking | CC BY

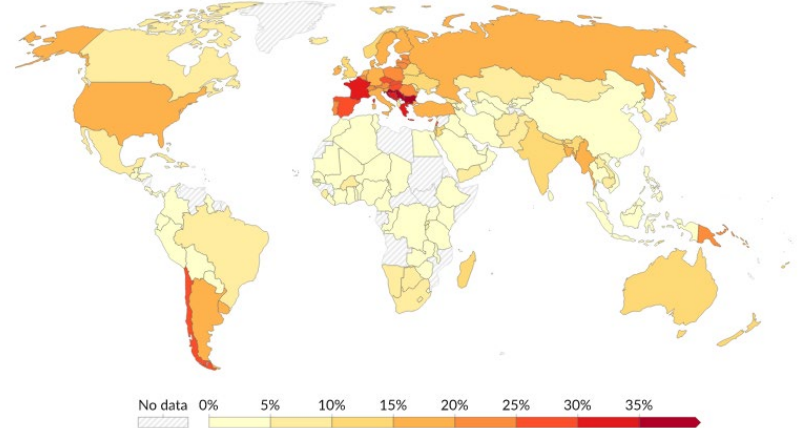
Note: To allow for comparisons between countries and over time, this metric is age-standardized.

Men

Share of women who smoke or use tobacco, 2022

Estimated percentage of women (15 years and older) who currently use tobacco. This includes all forms of tobacco use, such as smoking, chewing or snuffing, but excludes products that do not contain tobacco, such as e-cigarettes.

Our World
in Data



Data source: World Health Organization - Global Health Observatory (2024)

OurWorldinData.org/smoking | CC BY

Note: To allow for comparisons between countries and over time, this metric is age-standardized.

Women

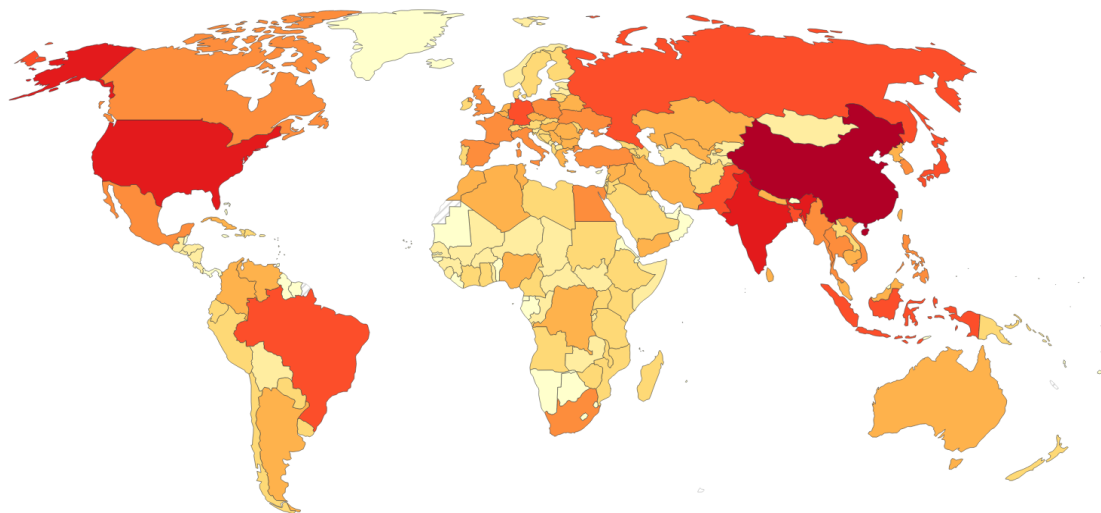
Rates can be lowered without using new tobacco products

Tobacco control – a global health challenge

Number of deaths from tobacco smoking, 2023

Estimated annual number of deaths attributed to smoking.

Our World
in Data

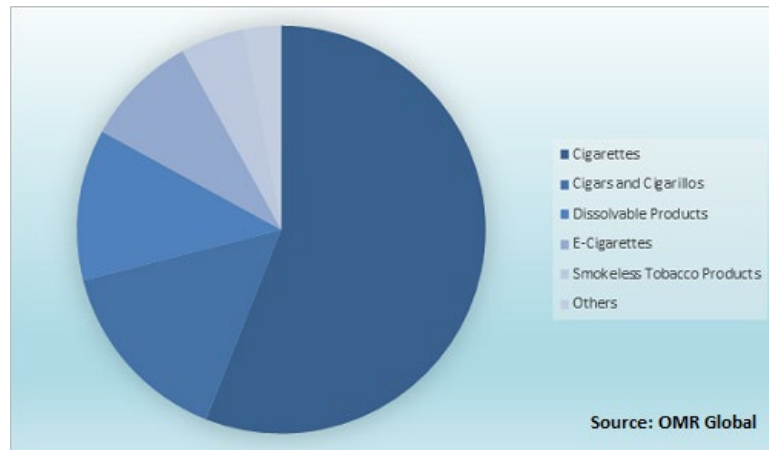
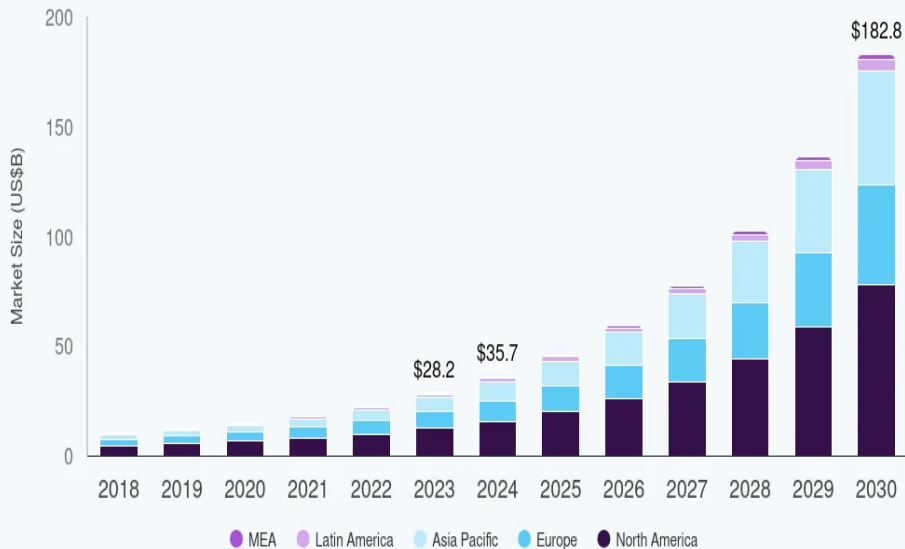


E-cig Global market

E-cigarettes now banned in 40+ countries

E-cigarette And Vape Market

Size, by Region, 2018 - 2030



Global market share 2019-2025

2. Tobacco control action

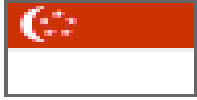


Guided by:
WHO FCTC
WHO mpower

SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals)

Early Pioneers TC legislation

1970s-1980s



1970 Singapore

1973 Norway

1976 France

1981 Senegal

1982 Hong Kong

1982 Sudan

1983 New Zealand

1983 Israel

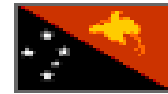
1984 Australia

1987 PNG

1988 Canada

1989 Netherlands

1989 Thailand



(Green – Asia)



183 countries ratified by 2026



A powerful tool – the WHO FCTC uses international law for public health

Main provisions of the WHO FCTC

Regulation of:

- contents, packaging and labelling of tobacco products
- prohibition of sales to and by minors
- illicit trade in tobacco products
- smoking in public places

Reduction of consumption by:

- comprehensive ban on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship
- education, training, raising public awareness and assistance with quitting

Protection of the environment and the health of tobacco workers

Support for economically viable alternative activities

Research, surveillance and exchange of information

Support for legislative action to deal with liability

Like good national policy, laws, tax

FCTC: No quick fix but a success:

Over 20 years, the WHO FCTC has achieved significant progress in global tobacco control.

It has been instrumental in:

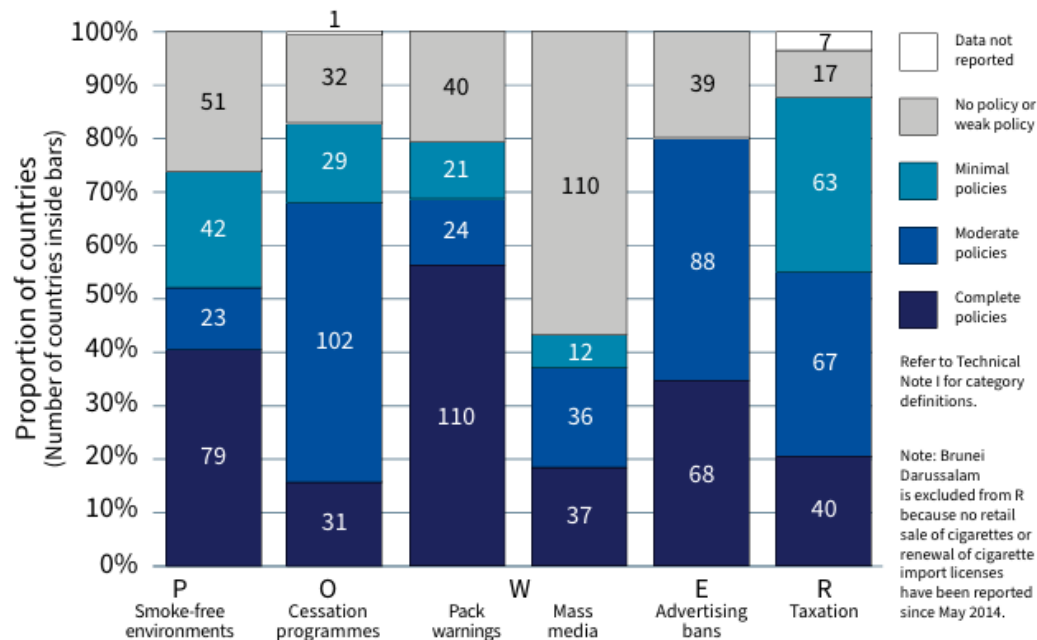
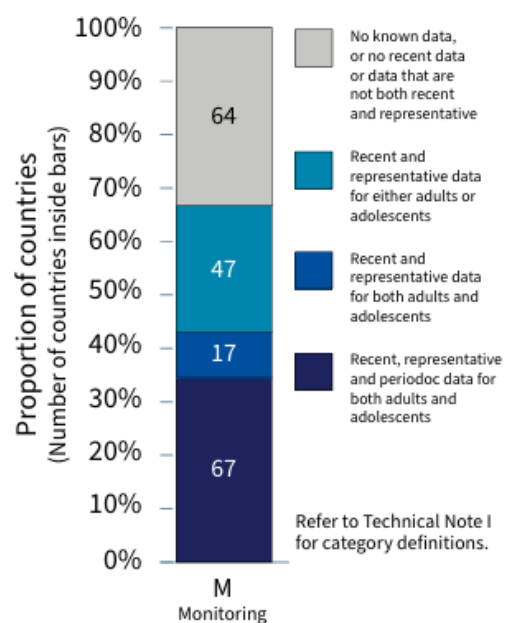
- a) reducing tobacco use prevalence;
- b) implementing key tobacco control measures; and
- c) raising awareness about tobacco industry interference.

**24 MILLION FEWER
YOUNG PEOPLE
SMOKE TODAY
THANKS TO STRONG
TOBACCO CONTROL.**

#WCTC2025



State of tobacco control, 2024



We already know what works

Ranking	Policy in 41 countries
1	Taxes (75% of retail price) Yet major under-used measure in WPR!
2	Smoke-free
3	Warnings
4	Cessation
5	Marketing bans



Philippine 'Sin tax' 2013



- **Tax on tobacco and alcohol**
- **Simplified tax structure**
- **Increased tobacco taxes by up to 340%**
- **US\$ 5.6 billion revenue each year by 2023**
- **85% earmarked for Universal Health Care Programme, and smoking prevention**

Advocate for total bans on
ALL tobacco advertising,
promotion and
sponsorship (TAPS)

Hong Kong 1994

BANNED



Packaging and Labelling ... is another form of promotion

In 2026:

a) Graphic warnings: 148 countries

b) Plain packaging: 27 countries



China: Pack warnings

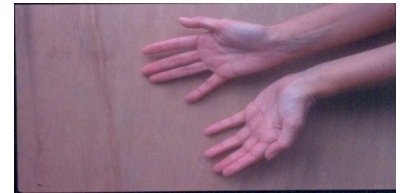
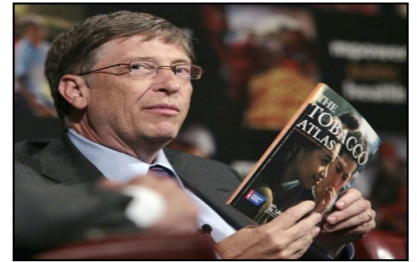
1. Text only
2. Small area
3. Background colour of warnings same as the colour of package
4. Few messages.
5. No information is provided about :
 1. Tobacco diseases.
 2. Addictive nature of tobacco.
 3. Harms of second-hand smoke.
 4. No advice about cessation.

Conclusion: “Ineffective”
International Tobacco Control
China Project



Identify funding

- **HALF OF ALL FUNDING** from high to low income countries to fund tobacco control comes from two donors:
 - Bloomberg Philanthropies
 - Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
- Also International Tobacco Control (ITC) Policy Evaluation Project, CDCF (GATS, GYTS studies)
- **BUT Government funding remains woefully inadequate, especially for the WHO FCTC**



New ideas? In last decade...

1. STOP project, to expose and counter the industry's relentless efforts to sell harmful, addictive products. Includes Tobacco Industry Interference Indexes.
2. Tobacco-Free Portfolios, encouraging big investors to switch to tobacco-free investments.
3. A tobacco-free generation, where any young person born after a certain date will never be able to buy cigarettes.
4. 'Polluter pays' fees, levies, compensation funds

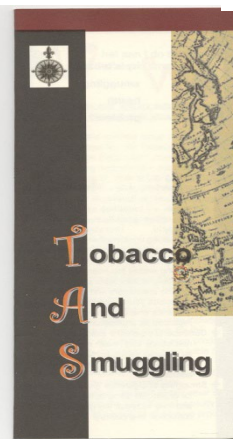
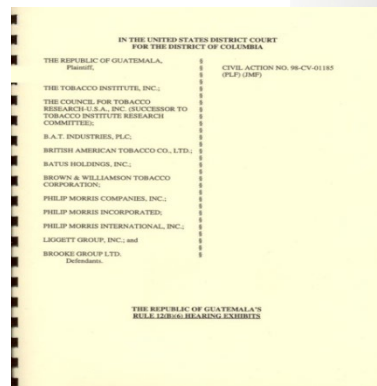
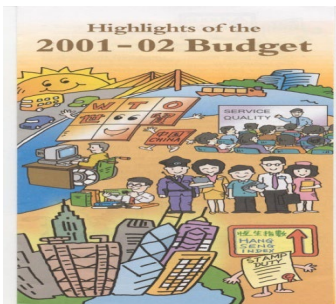
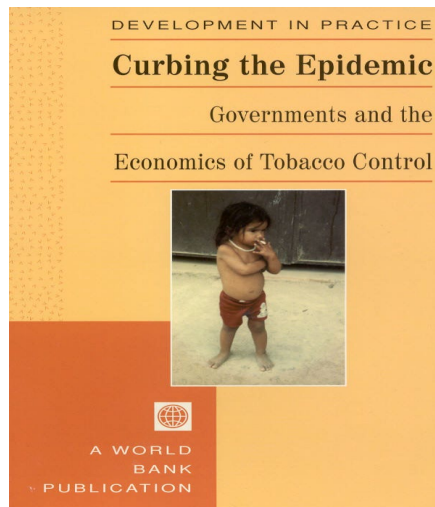
We need more innovative thinking as we move to the future.



3. Key lessons learned for the Future



Traditional Medical Model Not Enough



婦女事務委員會
Women's Commission



Listen to tobacco industry “Scream test”

1. If the industry screams, the measure will be effective:

- Tobacco tax
- Smoke-free areas
- TAPS bans
- Large graphic warnings, plain packaging.
- Bans on new forms of tobacco

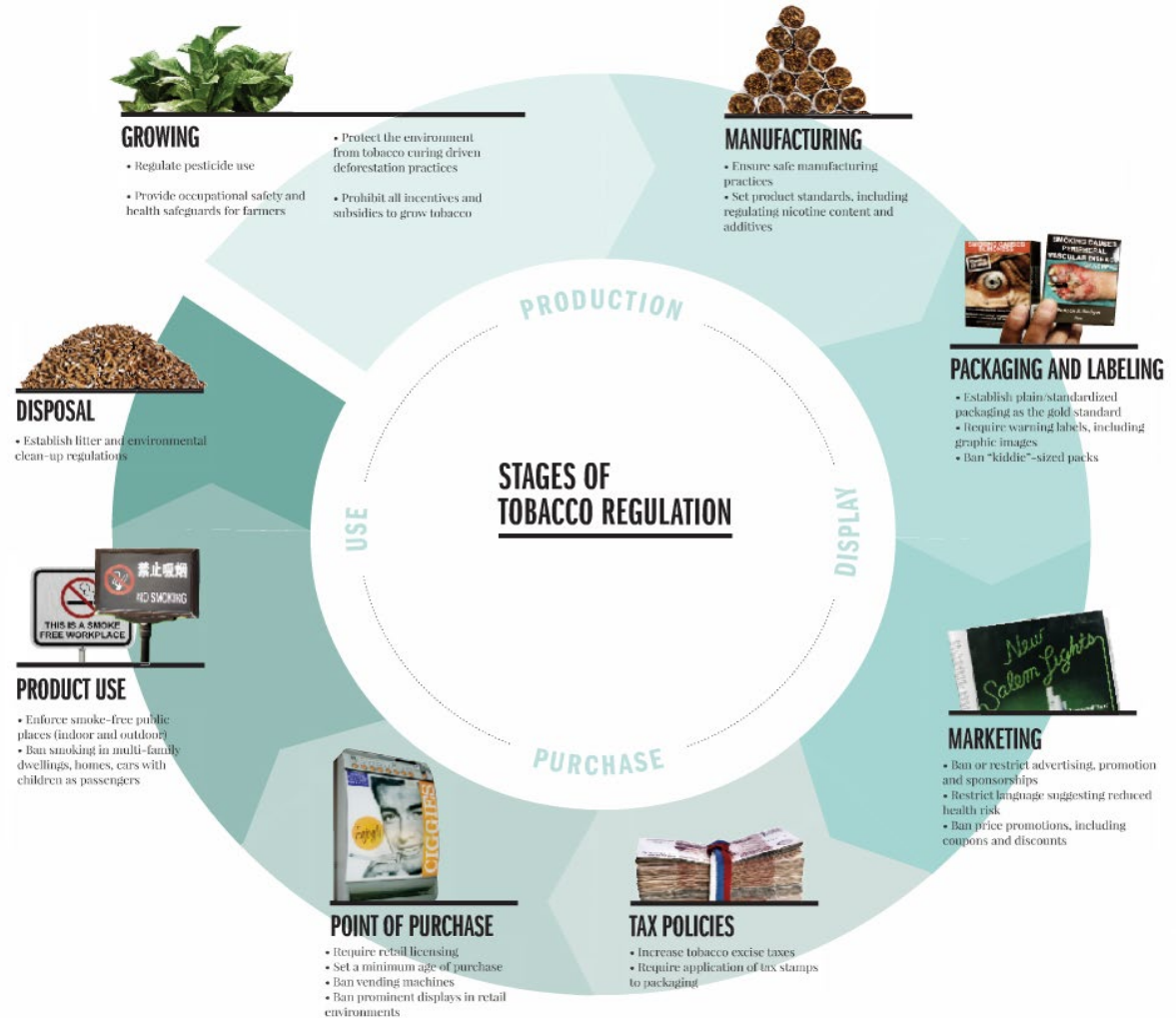
2. If industry ignores a measure, then less effective:

- Traditional school health education
- Ban on sales to minors

.....Our research is done for us.



Need to intervene throughout tobacco cycle



Lessons learned: Similarities

In spite of differences between countries of population size, income and political systems...



1. The product, harm, obstacles, and tobacco control action are virtually identical.
2. WHO FCTC is proof, as it applies to all nations.
3. Everywhere, need sound, standardised prevalence, health, economic and policy effectiveness, *and decades of persistence.*

Lobbying governments is important as only governments can:

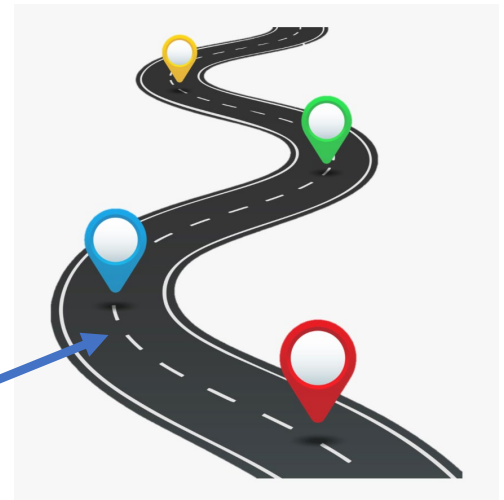
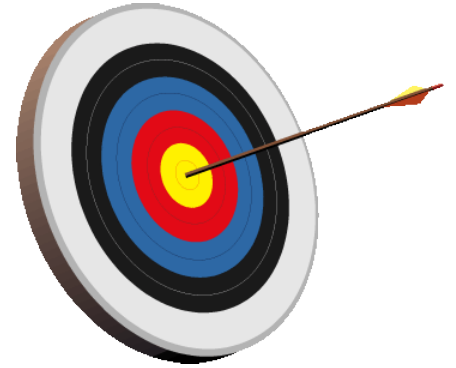


1. Pass public health legislation.
2. Implement tax policy.
3. Ratify and implement UN treaties, such as the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), or SDGs.
4. Mobilise resources.
5. Coordinate inter-agency responses.
6. Stop the tobacco industry.



Set Endgame target, usually of 5%

1. 2010: 1st launched in Finland.
2. By 2026: **Adopted by 18 countries.**
3. Most are government targets.
4. Endgame target dates range from 2025-2040.
5. Roadmap and interim goals.
6. Not all governments, are ready to commit to Endgame target of 5%. WHO has suggested an interim reduction for each individual country by 2030.





www.GOV.cn

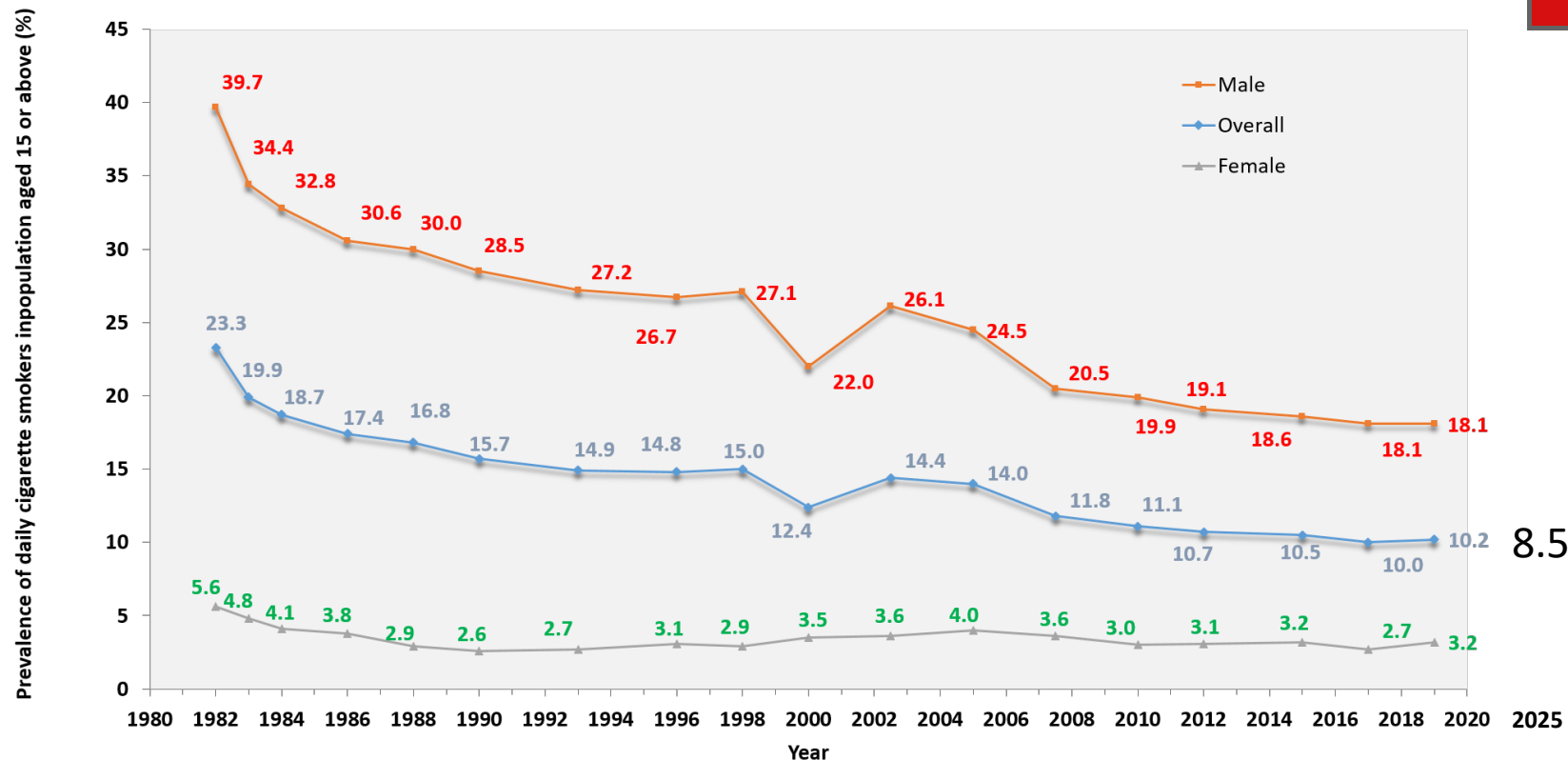
中华人民共和国中央人民政府

The Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China

	CHINA 2013-2018	
2013	China Central Party School	240-page report on tobacco
2013	State Council Directive	Government employees: no smoking in smoke-free areas or at official functions; smoke-free offices; no free gifts
2014	Ministry Education	No smoking in schools, universities, no ads, no sales
2014	PLA Notice	Strengthening Tobacco Banning and Control in Army
2015-	Smoke-free cities	Beijing 2015; Shenzhen 2017; Shanghai 2017
2010s~	Commission Health	Drafting of National smoke-free law. Stuck in 2018
2014	National Health City Standards	Included tobacco control
2015	China Academy of Governance	Became involved with Tobacco control
2015	Ministry Industry	New law on banning advertising
2015	Tax increases	Increase passed on to the consumer
2016	Philanthropy Law	Tobacco donation allowed. Publicity of tobacco donation banned. No punishment for violation
2017	Sina Weibo	Smoking removed from 'Cool' emoji
2018~	Health Promotion Law	Draft has weak tobacco clauses.
2018	National Health Commission	Tobacco control moved from MIIT and industry
2018	STMA	Ban sales E-cig to minors



Prevalence of Daily Cigarette Smoking in Hong Kong

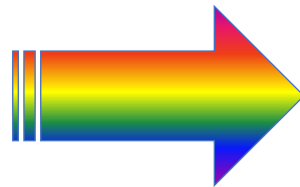


No need to use e-cigarettes and HTP to reduce smoking rates

Obstacles

1. Lack awareness of magnitude of harm
2. Human rights - reluctance to intervene with 'personal behaviour.'
3. Focus on cure not prevention
4. Pre-occupation with other issues
5. Misperceived economic concerns and tax arguments
6. Lack of funds
7. Other miscellaneous obstacles
8. **Tobacco industry interference**

AND overcoming them



1. Obstacle: Lack of awareness of magnitude of harm: 2/3 smokers die



World Health
Organization

#NoTobacco

**DON'T LET TOBACCO
TAKE YOUR BREATH AWAY**

**TOBACCO KILLS MORE THAN 8 MILLION
PEOPLE EVERY YEAR.**

**8 MILLION
DEATHS**
caused by
tobacco
every year



**1 MILLION
DEATHS**
due to second
-hand smoke
exposure

Smoking, SHS, alcohol,
obesity - but HK resident
worries about SARS

2. Obstacle: Reluctance to intervene with personal behaviour



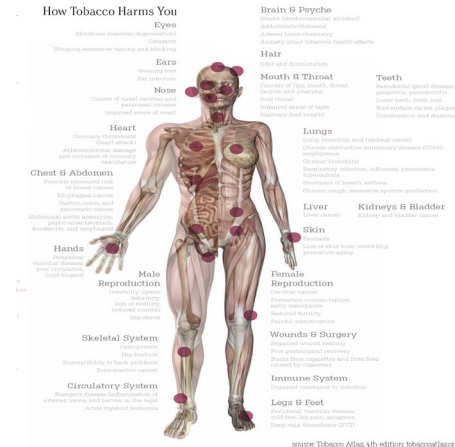
**Smokers are a minority:
Globally only 18%
of adults smoke**

3. Obstacle: Focus on cure, not prevention

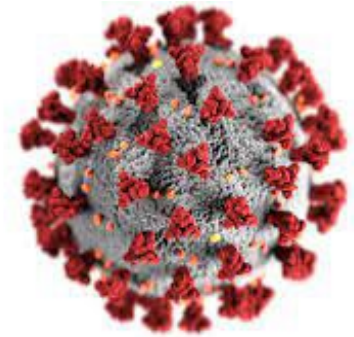
a) Most health professionals work in curative medicine



b) Many/most of tobacco diseases are untreatable at the time of diagnosis...



4. Obstacle: Preoccupation with other diseases or events



5. Obstacle: Mis-economic & tax arguments



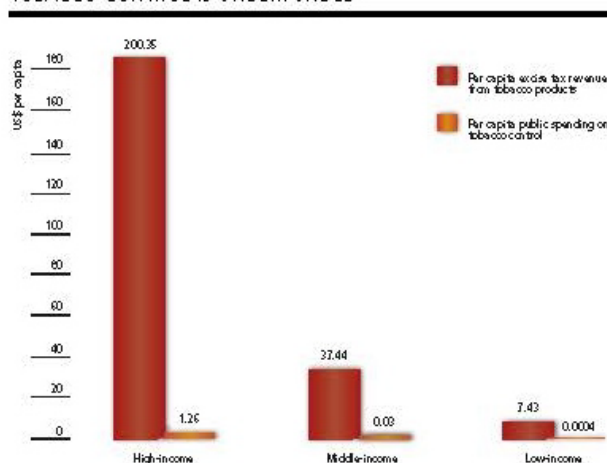
- Misunderstanding of economic costs
- Tobacco tax revenue (but not debit) seen
- **Health economists (e.g. World Economic Forum) that the cost of prevention today on all the Non-communicable diseases will far outweigh the future costs of inaction now.**

6. Obstacle: Lack of funds

Governments collect nearly US\$ 269 billion in tobacco excise tax revenues each year, but spend only around US\$ 1 billion combined on tobacco control – with 91% of this spent by high-income countries.



TOBACCO CONTROL IS UNDERFUNDED



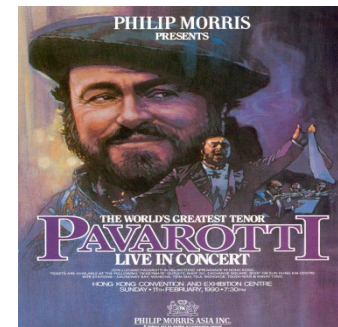
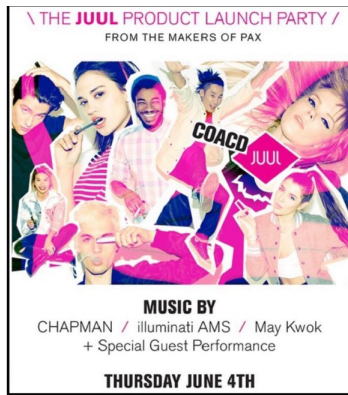
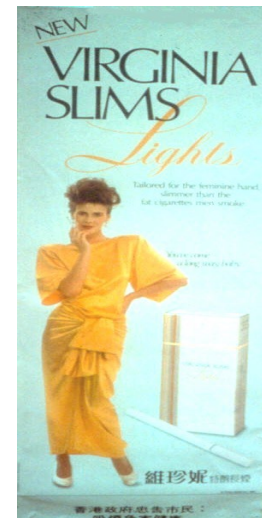
Note: Based on 76 countries with available tobacco excise tax revenue data for 2013 or 2014; expenditure on tobacco control for several of these countries is estimated from figures between 2004 and 2014, adjusting for inflation (average consumer price, IMF World Economic Outlook 2015). Tax revenue on tobacco (product or d. goods) as tax revenue in 2013–2014 (or the country covered) Per capita tax is calculated by using 2014 UN revised population age 15+.

7. Obstacles: more...



- Reluctance of some governments to work with civil society, NGOs and academia.
- No understanding of environmental consequences.
- Media may be uninformed or even offer “equal time” to industry.
- Current health promotion may not resonate with 11-year olds.

Tobacco industry promotion undermines tobacco control



8. Obstacle #1 – The Tobacco Industry

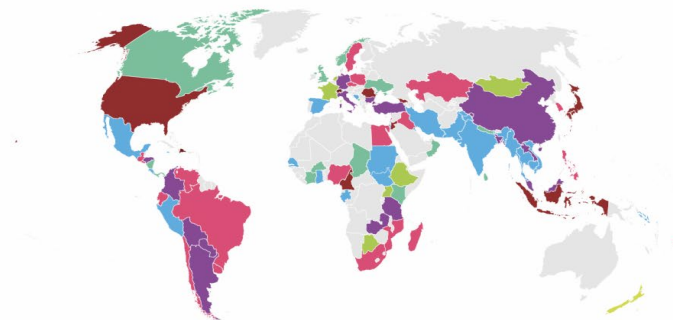
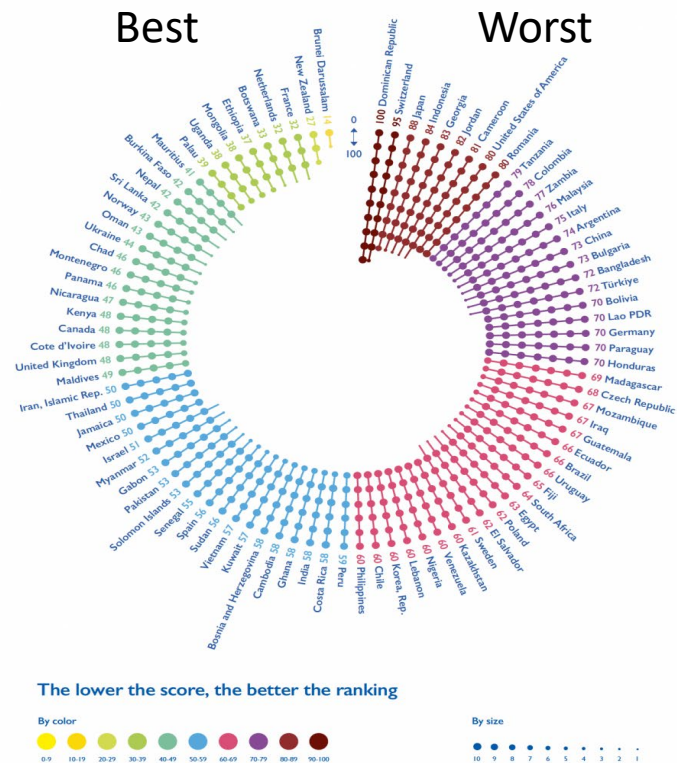
Global forms of Tobacco Industry Interference

					
1. Manoeuvring to hijack the political and legislative process	2. Exaggerating the economic importance of the industry	3. Manipulating public opinion to gain the appearance of respectability	4. Fabricating support through front groups	5. Discrediting proven science and economic evidence	6. Intimidating governments with litigation or the threat of litigation, or trade threats

1. Hijack political process



Tobacco Industry Interference Index 2025



LEAST INTERFERENCE

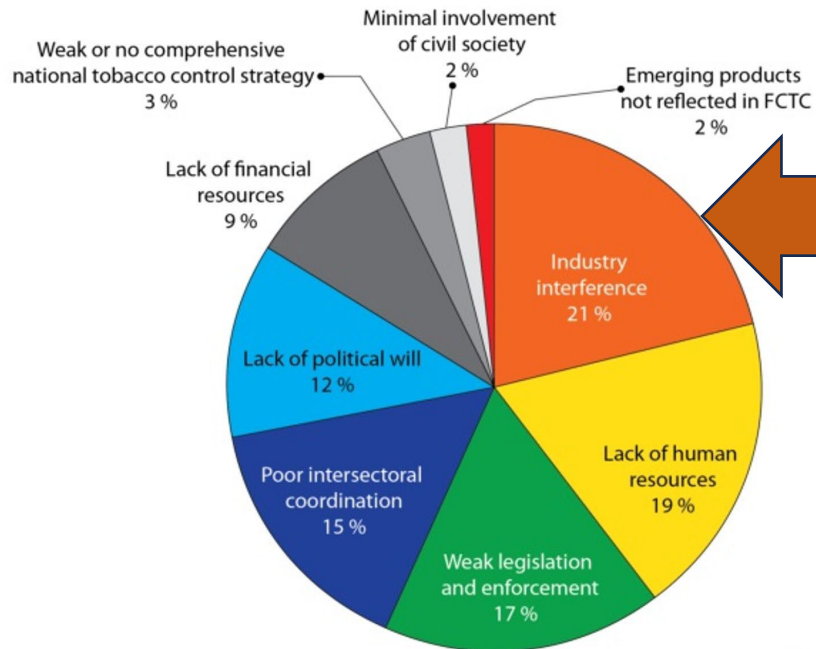


MOST INTERFERENCE



Priorities, needs and gaps, challenges

Constraints and barriers



Largest sector: TII





**COP10
PANAMA**
5-10 February 2024



FCTC
WHO FRAMEWORK CONVENTION
ON TOBACCO CONTROL



Taxpayers Protection Alliance ✓
@Protecttaxpayers

It's hard to believe we are less than TWO WEEKS away from [#GoodCOP](#) in Panama! [#COP10](#)

[@cjsnowdon](#) gets it – and that's why we're thrilled to have him joining our all-star team of harm reduction experts in Panama City next month! 🌟



3:18 AM · Jan 27, 2024 · 7,749 Views

WHO 'Not fit for purpose' and a 'threat to global health'

Inside Philip Morris' campaign to **subvert** 'the global anti-smoking treaty' - Reuters

'Interference around COP10 & MOP3'
- University of Bath

2. Mis-economics



2. Exaggerate the economic importance of the industry



Malawi

In the early 1980s, Philip Morris was heavily involved in lobbying the World Health Organization. One article from the Chief of Health Services in Malawi, who owned a tobacco farm, stated that "the list of economic benefits of tobacco is a long one. *Tobacco-related deaths and illnesses are primarily problems of affluent societies.*" Philip Morris distributed thousands of copies of the journal.

TI: "the list of economic benefits of tobacco is a long one"



Economic myths

Health
Economics

Tobacco industry says	Health economists say
Tobacco control will lead to job and business losses for farmers, factory workers, retailers, the hospitality industry and other businesses, and governments	NOT TRUE
The creation of smoke-free areas will cause loss of income for restaurant owners.	NOT TRUE
TAPS bans will severely affect the advertising industry	NOT TRUE
Increasing tobacco taxes will harm the poor and increase illicit trade	NOT TRUE:

Many governments echo these concerns, to the extent these mistaken economic arguments are the major obstacle to tobacco control.

Present true debit costs of tobacco

Direct costs

Healthcare costs related to both smoking and exposure to second-hand and third-hand smoke

Fires caused by careless smoking

Damage to building fabric

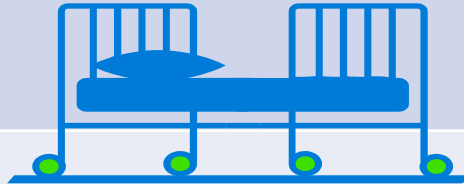
Litter of billions of cigarettes, matches, packets and lighters

Environmental degradation

Indirect costs

Lost labour productivity:

- Time off for smoke breaks
- Higher absence rates
- Loss of skilled workers by premature death
- Increased early retirement due to ill health



Economic misinformation. Industry employs KPMG, Auditors



2001: predicted following a smoking ban in HK:

- Spending will fall by USD One billion **per year** in cafes, bars and F&B outlets of hotels.
- Potential loss 21,500 jobs in hospitality trade.
- **Receipts would fall in restaurants by 9.2%**

NO NO NO!

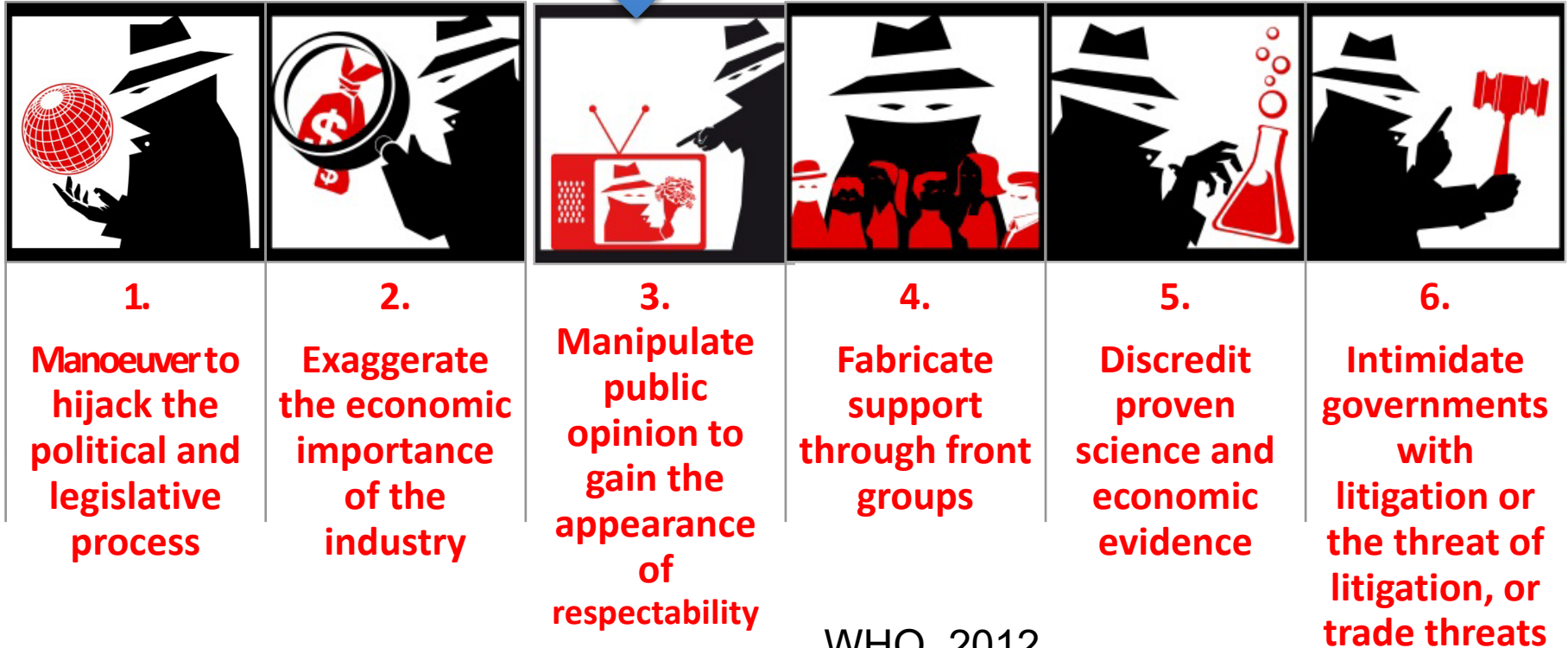


Hong Kong
Restaurant
Tax Receipts

Before ban and
2 years later:

↑ 31%

3. CSR



3. CSR: China: Sponsor schools

China National Tobacco Corporation has sponsored at least 69 elementary schools and thousands of students are exposed daily to pro-tobacco propaganda, names and messages.

School signage reads

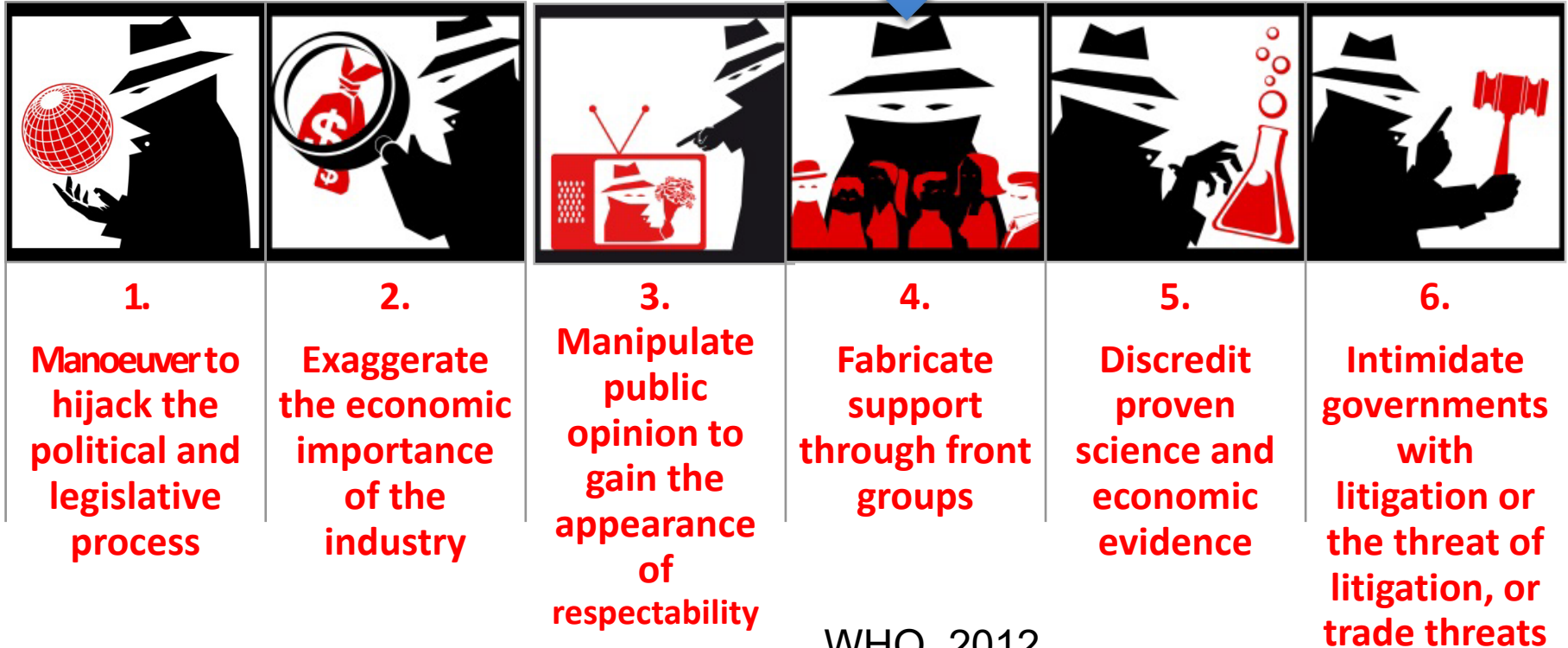
“Genius comes from hard work
Tobacco helps you be successful”

China

China National Tobacco Corporation has sponsored at least 69 elementary schools, and thousands of students are exposed daily to pro-tobacco propaganda, names, and messages. School signage reads: *“Genius comes from hard work / Tobacco helps you to be successful.”*



4. Front groups



Industry front groups in HK alone!



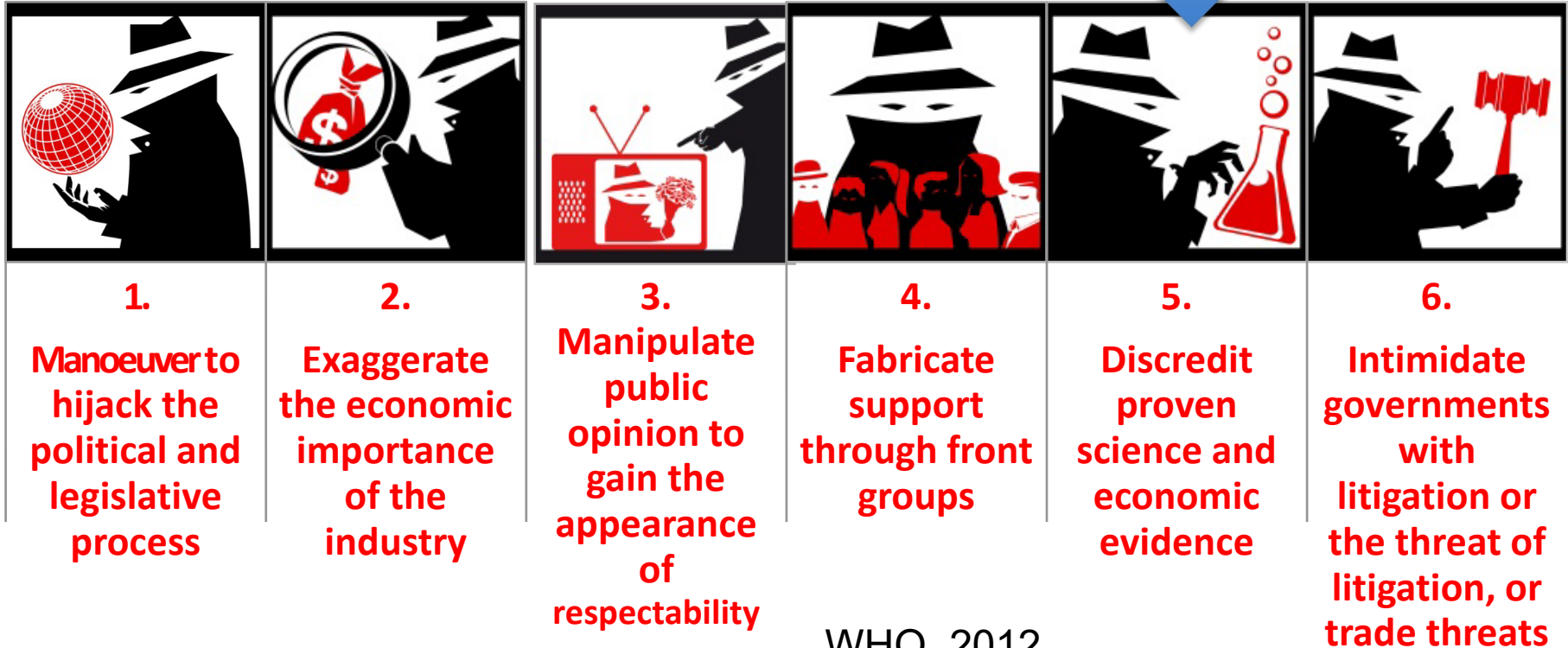
HK : Funded by Philip Morris



HK Pro-tobacco groups

1. Youth Smoking Prevention, funded by the tobacco industry.
2. Heated Tobacco Concern Group
3. Courtesy of Choice
4. Factasia
5. Tobacco Control Concern Group (TCCG); membership includes several tobacco companies.
6. United Against Illicit Tobacco (UAIT)

5. Discredit science, economics



The tobacco industry used COVID to:

1. Use Corporate Social Responsibility programmes, e.g. free masks bearing industry logos, ventilators, PPE and even cash, amid publicity +++
2. Try to make contact with policy-makers and health professionals.
3. Confuse the science. The reality is that smokers who develop symptomatic COVID have 3 x the risk of dying than non-smokers.
4. Produce a COVID vaccine using tobacco leaf.

Slogans:

“Tobacco to the rescue”

“The unlikely savior”

“Does nicotine protect against the coronavirus?”

“Industries remarkable efforts”

“For a better tomorrow”





Farmers benefit from NOT growing tobacco:

Yuxi, Yunnan China 4-year
Project on switching to
alternative crops

- 458 farm families
- Farmers' annual income
increased between 21% and
110% per acre.



- Virginia C Li, UCLA, Yuxi Municipal Bureau Agriculture,
Kunming Medical School

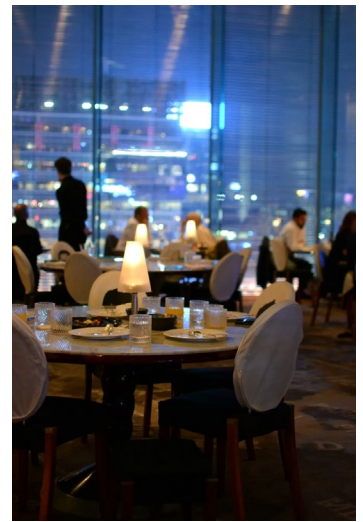
5. Economic misinformation:



2001: predicted following a smoking ban:

- Potential loss 21,500 jobs in hospitality trade.
- Receipts would fall in restaurants by 9.2%.

• **NO NO NO - The reality?**

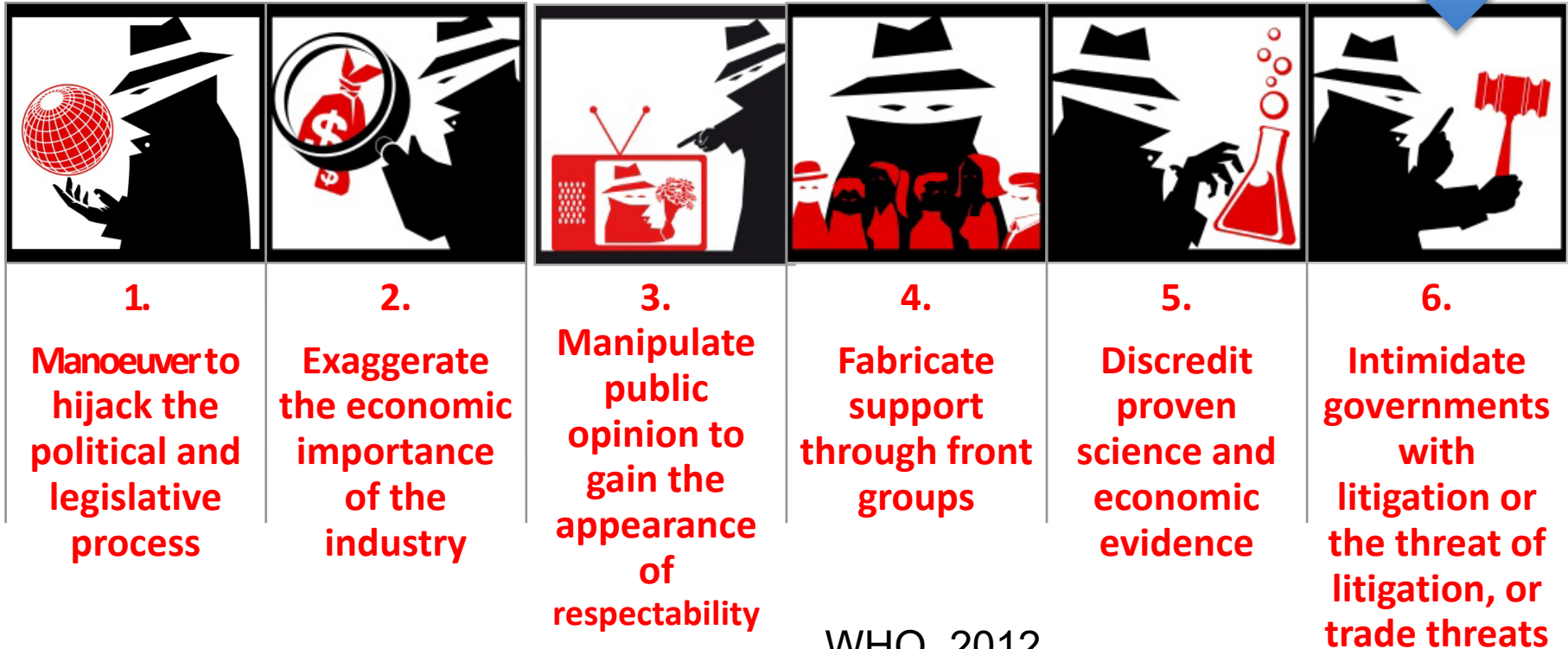


Hong Kong
Restaurant
Tax Receipts

Before ban and
2 years later:

↑ **31%**

6. Litigation, trade threats



6. Industry challenges: Australia

Challenges over introduction *Plain Packaging Act* :

1. Constitution
2. Bilateral investment treaty between Australia and Hong Kong
3. World Trade Organization



“It is fair to say that we are being targeted by what can only be described as **subversive and disgraceful tactics by the tobacco industry**, including using every available vehicle and opportunity to try and intimidate and/or threaten us to withdraw the legislation.”

Jane Halton, Secretary of the Department of Health and Ageing, Australia, 2011

ACTION: Keep industry out of policy making

WHO FCTC Article 5.3.

“In setting and implementing their public health policies with respect to tobacco control, Parties shall act to protect these policies from commercial and other vested interests of the tobacco industry in accordance with national law.”



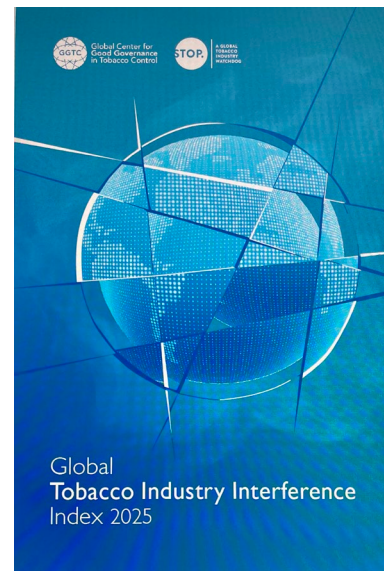
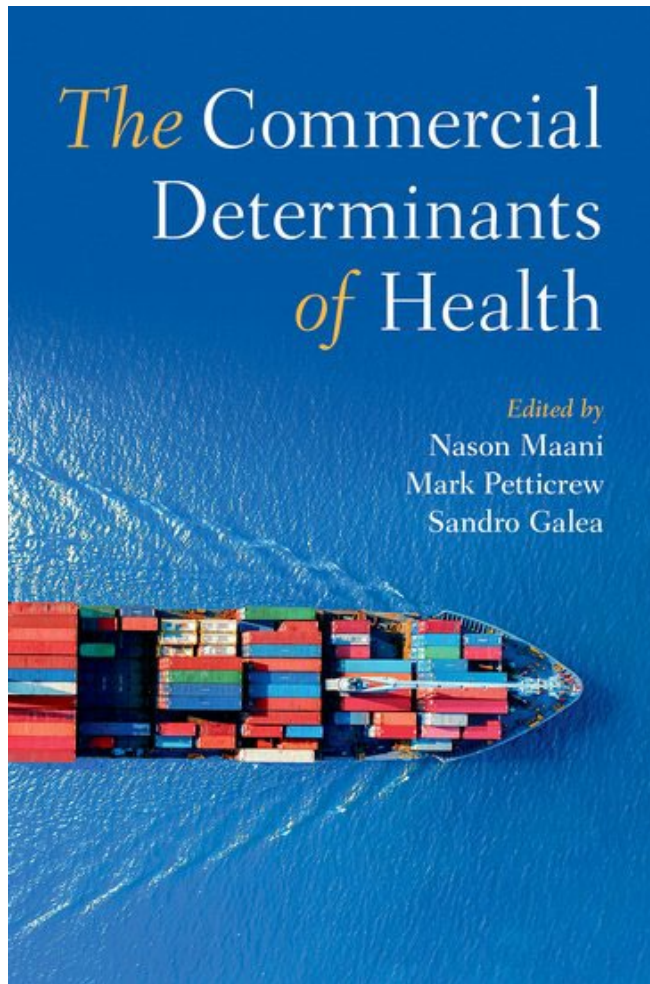
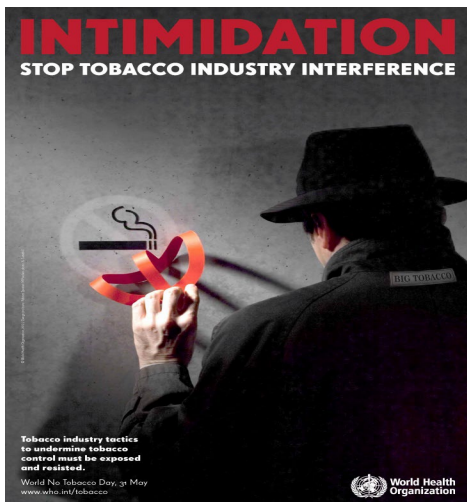
F C T C
WHO FRAMEWORK CONVENTION
ON TOBACCO CONTROL

Action: Make the 'polluter pay' for health, economic and environmental harm

(FCTC Article 19)



1. Litigation (taking the industry to court) is costly, time-consuming, lengthy, and complex.
2. Instead: ***Fees, levies, and a tobacco compensation fund are easier.***
E.g Canada, has adopted a fee — not a tax — requiring tobacco manufacturers, based on market share, to reimburse the national government for the annual cost of the government's tobacco strategy.
3. ***This is not about punishment. It is about remedying injustice and shifting tobacco's financial burden back to the industry that has known, concealed, and profited from those harms for decades (COP11)***



From mega to micro level – always something you can do, eg in tobacco control

NATIONAL LEVEL: Tax. Smoke-free national legislation. Pack warnings. National monopoly. Treaties.

PROVINCIAL/LOCAL LEVEL:

Research

Education, advocacy, media

Cessation services

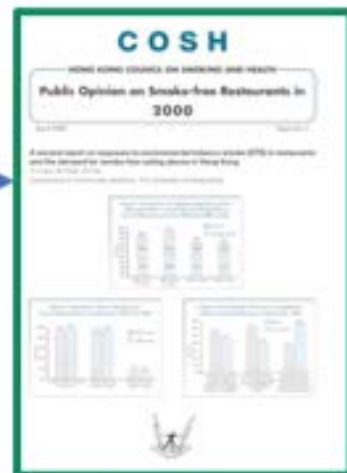
Smoke-free areas

Hospital 'chop' on patients notes

Illicit trade

Alternative crops, eg Yuxi, Yunnan

Enforcement of laws and regulations



Unless governments
address the tobacco
industry, tobacco control
is not likely to be
successful

Thank you!



Fighting the industry!

More resources



Google 'tobacco industry interference'

WHO:

<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/commercial-determinants-of-health>

http://www.tobaccotactics.org/index.php?title=Main_Page

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