EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FINDINGS FROM THE WAVE 1 TO 3 SURVEYS (2006-2012)

Promoting Evidence-Based Strategies to Fight the Global Tobacco Epidemic
Findings from the ITC France Wave 1 to 3 Surveys

ITC France National Report

Executive Summary

2006-2012

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The complete ITC France Wave 1 to 3 National Report is available on the ITC Project website at www.itcproject.org.
ITC POLICY EVALUATION PROJECT

The International Tobacco Control Policy Evaluation Project (the ITC Project) is a multi-country prospective cohort study designed to measure the psychosocial and behavioural impact of key policies of the World Health Organization (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) in 22 countries.

In 2006, researchers from the French Institute for Health Promotion and Health Education (Inpes) (now called Santé publique France) and the French National Cancer Institute (INCa) formed a collaboration with the ITC Project team at the University of Waterloo to create the ITC France Project. The objectives were to create an ITC survey in France as a system for comprehensive surveillance and evaluation of tobacco control initiatives in France (including FCTC policies).

The ITC France Project was initiated during the development of national smoke-free policies in France. A comprehensive ban on smoking in workplaces and public places was implemented in two phases. In February 2007, smoking was banned in workplaces, shopping centres, airports, train stations, hospitals, and schools. In January 2008, the ban was extended to hospitality venues (cafés, bars, restaurants, hotels, casinos, and nightclubs).

The ITC France Project conducts nationally representative cohort surveys of adult smokers and non-smokers residing in continental France, i.e. excluding the five overseas departments of Guadeloupe, Martinique, French Guiana, Réunion, and Mayotte. This is the third report in the ITC France National Report series. It presents comprehensive results from the ITC France Wave 1 to Wave 3 Surveys, including a long-term evaluation of the two-phase smoking ban and an assessment of the impact of pictorial health warnings that were required on the back of cigarette packages as of April 2011 and on roll-your-own tobacco packages as of April 2012.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

France has a strong history of tobacco control having implemented a range of policy measures long before ratifying the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) in 2004. Unfortunately, after four decades of decreasing smoking prevalence among males and two decades of declining prevalence among females, smoking rates among 15 - to 75-year-olds have increased from 31% in 2005 to 34% in 2010. However, tobacco sales sharply decreased between 2011 and 2013 in the official distribution network in France (-3.4% between 2011 and 2012 and -6.2% between 2012 and 2013). This decrease may be due to: 1) a decrease in smoking prevalence; 2) a decrease of the quantity of cigarettes smoked by smokers; and 3) more cross-border purchasing — trends which could be caused by price increases and the emergence of e-cigarettes. With regard to cross-border purchasing, the telephone survey ETINCEL carried out in 2013 by the French Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (OFDT) showed no significant difference in the proportion of smokers whose last purchase of tobacco was cross-border purchasing (17%) compared with a previous survey conducted in 2010 by the French Institute for Health Promotion and Health Education (Inpes) and the OFDT where this proportion was 15%.

The ITC Project was developed to provide an evidence base to guide policies enacted under the FCTC and to systematically evaluate the effectiveness of these legislative and regulatory efforts. The ITC Project is conducting longitudinal surveys in 22 countries to assess the impact, and identify the determinants of effective tobacco control policies in the following areas: health warning labels and pack descriptors; pricing and taxation of tobacco products; smoke-free legislation; tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship; education; and support for cessation. In addition to policy evaluation, the ITC Project provides a greater understanding of patterns of tobacco use and cessation over time and across countries, including factors that predict quit attempts and successful quitting at an international level.

In 2006, researchers from the Inpes (now called Santé publique France) and the French National Cancer Institute (INCa) formed a collaboration with the ITC Project team at the University of Waterloo to create the ITC France Project. The objective was to create an ITC survey in France as a system for comprehensive surveillance and evaluation of tobacco control initiatives in France (including FCTC policies). The Wave 1 Survey was conducted among 1,735 smokers and 525 non-smokers between December 2006 and February 2007, just before the first stage of the smoking ban in public places. Two follow-up survey waves were conducted in 2008, i.e., 9 months after the second stage of the smoking ban (Wave 2), and in 2012 (Wave 3). The study sample in Waves 2 and 3 included cohort participants from the previous waves, as well as newly recruited respondents (the replenishment sample) to replace respondents who were lost to follow up. Respondents were surveyed using computer assisted telephone interviews (CATI), following a random digit dialing (RDD) sampling design covering continental France.

The ITC France Wave 1 to 3 Survey findings indicate that France has made a number of important tobacco control achievements between 2006 and 2012. However, the findings also point to several areas where France can move forward to implement stronger tobacco control policies and achieve comprehensive implementation of the FCTC and the treaty Guidelines.
Tobacco Use Behaviour

The percentage of cigarette smokers who smoke exclusively factory-made cigarettes has decreased between Wave 1 (78%) and Wave 3 (64%). RYO cigarette use only increased from 11% of smokers at Wave 1 to 19% at Wave 3, while use of both types of cigarettes increased from 12% at Wave 1 to 17% at Wave 3. The number of cigarettes smoked per day (13) among daily smokers interviewed in the ITC France Survey has essentially remained unchanged between Waves 1 to 3 and is lower than in other ITC European countries.

The findings provide insight on smokers’ perceptions about their smoking behaviours. About half of smokers have negative views of smoking and over 85% regret having started smoking. Over three-quarters of smokers and quitters believe that society disapproves of smoking or that people who are important to them believe they should not smoke.

Smoking Cessation

Although physician advice to quit is recognized as having a powerful influence on helping smokers to quit, the results indicate low rates of involvement of health professionals in cessation. Across all three waves, less than one-third of smokers were offered advice to quit during a routine visit and less than 10% were offered a prescription or a referral to another health professional, while according to the Inpes Health Barometer 2010, 37% of smokers who want to quit reported they would like to be assisted by a doctor\(^1\). Although there has been an increase in the provision of cessation assistance, specifically referrals to other services (from 2% at Wave 2 to 9% at Wave 3) and prescriptions (from 4% at Wave 1 to 9% at Wave 3), findings supported by results of a recent French survey of general practitioners\(^4,5\), the level is still relatively low.

However, the findings suggest that cessation support is available for those smokers who visit a doctor or health professional around the time of a quit attempt. At Wave 3, the majority of cohort smokers (73%) and quitters (82%) who visited a doctor or health professional around the time of their last or current quit attempt received advice to quit, a prescription for stop-smoking medications (59% of smokers; 57% of quitters), or instructions or suggestions on how to quit or how to stay quit (59% of smokers; 66% of quitters).

At Wave 3, there was consistency in the most common reasons for thinking about quitting / for quitting among smokers / quitters: wanting to set an example for children (83% of smokers; 85% of quitters), the price of cigarettes (77% of smokers; 72% of quitters), and concern for personal health (67% of smokers; 84% of quitters). A higher percentage of quitters compared to smokers reported that concern for personal health “somewhat” or “very much” led to their quit attempt, or helped them to stay quit. Concern for personal health was also the most common reason for triggering the last or current quit attempt among smokers and quitters.

The percentage of cigarette smokers who smoke exclusively factory-made cigarettes has decreased between Wave 1 (78%) and Wave 3 (64%).
Health Warning Labels

From October 2003 to April 2011, France had text-based health warnings on 30% of the front and 40% of the back of all factory-made and RYO cigarette packages. In April 2011, pictorial health warnings were introduced on 40% of the back of factory-made cigarettes, while text warnings remained on 30% of the front. This same change was implemented one year later (April 2012) on RYO tobacco packages.

Overall, the findings indicate that the introduction of pictorial warnings on only 40% of the back of cigarette and RYO packages, without any increase in size nor any change in the content of the text warning labels for the last 8 years, has not been effective among the majority of France smokers, and that warning label effectiveness has actually decreased over time. Noticing health warnings in the last month decreased among smokers from 70% at Wave 1 to 57% at Wave 2 and further decreased to 49% at Wave 3 after the pictorial health warnings were introduced. Low-income smokers more frequently reported noticing warning labels compared to high-income smokers at Waves 2 and 3. Reading or looking closely at the labels in the last month also decreased from approximately one-third (31%) of smokers at Wave 1 to 26% at Wave 2 and 19% at Wave 3. Health warnings continued to rank low among the given reasons for thinking about quitting, even after the implementation of pictorial health warnings. Just above one-third (39%) of smokers reported that health warnings on cigarette packages made them think about quitting at Wave 3, not significantly different from previous waves. All these results suggest that the introduction of pictorial warnings did not increase warning label effectiveness. New messages and larger pictorial warnings on both sides of the pack (65% of the front and back of cigarette and RYO packs as required by the European Union Tobacco Products Directive by May 20, 2016) may be more effective in encouraging cessation.

Smoke-free Public Places

Findings show that the success of France’s national smoke-free laws in reducing smoking in workplaces and restaurants in 2008 has been sustained in 2012. In workplaces, more than 5 years after the ban, 15% of smokers and quitters and 14% of non-smokers reported observing smoking indoors at their workplace (respectively 7% and 6% for respondents who reported that smoking was not allowed at all at their workplace). In restaurants, the near elimination in observed smoking 9 months after the ban continued more than 4 years after the ban (1% of smokers and quitters observed smoking indoors at last visit; 2% of non-smokers).

In April 2011, pictorial health warnings were introduced on 40% of the back of factory-made cigarettes, while text warnings remained on 30% of the front.
Of concern however is the increase in observed smoking in bars between 2008 (4% of respondents) and 2012 (6% of smokers and quitters; 8% of non-smokers), suggesting the need to strengthen efforts to monitor the enforcement of the smoking ban in these venues. In addition, evidence from other studies also indicates a lack of compliance with the existing law banning smoking in covered and enclosed terraces.

Consistent with findings in other ITC countries, support for smoking bans in workplaces, restaurants, and bars has continued to increase since the implementation of the smoke-free laws, even among smokers. Indeed, the majority of smokers are aware of the harms of secondhand smoke. However, support (percentage who responded that smoking should “never be allowed”) for complete smoking bans in outdoor areas of restaurants remained relatively unchanged among smokers and quitters (37% at Wave 2; 35% at Wave 3) and non-smokers (32% at Wave 2 and 35% at Wave 3).

After the implementation of smoke-free policies between Wave 1 and Wave 2, the percentage of respondents who reported having home smoking bans has continued to increase from 23% of smokers at Wave 1 to 37% of smokers and quitters at Wave 3 and from 44% of non-smokers at Wave 1 to 61% at Wave 3.

**Tobacco Advertising, Promotion, and Sponsorship**

While France has implemented strong policies to ban direct and indirect advertising, promotion, and sponsorship of tobacco products, the country has not yet implemented a ban on advertising at point of sale as intended in France’s Cancer Plan 2009-2013. Approximately 20% of respondents across all three waves noticed advertising and promotion of tobacco products in France. The findings show that exposure to tobacco promotion is more widespread among young people and among low-income and less educated smokers.

The proportion of respondents who noticed promotion of either cigarette brands or tobacco companies in sporting events decreased between Wave 2 (noticed by 22% of smokers and quitters) and Wave 3 (noticed by 11% of smokers and quitters), possibly due to the decline in tobacco advertising and sponsorship at Formula One races. A similar trend was observed among non-smokers (21% at Wave 1; 24% at Wave 2; 13% at Wave 3). Across the three survey waves, less than 10% of respondents saw or heard about the use of arts events to promote cigarette brands or tobacco companies.

The depiction of smoking in movies, while not measured in the ITC France Survey, is another form of tobacco promotion used by the tobacco industry and has been shown to lead to smoking initiation among youth. Promotion through pack design, such as colour, and through the Internet also increases the risk of smoking initiation and the renormalizing of smoking, especially among young people. In September 2014, the French Government announced its intention to introduce measures to curb tobacco promotion among young people as part of the National Tobacco Reduction Plan. These measures include plain packaging and a ban on the advertising of tobacco products at point of sale.

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i. Arts events include music, theatre, art, or fashion events. It does not include the depiction of smoking in movies.
Although affordability of manufactured cigarettes has decreased between Waves 1 and 3, increased use of RYO tobacco suggests that the price differential between cigarettes and RYO tobacco may be compromising the effectiveness of France’s annual price increases.

Tobacco Price and Taxation

France has had several price increases during the time period covered by the ITC France Surveys. Between Wave 1 (2006-2007) and Wave 2 (2008) there was one increase in the price of RYO tobacco (+9%) and manufactured cigarettes (+6%), and between Wave 2 and the end of Wave 3 (December 2012) there were four price increases in both products (+25% for manufactured cigarettes and +45% for RYO tobacco). With these increases, tobacco products in France are now the most expensive of any country in continental Europe.

More than three-quarters of smokers across Waves 1 to 3 bought their cigarettes from a tobacconist or bar-tabac in France at last purchase, while approximately one smoker out of six (13% at Wave 1; 17% at Waves 2 and 3) last purchased cigarettes from outside of France, but in the EU. Previous ITC evidence has shown that among six EU countries, France smokers living in regions bordering countries with lower cigarette prices had the highest reported rates of frequently purchasing cigarettes from another EU country. Other tax avoidance behaviour, such as purchasing cigarettes from the Internet or from duty-free shops, was virtually non-existent at Wave 3.

Findings suggest that the multiple price increases that occurred between Wave 2 and Wave 3 had a greater impact on smokers’ attitudes, motivation to quit, and perceptions concerning the cost of smoking compared to the single price increase that occurred between Waves 1 and 2. The percentage of smokers who reported that they “often” or “very often” thought about the money they spent on smoking increased between Waves 2 (56%) and 3 (66%), and was the highest among ITC European countries and high among all ITC countries. This same trend was observed among smokers who reported that the price of cigarettes led them to think about quitting (64% at Wave 2; 73% at Wave 3) with relatively no difference between Waves 1 and 2 for these variables.

Although ITC France data shows that the affordability of manufactured cigarettes has decreased between Waves 1 and 3, increased use of RYO tobacco suggests that the remaining price differential between cigarettes and RYO tobacco may be compromising the effectiveness of France’s annual price increases on cigarette products in encouraging quitting, even though price increases were stronger for RYO tobacco than for manufactured cigarettes in recent years. Over 90% of smokers who smoke RYO cigarettes reported price as one of their main reasons to smoke RYO at all three waves.
Education, Communication, and Public Awareness

During the time of the ITC France Surveys, there was a reduction in public expenditures on tobacco prevention campaigns. However, France carried out mass media anti-smoking campaigns each year between 2008 and 2012, in particular in conjunction with World No Tobacco Day (May 31st).

Consistent with the reduction in campaign expenditures between Waves 1 to 3, the percentage of smokers who noticed information on the dangers of smoking, or encouraging quitting, in the last 6 months decreased between Waves 1 (43%) and 3 (29%). Television, newspapers and magazines, posters and billboards, and the radio as sources of anti-smoking information also declined or remained relatively unchanged in this time period. However, there was an increase in smokers noticing anti-tobacco information on the Internet (11% at Wave 1; 16% at Wave 2; 23% at Wave 3).

The survey findings indicate that cigarette packages were the second most noticed medium of information for smokers on the dangers of smoking and encouraging quitting at Wave 1 (78%) after television (80%), and the most common medium at Waves 2 (75%) and 3 (77%), providing evidence of the high degree of visibility of warning labels and the potential for messages to reach the public, particularly in the absence of sustained public awareness campaigns. However, the percentage of smokers who noticed anti-smoking information on cigarette packs did not increase after the introduction of pictorial health warnings (78% at Wave 1; 75% at Wave 2; 77% at Wave 3).

The majority of smokers and quitters were aware of the variety of health risks associated with smoking and the harms of secondhand smoke. However, only about one-third (32%) of smokers and quitters believed that smoking may cause blindness.

Implications of the Findings

The ITC France Wave 1 to 3 Survey findings point to the following opportunities for action to reduce the prevalence of tobacco use and to strengthen France’s commitment to strong implementation of the FCTC.

1. Even though only half of smokers have a negative opinion of smoking, strong feelings of regret among smokers for initiating smoking and strong perceived societal disapproval of smoking constitute an ideal ground for stronger interventions to assist with smoking cessation, with sustained funding for anti-smoking campaigns to motivate quitting, and promotion of cessation services to support smokers who want to quit. Full coverage of smoking cessation treatment has been proposed as a cost-effective policy option to reduce the prevalence of smoking in France. The National Smoking Reduction Plan will introduce legislation to increase the coverage of cessation treatment from 50 to 150 Euros per year for those aged 20 to 30 years, beneficiaries of the supplementary universal health plan, and cancer patients. Strong feelings of regret also show the importance of health promotion interventions aimed at children and teenagers to prevent them from taking up smoking. The National Smoking Reduction Plan will introduce strategies aimed at creating, among children born today, the first generation of adult non-smokers.

2. There is a continued need to strengthen family physicians’ roles in promoting smoking cessation as recommended in the Guidelines for Article 14 of the FCTC. Continued training and the inclusion of cessation in the French remuneration of public health goals (ROSP), measures that are identified in the National Smoking Prevention Plan, strengthen the motivation of health professionals in educating their patients about the importance of tobacco in the occurrence of diseases and the benefits of smoking cessation.
3. The increase in noticing anti-tobacco information on the Internet suggests that the development of “Apps” and other online tools would be beneficial to promote cessation and help quitters to stay quit, expanding on the personalized cessation coaching program on the Tabac Info Service (TIS) website (http://www.tabac-info-service.fr/) created by Inpes in 2005.

4. While the introduction of pictorial health warnings has brought France closer to meeting the FCTC Article 11 Guidelines adopted in November 2008, the new warnings do not meet the recommendation that warnings cover at least 50% of the top of the front and the back of the pack. The implementation of pictorial warnings on at least 65% of both the front and the back of cigarette and RYO packs, that will be mandatory in 2016 following the revised EU Directive, and forthcoming legislation to introduce plain packaging under the National Smoking Reduction Plan, are likely to strengthen the impact of health warnings.

5. The current pictorial health warnings in France consist of abstract or symbolic warnings that convey the health effects of smoking, as well as a few “hard-hitting” and graphic images, that have been selected from the European Commission library among 42 images. ITC studies have shown that images that are most graphic or emotional are more effective than abstract or symbolic images with respect to cognitive and behavioural impact\(^9\), \(^10\). Experimental studies also support these findings\(^11\)-\(^14\). These findings, as well as those of Moodie et al. (2013)\(^15\) suggest that larger, more “hard-hitting” pictorial health warning labels could improve their effectiveness in France. Providing quit tips on inserted leaflets, as done in Canada, could also be effective.

6. Given the importance of the cigarette pack as a medium of information for smokers on smoking-related health risks, the implementation of a pictorial health warning on the risk of blindness, as well as the renewal of current warning labels in order to emphasize less well-known health risks, should be considered. Australia, New Zealand, and Canada currently have pictorial health warnings on smoking-related risks to eye health.\(^ii\)

7. The increase in observed smoking in bars between 2008 and 2012 suggests the need to strengthen efforts to monitor the enforcement of the smoking ban in these venues.

8. Campaigns to further educate the public on the harms of secondhand smoke may be helpful to further increase the adoption of smoke-free homes.

9. In the face of mass media tobacco advertising bans, the retail environment is a key promotion venue for the tobacco industry. Although the sale of tobacco is regulated with the existence of dedicated tobacconists, banning advertising at point of sale, as intended in France's Cancer Plan 2009-2013, and recently announced as part of the National Smoking Reduction Plan, is likely to decrease exposure to tobacco advertising, particularly among youth. A number of countries have implemented point of sale display bans including Australia, Canada, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, New Zealand, Norway, and Thailand and a ban is being phased in through the United Kingdom. Research has demonstrated that point of sale displays influence spontaneous purchases and tobacco display bans are associated with reducing such purchases\(^16\).

10. Strategies to curb the use of journalistic or artistic expression for the promotion of tobacco use or products are outlined in the Guidelines for Article 13 of the FCTC. Further surveillance data, for example focusing on the Internet, is needed to better identify the sources and strategies used by the tobacco industry to market its products in France and to evaluate forthcoming restrictions on advertising and promotion as new policies are implemented.

\(^ii\) See Tobacco Labelling Resource Website for images: www.tobaccolabels.ca
11. Increases in the price of tobacco have been demonstrated to be an effective tool for reducing tobacco consumption. While the price of RYO tobacco has increased in recent years, increases in the prices of other tobacco products (such as cigars and pipes) should also be considered to minimize shifts to cheaper products. The WHO also recommends increasing the excise tax to at least 70% of the final retail price, which would increase prices, promote cessation, and deter smoking initiation among youth.\(^7\)

12. Previous ITC studies call for the EU to reduce price differences between countries and the number of cigarettes and amount of RYO tobacco that can be legally imported for personal consumption.\(^7\) However, the new EU Tobacco Directive does not address this issue.

REFERENCES


The International Tobacco Control Policy Evaluation Project

The ITC Project
Evaluating the Impact of FCTC Policies in...

20+ countries • 50% of the world’s population
60% of the world’s smokers • 70% of the world’s tobacco users

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