

Awareness of tobacco-related health harms among vulnerable populations in Bangladesh: Findings from the International Tobacco Control (ITC) Bangladesh Survey

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Abstract

This study assessed the knowledge of the harmful effects of tobacco use among vulnerable populations in Bangladesh and whether vulnerability was associated with the presence of complete home smoking bans. Data came from Wave 3 (2011–2012) of the International Tobacco Control (ITC) Bangladesh Survey, a nationally-representative survey of 3131 tobacco users and 2147 non-users. Socio-demographic measures of disadvantage were used as proxy measures of vulnerability, including sex, residential location, education and income. Outcome measures were awareness of the harmful effects of (a) cigarette smoking and (b) smokeless tobacco use and (c) whether respondents had complete smoking bans in their homes. Logistic regression was used to examine whether the adjusted prevalence of each outcome differed by socio-demographic proxies of vulnerability. Smaller percentages of women, the illiterate, urban slum residents and low-income Bangladeshis were aware of the health harms of tobacco. These vulnerable groups generally had lower odds of awareness compared to the least disadvantaged groups. Incomplete knowledge of tobacco's harms may prevent vulnerable groups from taking steps to protect their health. Development goals, such as increasing literacy rates and empowering women, can complement the goals of WHO's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

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