

# Chinese smokers' cigarette purchase behaviours, cigarette prices and consumption: Findings from the ITC China Survey

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## **Abstract**

**BACKGROUND:** While cigarette purchasing behaviour has been shown to be linked with certain tobacco use outcomes such as quit intentions and quit attempts, there have been very few studies examining cigarette purchasing behaviours and their impact on cigarette price and consumption in China, the world's largest cigarette consumer.

**OBJECTIVE:** The aim of the present study was to examine the extent and determinants of cost/price-related purchase behaviours, and estimate the impact of these behaviours on cigarette prices paid by Chinese smokers. It also assesses the socioeconomic differences in compensatory purchase behaviours, and examines how they influence the relationship between purchase behaviours, cigarette prices and cigarette consumption.

**METHODS:** Multivariate analyses using the general estimating equations method were conducted using data from the International Tobacco Control China Survey (the ITC China Survey), a longitudinal survey of adult smokers in seven cities in China: Beijing, Changsha, Guangzhou, Kunming, Shanghai, Shenyang and Yinchuan. In each city, about 800 smokers were surveyed in each wave. The first three waves-wave 1 (conducted between March to December 2006), wave 2 (November 2007 to March 2008) and wave 3 (May to October 2009 and February to March 2010)-of the ITC China Survey data were used in this analysis. Various aspects of smokers' self-reported price/cost-related cigarette purchasing behaviours were analysed.

**RESULTS:** Nearly three-quarters (72%) of smokers surveyed indicated that a major reason they chose their most-used cigarette brand was its low cost/price. Almost half (50.6%) of smokers reported buying in cartons in their most recent cigarette purchase. Smokers with lower income and/or low levels of education were more likely to choose a brand because of its low cost/price. However, those with higher income and/or high levels of education were more likely to buy cartons. Gender and age were also related to type of purchase behaviours. Those behaviours led to reductions in purchase prices. The price savings ranged from ¥0.54 to ¥1.01 per pack of cigarettes, depending on the behaviour examined, representing a price reduction of 8% to 15%.

**CONCLUSIONS:** A significant portion of Chinese urban adult smokers engaged in cost/price-reducing purchase behaviours. Such behaviours reduce cigarette purchase prices and are associated with increased cigarette consumption. Smokers of different socioeconomic status engaged in different purchase behaviours to mitigate the impact of higher cigarette prices. Reducing tobacco use through raising tobacco taxes/prices in China needs to take into account these cost/price-reducing behaviours.

## **Recommended Citation**

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