

The International Tobacco Control Policy Evaluation Project the ITC Project



Promoting Evidence-Based Strategies to Fight the Global Tobacco Epidemic

UNIVERSITY OF
WATERLOO



International Tobacco Control
Policy Evaluation Project

The Tobacco Epidemic – A Major Threat to Global Health and Sustainable Development

Tobacco smoking is the world's leading cause of preventable death, killing more than 7 million people each year, with an additional 1.2 million non-smokers dying each year from second-hand smoke. Smoking also contributes to the global burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as cardiovascular diseases, cancers, chronic respiratory disease and diabetes. One in 10 deaths around the world is caused by tobacco use. Nearly 80% of the world's more than 1 billion smokers live in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) where the health and economic burden of tobacco use is greatest. More than 75% of tobacco deaths this century will be in LMICs, leading to a significant threat to global health and economic development. The 2030 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) explicitly recognize the importance of tobacco control as a goal that will promote the attainment of the SDGs. The first ever Global Strategy to Accelerate Tobacco Control was adopted in October 2018 to accelerate implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control with the objective of reducing tobacco use by 30% by 2025.

THE NEED FOR GLOBAL TOBACCO CONTROL POLICY EVALUATION SYSTEMS

The Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC)

In 2005, thanks to a collaborative effort of the global health community that spanned over a decade, the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), became the world's first health treaty. The FCTC has become one of the most widely adopted United Nations treaties with 180 countries plus the European Union (or 181 Parties) to date.

The FCTC obligates these 181 Parties (covering nearly 90% of the world's population) to implement a broad set of **evidence-based** tobacco control policies, including large pictorial warnings, higher tobacco taxes, bans on advertising and other forms of marketing, comprehensive smoke-free laws, public education about the harms of tobacco, support for cessation, and measures to reduce illicit trade.

A recent *Lancet Public Health* article written by the ITC Project and the WHO showed that FCTC policies, when strongly enacted, have significantly reduced smoking rates. But implementation of the FCTC has been extremely slow (for example, only 22% of the world's population lives in countries with comprehensive smoke-free laws). The main problem is that the tobacco industry has used its influence, including campaigns to misinform governments, to defeat or weaken efforts to strongly implement the FCTC throughout the world.

Research evidence is essential for both guiding the development and implementation of FCTC policies and in debunking tobacco industry myths. There is thus an essential and growing need for evaluation studies of FCTC policies to inform governments about the strength of FCTC policies and to counter tobacco industry misinformation.

THE ITC PROJECT

Research for Evidence-Based Tobacco Control

In 2002, Professor Geoffrey T. Fong led the creation of the International Tobacco Control Policy Evaluation Project (the ITC Project) the world's first and still only international cohort study on tobacco use. The ITC Project is the world's largest and most productive tobacco control research program. More than 550 scientific articles, more than 1,200 conference papers, and over 100 national reports, policy reports and briefings (including collaborative reports with WHO, World Heart Federation, and other health organizations), submissions to governments, and briefing notes to policymakers and advocates have been produced by ITC Project researchers. The ITC Project is globally recognized for its scientific accomplishments. For example, of the 8 American Cancer Society's Luther L. Terry Awards for Outstanding Research Contribution (a triennial global award) ever conferred, ITC researchers have received 5.

ITC Surveys have been conducted in 29 countries (see back cover) inhabited by over 50% of the world's population, over 60% of the world's smokers, and over 70% of the world's tobacco users across all 6 WHO Regions.

The ITC Project has created a global evidence-gathering system that complements traditional surveillance systems that focus on time trends in tobacco use. The ITC Project is unique because it focuses on measuring the impact of tobacco control policies such as FCTC policies. Consistency in survey measures across ITC countries enable cross-country comparisons to measure differences in strength of policy implementation and impact over time.

The ITC Project has made major contributions to the global evidence on the effectiveness of FCTC policies such as health warnings, smoke-free laws, advertising bans, and new policies such as plain packaging. At the same time, the ITC Project's evaluation platform is flexible and versatile to adapt to emerging nicotine products such as electronic cigarettes and heated tobacco products such as iQOS. This allows ITC researchers the ability to provide detailed and rigorous evaluations of emerging trends in products and policies to meet the demand for evidence swiftly and powerfully.



MAKING EVIDENCE MATTER

Knowledge Transfer to Advance Policies

In addition to its contributions to science, the ITC Project has actively collaborated with many governments and international organizations (e.g., WHO, American Cancer Society) to bring ITC evidence to policymakers to promote stronger and more effective tobacco control policies. This collaboration has resulted in many examples where ITC evidence has led to stronger tobacco control measures and has been used to combat tobacco industry challenges. Some of the ITC Project's key contributions to advancing global tobacco control policies are as follows:

- ITC findings on Ireland's successful smoke-free law led many countries to implement such laws.
- ITC findings on the success of Thailand's pictorial warnings led to Malaysia's implementation of pictorial warnings.
- ITC findings on the declining effectiveness of Canada's pictorial health warnings contributed to Canada's initiative to revise the warnings.
- ITC findings on UK smokers' support for a ban on smoking in cars with children helped to support the ban in England and Scotland.
- ITC findings were used by China CDC in their submission to China State Council and National People's Congress in support for stronger smoke-free laws and a stronger advertising law.
- ITC findings on larger pictorial warnings in Canada, Malaysia, Mauritius, and Uruguay was used by Uruguay to defend against tobacco industry challenge via a bilateral trade agreement to their larger warnings and single presentation policy.
- ITC findings on smokers' support for plain packaging and the impact of plain packaging in increasing the effectiveness of pictorial warnings in Australia led UK government to implement their plain packaging law, and three ITC researchers were a part of Australia's government team defending the challenge of their plain packaging law at the World Trade Organization.

- ITC researchers have served as experts for many governments defending their strong policies against tobacco industry challenges with ITC evidence (e.g., Brazil, Australia, Uruguay, UK, Norway, Ireland).
- Dr. Fong was a member of the 7-person Expert Group selected by the Bureau of the FCTC Conference of the Parties to conduct the official impact assessment of the treaty over its first decade. ITC played a central role in the Expert Group's work by preparing a global evidence review on the effectiveness of the FCTC and in producing a landmark supplement of 9 articles on the findings of the Expert Group in the journal *Tobacco Control*.

The ITC Project has been recognized for its excellence in transferring research evidence for policy impact. The American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) awarded the ITC Project the 2017 AAPOR Policy Impact Award noting:

"The impressive array of over 100 collaborators have pioneered global research for the systematic evaluation of key, population-based policies of the FCTC. The breadth and scope of this research to promote evidence-based policies in tobacco control is truly inspiring."

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The ITC Project is continuing its 18-year record of conducting innovative studies to promote strong evidence-based approaches to combat tobacco use. These will include:

- multicountry evaluations of plain packaging (Canada, UK, New Zealand, France, Australia)
- increased work in economic analyses of tobacco control
- analyses of the impact of FCTC policies in reducing health inequalities
- studies to guide governments on regulatory approaches to e-cigarettes and other alternative nicotine delivery products

OUR ITC PROJECT PARTNERS

Sponsoring Organizations

The ITC Project has been widely supported by leading international granting agencies. Our major funding organizations have included:

- Canadian Institutes of Health Research—Foundation Grant (FDN-148477)
- US National Cancer Institute—Program Project Grant (Po1 CA200512)
- European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme
- Ontario Institute for Cancer Research
- Australia National Health and Medical Research Council
- Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

The ITC Project has collaborated with numerous international public health agencies and advocacy groups including:

- World Health Organization
- United Nations Development Programme
- Cancer Research UK
- Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids
- American Cancer Society
- World Heart Federation
- Framework Convention Alliance

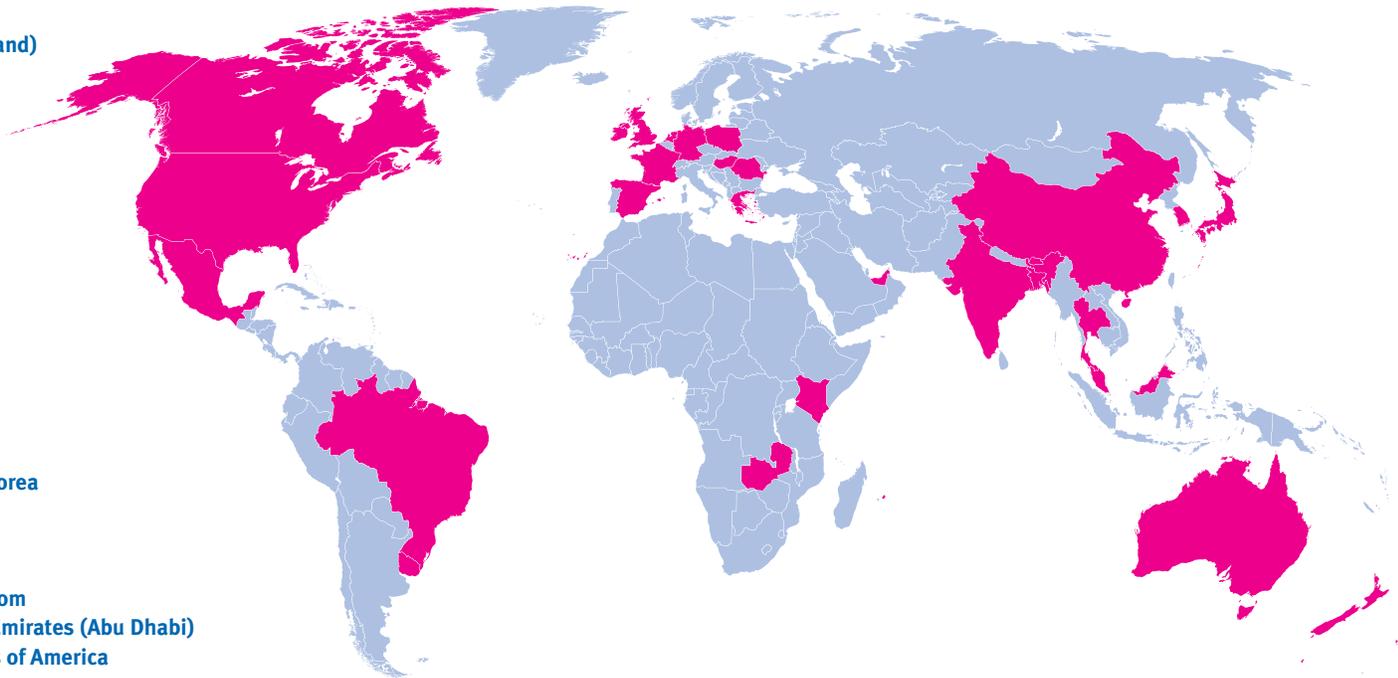
THE ITC RESEARCH TEAM

The ITC Project research team is led by ITC Project Founder and Chief Principal Investigator Dr. Geoffrey T. Fong at the University of Waterloo in Canada. The ITC Project research team includes over 150 researchers in 29 countries, including world-leading experts across multiple disciplines.

THE ITC PROJECT: EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF FCTC POLICIES IN...

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

- Australia
- Bangladesh
- Bhutan
- Brazil
- Canada
- China (Mainland)
- France
- Germany
- Greece
- Hungary
- India
- Ireland
- Japan
- Kenya
- Malaysia
- Mauritius
- Mexico
- Netherlands
- New Zealand
- Poland
- Republic of Korea
- Romania
- Spain
- Thailand
- United Kingdom
- United Arab Emirates (Abu Dhabi)
- United States of America
- Uruguay
- Zambia



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