

Attitudes of Korean smokers toward smoke-free public places: findings from the longitudinal ITC Korea Survey, 2005-2010

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Abstract

Objective: Prior to December 2012, restaurants in South Korea were required to implement only partial smoking bans. This study documents the changes in Korean smokers' attitudes towards smoking bans between 2005 and 2010 and explores the effects of anti-smoking advertising as a correlate of support for total smoking bans in public places.

Design: Longitudinal cohort study of Korean adult smokers.

Setting: The data were derived from three waves (2005, 2008 and 2010) of the International Tobacco Control (ITC) Korea Survey.

Participants: The ITC Korea Survey respondents were a probability-based, nationally representative sample of Korean smokers aged 19 and older. The current analysis includes 995 smokers who participated in Wave 1 (2005), 1737 smokers who participated in Wave 2 (2008) and 1560 smokers who participated in Wave 3 (2010).

Primary and Secondary Outcome Measures: Changes in respondents' awareness of secondhand smoke (SHS) harm, attitudes towards smoking bans and personal rules for smoking in private homes and/or vehicles were analysed. Correlates of support for smoking bans in public places were examined using generalised estimating equation regression models.

Results: More than 80% of Korean smokers are aware of the harms of SHS. The proportion of smokers who support smoke-free restaurants or smoke-free bars increased twofold between 2005 and 2010. Smokers who were aware of the dangers of SHS were more likely to support a total smoking ban in workplaces. Noticing anti-smoking advertising or information was not significantly associated with support for a total smoking ban in public places.

Conclusions: Korean smokers became more supportive of smoking bans in public places between 2005 and 2008. These results show that smokers' attitudes towards smoking bans can change with the implementation of smoke-free policies, even in a country that has a high prevalence of smokers.

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