

Socioeconomic disparities in quit intentions, quit attempts, and smoking abstinence among smokers in four western countries: Findings from the International Tobacco Control Four Country Survey

Jessica L. Reid, M.Sc., David Hammond, Ph.D., Christian Boudreau, Ph.D., Geoffrey T. Fong, Ph.D., & Mohammad Siahpush, Ph.D., on behalf of the ITC Collaboration

Abstract

Introduction: Lower socioeconomic status (SES) groups have higher rates of tobacco use, are less likely to successfully quit, and may also be less likely to intend or attempt to quit. However, results are inconsistent for some outcomes, and little is known about how socioeconomic disparities vary across countries and over time.

Methods: This study examined the associations between SES and quitting-related behaviors among representative samples of smokers in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, using data from the first five waves (2002–2006/2007) of the International Tobacco Control Four Country Survey (35,532 observations from 16,458 respondents). Generalized estimating equations modeling was used to examine whether education and income were related to intentions to quit, incidence of quit attempts, and smoking abstinence. Potential differences in the associations over time and across countries were also considered.

Results: Smokers with higher education were more likely to intend to quit, to make a quit attempt, and to be abstinent for at least 1 and 6 months; smokers with higher income were more likely to intend to quit and to be abstinent for at least 1 month. Some between-country differences were observed: U.K. and U.S. smokers were less likely to intend to quit than Australians and Canadians; and, although U.K. respondents were least likely to attempt to quit, those that did were more likely to be abstinent.

Discussion: The results suggest that socioeconomic disparities exist at multiple stages in the path to smoking cessation. Potential effects on socioeconomic disparities should be considered when implementing cessation interventions.

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