

TOBACCO USE AND CESSATION: RUSSIAN FEDERATION

May 31, 2014

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Overview

Smoking is a significant problem in the Russian Federation.

- Over 39% of Russians smoke.¹
- One million people in Russia die each year from alcohol- and tobacco-related illnesses.²
- The ratio of smokers to non-smokers is twice as high as in Western Europe.³
- Life expectancy of Russian men dropped from 64th in 1989 to 59th in 2008 due in part to tobacco-related illnesses.⁴

Smoking is a significant expense for Russians. Families spend an average of 15% of total household budget on cigarettes.⁵ Smokers spend the equivalent of U.S.\$6 billion on tobacco products a year.⁶

Tobacco control efforts in the Russian Federation are relatively new. In 2008, the country ratified the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.⁴ In doing so, the government agreed to the following steps within five years:

- Implementing a national ban on tobacco advertising.⁷
- Requiring health warnings that occupy at least 30% of tobacco packaging.⁷
- Enacting smoke-free air laws that apply to all workplaces and public places.⁷

- Raising the price of tobacco products by significantly increasing tobacco taxes.⁷
- Funding and implementing effective tobacco prevention and cessation programs to both prevent children from initiating smoking and help existing smokers quit.⁷

Although the Russian Federation has made some steps in tobacco control - banning the sale of tobacco to minors; prohibiting the use of tobacco vending machines; outlawing the sale of individual cigarettes; and eliminating smoking in public transportation - in the past there has been limited enforcement of its smoking-related regulations.⁸ The result is a society in which smoking is socially acceptable and pervasive. However, in recent years tobacco companies began to see a decline in sales due to higher cigarette prices.⁹ The passing of a complete “ban on tobacco advertising, cigarette visualization in retail outlets and smoking in public places” on February 25, 2013 forced tobacco companies to increase prices.⁹

Prevalence of Tobacco Use

The Russian Federation has more smokers per capita than any country in the world.¹⁰ In 2008, 39% of Russians were current smokers.¹¹ Estimates were that 50 million Russians between the ages of 18 to 65 smoked.⁶ Since the fall of the Soviet Union, smoking rates have increased drastically. Between 1996 and 2000 alone, annual cigarette consumption nearly doubled.⁸

Smoking is common among Russian men of all ages. Approximately 55% of all adult men smoke daily; 16% of women smoke daily.¹² The smoking rate among Russian men grew from 57% in 1992 to 63% in 2003.¹³

Although historically Russian women have had lower smoking rates, numbers have more than doubled since the collapse of the Soviet Union.¹³ Approximately 7% of women smoked in 1992 to 15% of women in 2003.¹³ This number may be a gross underreporting of female smoking rates as the activity is not socially acceptable.

Prevalence of Tobacco Use¹⁴

	Over 18 Years Old	Ages 13-150
Male	60.4	30.1
Female	15.5	24.4

In the Russian Federation, addiction to nicotine begins at a young age.⁵ More than half of teenagers smoke - approximately 60% of males and 40% of females.¹⁰ One-third of Russian youth have reported trying a cigarette by the age of 10.⁵ Approximately 27.4% of 15-year-old males and 18.5% of 15-year-old females are current smokers of at least 6 cigarettes per day for at least 17 days per month.⁵

Cost of Tobacco Use

Smoking is relatively inexpensive in the Russian Federation. The cost of a pack of imported and domestic cigarettes is approximately U.S.\$1 and U.S.\$0.62, respectively.⁵ Cigarettes are taxed at 33% of retail price.⁴ Despite this, cigarettes are actually becoming more affordable with time due to inflation and increased consumer purchasing power.⁴ The Ministry of Finance announced that cigarette taxes would rise 60% by the year 2015.¹⁵

There are financial repercussions to being a smoker in the Russian Federation. Smokers earn significantly less than non-smokers.⁶ When controlling for age, level of education, health status and household composition, the smoking wage differential amounts to:

- 10.9% for males.⁶
- 3.8% for females.⁶

The Russian economy also suffers due to widespread tobacco use. Premature death due to smoking results in productivity losses totaling U.S.\$24.7 billion.⁴

Tobacco-Related Health Information

According to the World Health Organization, tobacco and alcohol use are the leading risk factors for premature death in the Russian Federation.⁵ Each year about 385,000 Russians die of tobacco-related illnesses.¹ Approximately, 28.2% of men and 4.4% of women die from a disease related to smoking.¹⁶ These illnesses are the third leading cause of death and account for 17% of annual health care expenditures.⁴ Male smokers in Russia have 60% higher odds of dying than nonsmokers.¹⁷

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation has struggled health-wise. Male life expectancy at birth fell 6.6 years between 1989 and 1994.¹⁷ Female life expectancy at birth fell by 3.3 years over the same period.¹⁷ Over a similar timeframe (1985 to 1995), smoking-attributable deaths among men aged 35 to 69 increased by over 12%.¹⁷

Smoking contributes significantly to the Russian Federation's mortality profile. In 2000, the proportion of total deaths by all smoking-related causes was 26% among males, 3% among females and 15% in the total population.⁵ In 2000, the proportion of:

- Lung cancer deaths attributed to smoking was 94% among males and 40% among females⁵
- Cardiovascular disease due to smoking was 27% among males and 2.3% among females⁵

The average number of years of life lost as a direct result of smoking is 19 and 16 among males and females, respectively.⁵

Tobacco Use in the Workplace

The Russian Federation is the third-largest producer of tobacco products in the world.¹⁰ The country's tobacco production has more than doubled in recent decades, from 206 billion in 1996 to 413 billion in 2006.¹⁰ Russian-manufactured cigarettes have 30% to 40% more tar and nicotine than other world brands, which contributes to higher mortality rates.¹⁰

Despite significant internal production of nicotine products, the Russian Federation is also a major importer of cigarettes. Over half of the cigarettes sold in Russia are produced by transnational companies.⁵ Estimates are that 20% of cigarettes on the market are sold illegally.

In an effort to curb smoking, the Russian government has banned smoking in private worksites, educational facilities, health care facilities, government buildings, public transportation.⁴ Employers are allowed to set up designated smoking areas. Those in violation of regulations will be fined. Penalties range from the equivalent of U.S.\$100 to U.S.\$200 for individuals and U.S.\$3,200 to U.S.\$4,000 for organizations.⁸

Tobacco Cessation Treatment Options

In the Russian Federation, few tobacco cessation resources exist.⁵ Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) is available over the counter. The government will not pay for NRT or subsidize its use.⁵

Resources

[WHO Report on the Global Tobacco Epidemic, 2009](#)

[Smoke Free Guide in Russian](#). Tobacco cessation checklist created by the U.K.'s NHS and provided by the Russian Ministry of Health. (English version available at: http://smokefree.nhs.uk/downloads/108281_main_guide_double.pdf.)

Citations

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