

Meeting the Challenges and Barriers to Tightening Tobacco Control Policies in Sri Lanka

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Webinar on
'Tobacco Control: a Critical Piece of the Global Health Puzzle'
By Cancer Research UK
29th October 2021



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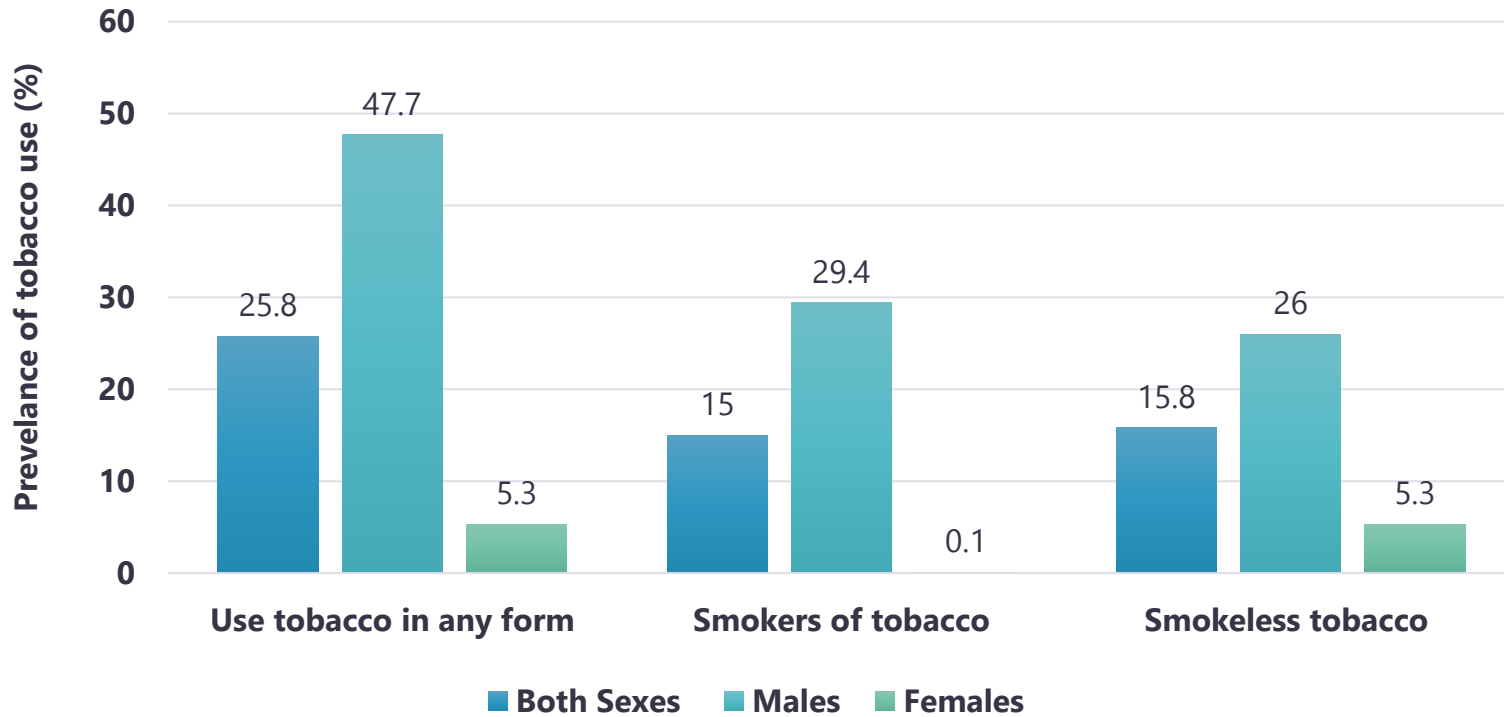


Outline

- **Tobacco Use in Sri Lanka: The Status**
- **Tobacco Use in Sri Lanka: The Trend**
- **Tobacco Use in Sri Lanka: The Impact**
- **Tobacco Use in Sri Lanka: The Policy Context**
- **Tightening Tobacco Control : The Policies We Need**
- **Challenges and Barriers**
- **Supporters**
- **Tightening Tobacco Control Policies: The Way Forward**
- **Tax Policy Case Study**

Tobacco Use in Sri Lanka: The Status

Tobacco Use Prevalence, by Sex and Tobacco Type (aged 18-69)



Tobacco Smoking Initiation (Average Age -years)



20.5



46.2

Tobacco Cultivation, Production and Consumption



**1338
hectares
(2018)**



**3273 MT
(2017)**



**2,300
million
(2020)**

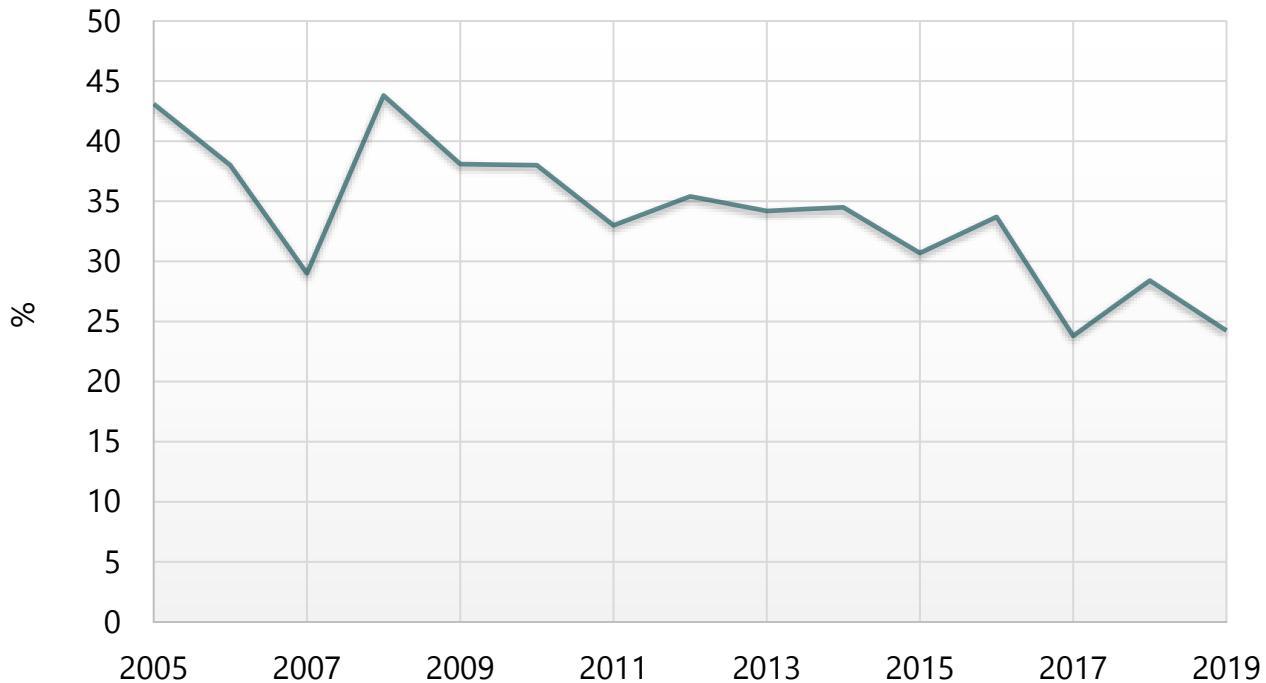
Source: World Health Organization. Sri Lanka STEPS Survey 2015.

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Tobacco Smoking in Sri Lanka: The Trend

Tobacco Smoking Prevalence Rate (Males 15+)



Source: Drug and Alcohol Information Center (ADIC)

The Last Mile Smokers in Sri Lanka



Men aged 40 and above



Men from poorer households



Men from rural areas



Youth from non-schooling background



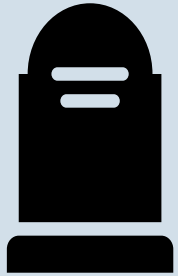
Agriculture, fisheries and craft workers



High prevalence districts



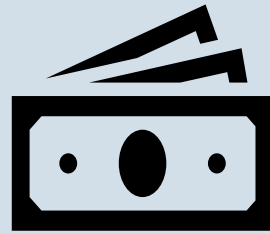
Tobacco Use in Sri Lanka: The Impact



**Kills 20,000 Sri
Lankans
annually**

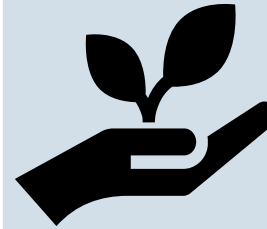


**A main risk
factor of NCDs.**

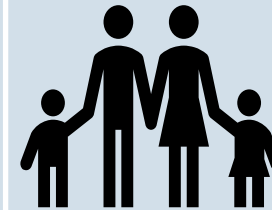


**Puts a huge
burden on the
economy**

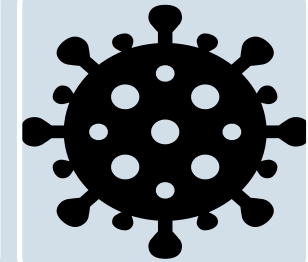
*(LKR 213.8
billion = 1.6% of
the GDP in
2016)*



**Impacts
adversely on
the
environment**

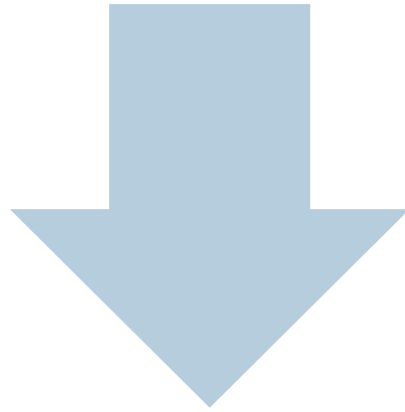


**Hurts an
individual's
relationships
with family and
friends**



**Adds an
additional
pressure on
country's
health system
during the
pandemic**

Tobacco Use in Sri Lanka: The Impact



*If we reduce tobacco consumption by **20%***



*There will be a **30%** net benefit to the economy*

Tobacco Use in Sri Lanka: The Policy Context

- Sri Lanka became a Party to the **WHO FCTC** - 2005
- **National Authority on Tobacco and Alcohol 1 Act, No. 27, 2006** - the law governing tobacco control in Sri Lanka.
 - Restrictions on smoking in public places
 - Packaging and labelling requirements
 - Tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship
 - Establishment of the National Authority on Tobacco and Alcohol
 - Offences and penalties
- **Sales Restrictions**
- **Graphical warnings on Product Packaging** – 2015
- **Regulations on smokeless tobacco products and e-cigarettes** - 2016

Tightening Tobacco Control: The Policy Changes We Need

- **Targeted Interventions**

- Tailor-made interventions to reach the LMS.
- Raise awareness on existing support services and harmful effect of tobacco
- More flexible and innovative channels
- Interventions which suit to reach the informal sector as most of the LMS are from informal sector.

- **Tobacco Taxation**

- Inflation-adjusted tax increases with streamlined to a single tax can
 - Increase govt. revenue by LKR 37 billion by 2023
 - Reduce smoking prevalence to 12.5%
 - Prevent 40,000 premature deaths
- IPS policy proposal to the NATA on Tobacco Taxation to implement a '**tax indexation**' formula for cigarettes.

Tightening Tobacco Control: The Policy Changes We Need

- **Ban on selling single sticks**
 - 81% smokers are purchasing cigarettes as single sticks
 - Sale of single stick cigarettes encourages smoking initiation
 - Health warnings are not seen when cigarettes are sold as single sticks
 - Sale of single cigarettes lessens the impact of tax increases
- **Smoking cessation**
 - A huge unmet demand especially from LMS
 - Should give priority to the LMS
 - Introduce and implement targeted behavioural cessation interventions, and community-based interventions (e.g., 'Tobacco Free Zones')
- **Control on informal promotion** – social media/ selling points

Challenges and Barriers

- **Industry interference**
- **Gaps in the existing policies and laws**
- **Implementation gaps**
- **Getting high level political will**
- **Misconceptions on income generated by tobacco**
- **Not having a strong public movement**
- **Stakeholders not having a strong connection with key decision makers**

Supporters

- **Ministries and other government institutes – Ministry of Health, NATA**
- **Professional Organizations – e.g., Sri Lanka Medical Association (SLMA)**
- **NGOs - e.g., Alcohol and Drug Information Center (ADIC), Center for Combatting Tobacco (CCT)**
- **INGOs – e.g., WHO**
- **Academia and research institutions**
- **Civil Society Organizations and Religious Leaders**
- **Public**

Tightening Tobacco Control Policies: The Way Forward

- **Continuous collective pressure on the government**
- **Awareness, Advocacy and Empowerment**
 - **High-level decision makers – political leaders as well as the govt. officers**
 - **Public**
- **Generating research-based evidence**
- **Exposing industry interferences**
- **Making use of the strong public support on tobacco control**

Approach to Policy Influencing: Tax Policy Advocacy for Budget 2022 Case Study

Elite level-insider influence matters in SL given the concentration of power in the government:

- # Policy Development: Indexation
- # Policy engagement: IPS input into NATA process and asked to help develop MoH Cabinet Memorandum; plus input to MoF
- # Reform narrative is closely framed around;
 - Economic context: need to raise revenue
 - Covid-19; ease pressure on health service
 - Electoral popularity of raising tax

This needs to be complimented with public advocacy to build momentum for reform:

- # Working with ADIC on a public campaign including survey which shows strong public support for increasing taxes in current context
- # Extensive media/social media dissemination and targeting of key decision-makers/influencers
- # Public petition

Status: Cabinet Memorandum recommended indexation submitted; high profile public campaign underway and elicited clear interest from government in proposals ... but no guarantees!

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