

# Smoke-Free Cities

## Smoke-Free Laws Reduce the Economic Burden on Individuals and Businesses



Secondhand smoke exposure causes disease and death, raises individual and business costs, and weakens the economy. Comprehensive smokefree laws are the cheapest, fairest, and most effective way to protect workers and the public, reduce business expenses, and strengthen the economy.

- **Globally, secondhand smoke kills more than 600,000 people every year** and causes over 10 million years of healthy life lost, with children accounting for more than one in four of these deaths.<sup>1</sup>
- **Exposure to secondhand smoke increases medical costs**, absenteeism, and insurance premiums for businesses, and reduces productivity among both smokers and non-smokers exposed at work. It also forces costly cleaning, repairs, and maintenance due to smoke damage, especially in hospitality venues.<sup>2</sup>
- **In households, secondhand smoke-caused illness can lead to significant financial strain**, particularly for low-income families, as treatment costs and lost income from illness or death can threaten long-term financial security.<sup>3,4</sup>
- **Smokefree environments protect health**, encourage smokers to quit, and help prevent youth from starting to smoke — reducing these health and economic costs to individuals and businesses over time. Partial laws do not work: they fail to protect all workers and patrons, make enforcement more difficult, and create an uneven playing field for businesses.<sup>5</sup>

### Smoke-Free Laws Reduce the Economic Burden of Secondhand Smoke.

Eliminating secondhand smoke in workplaces and public places lowers healthcare costs and improves financial security for families and businesses.

- Secondhand smoke is a proven cause of illness and premature death, creating billions in annual costs worldwide from both direct costs (medical care) and indirect costs (lost productivity, premature death)<sup>1,2</sup>
- Studies in China, India, and the U.S., have demonstrated that secondhand smoke exposure drives substantial national economic losses every year.<sup>4,6,7</sup>
- The burden falls heavily on low-income households, where tobacco use is higher and the loss of an income earner due to illness or death can push families into long-term financial hardship.<sup>3</sup>
- According to WHO's MPOWER report, comprehensive smokefree laws — aligned with the WHO FCTC — directly reduce these costs by preventing exposure to secondhand smoke and helping people quit.<sup>8</sup>

- Research in the United States estimated if everyone in the country were protected by strong smoke-free laws, it could save \$700 to \$1,297 for each person not currently covered by a smokefree policy.<sup>9</sup>

### Key Takeaways

- **Exposure to secondhand tobacco smoke increases healthcare and other costs for individuals, businesses and the broader economy.**
- **Comprehensive smokefree laws are the cheapest, fairest, and only effective way to protect everyone's right to breathe clean air, saving lives while benefiting business and the economy**

### References

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