

Republic of Korea



How many people die from smoking in South Korea each year?  
**54,508**

What is the economic cost of smoking and tobacco use in South Korea each year?  
**28,423,137,263,616**  
won

Current Rates of Smoking and Tobacco Use in South Korea

Tobacco use continues to be an epidemic in South Korea. Government complacency in the face of the tobacco epidemic protects the tobacco industry in South Korea as the death toll grows each year. Proponents of healthier societies must push for the implementation of evidence-based best practices in tobacco control to create change and reduce the negative effects of tobacco use.

Adult Smoking Prevalence in South Korea  
15+ years old; 2019

Men	Women
42.5%	5.2%

Adult smoking prevalence in South Korea is 24%.

Number of Adult Smokers in South Korea  
15+ years old; 2019

Men	Women
10,043,969	1,119,577

Number of adult smokers in South Korea is 11,163,546.

Youth Smoking Prevalence in South Korea  
10-14 years old; 2019

Boys	Girls
8.9%	5.6%

Youth smoking prevalence in South Korea is 7%.

Adult Smokeless Tobacco Use in South Korea  
15+ years old; smokeless tobacco includes snus, chewing tobacco, gutkha, etc.; 2019

Both Men and Women  
**Not Available**

## Deaths Caused by Tobacco in South Korea

% deaths attributable to tobacco use in 2019

Men

**26.1%**

Women

**6.8%**

17% of all deaths in South Korea are caused by tobacco use.

Learn more about global **Prevalence**,  
**Youth Smoking** and **Deaths**.

## Negative Effect of Tobacco Use in South Korea

Tobacco use harms both the public and fiscal health of South Korea, threatening efforts to improve equity, alleviate poverty, and protect the environment.



### Societal Harms

The economic cost of smoking South Korea is 28,423,137,263,616 won. This includes direct costs related to healthcare expenditures and indirect costs related to lost productivity caused by illness and premature death.



### Harms Development

Tobacco spending diverts funds from the resources that families need to rise out of poverty. On average in South Korea, a smoker must spend 1.23% of GDP per capita to buy 100 packs of the most popular cigarettes in a year.



### Environmental Harms

Cigarette butts are the most commonly discarded pieces of waste worldwide. It is estimated that 14,305 tons of butts wind up as toxic trash in South Korea each year, equal to 4,087 female African elephants.



### Harms Health Equity

The tobacco industry markets its products aggressively to lower-income populations and youth in South Korea.



### Harms NCDs

Not only is smoking a major risk factor for the 4 largest noncommunicable diseases (cancer, heart diseases, respiratory diseases, and diabetes), but people living with mental illness are nearly 2x as likely to smoke as other individuals.

Learn more about **Health Effects**.

Impact of the Tobacco Supply Chain on South Korea

The tobacco industry profits significantly from producing and selling tobacco. At the same time, across the tobacco supply chain, there are significant negative health and economic repercussions for South Korea.



**Tobacco Industry**  
The total revenue of the 6 largest tobacco companies in the world was USD 336 billion in 2019, about the same as Viet Nam's Gross National Income (GNI), 5x Ghana's GNI and 9x Paraguay's GNI.



**Tobacco Production**  
There were approximately 144 billion cigarettes produced in South Korea in 2016.



**Tobacco Growing**  
There were 25274 tons of tobacco produced in South Korea in 2019 on 10337 hectares of quality agricultural land that could have been used to grow food.

Learn more about global **Growing** and **Product Sales**.

Ending the Tobacco Epidemic in South Korea

Fortunately, there are evidence-based -i.e. proven -solutions to the challenges posed by tobacco use. For several decades, governments around the world have been introducing a set of policies that address the demand for tobacco products, particularly among youth. These policies effectively reduce consumption and are cost-effective because they save governments enormous amounts of money in health care spending and increase economic productivity.

Current Tobacco Control Policies in South Korea

Designated Smoke-Free Areas in South Korea

Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	N/A	Yes
Healthcare Facilities	Educational Facilities	Universities	Government Facilities	Indoor Offices	Restaurants	Pubs and Bars	Public Transport	All Other Indoor Public Places	Funds for Enforcement

**Availability of Cessation Services  
in South Korea****Quitting Resources**

National quit line, and both NRT and some cessation  
services cost-covered

**National Quit Line****Yes**

Learn more about best practices in **Cessation**.

**Tobacco Packaging Regulations in  
South Korea****Quality of Tobacco Packaging Regulation**

None

Text warning label only

✓ **Graphic warning label only**

Plain Packaging with graphic warning label

**% of Pack Covered****50%**

Learn more about best practices in **Counter Marketing**.

**Tobacco Control Mass Media  
Campaigns in South Korea****Ran a National Anti-Tobacco Campaign****Yes****Part Of A Comprehensive Tobacco Control Program****Yes****Pre-Tested With The Target Audience****Yes****Target Audience Research Was Conducted****Yes****Aired On Television And/Or Radio****Yes****Utilized Media Planning****Yes****Earned Media/Public Relations Were Used To Promote The  
Campaign****Yes****Process Evaluation Was Used To Assess Implementation****Yes****Outcome Evaluation Was Used To Assess Effectiveness****Yes**

Learn more about best practices in **Mass Media**.



Tobacco Tax Policies in South Korea

Using evidence-based international recommendations/best practices, the Tobacco Economics Cigarette Tax Scorecard assesses four components of tax systems - price, change in affordability, tax share, and structure - on a scale of 0 to 5, where a higher score is preferred.

Overall Score	Cigarette Price	Change in Affordability Over Time	Tax Share of Price	Tax Structure
2.5	2	0	4	4
The overall score is an average of the four component scores.	Consumers respond to higher prices by decreasing consumption and some quit using tobacco.	In addition to price, change in affordability is critical. Cigarettes need to become less affordable for consumption to decline.	Large tax shares of price are usually a good indicator that taxes are working.	Best practices include relying more on uniform specific excise taxes that are adjusted regularly to outpace growth and inflation.

Learn more about the [Scorecard in South Korea](#).

Regulations on Tobacco Advertising, Promotion, and Sponsorship (TAPS) in South Korea

Marketing is the key avenue that tobacco companies use to reach consumers, new and old. Restricting or eliminating marketing is key to tobacco control success.

Direct Bans	4 out of 7 direct bans implemented	Indirect Bans	1 out of 10 indirect bans implemented
National TV and radio	Yes	Free distribution in mail or through other means	No
International TV and radio	Yes	Promotional discounts	Yes
International magazines and newspapers	No	Non-tobacco products identified with tobacco brand names	No
International magazines and newspapers	No	Brand name of non-tobacco products used for tobacco product	No
Billboard and outdoor advertising	Yes	Appearance in TV and/or films: tobacco brands (product placement)	No
Advertising at point of sale	No	Appearance in TV and/or films: tobacco products	No
Advertising on internet	Yes	Prescribed anti-tobacco ads required for any visual entertainment media product that depicts tobacco products, use or images	No
Ad Ban Compliance 50%		Complete ban on sponsorship	No
		Any form of contribution (financial or other support) to any event, activity or individual	No
		Ban on the publicity of financial or other sponsorship or support by the tobacco industry of events, activities, individuals	No