

Report: More urban Chinese smokers quit



China's National Health and Family Planning Commission is planning to implement a nation-wide ban on smoking in public places by the end of 2017. [Photo/163.com]

More smokers in Chinese cities are quitting the habit compared to a decade ago thanks to regional tobacco control regulations and improved public awareness, according to a report released on World No-Tobacco Day on Wednesday.

The quitting rate – which measures the percentage of participants who quit smoking during the survey period – rose from 6 percent in 2006 to 9.2 percent in 2015, Liang Xiaofeng, deputy director of the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention (China CDC), said at a press conference in Shanghai.

“Although the percentage has increased, it is far lower than in other countries,” he said.

The report was based on five surveys performed from 2006 to 2015 in both urban and rural areas, including the cities of Beijing, Shanghai and Kunming as well as rural areas of Yichun in Heilongjiang Province and Tongren in Guizhou Province.

Around 800 smokers and 200 non-smokers in each area participated in each survey, organized by China CDC in cooperation with the International Tobacco Control (ITC) Policy Evaluation Project.

The ITC project is an international research program to evaluate key policies

of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). It is conducting surveys in at least 28 countries covering more than 50 percent of the world's population.

The surveys in China found people in rural areas lacked knowledge about tobacco's harmful effects to human health, apart from lung cancer.

The latest survey from 2013 to 2015 showed only 53 percent of rural participants knew smoking may lead to heart disease, 12 percentage points lower than in urban areas.

Only 35 percent of people in rural areas knew smoking could cause stroke, 5 percentage points lower than in urban areas, according to the report. "The results show tobacco control publicity is badly needed to improve public awareness in the countryside," said Liang.

There are over 300 million smokers and 740 million people exposed to second-hand smoke in China. Over 1 million people die of tobacco use every year, with another 100,000 deaths caused by second-hand smoke exposure, figures show.

China has set a target to reduce the smoking rate among people aged 15 and older to 20 percent by 2030 from the current 27.7 percent, according to the "Healthy China 2030" blueprint issued by the central authorities last October.

Since China ratified the WHO FCTC in 2005, the country has made a number of tobacco control efforts, including banning tobacco advertisements, increasing tobacco taxes and putting forward regional smoking bans.

As of 2016, 18 cities, including Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen, had implemented regional smoking bans, and a draft of national tobacco control regulations in public areas is currently being reviewed, according to Song Shuli from the National Health and Family Planning Commission.

"The local bans, which have covered one-tenth of our country's total population, have provided reference for national legislation on tobacco control," said Song.

China to use big data to help left-behind children

A big data platform was launched Wednesday to help a special group of Chinese children, known as left-behind children.

China has around 9 million rural children whose parents work away from home,

leaving them behind with grandparents, relatives or caregivers.

The platform will include a database covering these children's personal information, guardianship, psychological and physical conditions, and then match their needs with resources donated by social organizations, companies and individuals.

Service centers will be set up to offer various courses, training and aid, according to a statement issued at the launch ceremony.

Children taking part in the project will receive watches that record their location to prevent them from becoming lost.

The project was jointly launched by the China Children and Teenagers' Fund and a technology firm related to the country's BeiDou Navigation Satellite System.

[Shaanxi reports new H7N9 human case](#)

Northwest China's Shaanxi Province Wednesday reported a new human infection of the H7N9 bird flu virus, bringing the number of infections to six in the province.

The 62-year-old female from Inner Mongolia showed symptoms including a fever and cough after having contact with dead poultry and was confirmed as infected in the city of Yulin Wednesday.

Also on Wednesday, the local government in the city's Yuyang District reported more than 20,000 chickens had died from an outbreak of H7N9 bird flu at a private poultry company.

H7N9 is a bird flu strain first reported to have infected humans in China in March 2013.

According to the National Health and Family Planning Commission, in March, 96 H7N9 infections and 47 deaths were reported nationwide. In April, 81 infections and 24 deaths were reported.

[Former China Telecom chairman](#)

sentenced to 6 years for graft



Chang Xiaobing, former chairman of China Telecom, stands trial for accepting bribes on April 18. [Photo/CCTV]

Chang Xiaobing, former chairman of China Telecom, was sentenced to six years in prison for graft Wednesday.

The sentence was handed down by the Intermediate People's Court of Baoding city in northern China's Hebei Province.

The court also fined Chang 500,000 yuan (around US\$72,850) and ordered his illicit gains to be confiscated.

Chang confessed to his crimes in court.

It found Chang guilty of taking advantage of his positions as a telecom official and chairman of China Unicom to seek benefits for various institutions between 1998 and 2014.

In return, he accepted money and valuables worth more than 3.76 million yuan.

China Unicom and China Telecom are two of China's top three telecom service providers.

The court decided to be lenient as Chang pleaded guilty, expressed remorse, returned his illegal gains and offered information on other crimes.

China completes satellite station network

A network of remote sensing satellite ground stations that cover all of China's territory and 70 percent of Asia passed its final acceptance examination on Wednesday.

The network is headquartered in Beijing and features three ground stations in a suburb in Beijing, Kashgar in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region and Sanya in Hainan Province, respectively.

It will be used to support various remote-sensing systems, especially for the western part of the country and the South China Sea, according to the examination committee.

The project began in 2007.