

Smoking in Finland

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Smoking in Finland continues to decrease, albeit slowly. One in five adults smokes daily. In 2005, 26% of men and 18% of women of working age reported they smoked daily. Out of young men (15–24 years), 18% reported they smoked daily and 8% occasionally. Out of young women, 14% smoke daily and 10% occasionally.

Men's smoking has been on the decrease since studies began in 1978; in the 2000s, there have been only small changes in men's smoking. Women's smoking, on the other hand, increased up to the mid-1980s. After that, women's smoking remained at the same level for a long time, but then began to decrease in recent years.

Of the men who smoke daily, 77% are concerned about the effects of their smoking on their own health. The corresponding figure for women is 86%. 59% of men and women said that they want to quit smoking. 36% of men and 42% of women said they had made a serious attempt to quit smoking, i.e. they had gone without smoking for at least one day within the past year.

The increase in attempts to quit smoking since 1997 may be partly illusory, however. The question in use prior to 1997 was amended with the WHO's definition of a 'serious attempt to quit smoking' – the respondent had gone without smoking for at least 24 hours in their attempt to quit. The immediate increase in the figures may indicate that Finns had previously interpreted a serious attempt to quit smoking as lasting longer than this.

64% of Finnish adult men and 72% of women do not smoke at all. Out of men of working age, one in five has smoked at some point and managed to quit; out of women, one in eight. Most smokers want to quit smoking.

As smoking rates decrease, they also become more concentrated. If the population is divided into three groups based on education, 38% of the least educated, 35% of those with secondary education, and 21% of the highly educated men smoke. The differences between the groups have been increasing consistently. With women, smoking became more prevalent among the less educated in the 1970's and 1980's, and has now remained around 20% for over ten years. Smoking rates of men have decreased the most among those with the highest education.

Adolescent use of tobacco products began to increase in Finland in the 1980's. In 2003, 23% of boys and 26% of girls aged 14–18 used tobacco products daily. Experimenting with smoking and starting smoking are on a slight decrease with boys, and the age for starting regular smoking has risen. Over the past six years adolescent smoking has been on the decrease, which reflects the restrictions on tobacco sales as well as the changing societal attitudes toward smoking. Other possible factors influencing adolescent smoking include the more active discussion regarding the addictiveness of smoking, and the development of stop smoking services, especially by telephone and online.

Kristiina Patja

Medical advisor,
National Institute for Public Health and Welfare (THL)

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Juha Sedergren,
Stumppi-työryhmä

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