

State of the Evidence: Tourism Economy Impacts Following Smoke-Free Policy Implementation

Background & Methods

Article 8 of the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) obligates Parties to enact policies that create 100% smoke-free environments in enclosed workplaces, public places and public transport. In some jurisdictions, the tourism sector has requested exemptions, citing concerns that these policies could have negative economic impacts.

We conducted a narrative literature review to identify studies reporting economic impact of smoke-free policies on tourism sectors including hotels, casinos/gambling venues, and sporting venues. Search included academic and gray literature (e.g., government reports) published between January 1, 2004, and June 18, 2024, using the Scopus, Embase, and JSTOR databases. Search terms included variations of “smoke-free” and “tourism,” “hospitality,” “casino,” “hotel,” and other related terms. Studies were included if they reported direct or indirect economic impacts of smoke-free policies on the tourism sector. Studies were initially screened by title and abstract, then full text.

Key Findings

Database searching identified 692 articles, of which 37 met the inclusion criteria. Of these, nearly all identified studies (95%) focused on economic impacts in high income countries. Most (73%) reported neutral or positive economic impacts following the implementation of smoke-free policies.

There is evidence that hotels experienced stable or improved revenues, increased customer satisfaction, and enhanced employee health outcomes after going smoke-free. Some casinos experienced short-term revenue declines but stabilized over time, as seen in several studies.

Comprehensive smoke-free policies were more likely to yield positive economic benefits.

Implications

Our review of the evidence supports the argument that comprehensive smoke-free policies aligned with WHO FCTC Article 8 deliver both health and economic benefits without harming the tourism sector. Additionally:

- ➔ These findings can help policymakers counter tobacco industry claims and build political support for stronger smoke-free policies, especially in tourism-dependent jurisdictions
- ➔ The lack of studies from low- and middle-income countries highlights the need for further research in these contexts

Tourism Sector		% of Studies
Lodging		57% (n=21)
Casinos/Gambling		38% (n=14)
Tourism demand		5% (n=2)
Sports		3% (n=1)
Beaches		3% (n=1)

Economic Impacts		% of Studies
Neutral impact or positive impact		76% (n=28)
Neutral impact		38% (n=14)
Positive impact		24% (n=9)
Neutral and positive impact		14% (n=5)
Mixed impact*		14% (n=5)
Negative impact		11% (n=4)

*Includes one of these combinations:
 • neutral, positive, and negative (n=3)
 • neutral and negative (n=1)
 • positive and negative (n=1)