

# China struggles to kick world-leading cigarette habit

By **Matthew Brown**  
The Associated Press

**B**EIJING — Most smokers in China, the world's largest tobacco consumer, have no intention of kicking the habit and remain unaware of some of its most damaging health effects, according to Chinese health officials and outside researchers.

An estimated 316 million people smoke in China, almost a quarter of the population, and concerns are growing about the long-term effects on public health and the economy.

The vast majority of smokers are men, of whom 59 percent told surveyors they have no plans to quit, according to a decade-long study by the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention and Canadian researchers with the International Tobacco Control project.

Such numbers have prompted efforts to restrict the formerly ubiquitous practice. Major cities, including Beijing and Shanghai, recently moved to ban public smoking, with Shanghai's prohibition scheduled to go into effect in March. In 2015, the central government approved a modest nationwide cigarette tax increase.

But Chinese and international health officials argue that more is needed, including a nationwide public smoking ban, higher cigarette taxes, and more aggressive health warnings. Such actions



are "critically important," Yuan Jiang, director of tobacco control for the Chinese Center for Disease Control, said in a statement released with the study.

A public smoking ban appeared imminent last year. The government health ministry said in December that it would happen by the end of 2016, but that has yet to materialize.

"They have to figure out what's important as a health policy," said Geoffrey Fong of Canada's University of Waterloo, one of the authors of the study. "Every third man that you pass on the street in China will

die of cigarettes. ... When you have cheap cigarettes, people will smoke them."

In line with global trends, smoking rates among Chinese have fallen slowly over the past 25 years, by about 1.0 percent annually among men and 2.6 percent among women, according to a separate study published in April in the medical journal *The Lancet*.

Yet because of China's population growth — 1.37 billion people at last count — the actual number of smokers has continued to increase. Rising prosperity means cigarettes have become more

**HARD HABIT TO BREAK.** A man is seen smoking a cigarette while sitting inside a delivery cart in Beijing. A decade-long study has found that most smokers in China, the world's largest consumer of tobacco, have no intention of kicking the habit and remain unaware of some of the most damaging health effects of smoking. (AP Photo/Mark Schiefelbein)

affordable, while low taxes keep the cost of some brands at less than \$1 a pack.

Sixty percent of Chinese smokers were unaware that cigarettes can lead to strokes and almost 40 percent weren't aware that smoking causes heart disease, according to the study, which was released on World No Tobacco Day, when the World Health Organization and others highlight health risks associated with tobacco use.

Judith Mackay, an anti-tobacco advocate based in Hong Kong, said China has made strides with public smoking bans in some cities and a similar ban covering schools and universities, but that's not enough.

"This is the first time there has been a report looking at the overall picture of where China stands," said Mackay, senior adviser at Vital Strategies, a global health organization. "The reality is, it's falling behind."

Mackay blamed behind-the-scenes lobbying by China's state-owned tobacco monopoly for impeding efforts to toughen tobacco policies. Government agencies and research institutes in China, Canada, and the United States funded the study.

## Hong Kong "shoebox," "coffin" homes a challenge for new leader

By **Kelvin Chan**  
The Associated Press

**H**ONG KONG — Li Suet-wen's dream home would have a bedroom and living room where her two children could play and study. The reality is a one-room "shoebox" cubicle, one of five partitioned out of a small apartment in an aging walkup in a working-class Hong Kong neighborhood.

Into the 120-square-foot room are crammed a bunk bed, small couch, fridge, washing machine, and tiny table. On one side of the door is a combined toilet and shower stall, on the other a narrow counter with a hotplate and sink. Clothes drying overhead dim light from a bare fluorescent tube. It feels like a storage unit, not a home.

Li's six-year-old son and eight-year-old daughter often ask, "Why do we always have to live in such small flats? Why can't we live in a bigger place?" Li said.

"I say it's because mommy doesn't have any money," said Li, a single mom whose HK\$4,500 (\$580) per month in rent and utilities eats up almost half the HK\$10,000 (\$1,290) she earns at a bakery decorating cakes.

Housing costs are among the wealthy Asian financial center's biggest problems.

Some 200,000 of Hong Kong's 7.3 million residents live in "subdivided units." That's up 18 percent from four years ago and includes 35,500 children age 15 and younger, government figures show. The figure doesn't include many thousands more living in other "inadequate housing," such as rooftop shacks, metal cages resembling rabbit hutches, and "coffin homes" made of stacked wooden bunks.

It's a universe away from the lifestyles enjoyed by the rich living in lavish mountaintop mansions and luxury penthouses, or even those with middle-class accommodation in the former British colony.

Hong Kong regularly tops global property price surveys. Rents and home prices have steadily risen and are now at or near all-time highs.

### Japan launches rocket with satellite to build its own GPS

**TOKYO (AP)** — Japan is building its own GPS in hopes of reducing location errors for drivers, drone operators, and other users.

A rocket launched from southern Japan transported a satellite that will form part of a Japanese GPS.

An initial satellite was launched in 2010, and the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries plan to launch two more satellites by next spring to complete the "Michibiki" system. *Michibiki* is the Japanese word for guidance.

Japan currently relies on an American GPS. Having its own system is expected to reduce location errors in Japan to a few inches from as much as 30 feet by some estimates.

Three satellites will be visible at all times from the Asia-Pacific region, and the Japanese system could be

The U.S.-based consultancy Demographia has ranked it the world's least affordable housing market for seven straight years, beating Sydney, Vancouver, and 400 other cities. Median house prices are 19 times the median income.

Beijing-backed Carrie Lam, who was chosen in March to be Hong Kong's next chief executive, has vowed to tackle the housing crisis she is inheriting from her predecessor, Leung Chun-ying.

Lam says that after she takes office in July she will help middle-class families afford starter homes and expand the amount of land the government makes available for development.

"As everyone knows, for some time housing has been a troubling problem for Hong Kong," she said in her victory speech. "I have pledged to assist Hong Kongers to attain home ownership and improve their living conditions. To do so, we need more usable land. The key is to reach a consensus on how to increase the supply."

Prices have soared despite multiple rounds of government cooling measures, as money floods in from mainland China. Widening inequality helped drive mass pro-democracy protests in 2014. Young people despair of ever owning homes of their own. They lack space even to have sex, one activist lawmaker said last fall, using a coarse Cantonese slang term that caused a stir.

"If we cannot solve the housing problem, there will be more social problems," said Sze Lai-shan, an organizer with social-welfare group Society for Community Organization. "Social tensions will increase and people are (going to be) getting more annoyed with the government's policies."

Li says her children bicker nonstop.

"They fight over this and fight over that. If there's a day off (from school), the two of them will argue," she said. "The bigger they get, the more crowded it gets. Sometimes there's not even any space to step," she said. "They don't even have space to do their homework."

Public housing is the best hope for most living on integrated with the American one, enabling highly precise positioning, the Japanese government said.

The more accurate information could be used for both driving and drone deliveries. Japanese media report it also may enhance the country's defense capabilities.

Japan is considering adding three more satellites to the system in the future, as mountains and tall buildings will still affect the positioning under the four-satellite system.

modest incomes. High-rise public housing estates house about 30 percent of Hong Kong's 7 million people. If homes bought with government subsidies are included, the number rises to nearly half.

Li applied two years ago, but with 282,300 people on the

*Continued on page 16*

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		8					7	6
	4						5	9
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3	7							2
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Difficulty level: Hard #21387

**Instructions:** Fill in the grid so that the digits 1 through 9 appear one time each in every row, column, and 3x3 box.

**Solution to last issue's puzzle**  
Puzzle #31573 (Medium)  
All solutions available at <www.sudoku.com>.

8	6	7	3	4	9	1	5	2
9	1	2	7	6	5	4	8	3
3	4	5	8	1	2	9	7	6
7	9	4	6	2	1	8	3	5
1	3	8	5	9	7	6	2	4
5	2	6	4	3	8	7	1	9
6	7	1	2	5	4	3	9	8
2	8	3	9	7	6	5	4	1
4	5	9	1	8	3	2	6	7

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