

The impact of smoking policies on recent quitters prevalence in Italy in the last three decades



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Background

Smoking prevalence declined in Italian adult men since 1957 and in women since 1990. Data about trend of smoking cessation but not of recent quitters were available through estimation from repeated surveys. The information enables researchers and policy-makers to consider the effect of specific interventions and policies to promote quit attempts.

Methods

Data from ISTAT Multipurpose Surveys, conducted between 1983 and 2005, and from PASSI, a national ongoing surveillance on health-related behaviors, for the years 2008 to 2012, were analyzed.

Data on cigarette price come from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the structure and rates of excise duty applied on cigarettes and the manufactured tobacco products
http://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/common/publications/index_en.htm.

Outcome: Recent quitters prevalence derived from smokers aged 25-64 years, who had smoked in the preceding year but reported no smoking at the moment of the interview.

Results

Smokers who quit in the previous year increased, in particular from 2000, when they were only 2,5% (fig 1). From 2009 to 2012 there was no further substantial variation and the prevalence stalled around 6,5%. This trend can be influenced by policies on smoking advertisement and on smoking ban (enforced by law in 2005), but the latter apparently did not alter pre-existing trends.

Women quit slightly more than men but without statistical differences.

In Italy the price of cigarettes rose in particular between 2000 and 2012. The trend followed the increase of cigarette price (fig. 2). Because subjects of lower socio-economic status may be more sensitive to price than subjects of higher status, the influence of price can be expected to decrease inequalities in smoking. This was not the case. Actually, using educational attainment as an indicator of socioeconomic position, inequalities in smoking cessation became more evident in 2012 (fig 3).

Discussion

Recent strategies to control smoking had an impact on the prevalence of smokers who quit in the previous year. People with lower socioeconomic status deserve special attention as the gap between highly educated people and those with lower educational level widened.

Limitations:

The definition of recent quitter includes smokers who have quit in the last 6 months and consequently are at high risk of relapse.

Data derive from two sources of information, using similar but not coincident indicators of smoking cessation.

Successful cessation was self-reported.

Data are based on retrospective reports of quitting as opposed to a longitudinal follow-up of individuals who quit.

Results

Figure 1. Smokers who quit in the previous year and were abstinent at the moment of the interview.

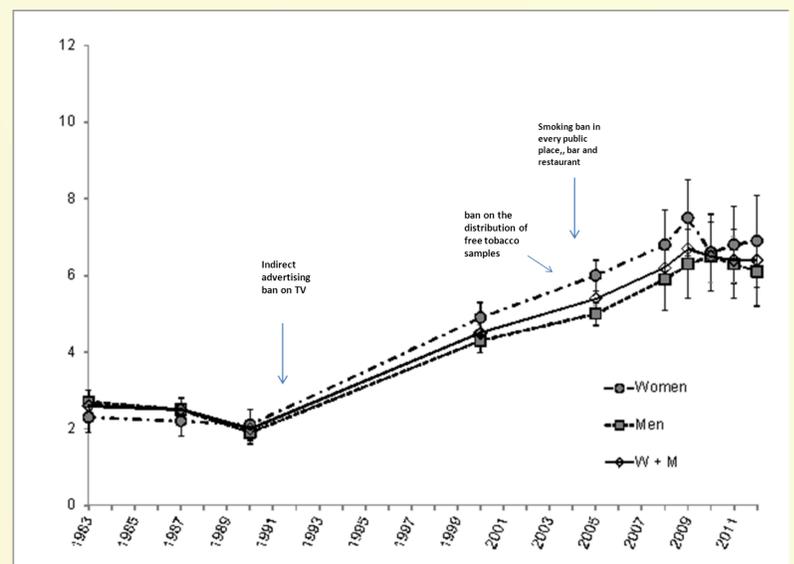


Figure 2. Comparison between smokers who quit in the previous year and cigarette price variation

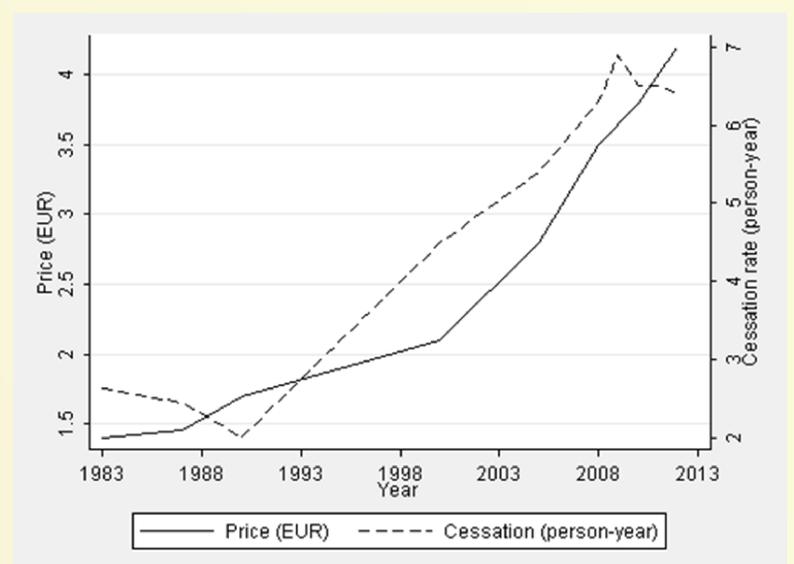
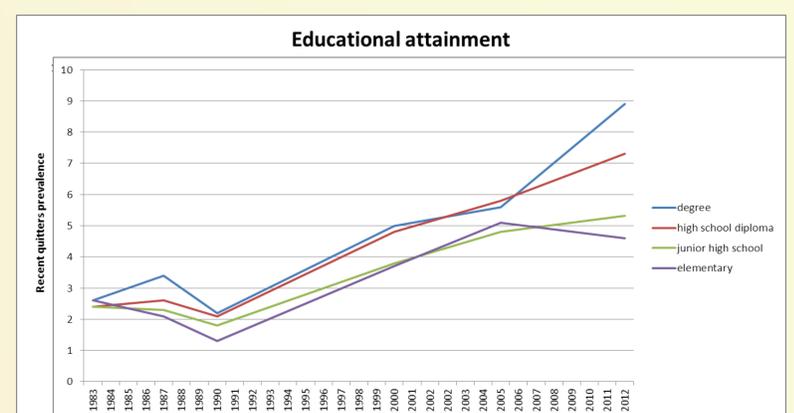


Figure 3. Differences in educational attainment among smokers who quit in the previous year



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