Tobacco is the largest preventable cancer risk factor. While global cigarette consumption and overall prevalence have been declining recently, success has been uneven. In countries with vigorous tobacco control policies, tobacco use has typically declined more.

In recent years, tobacco-control proponents have developed a proven set of tools to address the challenges of tobacco use. These measures comprise the World Health Organization’s Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, which boasts the World Health Organization’s Framework on Tobacco Control.

FIGURE 28.1 Cigarette price and smoking prevalence in South Africa by income group

- High Income
- Middle Income
- Low Income

When taxes raise cigarette prices, the poor get more health benefits than the rich.

FIGURE 28.2 The benefits of tobacco taxes in the Philippines

- Universal healthcare for low-income persons
- Improving health infrastructure
- Helping tobacco-farming communities

Access creates progress: Not only are they saving hundreds of thousands of lives, but the gains are growing. New tobacco tax revenues on:

- Sugar
- Rum
- Tobacco

In 2012, Australia moved beyond the gold standard of large, graphic warning labels on tobacco packaging by legislating plain standardized packages. Gone are the logos and color themes that even young children can identify around the world.

Tobacco firms’ success relies on their ability to present tobacco use as cool and glamorous. Most recently, firms have re-doubled their efforts to sell to young women and girls. To combat this, the health community must constantly remind people that smokers lose on average 11 years of life, and more than half of long-term smokers die prematurely from tobacco-attributable disease.

Finally, it is in countries where broad communities seeking improved social welfare—including health, human rights, and environment, among others—are speaking out loudly against tobacco that tobacco use is waning most.

MAP 28.1 Parties to the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control

As of mid-2019, there are 181 parties to the Framwork Convention on Tobacco Control.

In 2018, the World Trade Organization (WTO) Dispute Settlement Body ruled that Australia’s plain packaging law does not violate the country’s commitments to the WTO agreement.