

Packaged to Persuade:

Building the scientific case for plain and standardized packaging for *all* tobacco products

Joanna Cohen, PhD
Institute for Global Tobacco Control
Department of Health, Behavior and Society

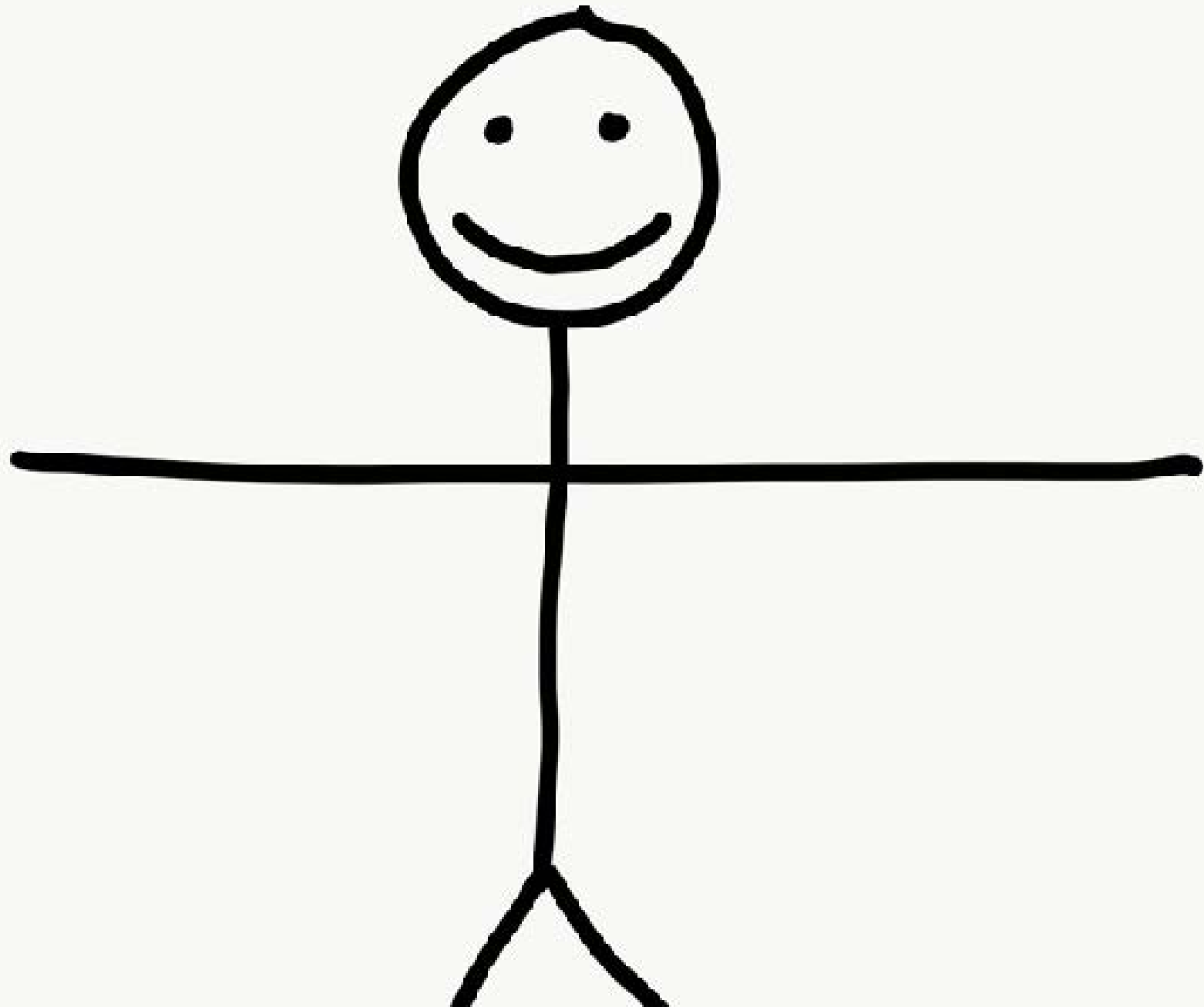


Disclosures

Over the past 10 years, I have been supported with funding from Bloomberg Philanthropies' Bloomberg Initiative to Reduce Tobacco Use (bloomberg.org), National Institutes for Health, U.S. FDA Center for Tobacco Products, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Vital Strategies, Health Resources and Services Administration and Johns Hopkins University.

	Tobacco industry	E-cigarette & nicotine product industry	Pharma industry
The work being presented has received funding or other means of support from any of the following sources:	NO	NO	NO
Any of the authors have received funding (including E-cigarette & nicotine product industry NO consultancy) from any of the following sources in the past 5 years:	NO	NO	NO

I have been a paid consultant in litigation against a tobacco company.



Invitation to use person-first language

Nicotine and Tobacco Research, 2025, XX, 1–2
https://doi.org/10.1093/ntr/ntaf003
Advance access publication 7 January 2025
Editorial



Person-First Language in Nicotine and Tobacco Research

In 2022, Nicotine and Tobacco Research published an Editorial suggesting it may be time we stop using the word “smoker” to refer to people who smoke tobacco. A strong argument

A complexity with person-first language, not unique to the nicotine and tobacco research field, is that in some cases it may be preferential to use labels that define individuals by

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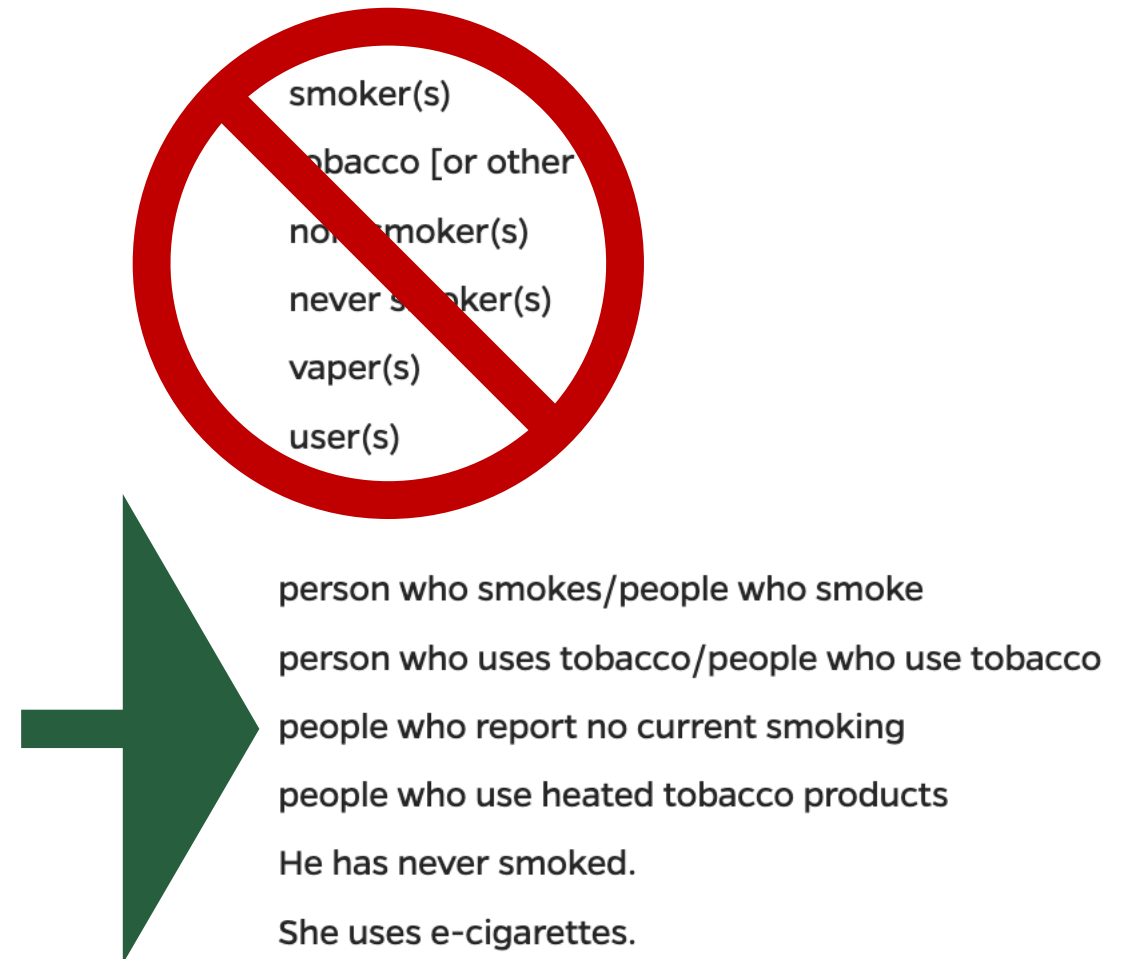
Home / People-first language policy

Email alerts

People-first language policy

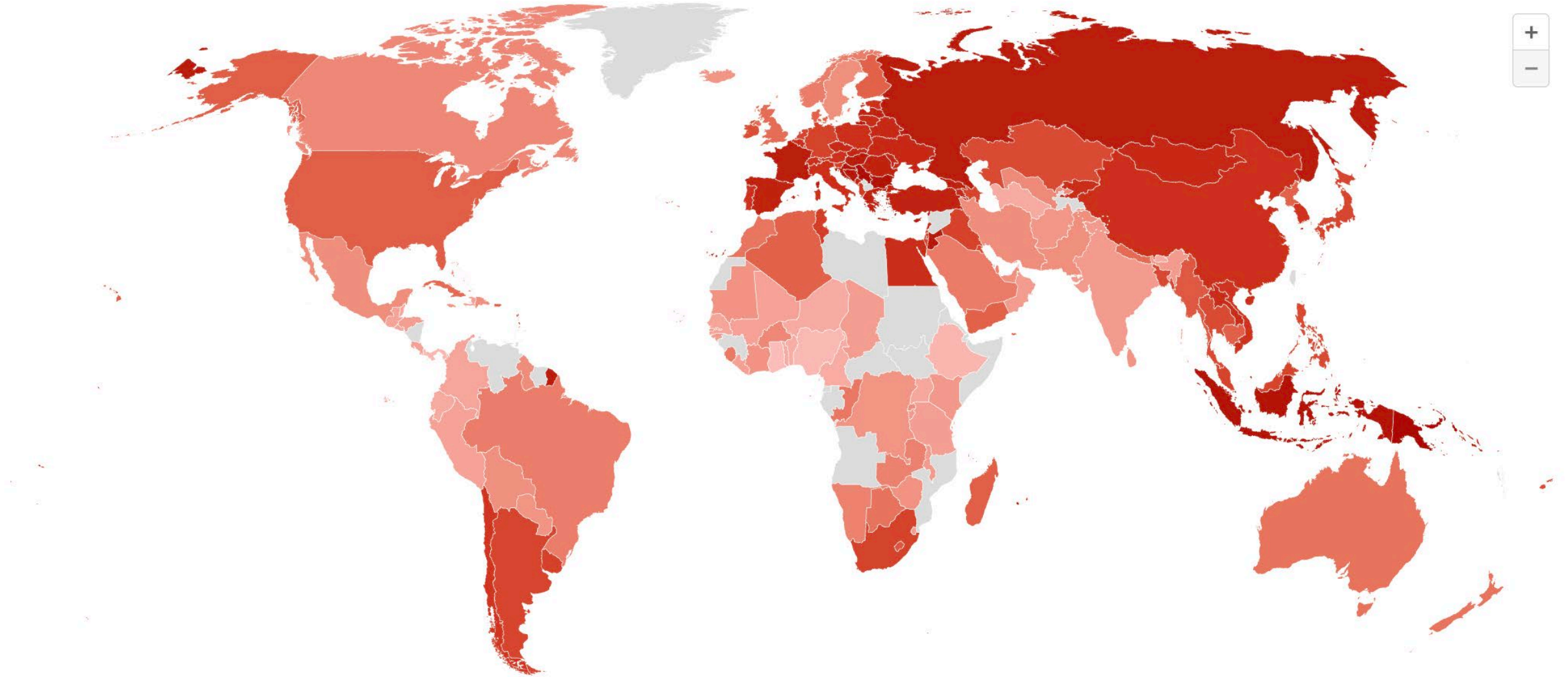
Tobacco Control has a policy of using people-first language which avoids putting product use first. In simple terms, this means avoiding use of labels such as ‘smoker’, ‘tobacco user’ and ‘vaper’.

Feb 2023



Current smoking prevalence

Percentage of daily smokers: age 15+, 2021 or latest data available



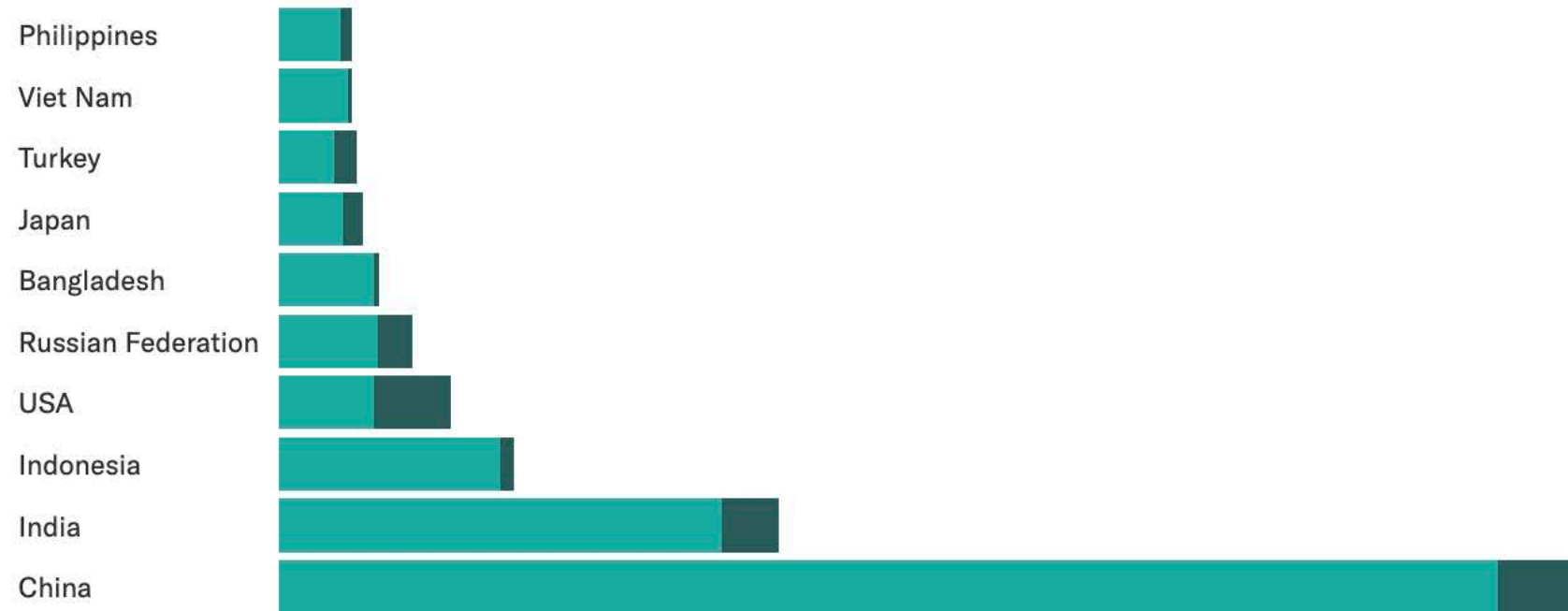
Overall smoking prevalence is declining but there are still more than one billion smokers in the world.

Source: WHO GTCR, 2023 · [Get the data](#) · [Embed](#) · [Download image](#)

Countries with the most people who smoke

Countries with the highest number of smokers (age 15+ yrs), in millions, 2019

■ Male ■ Female



More than 500 million smokers live in three countries. One-third of all male smokers globally live in China.

Source: GBD, 2019 · [Get the data](#) · [Embed](#) · [Download image](#)

THE TOBACCO ATLAS



OPEN ACCESS

Low-income and middle-income countries leading the way with tobacco control policies

Joanna E Cohen ¹, Grazielle Grilo,¹ Lauren Czaplicki,¹
Jennifer L Brown ¹, Kevin Welding ¹, Marita Hefler,²
Ryan D Kennedy,¹ Anne-Marie Perucic³

¹Department of Health, Behavior and Society, Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health, Baltimore, Maryland, USA

²Menzies School of Health Research, Charles Darwin University, Casuarina, Northern Territory, Australia

³Health Promotion Department, WHO, Geneva, Switzerland

GLOBAL TOBACCO USE AND POLICY INTERVENTIONS

Tobacco products are the world's single largest cause of preventable death, accounting for more than 8 million deaths each year and causing suffering from avoidable illnesses among tens of millions more.¹ Tobacco-caused death and disease

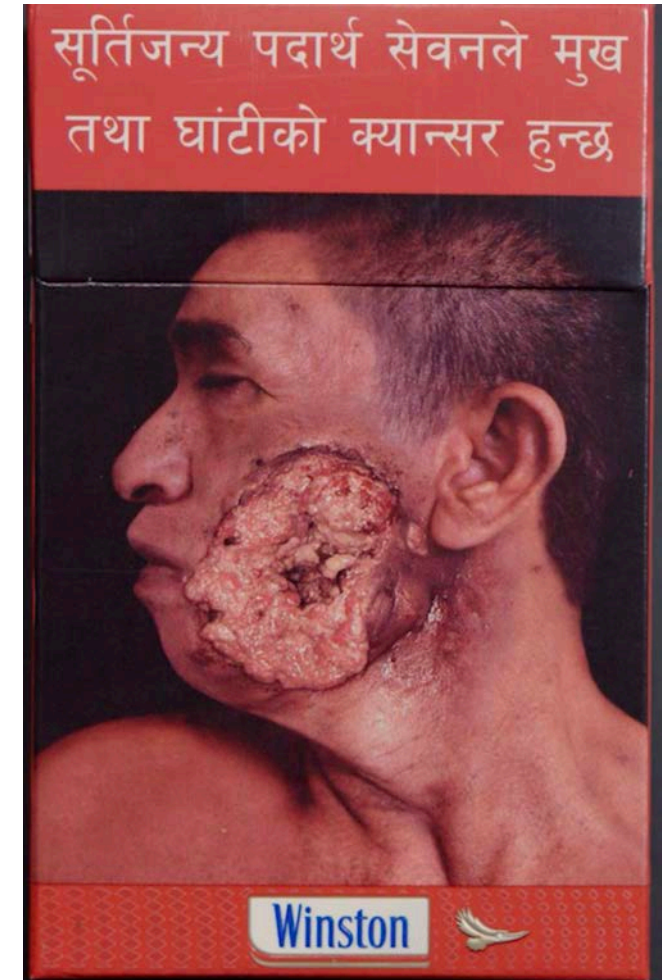
impacts feeding into the development of the FCTC, included smoke-free air policies in states and cities in the USA, pictorial health warning labels (HWLs) in Canada, restrictions on tobacco advertising and sponsorship in Canada, and the use of tobacco excise taxes as a measure to reduce smoking in Canada. Since the

Looking to LMICs for inspiration

- Large health warning labels (HWLs) on cigarette packs
- Single brand presentation (Uruguay)
- Additive ban (Brazil)
- Banning sales of a prevalent smokeless tobacco product (India)
- Strengthening penalties for illicit trade in tobacco products (Colombia)
- Tobacco-free generation (Balanga City, Philippines)
- Banning tobacco company corporate social responsibility (Mauritius)

Policy Innovations: **Large picture** health warning labels

- **92.5%:** Timor-Leste, Turkey
- **90%:** Maldives, Nepal, Vanuatu, Benin
- **87.5%:** New Zealand
- **85%:** Hong Kong, India, Thailand



United States?



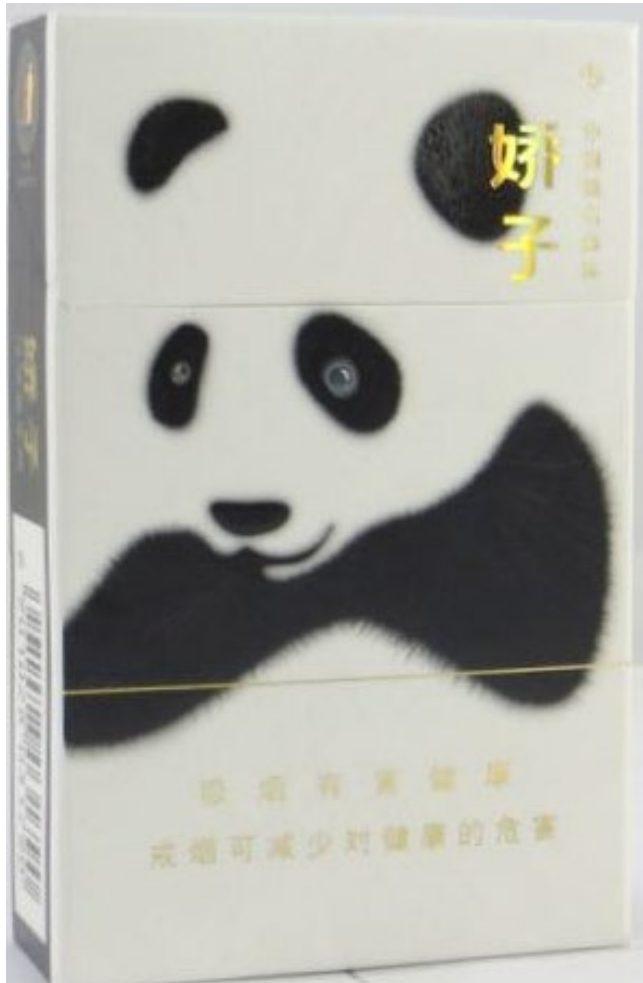
Policy Innovations: Single pack presentation

Uruguay: first country to limit each cigarette brand to one pack design

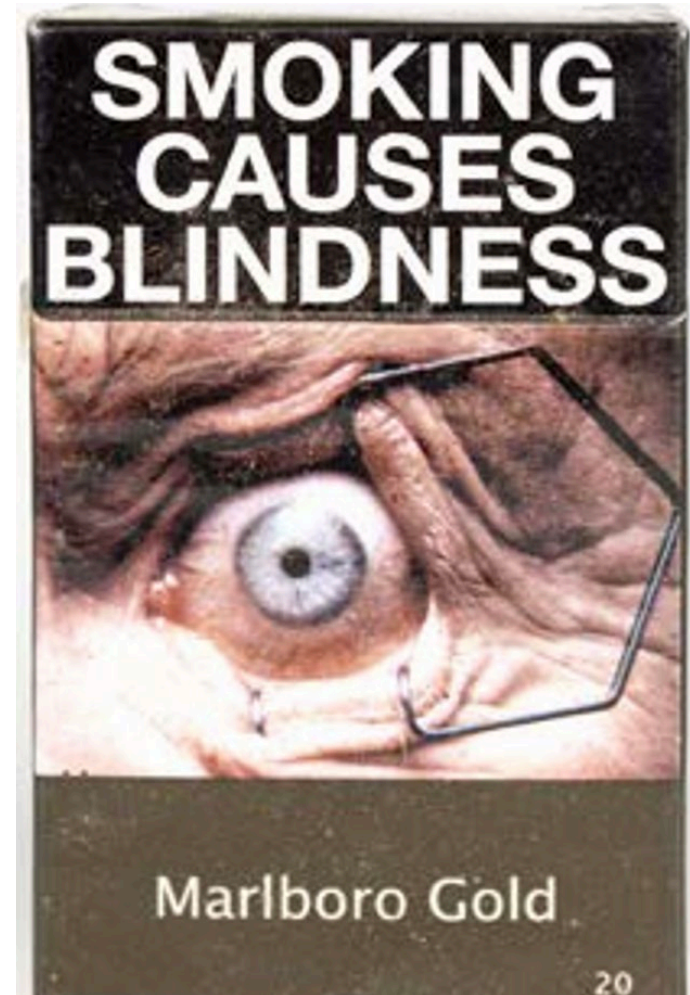


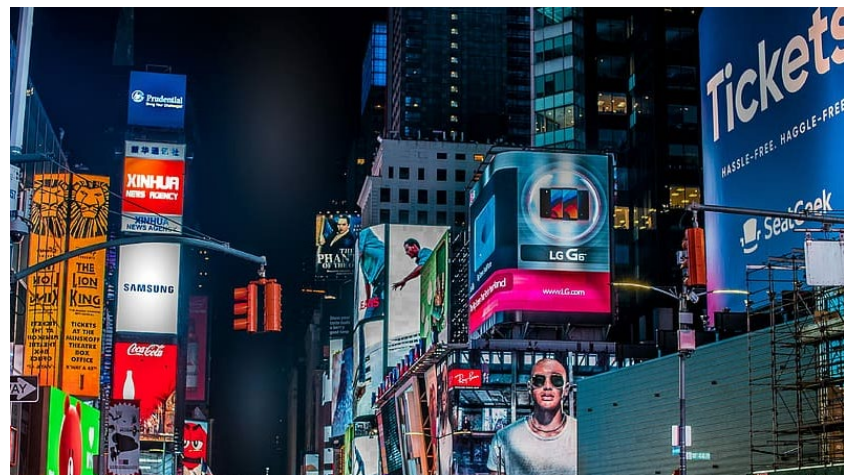
Packaging can...

▶ Entice



▶ Dissuade





Expanse of tobacco pack marketing appeals



Deluge of pack shapes and sizes

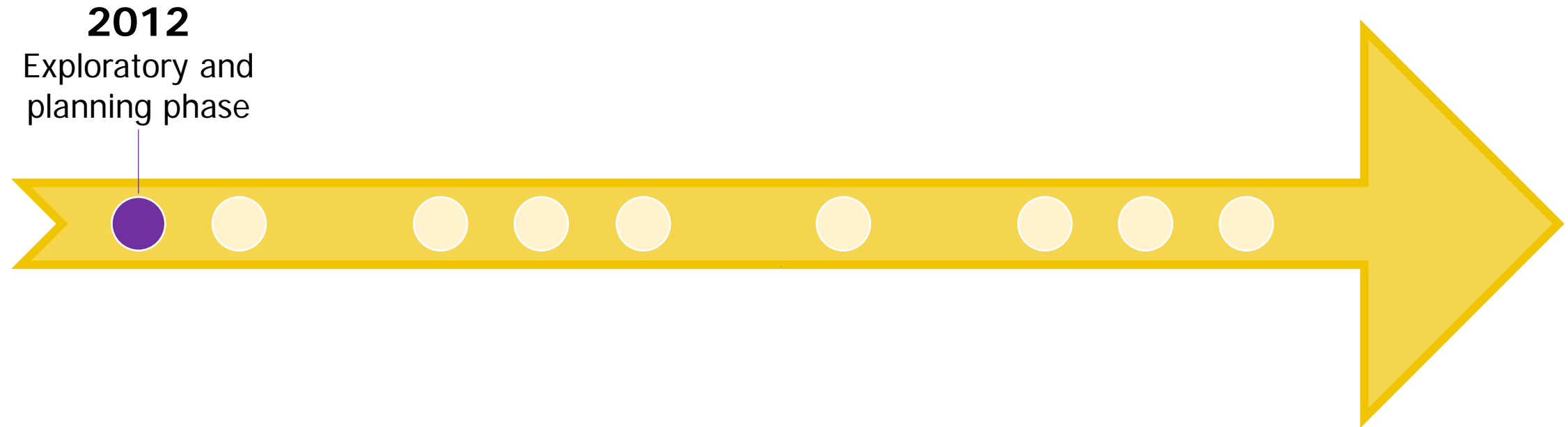


Tobacco company manipulation of health warning labels



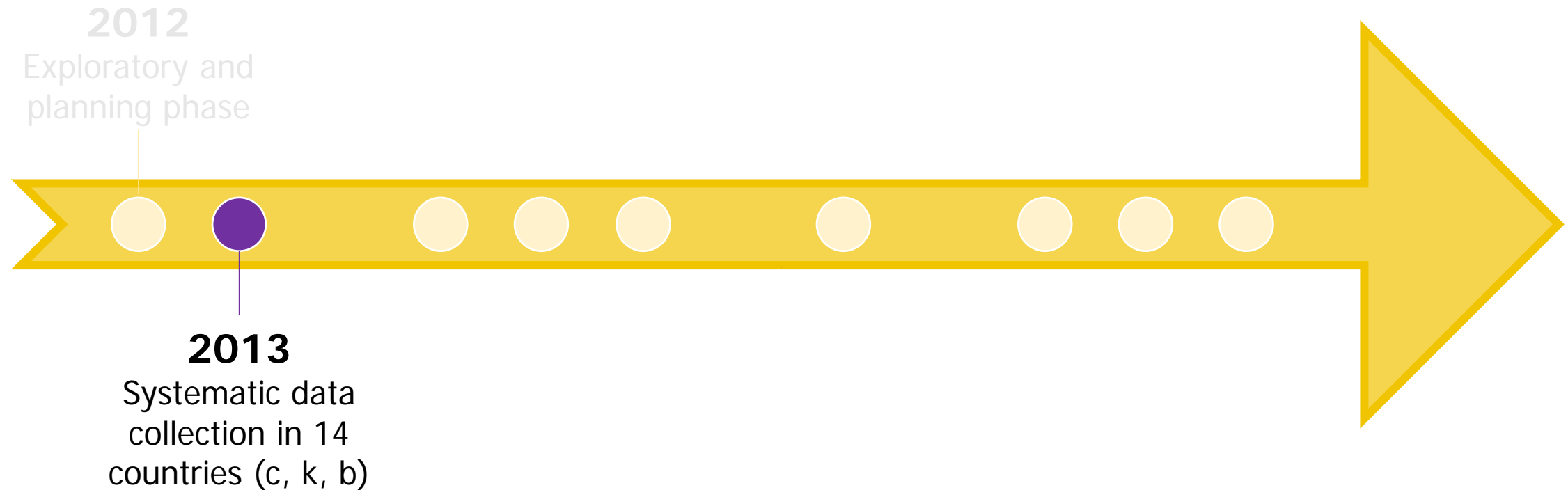
tpackss.globaltobaccocontrol.org

Tobacco Pack Surveillance System (TPackSS)



c = cigarettes	r = roll your own
k = kreteks	slt = smokeless
b = bidis	e = e-cigarettes
s = straw cigarettes	h = HTPs

Tobacco Pack Surveillance System (TPackSS)



2012

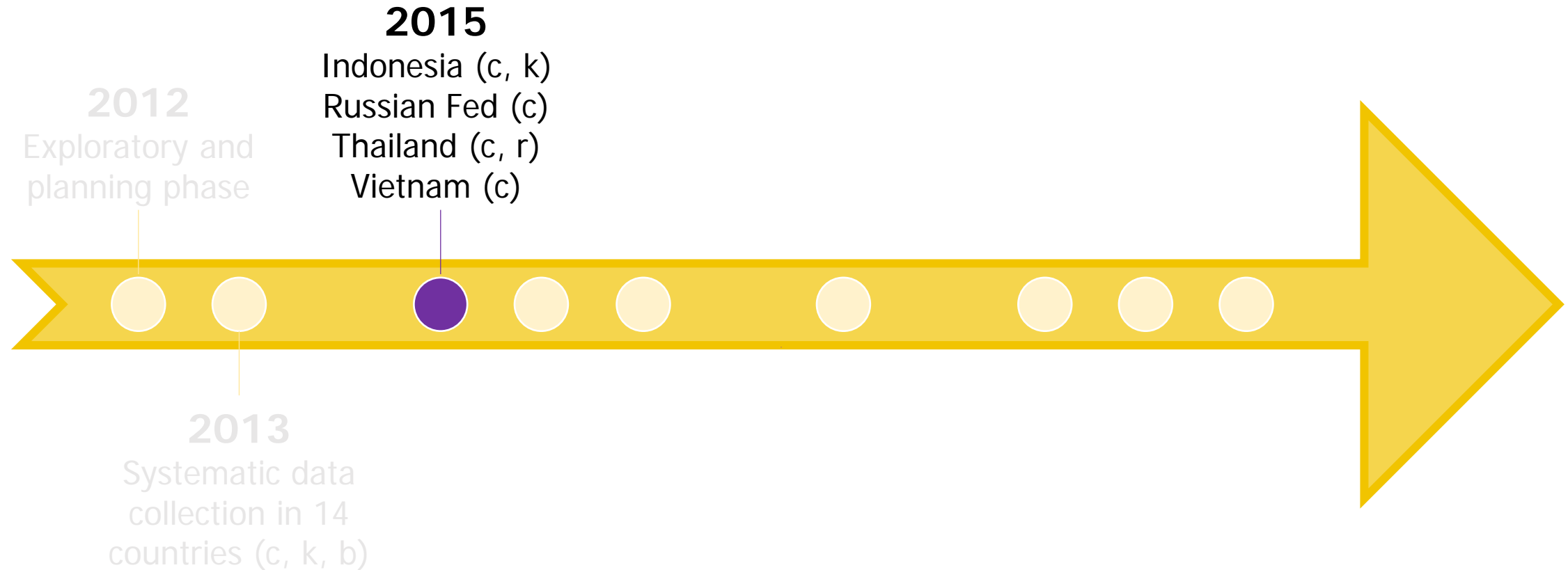
Exploratory and
planning phase

2013

Systematic data
collection in 14
countries (c, k, b)

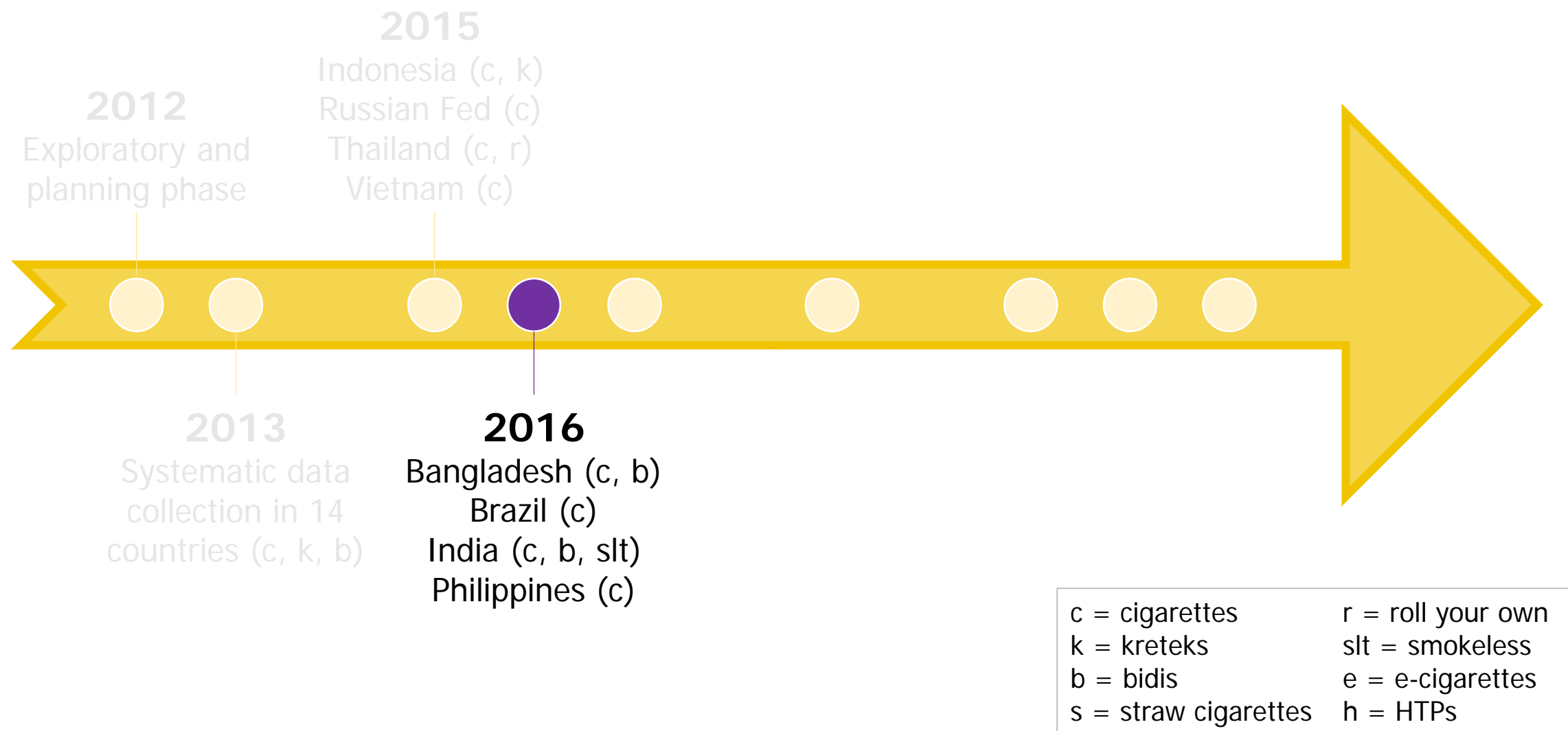
c = cigarettes	r = roll your own
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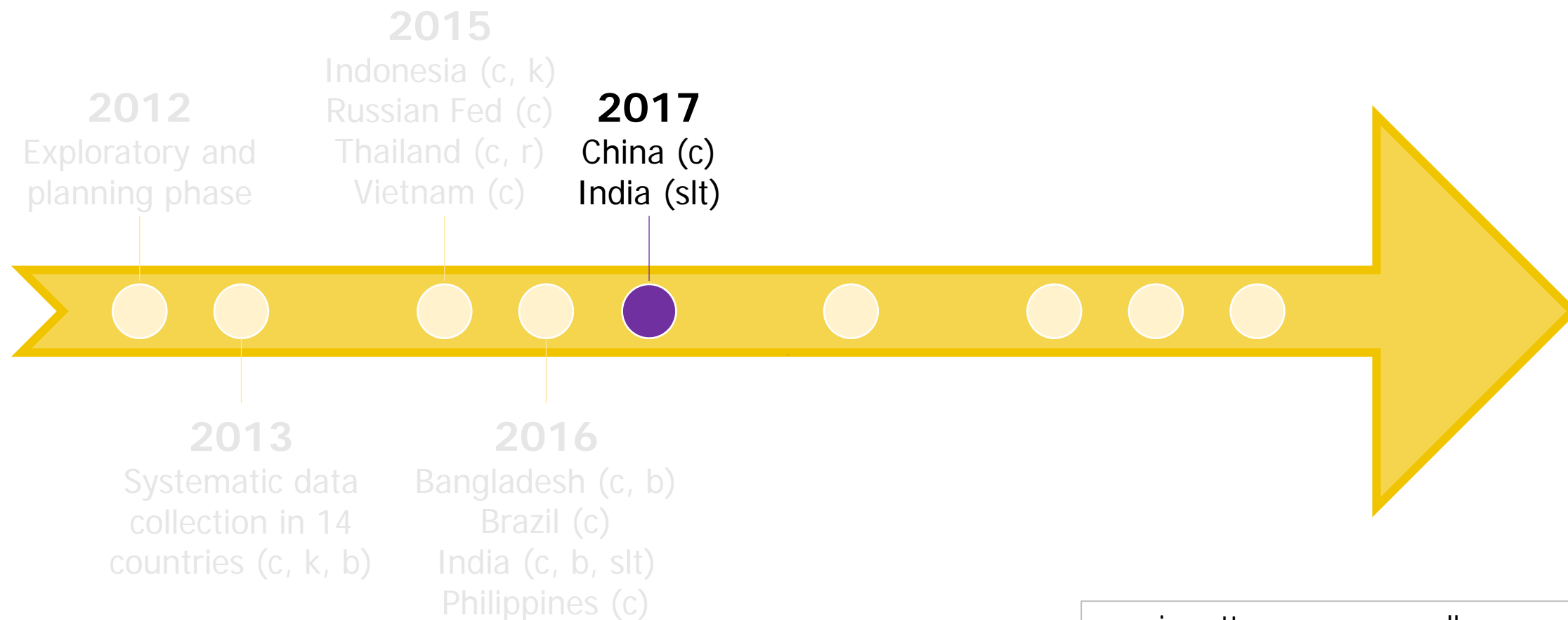


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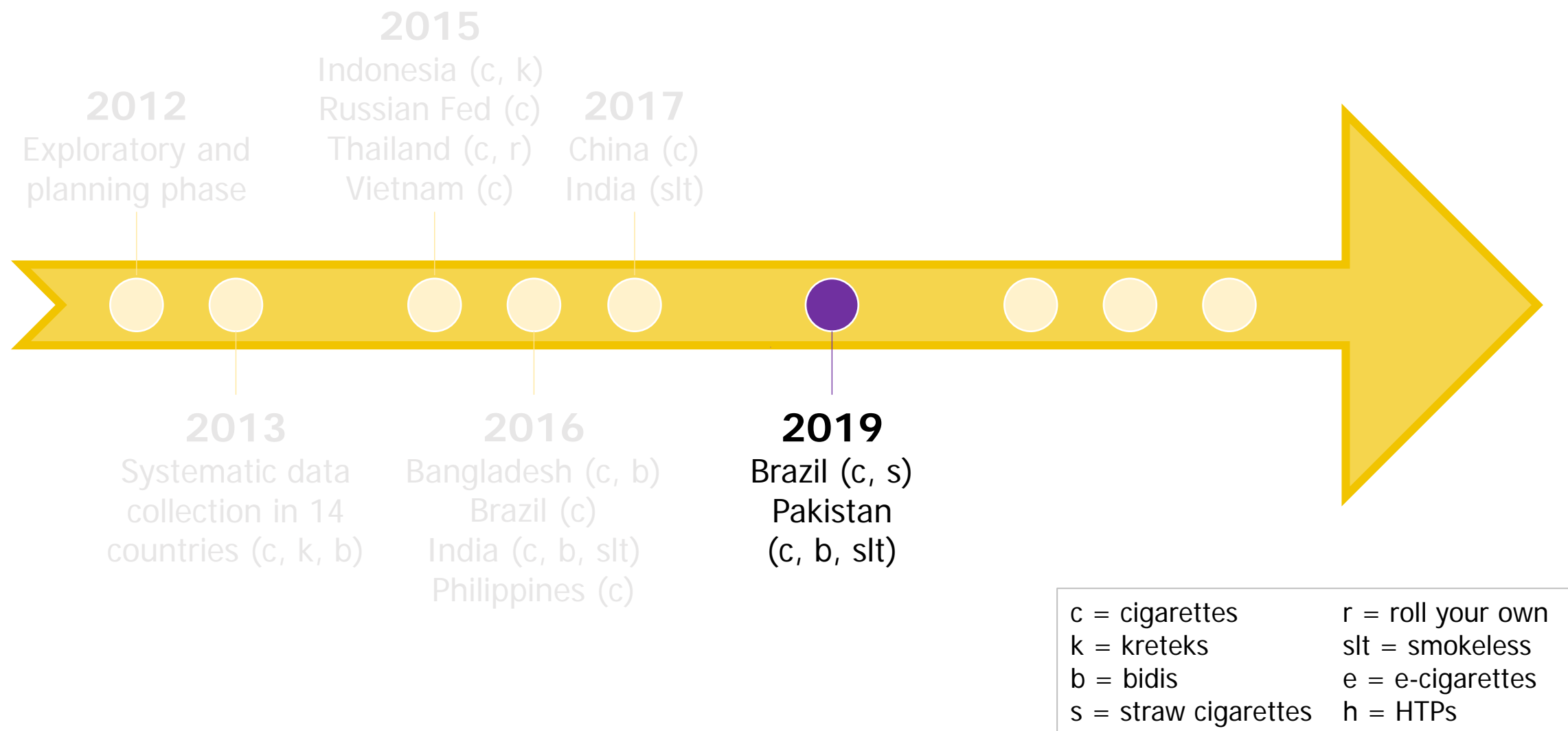


Tobacco Pack Surveillance System (TPackSS)

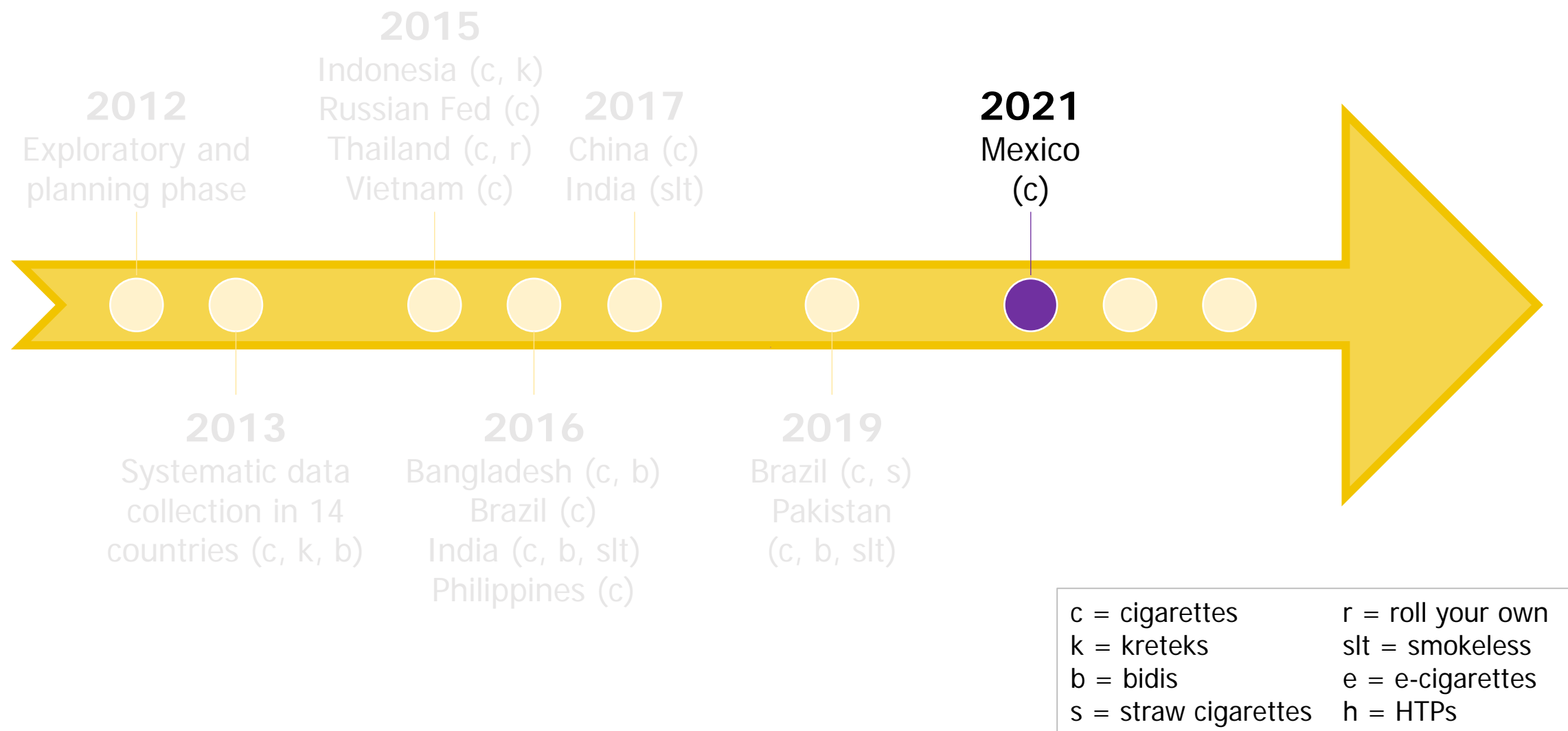


c = cigarettes	r = roll your own
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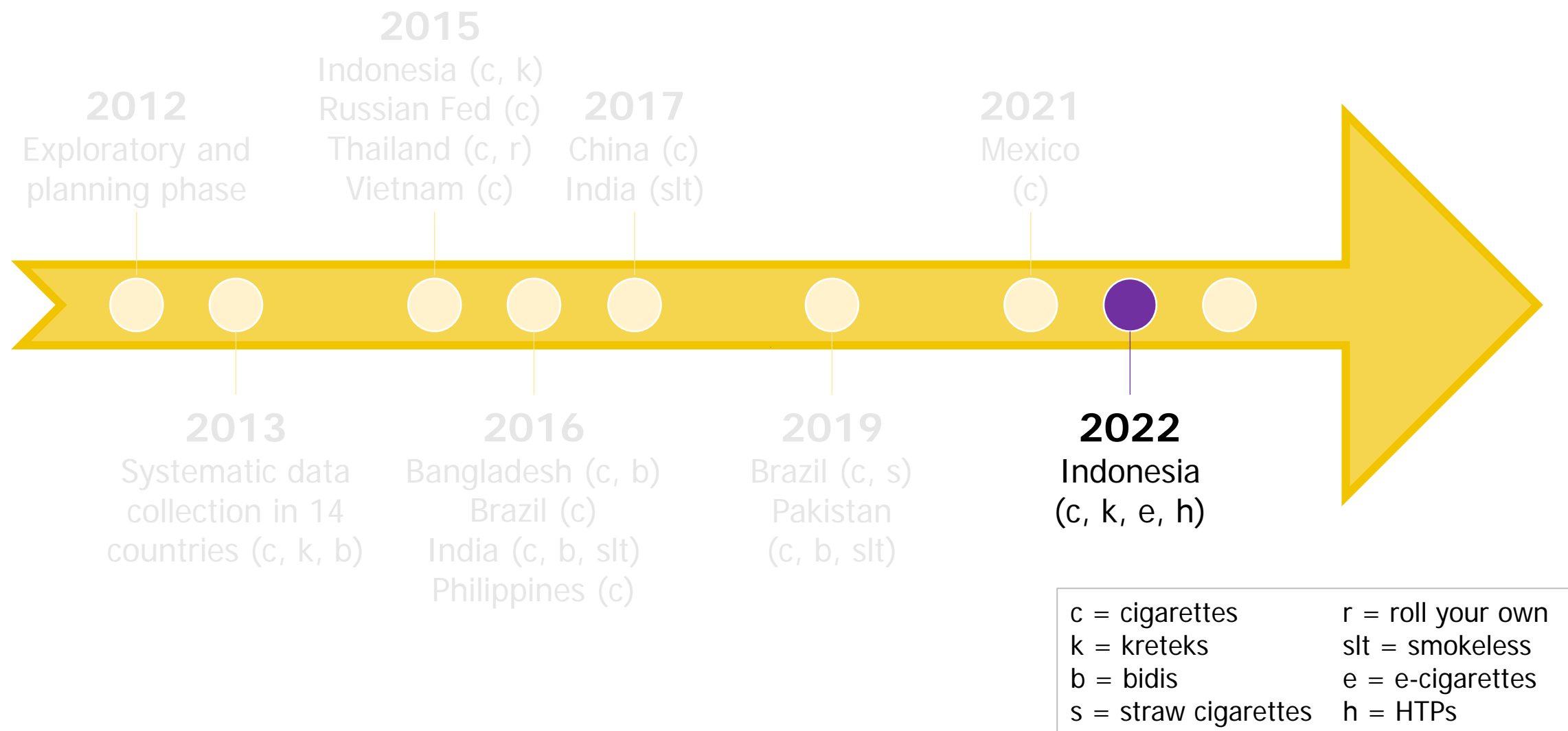
Tobacco Pack Surveillance System (TPackSS)



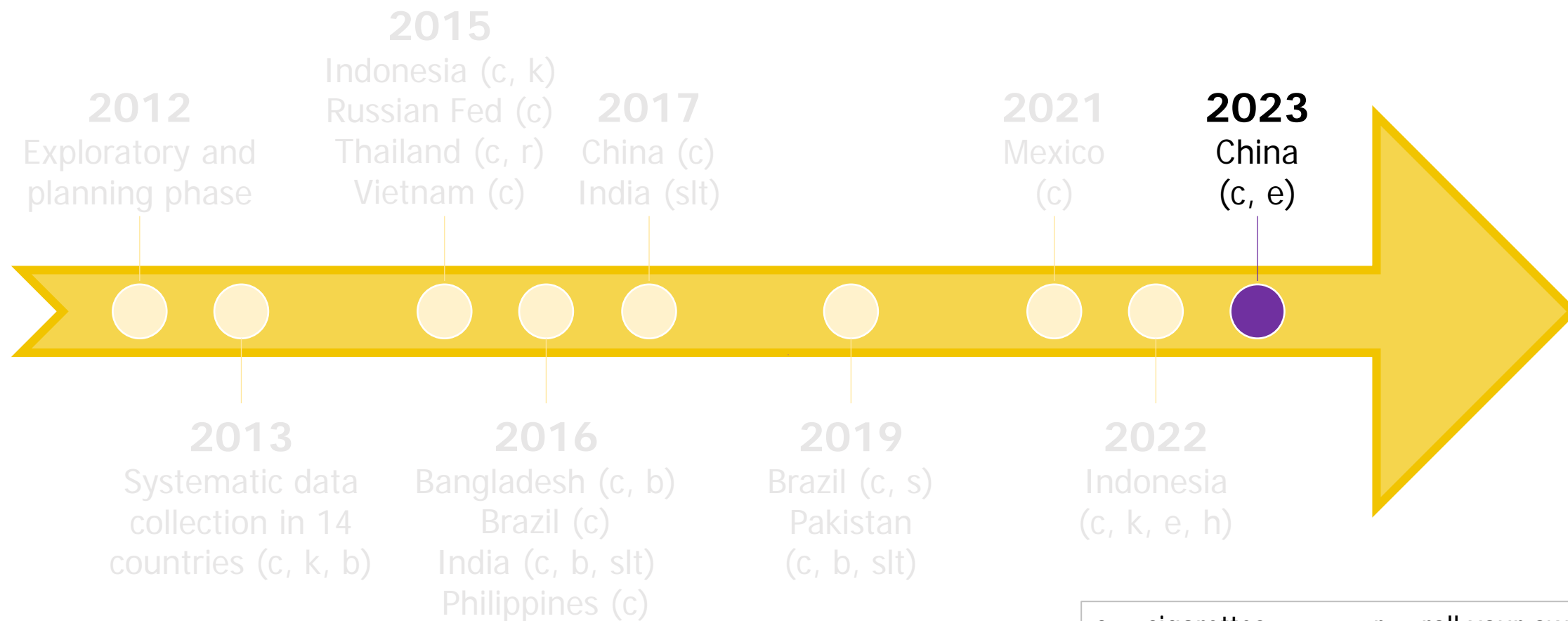
Tobacco Pack Surveillance System (TPackSS)



Tobacco Pack Surveillance System (TPackSS)



Tobacco Pack Surveillance System (TPackSS)



c = cigarettes	r = roll your own
k = kreteks	slt = smokeless
b = bidis	e = e-cigarettes
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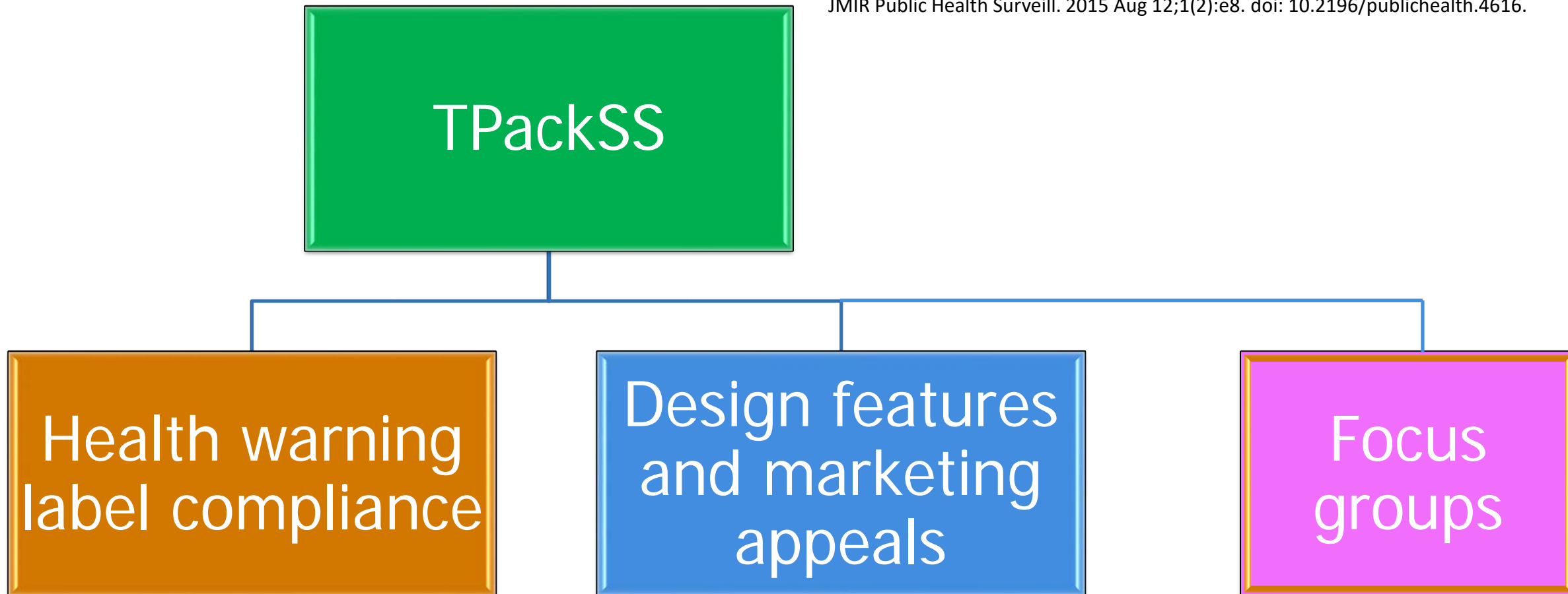
TPackSS Foci

Protocol

The Tobacco Pack Surveillance System: A Protocol for Assessing Health Warning Compliance, Design Features, and Appeals of Tobacco Packs Sold in Low- and Middle-Income Countries

Katherine Smith, PhD; Carmen Washington, MPH, MSW; Jennifer Brown, MPH; Alison Vadnais, MHS; Laura Kroart, BA; Jacqueline Ferguson, MHS; Joanna Cohen, PhD

JMIR Public Health Surveill. 2015 Aug 12;1(2):e8. doi: 10.2196/publichealth.4616.





Mexico

Brazil

Ukraine
Turkey
Egypt

Russian Federation

China

Pakistan
India
Bangladesh

Thailand
Vietnam
Philippines
Indonesia

Range of tobacco products



Bidis



Kretek



Straw cigarette



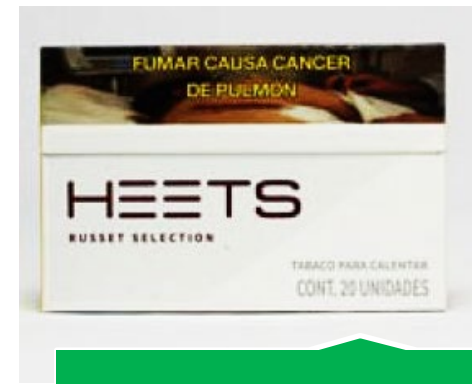
Smokeless



"Roll your own"



Cigarettes



HTPs



E-cigarettes



Study design

Minimum of three cities/country

Tobacco vendors in low-, mid-, and high-income neighborhoods

Systematic walking protocol

Range of vendor types

Unique pack sample

Standard protocols



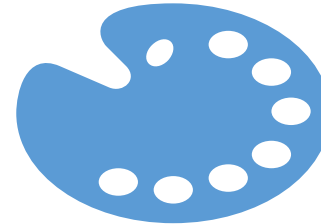
Data
collection



Intake



Photo
capture



Coding
design
features and
marketing
appeals



Coding
health
warning label
compliance

Coding design features and marketing appeals

► *Entice*



Coded for **design features**:

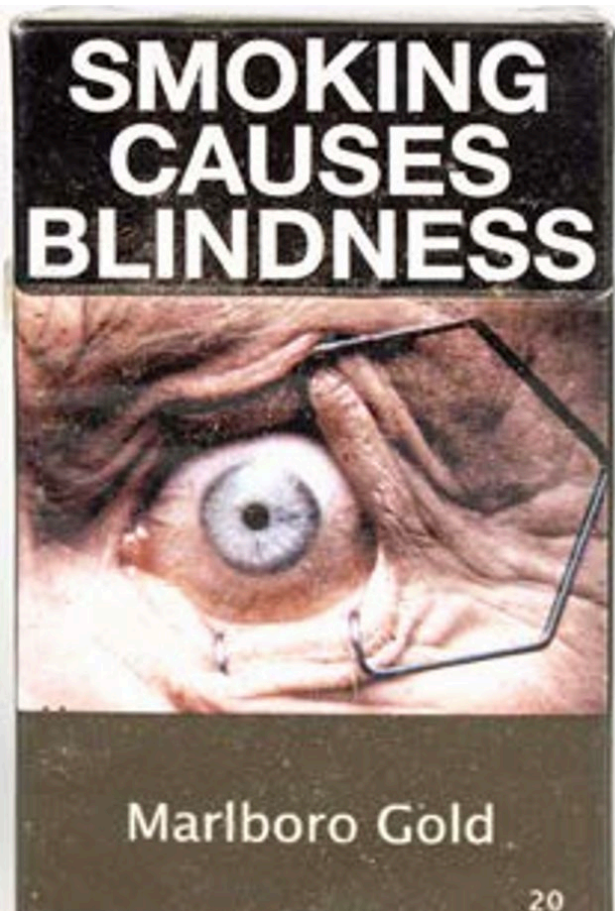
- Shape and size
- Opening style
- Textures and embellishments

Coded for **marketing appeals**:

- Flavors
- Technology
- Feminine, masculine
- Nationalism
- Others

Coding health warning label compliance

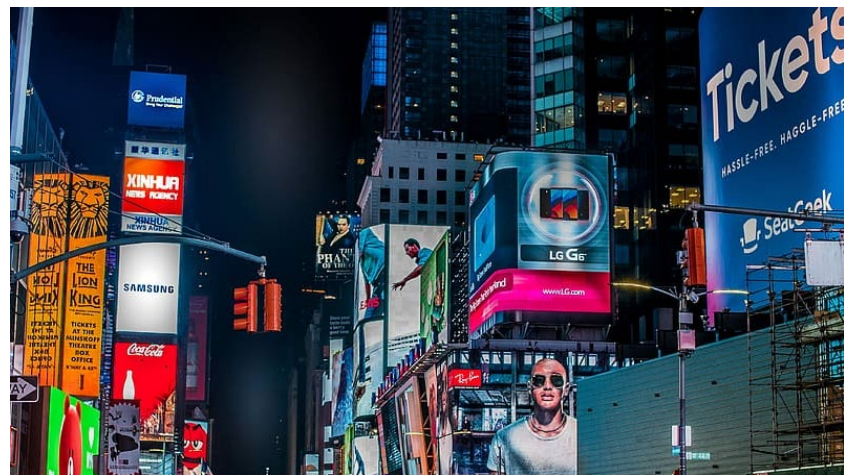
▶ *Dissuade*



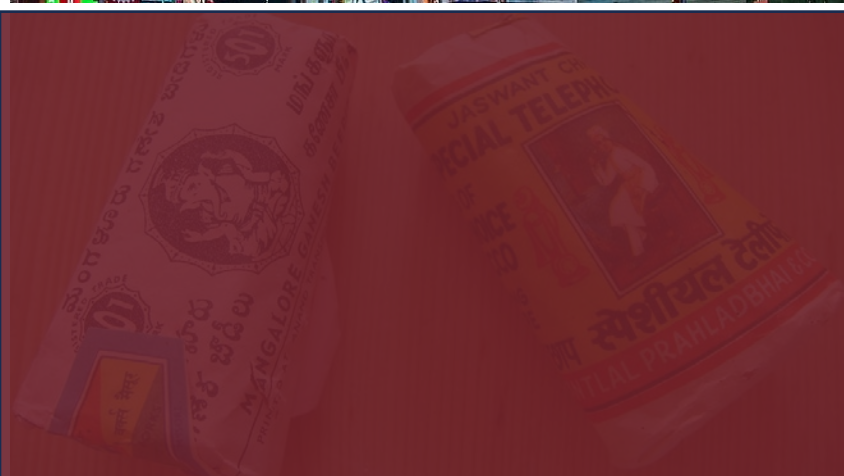
Coded for:

- Warning **location**
- Warning **size**
- Warning **text size**
- Warning **label elements**
(e.g., color contrast, picture fidelity)
- **In rotation**
- **Illicit** packs

Cohen JE et al. Do cigarette health warning labels comply with requirements: A 14-country study. *Prev Med.* 2016 Dec;93:128-34.



Expanse of tobacco pack marketing appeals



Deluge of pack shapes and sizes



Tobacco company manipulation of health warning labels



Flavors

Menthol




Other flavors



Flavor capsule cigarettes



FUMAR CAUSA CÁNCER DE PULMÓN



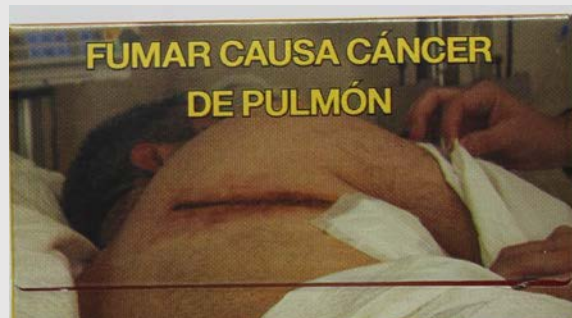
Winston



CONTENIDO 20 CIGARROS


OASIS MIX

FUMAR CAUSA CÁNCER DE PULMÓN



Marlboro


Tropical Shuffle



selección aleatoria de 3 cápsulas


CONT. 20 CIGARROS CON FILTRO

FUMAR ES CAUSA DE DIABETES



LIMITED EDITION

SHIFT



RANDOM SOUNDS

CONT. 20 CIGARROS

FUMAR ES CAUSA DE IMPOTENCIA



THIS CHANGE

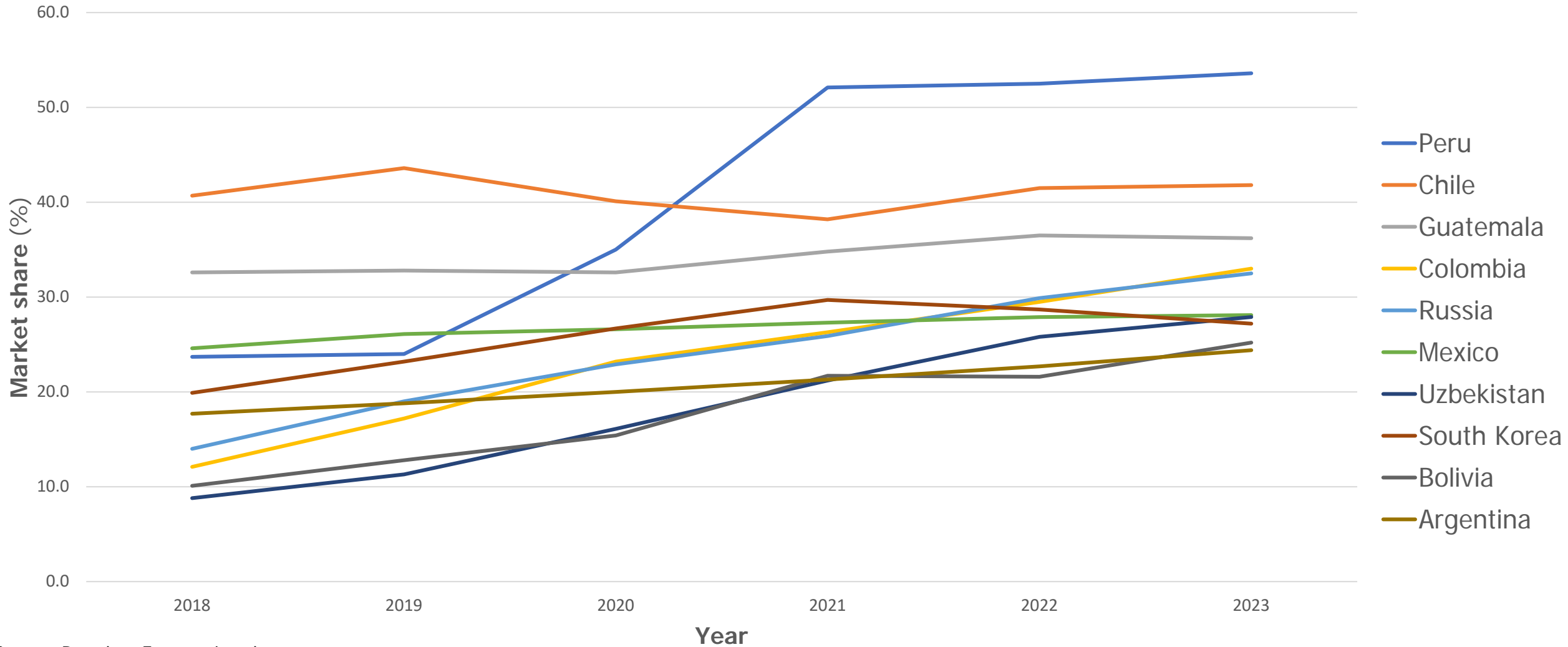


CHANGE!
to Fresh Applentit

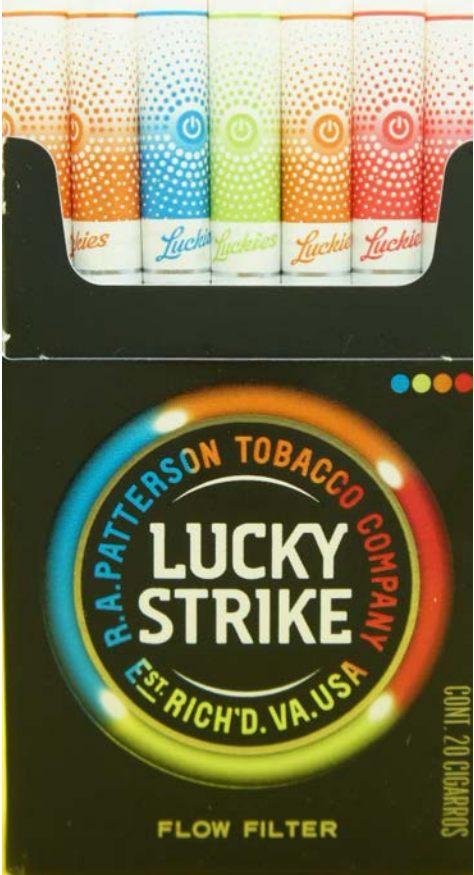
CONT. 20 CIGARRILLOS CON FILTRO



Flavor capsule cigarette growth



Colors



FUMAR ES RIESGO DE
CÁNCER DE MAMA



mega
ice xpress

CONT. 20 CIGARROS

FUMAR CAUSA
CÁNCER DE
LENGUA



double fusion ruby



CONT. 20 CIGARROS

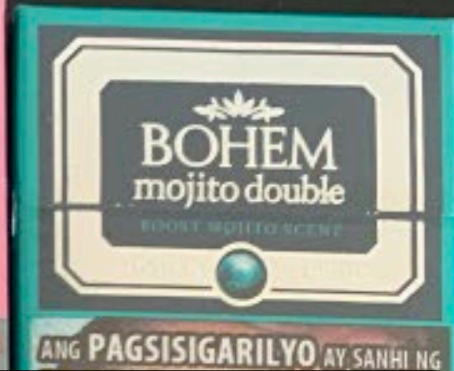
"You can imagine what the flavor
is because of the colors"
– Female adolescent who smokes



fusion summer



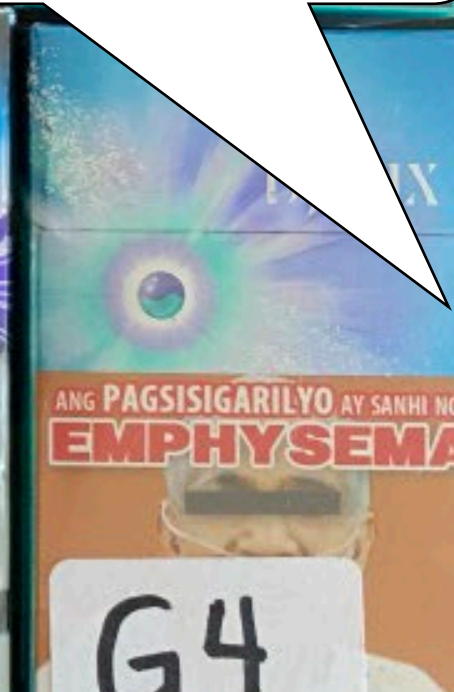
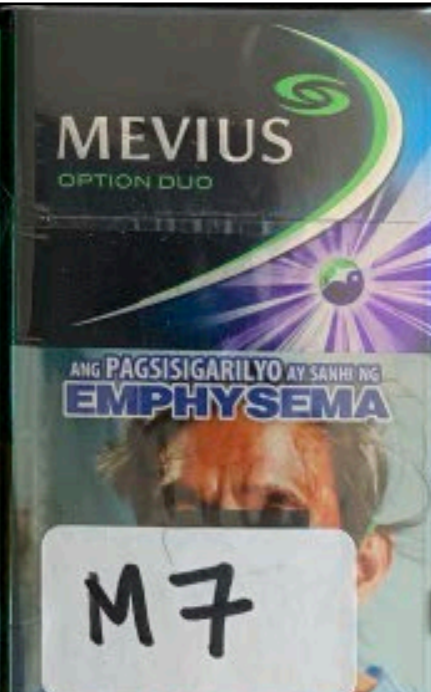
CONT. 20 CIGARROS



"It serves as a candy"
– Female who does not smoke

S2

"It has candy. You need to press on it."
– Male who smokes



D9

PA

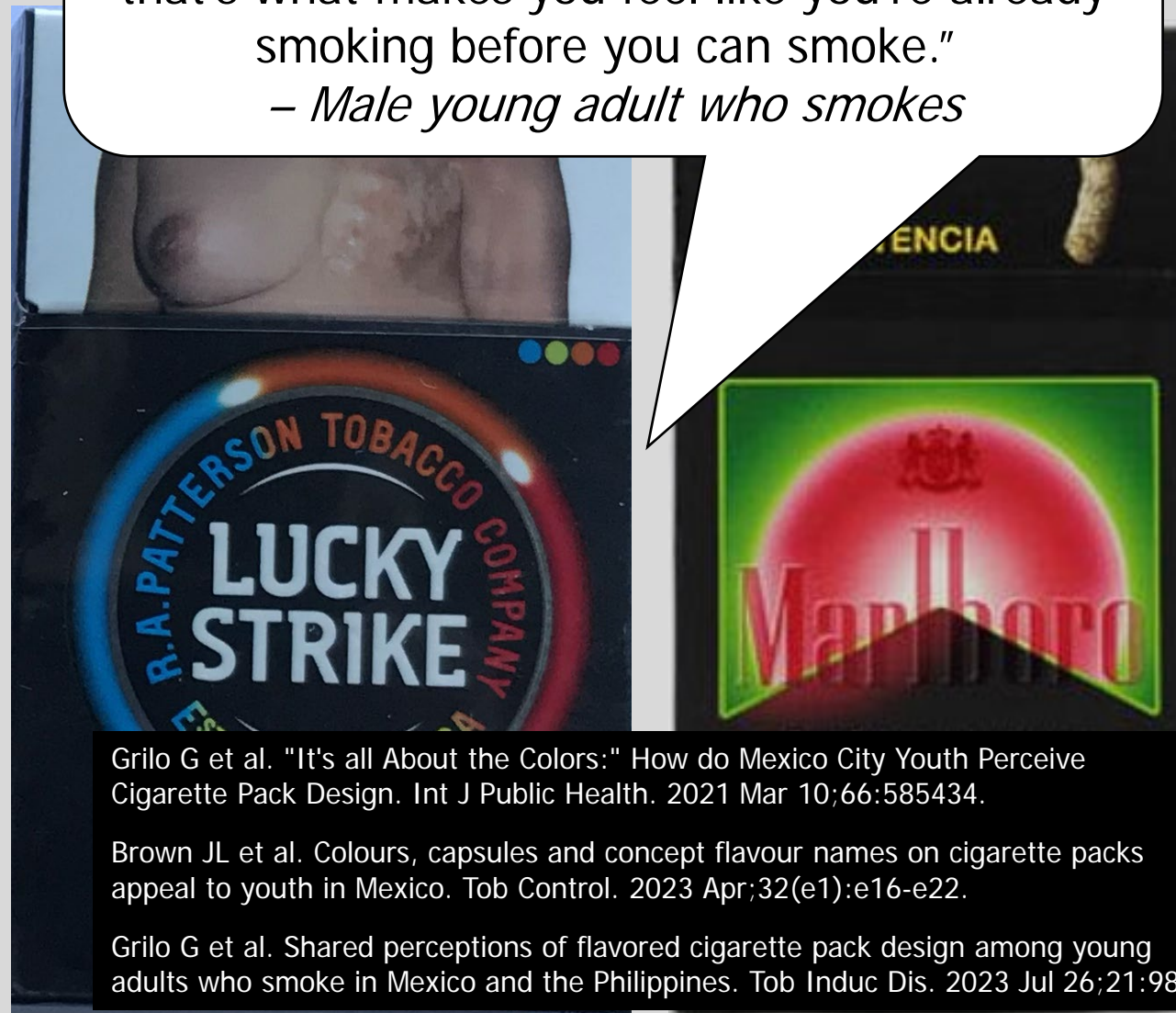
YH

M7

G4

"people who are starting to smoke, smoke these flavored, colored, because they get your attention."
– Female young adult who smokes

"Like the flavorings that already have a predetermined color. You already know that strawberry is pink, red is cherry, mint is blue, that's what makes you feel like you're already smoking before you can smoke."
– Male young adult who smokes



Grilo G et al. "It's all About the Colors:" How do Mexico City Youth Perceive Cigarette Pack Design. Int J Public Health. 2021 Mar 10;66:585434.

Brown JL et al. Colours, capsules and concept flavour names on cigarette packs appeal to youth in Mexico. Tob Control. 2023 Apr;32(e1):e16-e22.

Grilo G et al. Shared perceptions of flavored cigarette pack design among young adults who smoke in Mexico and the Philippines. Tob Induc Dis. 2023 Jul 26;21:98.

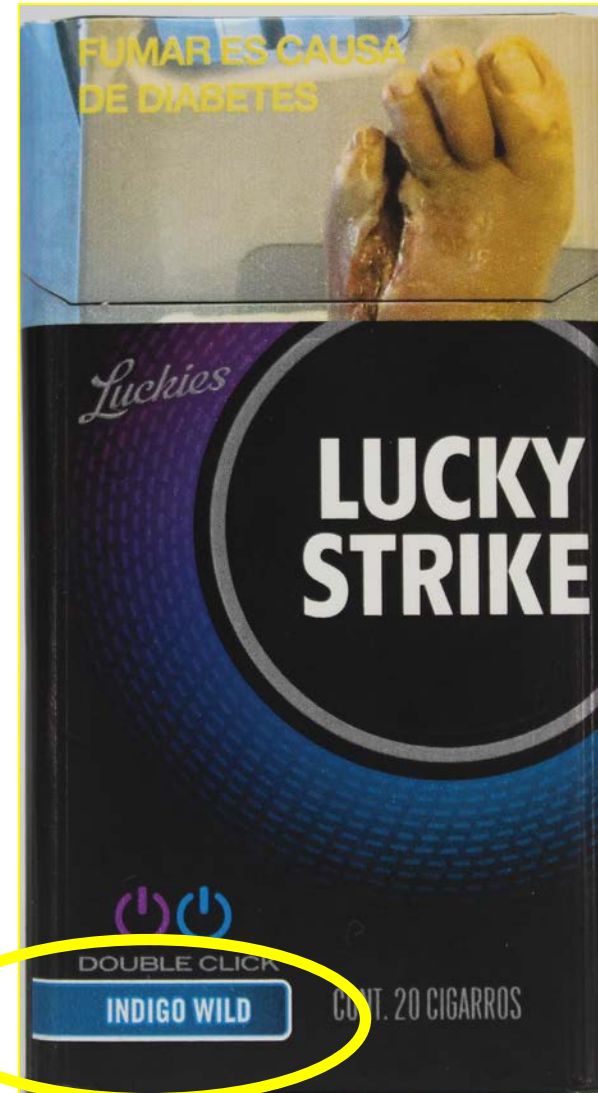
Concept Descriptors

Imply that
a **taste**,
aroma,
or **sensation**
awaits the
consumer

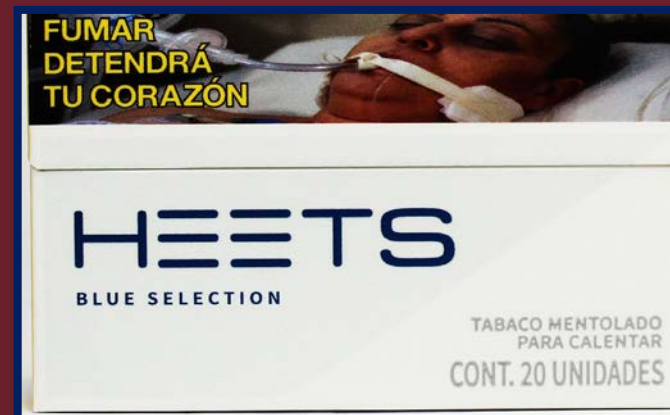


Tseng TY et al. The Use of Packaging Descriptors in a Rapidly Growing Market for Capsule Cigarettes: Evidence From Mexico. *Nicotine Tob Res.* 2024 Jul 22;26(8):1014-21.

Concept Descriptors







Grilo G et al. 'Green Zing' and a selection of color concept descriptors on IQOS HEETS in Mexico. Tob Induc Dis. 2022 Nov 18;20:102.

Flavor chemicals in cigarettes

Original research



'Menthol-Plus': a major category of cigarette found among 'concept' descriptor cigarettes from Mexico

James F Pankow,¹ Wentai Luo,¹ Kevin J McWhirter,¹ Samantha Gillette,¹ Joanna E Cohen^{1,2}

ABSTRACT

Background Tobacco companies are offering cigarettes with 'concept' descriptor names that suggest sensation

A number of national and subnational (eg, state, province, municipality) jurisdictions have taken steps to constrain sales of flavoured tobacco prod-

¹Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Portland State University, Portland, Oregon, USA

Nicotine and Tobacco Research, 2024, 26, 385–391
<https://doi.org/10.1093/ntr/ntad146>
Advance access publication 14 August 2023
Brief Report



Menthol and Other Flavor Chemicals in Cigarettes from Vietnam and the Philippines

Joanna E. Cohen PhD¹, Lauren Czaplicki PhD¹, Elizabeth Crespi MPH¹, Jennifer L. Brown PhD¹, Wentai Luo PhD², Kevin J. McWhirter BSc², Braden C. Masanga BSc², James F. Pankow PhD²

¹Institute for Global Tobacco Control (IGTC), Department of Health, Behavior and Society, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Baltimore, MD 21205, USA

²Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Portland State University, Portland, Oregon 97207, USA

Corresponding Author: Joanna E. Cohen, Institute for Global Tobacco Control (IGTC), Department of Health, Behavior and Society, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Baltimore, MD 21205, USA, Telephone: 410 614 5378; E-mail: jcohen@jhu.edu

Abstract

Introduction: Tobacco product flavors can increase product appeal, adolescent initiation and consumption, and difficulty quitting. Flavoured

Original research



Eugenol, menthol and other flavour chemicals in kreteks and 'white' cigarettes purchased in Indonesia

Joanna E Cohen¹, Beladenta Amalia,¹ Wentai Luo,² Kevin J McWhirter,² Braden C Masanga,² James F Pankow²

ABSTRACT

Background Flavoured tobacco products are not restricted in Indonesia, a country with about 68 million

► Additional supplemental material is published online only. To view, please visit the journal online (<https://doi.org/10.1093/ntr/ntad146>)

WHAT IS ALREADY KNOWN ON THIS TOPIC

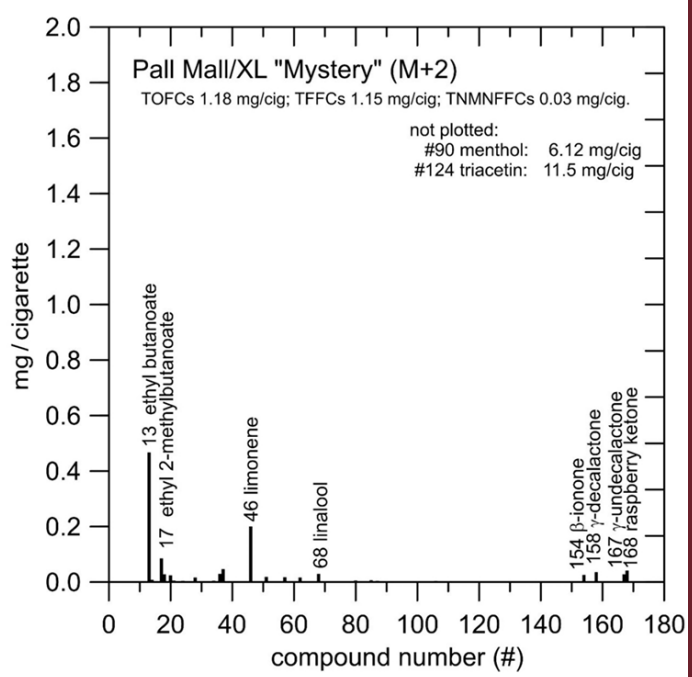
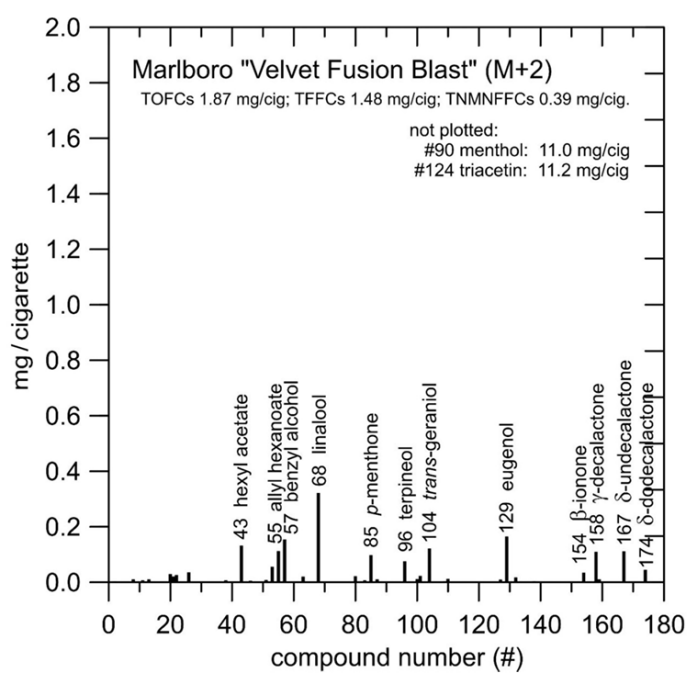
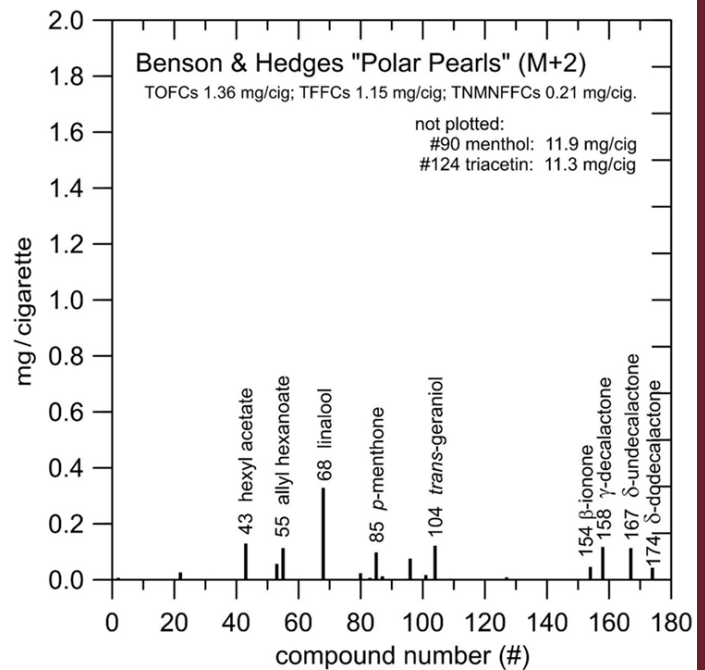
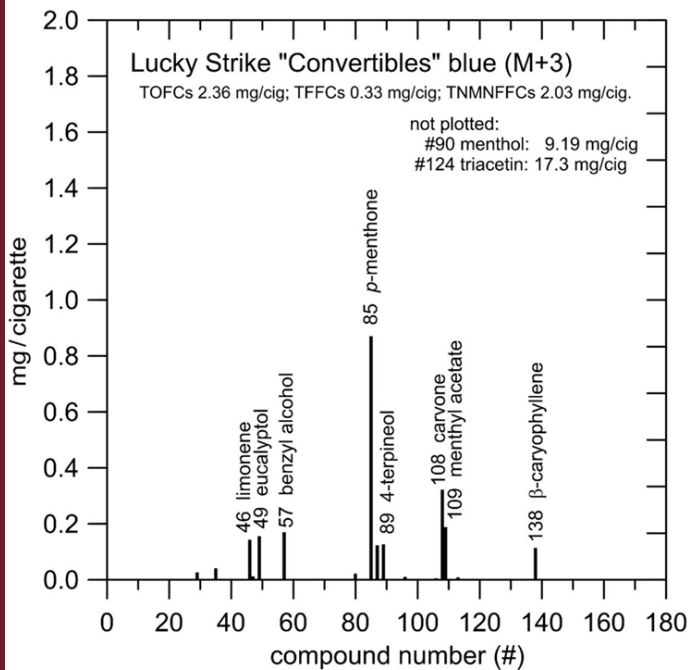
⇒ Despite the high societal costs of tobacco use,

Mexico: Pankow et al. *Tob Control*. 2022 Aug;31(e1):e18-e24.

Vietnam + Philippines: Cohen JE et al. *Nicotine Tob Res*. 2024 Feb 22;26(3):385-391.

Indonesia: Cohen et al. *Tob Control*. 2024 Sep 25;33(5):637-640.

Variety of flavors and amounts Mexico



Variety of flavors and amounts Indonesia

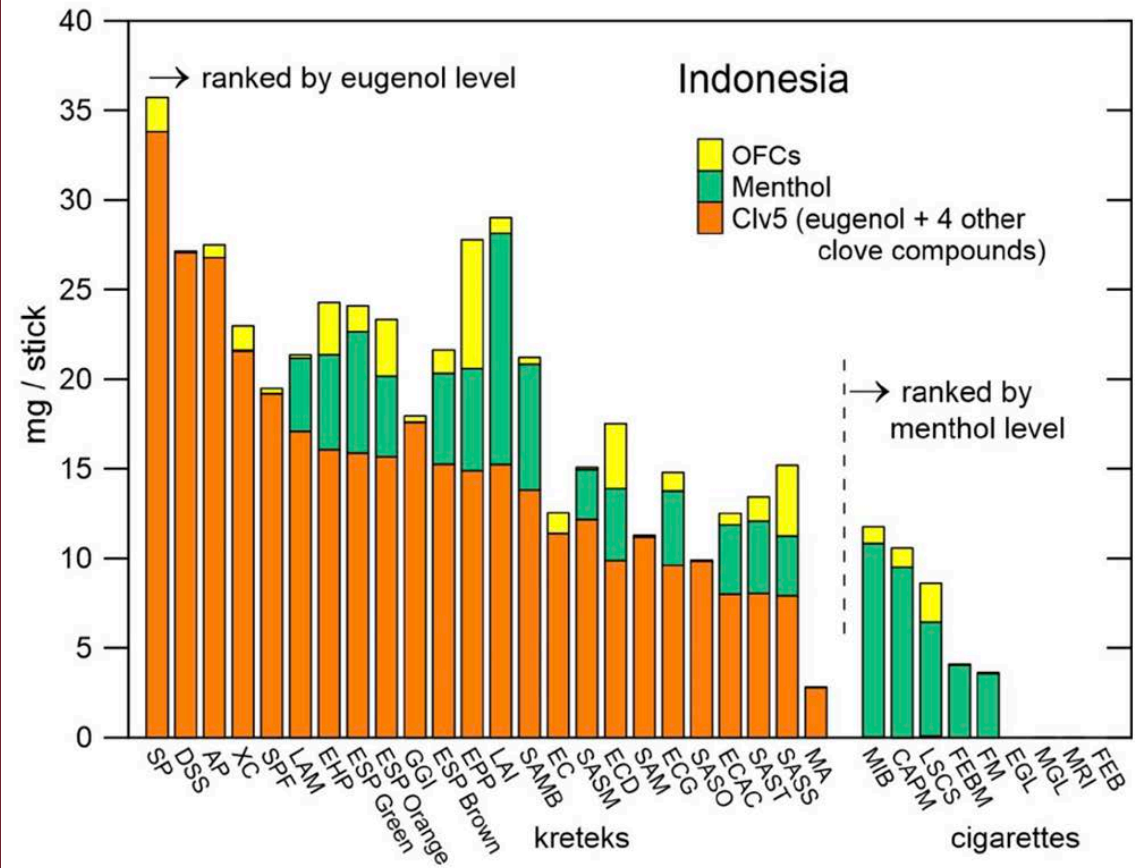


Figure 2 Stacked bar graph for kreteks and cigarettes giving mg/stick values for Clv5 (eugenol plus four other clove-related compounds), menthol and other flavour chemicals (OFCs—the 180 target analyte flavour chemicals minus the five clove-related chemicals+menthol+triacetin+triethyl citrate). The x-axis labels represent the abbreviated names of the unique brand variants analysed; the full brand names and their respective abbreviations can be found in the online supplemental figures.

Velo (British American Tobacco) nicotine pouches are being sold widely in Pakistan





Berry Frost max



Polar Mint max



Berry Frost strong



Elaichi Blast strong



Exotic Black strong



Paan Rush strong



Polar Mint strong



Urban Vibe strong

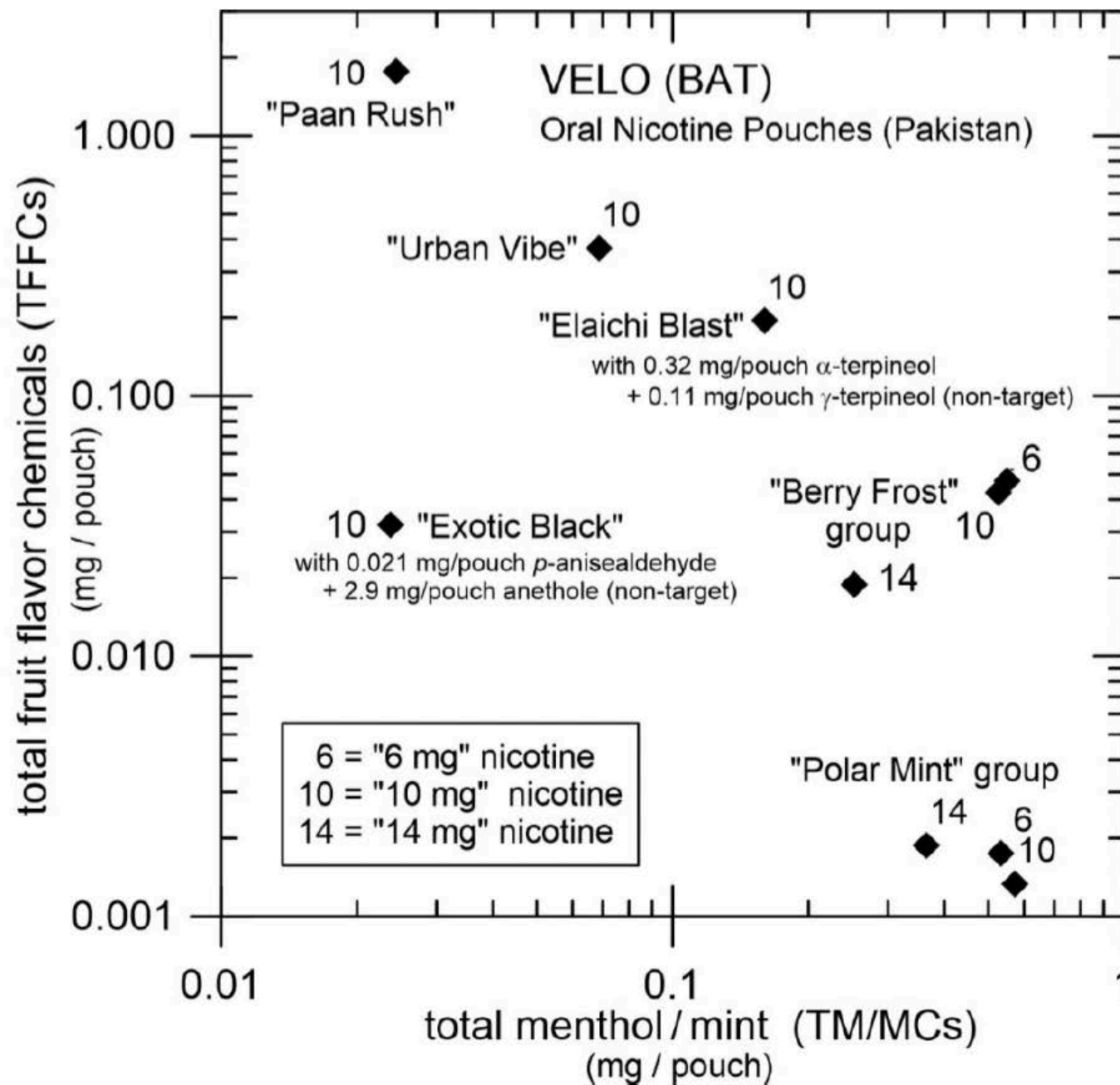


Berry Frost medium



Polar Mint medium

Levels of **total fruit flavor chemicals (TFFCs)** (mg/pouch) vs. **levels of total menthol/mint chemicals (TM/MCs)** (mg/pouch) for 10 brand variants of Velo (BAT) oral nicotine pouches purchased in Pakistan in 2022



Flavor chemicals in cigarettes, kreteks, and nicotine pouches

Chemical analyses of cigarettes from Mexico, Vietnam, Philippines, and Indonesia, and of nicotine pouches from Pakistan, found that multi-national tobacco companies are offering a buffet of flavors, with differing flavor mixes and flavor levels.

A field of vibrant red poppies in full bloom, set against a soft, hazy background. The flowers are scattered across the frame, with some in sharp focus in the foreground and others blurred in the distance. The lighting is warm and slightly dim, creating a romantic and serene atmosphere. The text 'Feminine appeals' is centered in a clean, white, sans-serif font, overlaid on the middle of the image.

Feminine appeals

Flowers/butterflies

Fashion



Russia



Vietnam



Ukraine



Bangladesh



Russia



Turkey

The color pink

Women/girls



Russia



Bangladesh



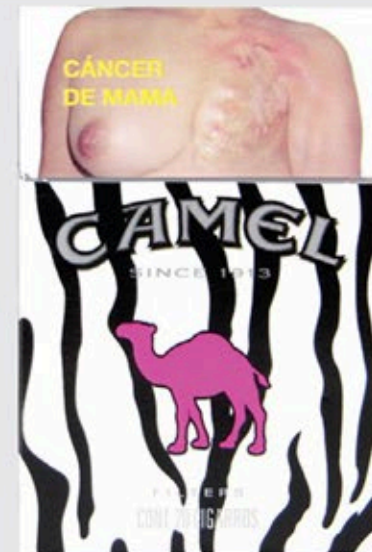
China



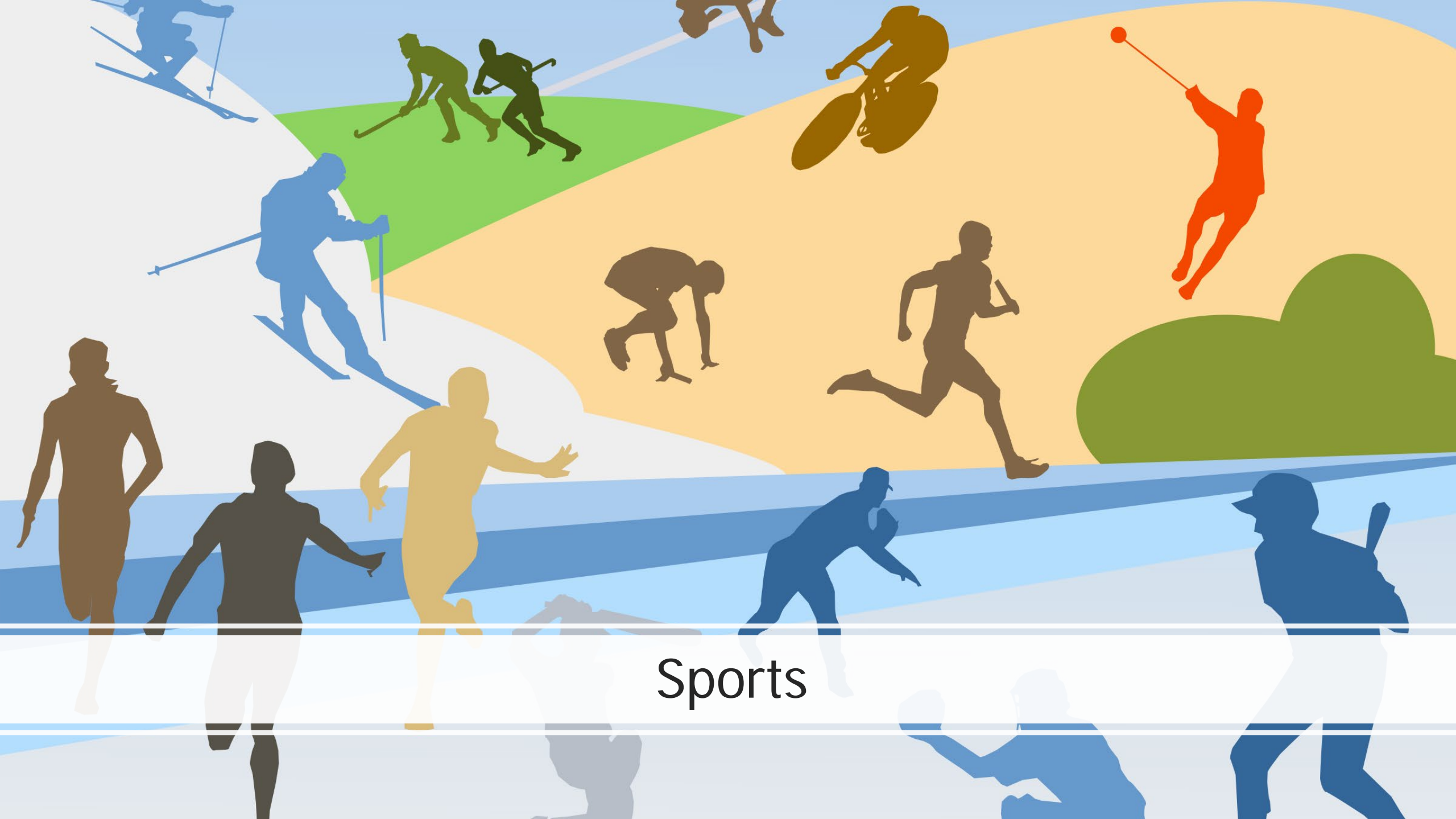
China



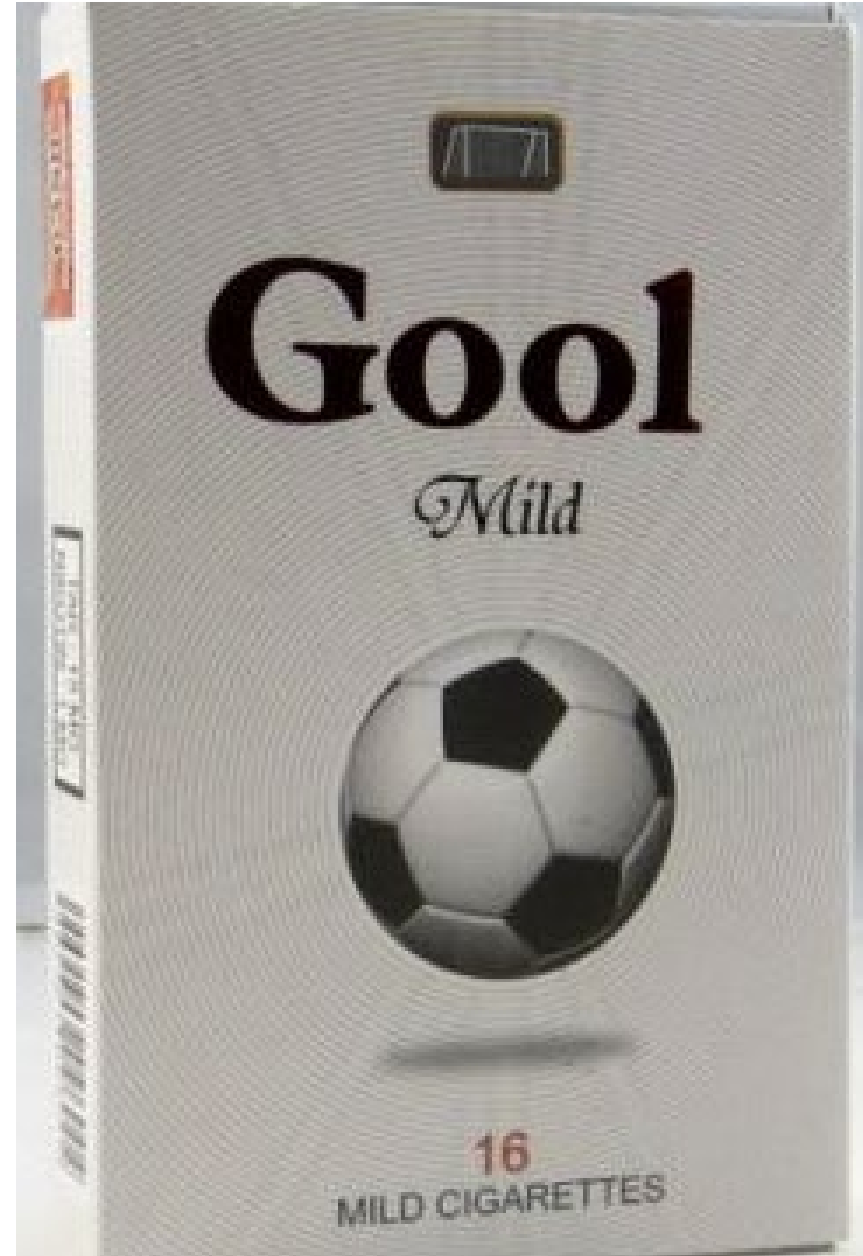
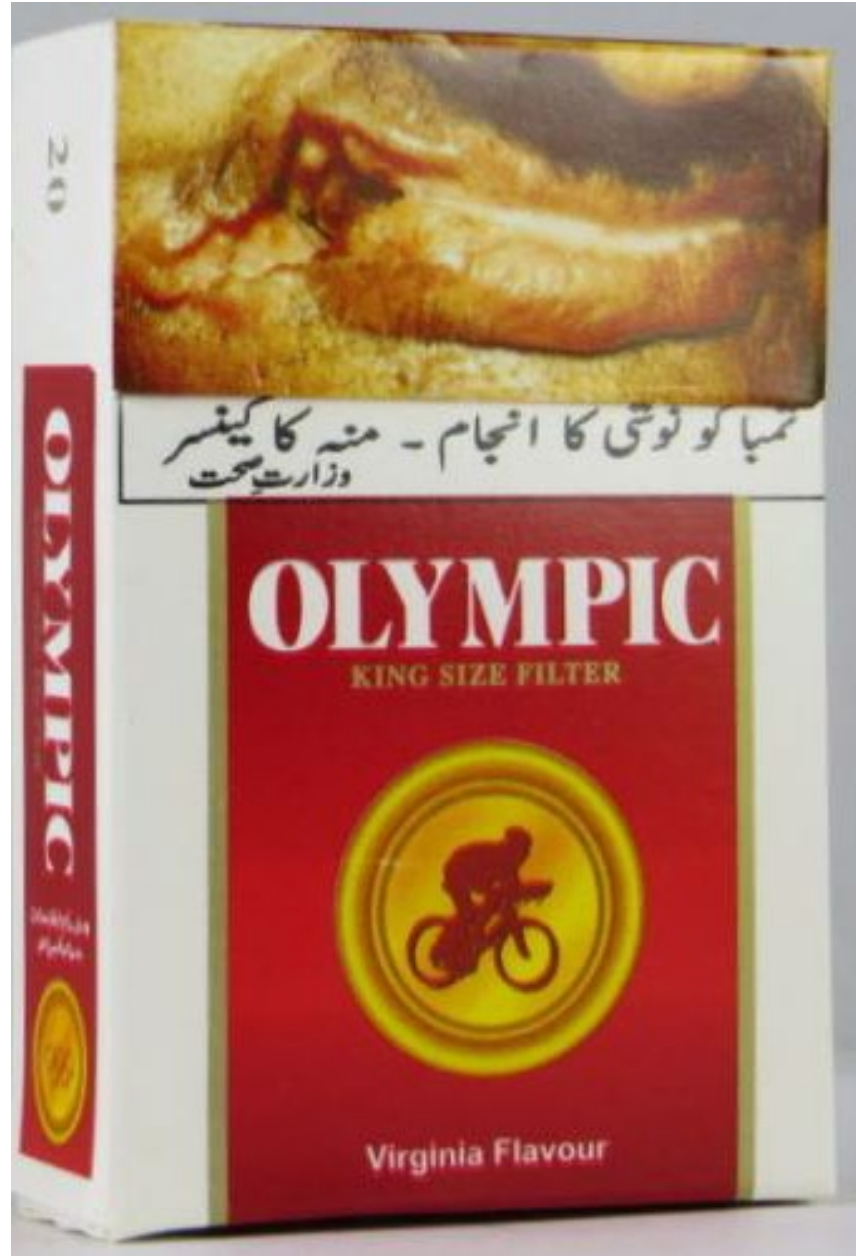
Pakistan



Mexico



Sports



Kleb C et al. The Use of Sports Imagery and Terminology on Cigarette Packs from Fourteen Countries. *Subst Use Misuse*. 2018 Apr 16;53(5):873-80.

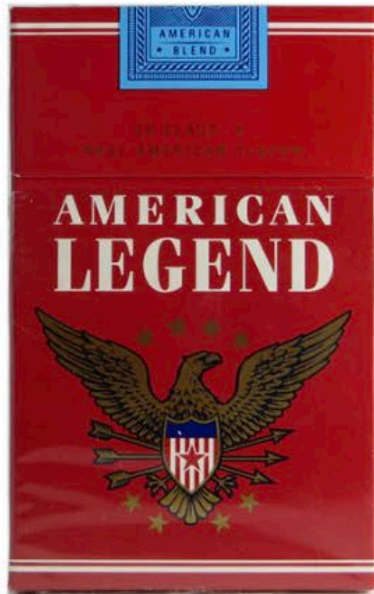


Welding K et al. The "Messi" problem of bidi branding in India. Tobacco Control Blog. M. Hefler, Ed. 2019. <https://blogs.bmj.com/tc/2019/06/16/1399/>.

English on cigarette packs from six non-Anglophone LMICs



Brazil
(Manaus)



Vietnam
(Ho Chi Minh City)



Bangladesh
(Chittagong)



Vietnam
(Ho Chi Minh City)



Ukraine
(Donetsk)



Egypt
(Cairo)

Wedding
appeals



“Dragon and phoenix” in Mandarin



Dragon and phoenix imagery



Pair of magpies imagery



吸烟有害健康
戒烟可减少对健康的危害

Double Happiness symbol

吸烟有害健康
戒烟可减少对健康的危害

Mandarin duck imagery

吸烟有害健康
戒烟可减少对健康的危害

Trimble DG et al. Analysis of wedding appeals on cigarette packs in China. *Tob Control*. 2022 Nov;31(6):770-2.

Xing E et al. The problematic use of cultural symbols on Chinese cigarette packs. *Tob Induc Dis*. 2023 May 19;21:65.

Branding on the stick...



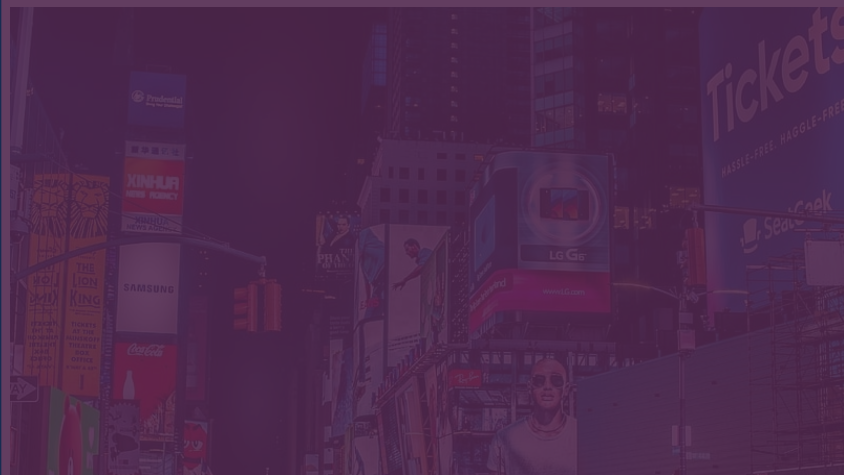
...and on the filter



Expanse of marketing
appeals on and in
tobacco packs:

Colors, capsules,
concept descriptors,
flavors, feminine,
sports, English,
weddings, stick...





Expanse of tobacco pack marketing appeals



Deluge of pack shapes and sizes



Tobacco company manipulation of health warning labels

Unique pack opening styles

“Other” Opening Style



Flip top variation



Flip top variation



Slide variation opening style



Book opening style



Carton opening style



Case opening

**Exposed surface
area when pack is
opened**





Pack inserts





E-cigarettes in Indonesia, 2022

External packaging



More packaging



Packaging resembles sweets



Cartoons



SOUTH ASIA



Smokeless tobacco and bidis in South Asia

Wide variety in size/shape of packaging of smokeless tobacco & bidis (hand rolled cigarettes) sold in South Asia



Smokeless tobacco sold in India & Bangladesh

Bidi cigarettes sold in India & Bangladesh

Low compliance with required HWL placement on smokeless & bidi products

Missing from front of pack



Wrong size (<50% coverage)

Wrong placement (upper half of pack)



Wrong size (<50% coverage)

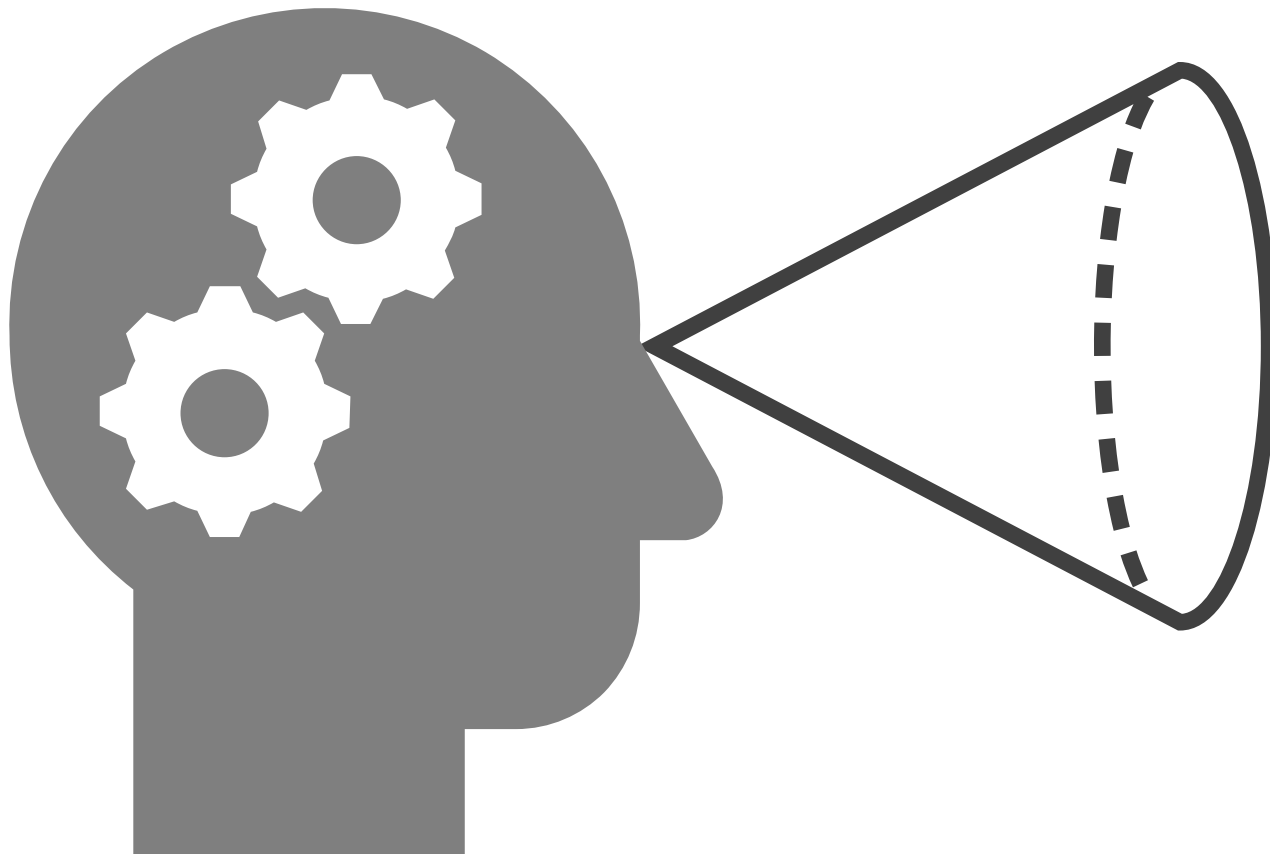
Wrong placement (upper half of pack)



Missing from back of pack

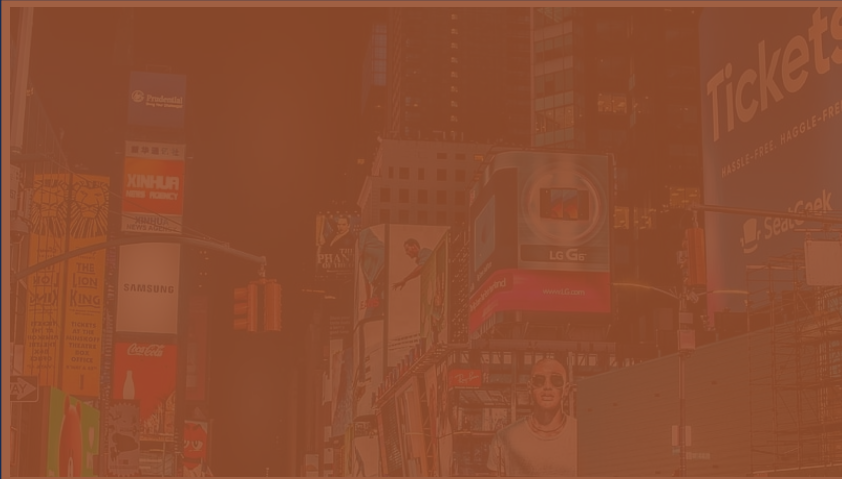
Standardized packs increase **noticeability** of warnings.

Prominence of warnings on standard packs raises **harm perception** and may **influence behavior**.



Deluge of
pack shapes
and sizes
makes it
difficult to
properly
apply HWLs





Expanse of tobacco pack marketing appeals



Deluge of pack shapes and sizes



Tobacco company manipulation of health warning labels

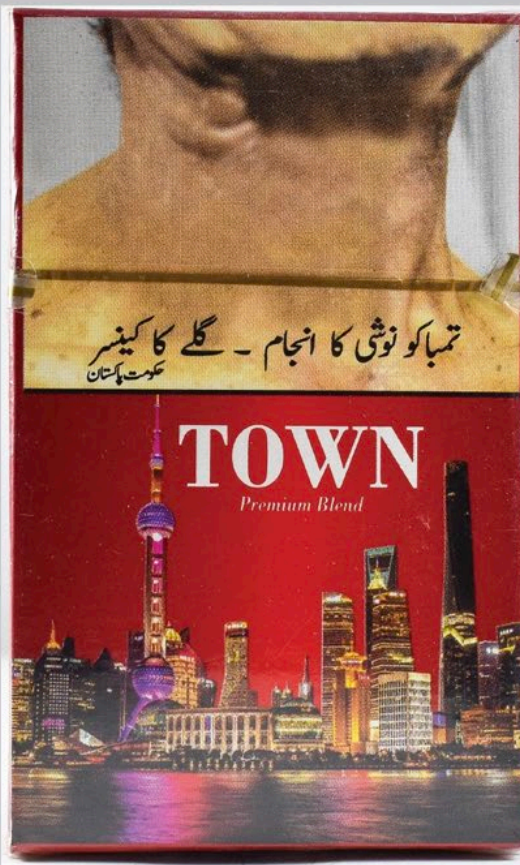
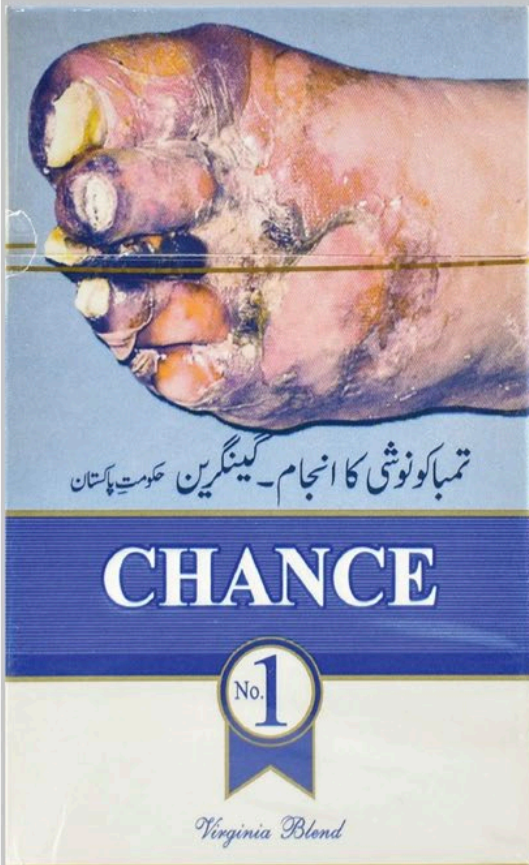


No black outline around text
Darkened image
Zoomed-out



Different color
Zoomed-in



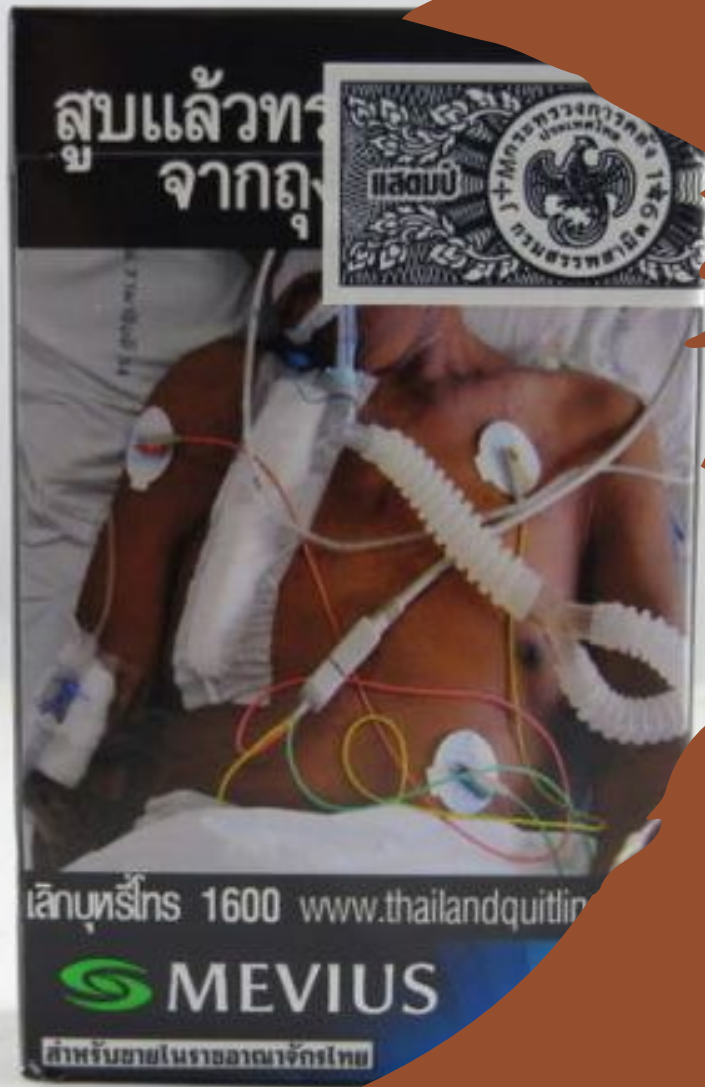


Crespi E et al. Industry manipulation of pictorial health warning labels in Pakistan. Tob Control. 2022 Sep;31(5):687-8.



Iacobelli M et al. Manipulated: graphic health warnings on smokeless tobacco in rural India. *Tob Control*. 2020 Mar;29(2):241-242.

Saraf S et al. Health warning label compliance for smokeless tobacco products and bidis in five Indian states. *Asian Pac J Cancer Prev*. 2021 Nov 1;22(S2):59-64.

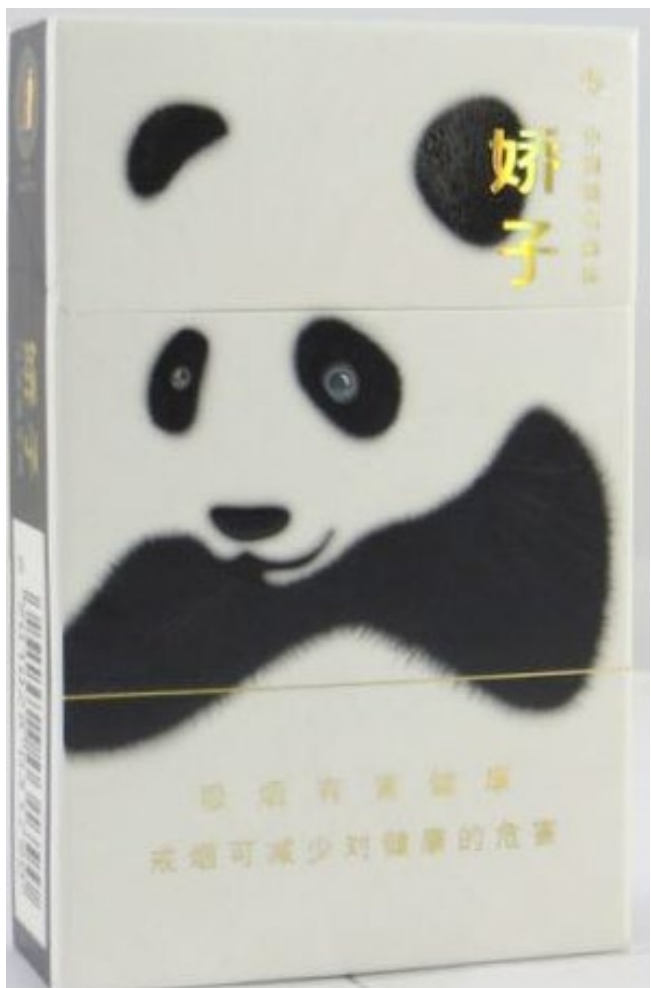


Tax stamp covering HWL

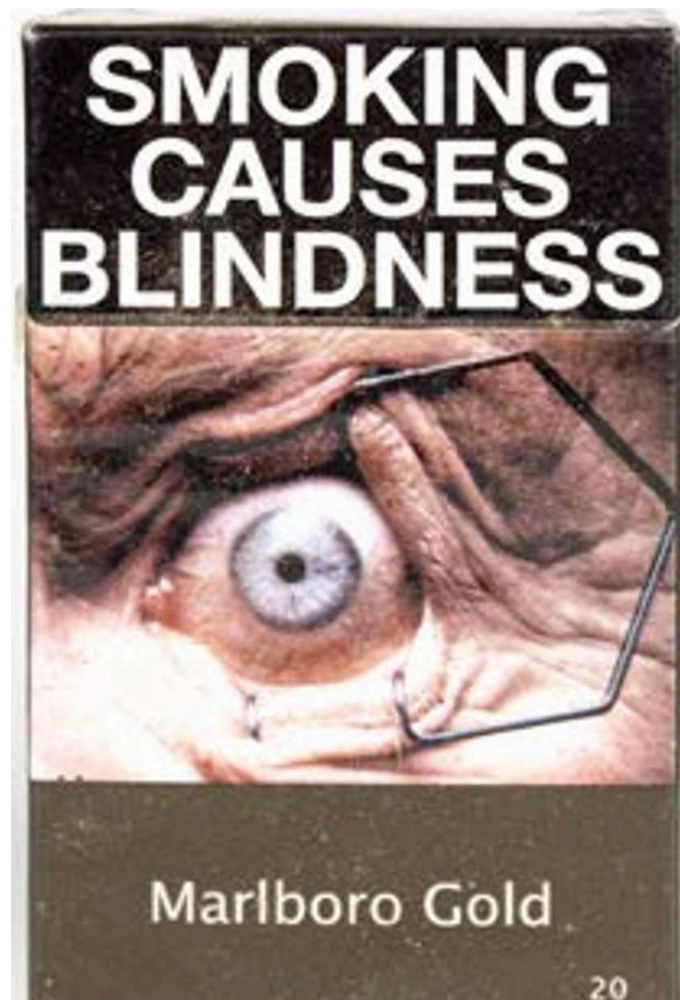
Iacobelli M et al. When the tax stamp covers the health warning label: conflicting 'best practices' for tobacco control policy. Tob Control. 2018 Jan;27(1):119-120.

Manipulation of HWLs undermines their efficacy

► Entice



► Dissuade



Tobacco
companies are
manipulating
health
warning
labels



Plain and standardized packaging



Institute for Global Tobacco Control. Advancing Tobacco Plain and Standardized Packaging in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: Advice from Experts. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health; March 2020.



Cigarette packs from left to right: Uruguay, New Zealand, Ireland, Norway, Australia, France



Moodie C, Hoek J, Hammond D, Gallopel-Morvan K, Sendoya D, Rosen L, Mucan Özcan B, van der Eijk Y. Plain tobacco packaging: progress, challenges, learning and opportunities. *Tob Control*. 2022 Mar;31(2):263-71.

Figure 3 Plain packs for rolling tobacco (Australia), shisha (Turkey), plug, cigars (Ireland) and cigar tubes (New Zealand) (top row), snus (Norway), heets (Canada), and rolling papers, e-liquids (Israel).

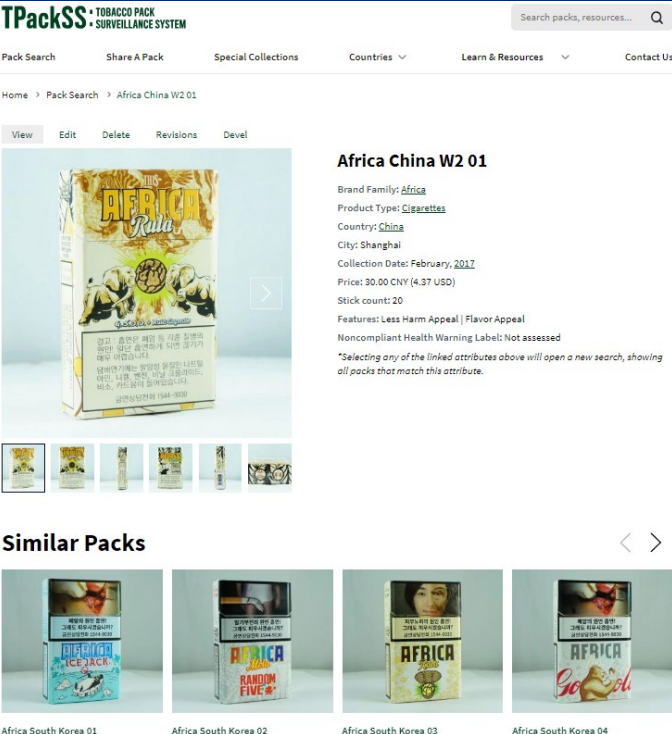

Summary

- **Plain and standardized packaging:**
 - Leaves no pack real estate for marketing appeals (e.g., colors, feminine, sports, etc.)
 - Allows the health warning label to be applied properly so that it is legible
- **Additional compliance checks are needed** to ensure tobacco companies are applying the labels as required and without any manipulation
- **Plain and standardized packaging** for all tobacco products will help convey the truth—that these are **deadly products**



Free resources

Tobacco Pack Surveillance System (TPackSS)




TPackSS • TOBACCO PACK SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM

Search packs, resources... Q

Pack Search Share A Pack Special Collections Countries Learn & Resources Contact Us

Home > Pack Search > Africa China W2 01

View Edit Delete Revisions Devel




Africa China W2 01

Brand Family: [Africa](#)
Product Type: [Cigarettes](#)
Country: [China](#)
City: Shanghai
Collection Date: February, 2017
Price: 30.00 CNY (4.37 USD)
Stick count: 20
Features: Less Harm Appeal | Flavor Appeal
Noncompliant Health Warning Label: Not assessed

*Selecting any of the linked attributes above will open a new search, showing all packs that match this attribute.

Similar Packs



Africa South Korea 01 Africa South Korea 02 Africa South Korea 03 Africa South Korea 04

Explore a searchable database of over **6,800+** tobacco packs from low- and middle-income countries around the world



Share a Pack



The image displays a grid of four user-submitted photographs of cigarette packs, each with a caption below it. To the right of the grid is a large QR code. The top-left image shows a Camel cigarette pack with the text 'Camel' and 'ESTE PRODUTO CAUSA CÂNCER PARE'. The top-right image shows a Lucky Strike cigarette pack with the text 'LUCKY STRIKE' and 'CLICK & MIX'. The bottom-left image shows a display of Iqos cigarette packs with the text 'Iqos' and 'upqâ!'. The bottom-right image shows a Chang Baishan cigarette pack with a winter scene and the text '本公司提示'.

Camel - Brazil 13621
Brazil | 2019

Lucky Strike - Mexico 13622
Mexico | 2019

Iqos - United Arab Emirates 13625
United Arab Emirates | 2019

Chang Baishan - China 13627
China | 2019

User-submitted images

that can be filtered by country, date found, product type and more.

Browse, submit and share from anywhere in the world!



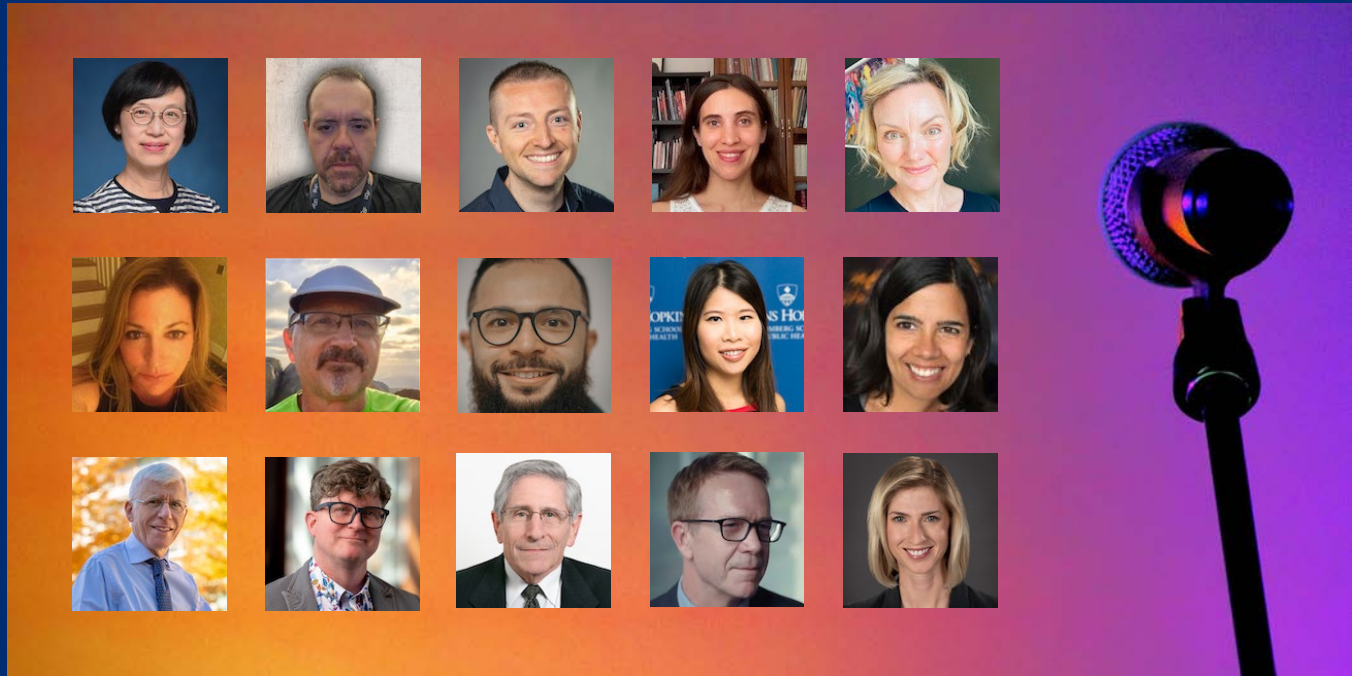
Free Online Courses

Enhance your **knowledge** and obtain a certificate of completion in your choice of **3 courses**



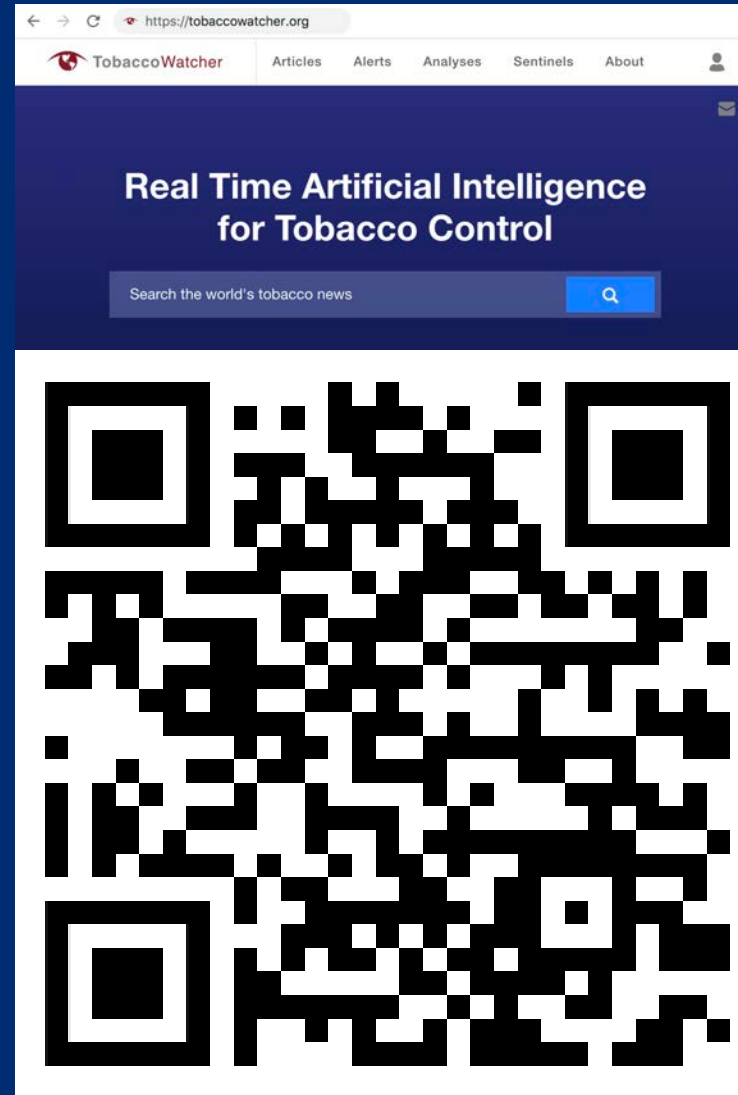
Innovations in Tobacco Control Lectures

- Leading **experts** in tobacco control
- More than **60 lectures** available online



Tobacco Watcher

Search articles, set alerts,
and cut through the noise
to stay on top of
**breaking
news**
of relevance to
tobacco control



The image shows a screenshot of the Tobacco Watcher website interface. The browser address bar displays "https://tobaccowatcher.org". The website header includes the "Tobacco Watcher" logo and navigation links for "Articles", "Alerts", "Analyses", "Sentinels", and "About". The main content area features the text "Real Time Artificial Intelligence for Tobacco Control" and a search bar with the placeholder text "Search the world's tobacco news" and a search icon. Below the website screenshot is a large QR code. The background of the slide features a stack of newspapers.



WORLD CONFERENCE ON TOBACCO CONTROL 2025

(formerly the World Conference on Tobacco or Health)

IS BACK!

Save the Date:

**23 - 25 JUNE 2025
DUBLIN, IRELAND**

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Michael Chaiton



Peter Selby

BMJJournals

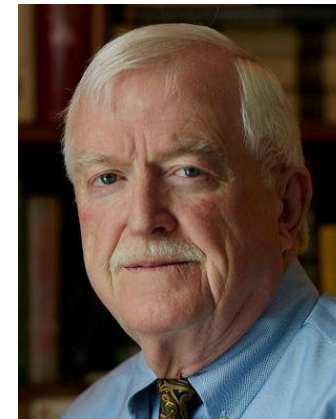
Tobacco Control



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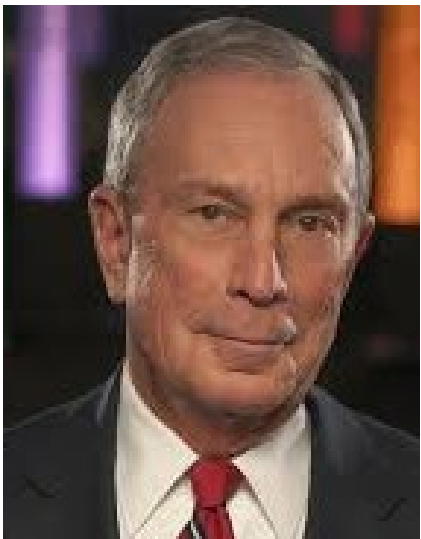
Grazi Grilo



Reiley
Hartmuller



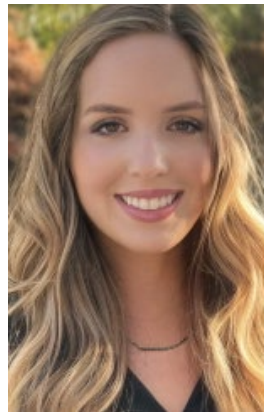
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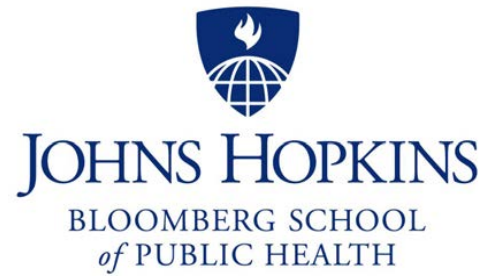
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Emma Walker



Thank you!



Global Tobacco Control Progress Hub

Country and region-level reporting and analysis of **implementation of key policy measures** required by the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control

