

Every 3rd person of 15 to 50 age-group addicted to smoking in Delhi NCR: Survey

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By : BioVoice Correspondent - July 11, 2019



New Delhi: According to an eye-opening survey 'Understanding Smoking Attitudes in Youth (USAT)', conducted by Aviss Health Foundation, Gurugram, of all the respondents, which were between the age group of 15 to 50 years, a whopping 33% admitted to smoking addiction. Adding more to the shock, the survey further revealed that amongst the smokers, 53% belonged to the most youthful age group of 20-30 years.

The USAT survey, conducted on the occasion of World No Tobacco Day to map the attitudes of 1388 youngsters in Delhi NCR towards smoking, brings some very surprising facts to the fore. The survey reveals that youths are resorting to smoking to cope with stress which is mostly bored at the work place.

According to the survey figures, 56% thought that the smoking helped them relief from stress while 55% of them admitted that they are aware of its ill-effects and were anxious about their health, but continue to smoke anyway. 52% of them had already tried to quit smoking but failed, underlying the

strong addictive nature of smoking leading to difficulties in giving up.

“The fact that educated youths are succumbing to smoking just to escape stress, speaks volumes about the lack of focus in ongoing outreach programs. We strongly believe that such insightful surveys can be instrumental in streamlining the existing awareness drives and devising the future policies,” says Dr Himanshu Garg, lead of the survey and a well known Pulmonologist.

India is one of those countries in the world which is reeling under a huge burden of high mortality and morbidity linked with [tobacco addiction](#). According to the World Health Organization (WHO), India is home to 12% of the world’s smokers.

Studies suggest that awareness drives, that initiates and channelizes the public discourse towards increasing understanding and prevention, is the key to the address public health issues. Smoking was in vogue in 1950-70, an era before the adverse impacts of smoking was evident. But with so many awareness campaigns and sustained efforts, it is reasonable for the stakeholders to expect that at least educated population is now abstaining from tobacco addiction. However, it turns out, that even today, despite knowing its addictive nature and harmful effects on health, a huge number of young people are still succumbing to its temptation.

“While Government policies in India have always been designed carefully around the targeted awareness programs, the survey figures indicate that it’s time to sit-up and fine-tune our strategies to address the issue more effectively,” said Dr Prerana Garg, Head of Aviss Foundation.

To conduct the survey, an online portal was created. To reach the target group, the portal was circulated by WhatsApp and email and other social media platforms. The format was easy and quick. The entire survey could be completed within 20 seconds while managing to elicit deep and meaningful insights on youths’ perception of smoking.

Along with strengthening awareness drives, the survey also points at the importance of stress management and lack of a regulated support system. Policy makers need to develop evidence-based strategies which can bring structural changes, not only in terms of making stress management an integral part of higher education but also in jobs, especially in case of fresh recruits. “Highlighting the strong link between stress and smoking and formulating outreach programs on these lines can go a long way in helping youth to abstain from this harmful addiction,” adds Dr Nikita Jajodia, Head of Research.

On the flip side, the USAT survey also revealed that amongst the non smokers, 80% felt that most common reason for staying away from smoking was awareness, at least this group have got it right in terms of developing the right attitude towards not smoking. Inculcation of right attitude through campaigns, education program and stress management strategies for youth will indeed make a positive difference in this vulnerable section of the society.