

# [Smoking should be banned in singapore essay](https://assignbuster.com/smoking-should-be-banned-in-singapore-essay/)

Smoking brings with it much harm, regardless whether it is with respect to health, finance, environmental or social issues. The World Health Organization (“ WHO”) estimates that tobacco kills one person every 10 seconds (WHO, 2005). Smoking causes cancer, and is a major risk for illnesses such as coronary heart disease, stroke and chronic obstructive lung disease. These account for close to two-thirds of all deaths in Singapore in the year 2000 (Health Promotion Board (“ HPB”), n. d. ).

Tobacco is the fourth most common risk factor for disease worldwide. Singapore government had already realized the negative effects of smoking, and therefore as early as the 1970s, it implemented regulations for smoking vide restricting smoking in public places and advertising of tobacco. In 1986, the launch of the National Smoking Control Programme, a comprehensive long-term programme for smoking control spearheaded by the Ministry of Health, Singapore (“ MOH”), with the theme “ Towards a Nation of Non-Smokers”, further set forth the government’s stand on smoking. Recent changes to legislation (Smoking (Prohibition in Certain Places) Act (Chapter 310)) seek to further restrict smoking in public places. The Straits Times (“ ST”) forum pages has been inundated with members of public penning their controversial views of possibilities, benefits and detriments of tobacco-banning in Singapore.

And most controversial of all, top cancer specialists from nine Asian countries have joined forces to push for a total ban on tobacco in 10 years (“ S’pore cancer specialists to push for tobacco ban”, ST, 22 September 2005). It is to be noted that there exist economic costs to the country. There is high public health costs of treating diseases brought about by tobacco-smoking, and it kills people at the height of their productivity, depriving families of breadwinners and the nation of healthy workforce. The smokers are also less productive while alive due to increased sickness. Studies on ten countries over a 23-year period beginning in the 1970s (Journal of Developing Areas, USA 2005; “ Smoking leads to lower productivity in workers” ST, 6 Oct 2005) showed that smoking and productivity point to further evidence of negative statistical relationship with an average loss of $4 to $6 loss in productivity per worker for some countries. Smoking may affect productivity at macro level due to forgone output as a result of pre-mature smoking-related mortality.

In Singapore, stroke is Singapore’s fourth leading cause of death, and 25% of all strokes are directly attributable to cigarette smoking (“ No reason to wait 10 years to ban smoking”, ST, 6 Oct 2005). Stroke is an expensive disease to treat and hospital bill average S$7, 500 to S$29, 000 a patient. There are also additional costs, such as outpatient medical treatment, rehabilitation, loss of income, medical supplies, to name a few. Approximately 10, 000 admissions to Singapore hospitals for stroke and related disorders, and as such, the total cost of the disease to Singapore would run into millions. While a portion of this cost is offset by taxation on cigarette imports, it is largely borne by the stroke patient, the family and the taxpayer.

Smoking and poverty are also inextricably linked. Studies have shown that in the poorest household, some 10% of total household expenses are spent on tobacco, leaving less money for basic items such as food, education and healthcare. Further, smoking also affects the health of the smoker’s family and especially children, as they are exposed to second-hand smoke and may suffer increased risk of respiratory problems such as asthma, pneumonia, and bronchitis. Statistics showed that children are also more likely to start smoking if they often see their parents smoke.

Smoking also poses harm to the environment. It creates air pollution also known as “ Environmental Tobacco Smoke” (“ ETS”), which causes twice as many deaths as other types of air pollution put together (HPB, n. d. ). Studies shown that 85% to 90% of the smoke from every cigarette ends up in the air as ETS.

ETS is dangerous as the cigarette smoke contains 4, 000 different chemicals, of which 400 are poisonous to man and about 40 are cancer-causing. ETS can cause lung cancer in people who have never smoked before. Passive smokers have 25% to 30% higher risk of developing lung cancer compared to those who are not exposed to cigarette smoke at all. For those who are exposed to smokers throughout the day, the risk increased by at least 50%.

Smoking of tobacco also cause serious impact on our environment as million of hectares of trees are cut down each year to make room for tobacco plants, to provide firewood to process tobacco leaves and to produce paper for cigarettes and their boxes. The waste, such as cigarette butts, boxes and the plastic wrappers made up for much of the city waste collected each day. Accidents arising from lighted matches and cigarettes have caused fires at home, offices and public places, causing extensive damage to property and lives. Several recent studies suggest that smoking has at least one health benefit, which is that it slows down the onset of Alzheimer’s disease, as nicotine improves the responsiveness of Alzheimer’s patients to acetylcholine, an important brain chemical (International Journal of Epidemiology, 1991).

One other social benefit of smoking is that if smokers die young, they would not deplete the retirement funds for everyone else. If the harm resulting from smoking outweighs its benefits, then both the smokers and non-smokers (being exposed to ETS) would be negatively affected. If so, then surely smoking should be banned in Singapore. As aforementioned in respect of the harm and benefits of smoking, it is certain that the harm of smoking prevail over its benefits.

Therefore, it follows that smoking should be banned in Singapore. From the Health Survey 2004 conducted by the MOH, it is estimated that in 2004, the prevalence of daily smoking stood at 12. % of the total population in Singapore, a decline from 15. 2% in 1998.

It can be inferred that majority of Singaporeans do not smoke. If benefits, with regards to banning of smoking in Singapore, exist, then surely majority of Singaporeans would gain from it. And if so, then smoking should be banned in Singapore. As previously mentioned, since the illnesses brought about by smoking contribute to close to two-thirds of all death in Singapore, then a decline (or ban) in smoking prevalence will significantly reduce the morbidity and mortality from these diseases.

Stopping smoking reduces the risk of stroke significantly within five years. Other than that, the harm brought about by smoking would also be reduced significantly. Since there are benefits arising out of possible ban of smoking in Singapore, then I reiterate that smoking should be banned in Singapore. The concerns from smokers of possible cigarette ban in Singapore might be that of withdrawal symptoms, and on the societal level, that their personal liberty has been threatened.

If there are possible solutions to ease their concerns, then it is that a cigarette ban is still feasible. A nicotine patch can lessen the withdrawal symptoms a smoker has and helps to deal with the smoking habit and the smoker’s psychological dependence on the cigarette. There are also several forums, toll-free health line, therapies available in government hospitals in Singapore, which can reach out to those who need assistance to quit smoking. With regards to the fact that a smoker might find his personal rights being iolated, the smoker might realize that the freedom he defend would enslave him or her to tobacco addiction and place him or her as well as others at high risk of dying a premature and painful death. This is pursuant to the harm of smoking which I have already highlighted.

It is established that the harm of smoking outweigh its benefits, the banning of smoking in Singapore brings about its benefits and that there are feasible ways to overcome the after-effect of cigarette-ban in Singapore. In the long run, it is not just the citizens but the society as a whole, which will reap the benefit if smoking is banned in Singapore.