

Smoking habits are transmitted from mother to daughter and father to son

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The study could help in terms of designing public policies to combat smoking. Credit: SINC

A European research group has studied how smoking habits are transmitted within the home. The results show that, in homes where both parents are present, there is a significant degree of inter-generational transmission of smoking habits between parents and children, particularly between individuals of the same gender.

"Fathers transmit their smoking habits to a statistically significant level to their sons, and the same is true of mothers and daughters. However, if a mother smokes it does not seem to impact on the probability of her son smoking, and similarly a father that smokes does not affect his daughter", Loureiro, a researcher at the Universidade de Santiago de Compostela (USC), in Spain, and co-author of the study, tells SINC.

The research, which has been published in the journal *Oxford Bulletin of Economics and Statistics*, is based on information from the British Household Panel Survey 1994-2002. "We selected this data source because it gives detailed information on the products consumed in [households](#), including [tobacco](#), making it possible to analyse the transmission of smoking habits between generations", the experts explain.

The study was carried out in homes where both parents were present as well as in single parent households, which were primarily headed by mothers.

"The results obtained show that, in terms of smoking habits, after taking socio-economic variables into account, daughters tend to imitate their mothers, while sons imitate their mothers", says Loureiro.

The estimated probabilities of a son smoking if both parents smoke is 24%, but this falls to almost 12% if neither of the parents smokes. For daughters, the probability of smoking if both parents smoke is 23%, also falling to 12% if neither of the parents smokes.

In single-parent households, mothers transmit their smoking habits to their children - regardless of their gender. In this case, a son's likelihood of smoking if the mother smokes is 32%, and 28% for a daughter.

"These results have clear importance in terms of designing public policies to combat smoking. Policies that are successful in reducing smoking habits among [parents](#) will also affect their children. Anti-smoking policies for young people need to be put in place that will also include the family and social context in which they live", explains Loureiro.

More information: María Loureiro, Anna Sanz de Galdeano y Daniela Vuri 'Like Father, Like Son, Like Mother, Like Daughter?' *Oxford Bulletin of Economics and Statistics* 72(6): 0305-9049, 2010.

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