

Tobacco's Toll On Global Health



Tobacco use continues to take a terrible toll on health and economies around the world, killing more than 7 million people each year. Tobacco use killed more than 100 million people in the 20th century and is projected to kill one billion in the 21st if current trends continue. In addition to its devastating impact on health, tobacco use is estimated to cause 1.85 trillion (USD) in economic damage each year and also causes great harm to the environment.

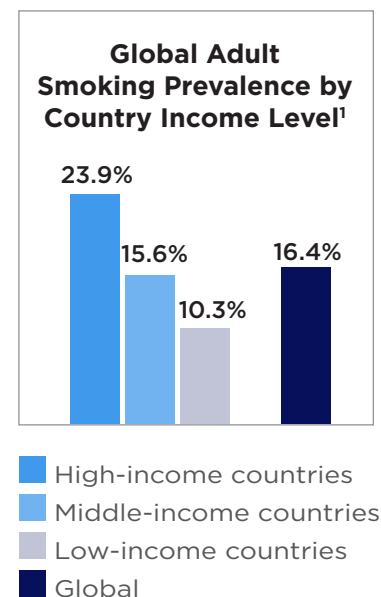
This toll continues despite the progress countries have made reducing tobacco use by adopting evidence-based policies as outlined by the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. This is due to the tobacco industry's ongoing aggressive marketing of its deadly products and its equally aggressive opposition to the life- and cost-saving policies that public health experts and the industry know will reduce tobacco use and its terrible toll.

Tobacco Use Prevalence

There are currently more than one billion smokers in the world.¹ Additional tobacco use includes various forms of oral tobacco (e.g., chew, dip), hookah or waterpipe, and a dizzying and ever-growing array of emerging products (e.g., e-cigarettes, heated tobacco products, nicotine pouches).

- Globally, 16.4% of adults are current smokers (men 28.1%; women 4.7%).¹
 - Smoking rates have declined by 24% among men and by 39% among women since 2007.¹ Despite those declines, due to population growth, there are more smokers now than in 2007.
- Around 79% of the world's smokers live in low- and middle-income countries.¹
 - On average, 23.9% of adults in high-income countries, 15.6% in middle-income countries, and 10.3% of adults in low-income countries are current smokers.¹
- Globally, the number of youth aged 13–15 years who smoke is estimated to be around 30 million.¹
- The number of cigarette smokers and other tobacco product users is increasing in many low- and middle-income countries due to population growth and tobacco industry marketing.
- Globally, more than 360 million people use smokeless tobacco products, and over 90% of users live in low- and middle-income countries.²

Tobacco use is projected to kill one billion people in the 21st century.



Tobacco Health Consequences

100 million people died from tobacco use in the 20th century. If current trends continue one billion people will die from tobacco use in the 21st century.³

- Tobacco kills up to half of all lifetime users.² On average, smokers lose at least 10 years of life.³
- Tobacco kills more than 7 million people, including smokers and non-smokers, each year.¹ Of these deaths, over 1.6 million are non-smokers exposed to secondhand smoke.⁴ Smokeless tobacco is responsible for up to 500,000 deaths each year.¹
- Tobacco-caused illnesses account for 1 in 10 adult deaths worldwide. By 2030, 80% of those deaths will be in low- and middle-income countries.⁵
- This toll takes place around the world in countries large and small but is particularly striking in countries with large populations.
 - In China, more than 2.4 million people died from tobacco use in 2023, 482,000 of those deaths were due to secondhand smoke.⁶
 - In India, more than 1.2 million people died from tobacco use in 2023, 325,000 of those deaths were due to secondhand smoke.⁶
 - In Indonesia, more than 295,000 people died from tobacco use in 2023, 72,000 of those deaths were due to secondhand smoke.⁶

Tobacco Costs to the Economy

- Smoking is estimated to cause about 1.85 trillion (USD) in total economic damage each year.⁷
 - Costs associated with tobacco-caused illnesses are extremely high. Total economic costs associated with smoking represent 1.8% of global GDP⁷, and smoking-attributable health expenditures represent 5.7% of total global health expenditure.⁸
 - In Vietnam, the total of both direct and indirect economic costs of smoking accounts for 0.97% of the nation's total GDP.⁹ South Africa spends the same 0.97% of their total GDP or 4.1% of their total health expenditure on tobacco related costs.¹⁰

- Tobacco-caused illnesses and premature mortality impose high productivity costs to the economy because of sick workers and those who die prematurely during their working years. Lost economic opportunities in highly populated low- and middle-income countries will be particularly severe as tobacco use is high and increasing in those areas.¹¹
 - These indirect costs of smoking are estimated to be about 1 trillion (USD) globally, nearly two thirds of which is due to premature mortality.¹²
 - The economic cost attributable to smoking in China is estimated to be over 302.2 billion (USD) annually, including healthcare expenditures and human capital lost as a result of illness and/or premature death caused by tobacco. The same annual economic cost attributable to smoking in India is 22.5 billion (USD) and 21.9 billion (USD) in Brazil.³

Tobacco Production and Use Damages the Environment

Tobacco production and use damages the environment throughout its entire life cycle — from cultivation to manufacture to consumption to disposal. It impacts our land, water, and air, and contributes to climate change.²

- Tobacco product waste makes up at least 25–40% of all global litter¹³, with cigarette butts being one of the most littered items on the planet.¹⁴
- Tobacco plants are especially vulnerable to many pests and diseases, prompting farmers to apply large quantities of chemicals and pesticides that harm human health and the environment.¹⁵
- Clearing of land for cultivation and large amounts of wood needed for curing tobacco cause massive deforestation at a rate of about 200,000 hectares per year.¹³
- A single cigarette pollutes 3.7 liters of water and produces 14 grams of carbon dioxide, further contributing to climate change. In total, tobacco polluted and depleted more than 22 billion cubic meters of water and produced 84 Mt of carbon dioxide (0.2% of all emissions of this greenhouse gas) in order to produce 6 trillion cigarettes.¹⁶

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