

# Smoking: a rundown on lighting up

30 May 2018, by Olivier Thibault



Cigarette smoking causes ten deaths per minute

Every minute, smokers get through nearly 11 million cigarettes and 10 die from the habit, experts say, in an industry that generates billions of dollars.

Here are some facts and figures ahead of the UN's World No Tobacco Day Thursday.

## How many people smoke?

There are around one billion [smokers](#) in the world, about a seventh of the global population, according to World Health Organization (WHO) and other estimates.

China has the highest number: of its population of 1.3 billion, about 315 million are smokers and they consume more than a third of the world's cigarettes, the WHO said in a report last year.

Indonesia has the highest proportion of smokers at 76 percent of men aged over 15.

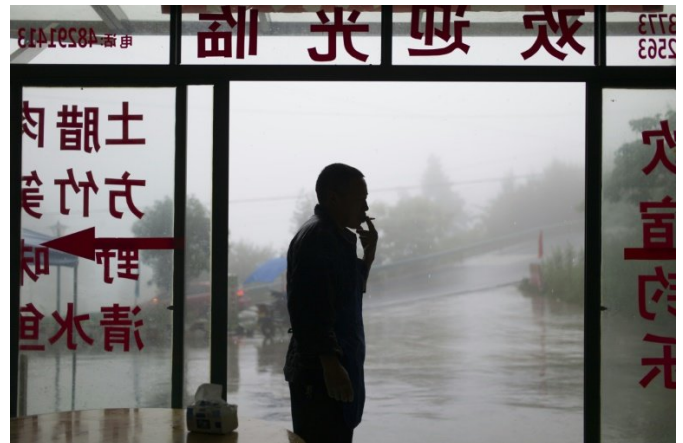
About 80 percent of the world's smokers live in low- and middle-income countries and 226 million of them are considered poor.

## On the decline?

A study published in *The Lancet* medical journal in April 2017 says the percentage of people using tobacco every day has dropped in 25 years.

One in four men and one in 20 women smoked daily in 2015, down from one in three men and one in 12 women in 1990, it found.

But reductions in smoking rates in some nations "are almost entirely offset by the increasing consumption in many countries with weaker tobacco control regulations," says The Tobacco Atlas anti-smoking lobby.



Around 315 million people smoke in China, consuming more than a third of the world's cigarettes

These include poorer parts of the world, in particular in sub-Saharan Africa.

Tobacco use has decreased in places such as Australia, Brazil and Britain, where anti-smoking measures include higher taxes, bans and health warnings. Electronic cigarettes have also entered some markets.

France reports a million fewer daily smokers in

2017 over 2016.

Tobacco sales have even declined in China, down by 10 percent from a peak in 2012, according to the Euromonitor International market research group.

### A high human cost

Tobacco is the leading cause of preventable death, experts say.

Active or passive smoking kills more than seven million people every year, according to the WHO, with [tobacco consumption](#) blamed for the death of on average one person every six seconds.

Cancers, heart attacks, strokes and lung disease are the main diseases associated with tobacco.

Over the 20th century tobacco claimed 100 million lives—more than the 60-80 million deaths during World War II and the 18 million in World War I combined.

At current rates tobacco could account for more up to a billion deaths in the 21st century, the WHO says.



Some smokers have turned to e-cigarettes as a substitute

Smoking uses up almost six percent of world spending on healthcare as well as nearly two

percent of global GDP, according to a January 2017 study in the scientific journal Tobacco Control.

This amounted to \$1.436 billion globally in 2012, 40 percent borne by developing countries, it says.

### Profits and production

Around the world 4.3 million hectares (10.6 million acres) of land is used to grow tobacco, the WHO says, an area about the size of Switzerland.

Cigarette sales are worth more than \$680 billion annually, according to Euromonitor.

China is the leading producer of [tobacco](#), growing about 40 percent of world's leaves, says The Tobacco Atlas.

Five firms control 80 percent of the global cigarette market. The top six made a profit of more than \$62 billion in 2015, it says.

Smokers get through about 5.7 trillion cigarettes annually, says The Tobacco Atlas. This works out to nearly 11 million every minute.

Filters made from non-biodegradable cellulose acetate have become the type of litter most present on the world's beaches.

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