

Smoking statistics

The following information comes from Action on Smoking and Health (ASH - www.ash.org.uk) and figures relate to the UK unless otherwise stated.

- Tobacco was introduced to Europe from the New World at the end of the 15th century. Smoking spread rapidly and was long regarded as having medicinal value.
- In the 20th century smoking became a mass habit and in the 1950s the dangers of smoking were established.
- About 12 million adults smoke cigarettes – 28 per cent of men and 24 per cent of women.
- In 1974, 51 per cent of men and 41 per cent of women smoked cigarettes - nearly half the adult population.
- Now, just over one quarter of people smoke.
- Smoking is highest among those aged 20-24.
- The lowest smoking rate is among people aged 60 and over.
- Around one quarter of smokers die before reaching retirement age.
- More than 80 per cent of smokers take up the habit as teenagers.
- About 450 children start smoking every day.
- Around one fifth of 15 year olds – 18 per cent of boys and 26 per cent of girls – are regular smokers.
- About 21 per cent of women and 27 per cent of men are ex-smokers. Surveys show that more than 70 per cent of current smokers would like to give up altogether.
- Tobacco is the only legally available consumer product which kills people when it is used entirely as intended.
- About 114,000 smokers die each year as a result of their habit.
- Deaths caused by smoking in 2002 were five times higher than those arising from road traffic accidents, other accidents, poisoning, overdose, alcoholic liver disease, murder, manslaughter, suicide and HIV infection.
- About half of all regular cigarette smokers will eventually be killed by their habit.
- Smoking causes about 30 per cent of cancer deaths, including around 84 per cent of lung cancer deaths, 17 per cent of heart disease deaths and at least 80 per cent of deaths from bronchitis and emphysema.
- Polls show that people underestimate the health risks of smoking and the effects of passive smoking.
- Tobacco smoke contains more than 4,000 chemical compounds, which are present either as gases or as tiny particles.
- The government earned £8,093 million in revenue from tobacco duty excluding VAT in the financial year 2003-04.
- The Government currently spends around £30 million on anti-smoking education campaigns. A further £41 million is spent on measures to help people stop smoking.