

Smoking statistics

Smoking-related diseases killed 19,019 Australians in 1998. This equals 52 preventable deaths every day. Smoking resulted in over 980,000 days spent in hospital and cost over \$700 million in hospital costs in the financial year 1998–99.

According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, most deaths resulting from tobacco smoking occurred in people aged 65 years or more. However, around one in five deaths occurred in the 35–64 years age group.

The major tobacco-related diseases include cancer, heart disease and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Smoking kills more men than women – 13,000 men compared to 6,000 women. Cancer is the number one cause of tobacco-related death in men (43 per cent) and women (32 per cent), with lung cancer accounting for around 76 per cent of cancers for both genders. Lung cancer currently causes the most cancer deaths in Australia, and is attributable mainly to smoking.

Smoking behaviours

In 2004 the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare estimated that 17.4 per cent of people aged 14 years and over smoked daily. Of particular concern is the smoking rate among Aboriginal people, which in 2002 was reported to be 51 per cent – more than double that of the wider community.

Selected statistics from *Statistics on drug use in Australia 2004* include:

- The male daily smoking rate was 18.6 per cent and the female daily smoking rate was 16.3 per cent.
- Male smoking rates were higher in all age groups except in 14–19 year olds, where 10 per cent of males smoked daily compared to 12 per cent of females.
- People aged 20–29 years were more likely to be daily or occasional smokers than all other age groups, with 24 per cent smoking daily.
- People aged 60 years and over were least likely to be daily smokers (9 per cent).
- Daily smoking rates for Australians aged 14 and over have declined by 40 per cent between 1985 and 2004.
- Ex-smokers outnumber current smokers: 26.4 per cent of Australians have quit smoking during their lifetime.
- More females have never smoked (57.5 per cent) than males (48.2 per cent).

Smokers in Victoria

The Centre for Behavioural Research in Cancer estimates that in 2005, 18.5 per cent of Victorian adults aged 18 and over smoked regularly.

- The smoking rate for men (20.2 per cent) was higher than for women (16.9 per cent).
- Former smokers greatly outnumbered current smokers – 30.4 per cent of men and 25.5 of women have quit smoking in Victoria.
- Smoking rates were higher among people with lower education – 22.3 per cent of persons who had completed year 11 or lower smoked, compared to 12.9 per cent with a tertiary education.

The 2005 Victorian Secondary School Students Survey estimated that 8 per cent of 12–15 year old students are current smokers. Among 16–17 year old students, 18 per cent of males and 20 per cent of females are current smokers. Current smokers are defined as having smoked in the week before the survey. Alarming, research also indicates that the mean age of adolescents taking up smoking is around 16 years old.

Comparative death rates

Smoking kills more Victorians every year than road accidents, alcohol and other drugs combined. Deaths due to tobacco use account for 82 per cent of all drug-caused deaths, and around 15 per cent of deaths from all causes.

Death rates from tobacco-caused disease are higher among Indigenous people than in the non-Indigenous population, and Indigenous Australians are more likely to die from these diseases at a younger age.

The benefits of quitting

Quitting smoking has immediate health benefits and dramatically reduces the risk of smoking-related diseases, whatever the person's age. Statistics include:

- Quitting before middle age reduces the risk of lung cancer by 90 per cent.
- After 15 years of being a non-smoker, the risk of stroke is reduced to that of a person who has never smoked.
- After one year of being a non-smoker, the increased risk of death from heart attack is halved.

Where to get help

- Your doctor
- Your pharmacist
- Quitline Tel. 137 848 www.quit.org.au

Things to remember

- In 1998, 19,019 Australians died from smoking-related disease, which equates to 52 preventable deaths every day.
- Cancer is the number one cause of smoking-related death in men (43 per cent) and women (32 per cent).

This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by:

Quit

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