

South Africa



How many people die from smoking in South Africa each year?

42,612

What is the annual cost-of-illness attributable to smoking in South Africa each year?

49,238,097,248
rands

Current Rates of Smoking and Tobacco Use in South Africa

Tobacco use continues to be an epidemic in South Africa. Government complacency in the face of the tobacco epidemic protects the tobacco industry in South Africa as the death toll grows each year. Proponents of healthier societies must push for the implementation of evidence-based best practices in tobacco control to create change and reduce the negative effects of tobacco use.

Adult Smoking Prevalence in South Africa

15+ years old; 2025

Men
26.10%

Women
4.20%

Adult smoking prevalence in South Africa is 15.10%.

Number of Adult Smokers in South Africa

15+ years old; 2022

Men
6,972,000

Women
1,378,000

Number of adult smokers in South Africa is 8,350,000.

Youth Smoking Prevalence in South Africa

10-14 years old; 2023

Boys
21.14%

Girls
17.45%

Youth smoking prevalence in South Africa is 19.3%.

Adult Smokeless Tobacco Use in South Africa

15+ years old; smokeless tobacco includes snus, chewing tobacco, gutkha, etc.; 2021

Both Men and Women
4.30%

Adult smokeless tobacco use prevalence in South Africa is 4.30%.

Deaths Caused by Tobacco in South Africa

% deaths attributable to tobacco use in 2023

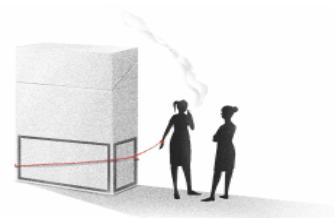


7.45% of all deaths in South Africa are caused by tobacco use.

Learn more about global Prevalence, Youth Smoking and Deaths.

Negative Effect of Tobacco Use in South Africa

Tobacco use harms both the public and fiscal health of South Africa, threatening efforts to improve equity, alleviate poverty, and protect the environment.

**Societal Harms**

The annual cost-of-illness attributable to smoking in South Africa is 49,238,097,248 rands. This includes direct costs related to healthcare expenditures and indirect costs related to lost productivity caused by illness and premature death.

**Harms Development**

Tobacco spending diverts funds from the resources that families need to rise out of poverty. On average in South Africa, a smoker must spend 4.06% of GDP per capita to buy 100 packs of the most popular cigarettes in a year.

**Environmental Harms**

Cigarette butts are the most commonly discarded pieces of waste worldwide. It is estimated that 2,731 tons of butts wind up as toxic trash in South Africa each year, equal to 1,011 female African elephants.

**Harms Health Equity**

The tobacco industry markets its products aggressively to lower-income populations and youth in South Africa.

**Harms NCDs**

Not only is smoking a major risk factor for the 4 largest noncommunicable diseases (cancer, heart diseases, respiratory diseases, and diabetes), but people living with mental illness are nearly 2x as likely to smoke as other individuals.

Learn more about Health Effects.

Impact of the Tobacco Supply Chain on South Africa

The tobacco industry profits significantly from producing and selling tobacco. At the same time, across the tobacco supply chain, there are significant negative health and economic repercussions for South Africa.



Tobacco Production

There were approximately 34,598,000,000 cigarettes produced in South Africa in 2024.



Tobacco Industry

The total revenue of the 6 largest tobacco companies in the world was USD 364 billion in 2023, about the same as Pakistan's Gross National Income (GNI), 5x Panama's GNI and 9x Paraguay's GNI.

Tobacco Growing

There were 9,800 tons of tobacco produced in South Africa in 2023 on 3,780 hectares of quality agricultural land that could have been used to grow food.

Learn more about global [Growing](#) and [Product Sales](#).

Ending the Tobacco Epidemic in South Africa

Fortunately, there are evidence-based i.e. proven-solutions to the challenges posed by tobacco use. For several decades, governments around the world have been introducing a set of policies that address the demand for tobacco products, particularly among youth. These policies effectively reduce consumption and are cost-effective because they save governments enormous amounts of money in health care spending and increase economic productivity.

Current Tobacco Control Policies in South Africa

Designated Smoke-Free Areas in South Africa

| | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|----------------|-------------|---------------|------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | NA | NA |
| Healthcare Facilities | Educational Facilities | Universities | Government Facilities | Indoor Offices | Restaurants | Pubs and Bars | Public Transport | All Other Indoor Public Places | Funds for Enforcement |

Availability of Cessation Services in South Africa

Quitting Resources

National quit line, and NRT and/or some cessation services (at least one of which is cost-covered)

National Quit Line

Yes

Learn more about best practices in Cessation.

Tobacco Packaging Regulations in South Africa

Quality of Tobacco Packaging Regulation

None

✓ Text warning label only

Text warning label with graphic warning label

Plain Packaging with text/graphic warning label

% of Pack Covered

20%

Learn more about best practices in Counter Marketing.

Tobacco Control Mass Media Campaigns in South Africa

Ran a National Anti-Tobacco Campaign

Yes

Part Of A Comprehensive Tobacco Control Program

Yes

Pre-Tested With The Target Audience

Yes

Target Audience Research Was Conducted

Yes

Aired On Television And/Or Radio

Yes

Utilized Media Planning

Yes

Earned Media/Public Relations Were Used To Promote The Campaign

Yes

Process Evaluation Was Used To Assess Implementation

Yes

Outcome Evaluation Was Used To Assess Effectiveness

Yes

Learn more about best practices in Mass Media.

Tobacco Tax Policies in South Africa

Using evidence-based international recommendations/best practices, the **Economics for Health Cigarette Tax Scorecard** assesses four components of tax systems - **price, change in affordability, tax share, and structure** - on a scale of 0 to 5, where a higher score is preferred.

| Overall Score | Cigarette Price | Change in Affordability Over Time | Tax Share of Price | Tax Structure |
|---|---|--|--|---|
| 2.38 | 2.00 | 0.00 | 2.50 | 5.00 |
| The overall score is an average of the four component scores. | Consumers respond to higher prices by decreasing consumption and some quit using tobacco. | In addition to price, change in affordability is critical. Cigarettes need to become less affordable for consumption to decline. | Large tax shares of price are usually a good indicator that taxes are working. | Best practices include relying more on uniform specific excise taxes that are adjusted regularly to outpace growth and inflation. |

[Learn more about the Scorecard in South Africa.](#)

Regulations on Tobacco Advertising, Promotion, and Sponsorship (TAPS) in South Africa

Marketing is the key avenue that tobacco companies use to reach consumers, new and old. Restricting or eliminating marketing is key to tobacco control success.

Direct Bans

4 out of 7 direct bans implemented

National TV and radio

Yes

International TV and radio

No

International magazines and newspapers

Yes

International magazines and newspapers

No

Billboard and outdoor advertising

Yes

Advertising at point of sale

No

Advertising on internet

Yes

Ad Ban Compliance

60%

Indirect Bans

6 out of 10 indirect bans implemented

Free distribution in mail or through other means

Yes

Promotional discounts

Yes

Non-tobacco products identified with tobacco brand names

Yes

Brand name of non-tobacco products used for tobacco product

Yes

Appearance in TV and/or films: tobacco brands (product placement)

Yes

Appearance in TV and/or films: tobacco products

No

Prescribed anti-tobacco ads required for any visual entertainment media product that depicts tobacco products, use or images

No

Complete ban on sponsorship

No

Any form of contribution (financial or other support) to any event, activity or individual

No

Ban on the publicity of financial or other sponsorship or support by the tobacco industry of events, activities, individuals

Yes