Cigarettes kill half of all lifetime users. Half die in middle age between 35 and 69 years old.

No other consumer product is as dangerous, or kills as many people. Tobacco kills more than AIDS, legal drugs, illegal drugs, road accidents, murder, and suicide combined.

Tobacco already kills more men in developing countries than in industrialised countries, and it is likely that deaths among women will soon be the same.

While 0.1 billion people died from tobacco use in the 20th century, ten times as many will die in the 21st century. Maternal smoking during pregnancy is responsible for many foetal deaths and is also a major cause of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. Passive smoking in the home, workplace, or in public places also kills, although in lower numbers. However, those killed do not die from their own habit, but from someone else’s.

Children are at particular risk from adults smoking, and even smoking by other adults around a pregnant woman has a harmful effect on a foetus.

Past and future

Annual deaths due to tobacco estimated worldwide

1950–2030 projected

0.3 million 1.3 million 2.1 million

1995 to 2000 2005 to 2010

of everyone alive today

500,000,000

will eventually be killed by tobacco

7 million projected

Deaths from tobacco use

as percentage of total deaths among men and women over 35

2000 regional estimates

over 25% 10% – 14%

20% – 24% 5% – 9%

15% – 19% under 5%

Dying in your prime

more than 25% of

35 – 69 year olds

living above these lines will die from tobacco use

Report for Tobacco Advisory Council, 1998