

## Harmful Effects of Tobacco Use on Human Health

### Executive Summary

Tobacco consumption imposes a heavy and dual burden on the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), undermining population health through deadly non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as cardiovascular diseases, cancers, and chronic respiratory diseases and stifling economic growth through lost productivity and healthcare costs. Tobacco-related deaths in the DRC increased from approximately **17,610** in **2013** to figures exceeding **20,000** in **2023**. By 2023, an estimated **2.57%** of all deaths in the DRC were attributable to tobacco use (**1.49%** from active smoking, **1.09%** from second-hand smoke). Further, the financial implications arising from smoking and tobacco use in the DRC **exceed \$179 million** each year. Tackling this multifaceted challenge is therefore an urgent societal imperative that demands comprehensive action beyond the health sector.

### Policy Gaps and Challenges

1. **50.7%** of Congolese adolescents aged between 10 and 17 years have low knowledge on the dangers of tobacco use and exposure.
2. The average retail price for a pack of cigarettes from the most common brands varies between **CDF 1000-3200**, approximately **\$0.43 - \$1.16**, and the price of a stick of cigarettes of the most common brands varies between **CDF 50-160**, approximately.
3. In the DRC, there are regulations on smoking in public spaces, however, the enforcement is weak, thereby exposing the population to secondhand smoke.
4. The absence of messages on cigarette packs in widely spoken local languages such as **Lingala and Swahili** also pose a threat to the use of these products.

### The Spectrum of Health Harms: More Than Just a Lung Problem

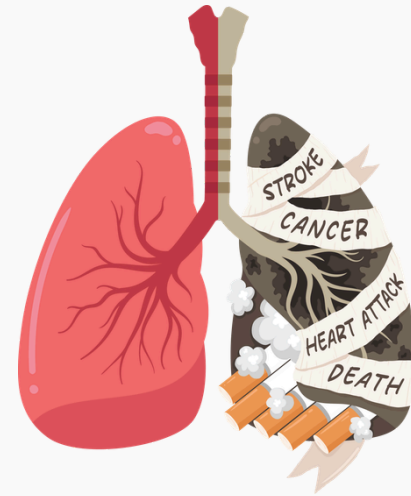
Tobacco smoke contains **over 7000 chemicals**, hundreds which are harmful and **at least 70** known to cause **cancer**. Its damage is systemic, affecting nearly every organ in the body.





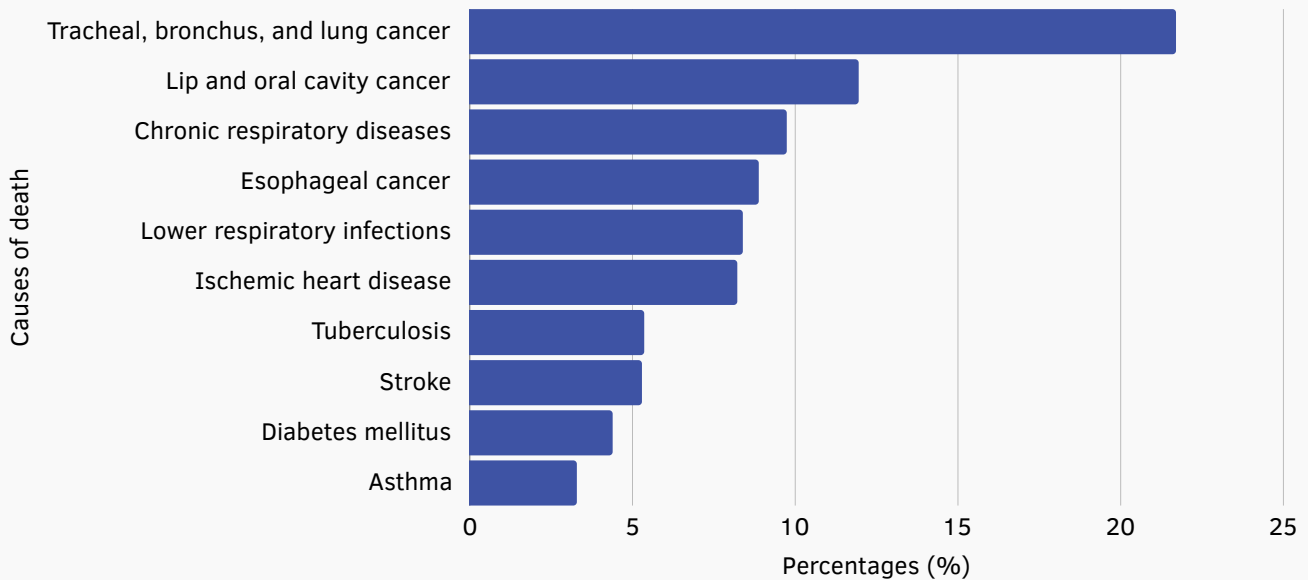
### 1. Direct health consequences on users

- a. In the DRC in 2023, **6.16%** of tobacco-related deaths were triggered by chronic respiratory diseases and tuberculosis.
- b. About **6,025 deaths** in the DRC from cardiovascular diseases were attributed to tobacco use in 2023.
- c. **2,718** Congolese deaths from all types of cancer were attributed to tobacco use in 2023.



### Percentage of death caused by smoking related diseases

Source: Global Burden of Disease (GBD 2023)



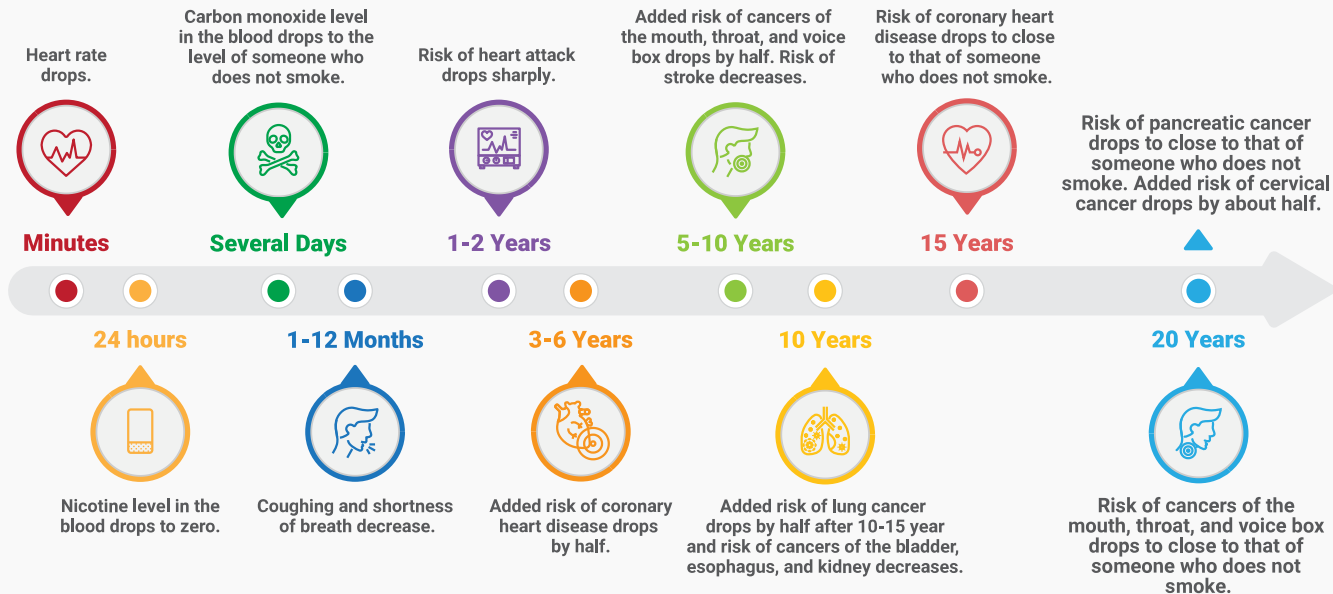
### 2. Impact on vulnerable groups

- a. About **2,090** children aged **below 14 years** died of tobacco consumption and/or exposure, while about **118 deaths** were recorded among adolescents **aged 15 to 19 years** in 2023.
- b. **Pregnant women** are vulnerable to secondhand smoke; and use of tobacco during pregnancy increases the risk of pregnancy complications, stillbirth and low birth weight.
- c. In 2023, **secondhand smoke** in the DRC accounted for **8,492 deaths**.



## Benefits of Quitting Tobacco

### How Quickly Your Health Improves after Quitting Smoking



## Policy Recommendations

- To reduce cigarette packs and stick affordability, the Congolese government should continue increasing tobacco taxes, until reaching the level of taxes (over 75% of the retail price of tobacco products) recommended by WHO. The excise tax increases should outpace inflation and income growth.
- Ensure the enforcement and expansion of smoke-free zones in schools, hospitals and public transports by the Ministry of Health, the Criminal Investigation Department and the Ministry of the Interior.
- Full implementation of **Ministerial Order No. 1250/CAB/MIN/SPHP/041/DCA/PNCLT/2022**, which bans advertising, promotion and sponsorship of tobacco, tobacco products, and their derivatives, and on smoking in public places.
- Strengthen cessation services; the Congolese Ministry of Health together with the Ministry of Communication could adopt a national quitline service, with support and resources diffused in local languages where necessary.
- Tobacco regulation should include new and emerging nicotine and tobacco products (such as e-cigarettes, nicotine pouches) in tobacco control laws.
- Public awareness campaigns on the harm of tobacco and nicotine products use



For references and more information on the harmful effects of tobacco use on human health in the DRC, visit:

[https://drc.tobaccocontroldata.org/en/home/mefaits-du-tabac/#ref\\_20](https://drc.tobaccocontroldata.org/en/home/mefaits-du-tabac/#ref_20)



### Adult Prevalence

Information on current adult prevalence of tobacco consumption by product, gender, age, rural/urban area, level of education, socio-economic status and province.

[Read more](#)



### Youth Prevalence

Presentation of primary research results about adolescent tobacco and nicotine use in DRC.

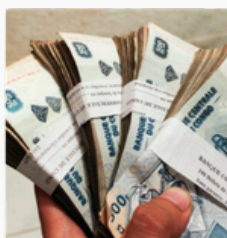
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### Legislation

An overview of the country's smoke-free legislation, its history, application and future prospects.

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### Taxation

The share of taxes and the structure of cigarette taxes in the DRC compared with other countries, as well as their evolution over time.

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### Industry Interference

Information on the structure of the tobacco market and recommendations for tobacco industry interference in the DRC.

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### Morbidity

The health consequences of smoking for smokers and those around them.

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### Illicit Trade

Qualitative and quantitative data on the illicit cigarette market in the DRC. This page describes the origins and types of illicit cigarettes sold in the DRC, as well as the importance of illicit products on the national market.

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### Prevention and awareness

This page highlights actionable pathways for the DRC to reduce tobacco and nicotine use and exposure across the population, starting well before initiation.

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### New and emerging products

This page examines the prevalence, health effects, and marketing strategies of NENTPs in the DRC. It also provides insights into their impact on public health, regulatory policies, and consumer trends.

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### WHO FCTC

This page is designed to equip decision-makers with the essential knowledge and policy tools needed to take effective action against tobacco use, in alignment with the WHO FCTC guidelines.

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