

World No Tobacco Day Briefing Document

When is World No Tobacco Day?

World No Tobacco Day is held annually, on the 31st of May.

What is World No Tobacco Day?

World No Tobacco Day is an annual campaign which informs the general public on:

- The dangers and health implications of tobacco use.
- The business practices of the tobacco industry.
- What health organisations are doing to curtail the tobacco epidemic, on a national and global scale.
- How individuals can improve their health by quitting smoking.
- Safeguarding future generations from the health, environmental, and social harms of tobacco.

The Member States of the World Health Organization created World No Tobacco Day in 1987 to draw global attention to the tobacco epidemic and the preventable death and disease it causes. In 1987, the World Health Assembly passed Resolution WHA40.38, calling for 7 April 1988 to be a "a world no-smoking day." In 1988, Resolution WHA42.19 was passed, calling for the celebration of World No Tobacco Day, every year on the 31st of May.

What is this year's theme?

*"Protect the environment:
World No Tobacco Day 2022 will give you one more reason to quit"*

World Health Organisation, 2022

This year, the global campaign will centre around the environmental harms of tobacco. The 2022 campaign, ['Tobacco: Threat to our environment'](#), will voice how tobacco impacts the planet through cultivation, production, distribution, and waste. The campaign seeks to highlight these harms and offer tobacco users another reason to quit.

The World Health Organisation will also use this approach to highlight the tobacco industry's use of 'greenwashing', whereby the industry presents itself and its products as environmentally friendly. For more information on greenwashing, please see the UK's Tobacco Control Research Group's (University of Bath) breakdown of past examples and ongoing research, [here](#).

Dr Ruediger Krech, Director of Health Promotion for WHO, offers a succinct summary of this year's campaign theme. In the official communications for the campaign, he said:

“The environmental impacts of tobacco using adds unnecessary pressure to our planet's already scarce resources and fragile ecosystems. This is especially dangerous for developing countries, as that's where most of the tobacco production happens”.

For further information on the 2022 campaign, please find the WHO official press release [here](#).

What are the facts?

The WHO has launched a campaign page outlining the global facts relating to the environmental harms of tobacco. A summary of the facts are below, and the figures in full can be found [here](#). These figures have been comprised for this year's messaging.

Impact on our forests:

According to WHO:

- An estimated 1.5 billion hectares of (mainly tropical) forests have been lost worldwide since the 1970s due to tobacco, contributing to up to 20% of annual greenhouse gas increase.

Impact on our oceans and water supplies

According to WHO:

- It is now well established that cigarette filters (butts) are among the topmost polluting and toxic substances found in water bodies. It takes a cigarette butt approximately 10 years to decompose, allowing time for nicotine and chemicals to leach into surrounding ecosystems.
- One cigarette butt left to soak in a litre of water for 96 hours releases enough toxins to kill approximately half of the fish that are exposed to it.
- The entire life cycle of a single cigarette requires approximately 3.7 litres of water, this includes the growing, manufacturing, distribution, use, and disposal. The average smoker could save up to 74 litres of water per day if they quit smoking.

Impact on soil and farming

According to WHO:

- Fertile land that could be used to grow nutritious crops is used for tobacco. The soil depletion caused by tobacco growing further contributes to food insecurity and nutrition challenges.
- Rehabilitating the soil after tobacco farming is costly. Based on data collected in 2014, it would cost 20.6 million USD to reverse the negative effects on soil in Bangladesh caused by one year of tobacco farming.

Impact on littering

According to WHO:

- Globally, the approximate weight of waste generated annually from the overall tobacco life cycle is approximately 25 million metric tons.
- Almost all commercial cigarettes have a cellulose acetate filter attached. This additive is poorly degradable and a source of microplastic contamination for the environment.
- Approximately 4.5 trillion cigarette butts are discarded every year.
- There are over 7,000 chemicals released into the environment from the use of one cigarette – 70 of which are known carcinogens.

Impact on global population health

According to WHO:

- Tobacco kills up to half of its users globally.
- Tobacco kills more than 8 million people each year. More than 7 million of those deaths are the result of direct tobacco use while around 1.2 million are the result of non-smokers being exposed to second-hand smoke.
- Tobacco use is associated with substantial humanistic and economic burden. Smoking is associated with increased risk of cardiovascular disease, respiratory illness, cancer, diabetes, hypertension, and more.

Tobacco's impact on Wales

- Smoking is the largest single cause of avoidable and premature death in Wales^{1 2 3}.
- More than 7 in 10 lung cancer cases in the UK are caused by smoking⁴.
- Lung cancer is the most common cause of cancer death in Wales^{5 6}.
- In Wales, smoking is responsible for around 3,100 cases of cancer each year⁷.
- In 2018 alone, around 5,600 deaths in people aged 35 and over and 28,000 admissions to hospital were attributable to smoking in Wales⁸.
- Smoking costs the NHS in Wales an estimated £302 million each year⁹.
- According to the latest Marine Conservation Society's Great British Beach Clean survey, in 2021, Welsh beaches held the highest amount of littered cigarette butts in Great Britain. For more information, see [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

¹ Welsh Government . [A SMOKE-FREE WALES - Our Long Term Tobacco Control Strategy for Wales \(gov.wales\)](#) 2021

² Public Health Wales. [Health in Wales | New evidence shows that smoking remains the biggest cause of preventable ill health in Wales](#) 2019

³ National Survey for Wales [National Survey for Wales 2018-19: adult smoking and e-cigarette use \(gov.wales\)](#) 2018

⁴ Cancer Research UK. [How does smoking cause cancer?](#). 2021

⁵ Public Health Wales. [Cancer mortality in Wales, 2002 - 2021 - Public Health Wales \(nhs.wales\)](#). 2022

⁶ Public Health Wales. [Cancer mortality statistics by cancer type in Wales, 2001-2017](#). 2018

⁷ Brown, KF et al. [The fraction of cancer attributable to modifiable risk factors in England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and the United Kingdom in 2015](#). 2018

⁸ Welsh Government [Ambition to make Wales smoke-free by 2030 - as smoking remains the leading cause of premature deaths | GOV.WALES](#) 2021

⁹ Welsh Government . [A SMOKE-FREE WALES - Our Long Term Tobacco Control Strategy for Wales \(gov.wales\)](#) 2021

How can my organisation get involved with WNTD 2022?

Global campaign materials

The World Health Organisation has created a suite of campaign materials, which can be downloaded [here](#). WHO campaign materials include social media tiles, posters, and web banners. All materials have been created to help organisations across the globe to voice the annual campaign.

National campaign materials and ASH Cymru

This year, ASH Cymru will utilise the WNTD environmental theme to highlight how tobacco can impact our surroundings in Wales, and on a wider global scale. The organisation will also use this theme to voice how tobacco harms public health in Wales, while signposting the national smoking cessation service: [Help Me Quit](#).

ASH Cymru have created social media resources for output on the day, which are available [here](#). The materials are accompanied with suggested text (for Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram), which have been translated into Welsh. Feel free to utilise these materials to:

- Signpost help and support for smokers in Wales.
- Tailor WNTD output for Wales.
- Adapt materials for your own sector.

World Tobacco Day is an opportunity for organisations across Wales to voice tobacco's impact on their specific sector (health, environmental, and social). Each organisation will have their own approach to the campaign and will engage with it to varying degrees.

For further information (on materials, facts or quotes for press releases), please use the contact below.

For further information please contact:

[Simon Scheeres](#) | Policy & Public Affairs Manager | simon@ashwales.org.uk | 07841 571 516 |

About us:

ASH Wales Cymru is the leading organisation working for a smokefree Wales via strong tobacco control policy and country-wide campaigns. We work to raise awareness on the health, economic, and environmental effects of smoking by engaging with communities, young people, and partners across Wales.

NB: Please refer to ASH Wales as a health/tobacco control organisation.

Website www.ash.wales Facebook www.facebook.com/ASHCymru

Twitter www.twitter.com/ASHWalesCymru