

43 MILLION CHILDREN, AGED 13-15 YEARS, USED TOBACCO IN 2018, SAYS WHO

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World Health Organisation

For the first time, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has projected that the number of males using tobacco is on the decline, and noted that approximately 43 million children (aged 13-15 years) used tobacco in 2018. Among them were 14 million girls and 29 million boys.

Every year, more than 8 million people die from tobacco use. More than 7 million of those deaths are from direct tobacco use while around 1.2 million are due to non-smokers being exposed to second-hand smoke, noted the WHO, adding that most tobacco-related deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries, areas that are targets of intensive tobacco industry interference and marketing.

The findings, published recently in a new WHO report, demonstrate how government-led action can protect communities from tobacco, save lives, and prevent people from suffering tobacco-related harm.

“Declines in tobacco use amongst males mark a turning point in the fight against tobacco,” said Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General, WHO.

During nearly the past two decades, overall global tobacco use has fallen, from 1.397 billion persons in 2000 to 1.337 billion persons in 2018, according to the WHO global report on ‘Trends in Prevalence of Tobacco Use 2000-2025’, third edition.

The new report shows that the number of male tobacco users has stopped growing and is projected to decline by more than 1 million fewer male users come 2020 (or 1.091 billion) compared to 2018 levels, and 5 million less by 2025 (1.087 billion).

By 2020, WHO projects there will be 10 million fewer tobacco users, male and female, compared to 2018, and another 27 million less by 2025, amounting to 1.299 billion. Some 60% of countries have been experiencing a decline in tobacco use since 2010.

“Reductions in global tobacco use demonstrate that when governments introduce and strengthen their comprehensive evidence-based actions, they can protect the well-being of their citizens and communities,” said Ruediger Krech, Director, Health Promotion, WHO.

Despite such gains, progress in meeting the global target set by governments to cut tobacco use by 30% by 2025 remains off track. Based on current progress, a 23% reduction will be achieved by 2025. Only 32 countries are currently on track to reach the 30% reduction target.

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