

2024 OLYMPICS: THE RECORDS OF SHAME

THE TOBACCO INDUSTRY MUST NOT WIN ON ALL FRONTS

PRESS RELEASE | 31 July 2024

For the 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games, France is welcoming no fewer than 10,500 athletes¹. Through an awareness campaign, ACT-Alliance contre le tabac has chosen to put the spotlight on a record-breaker who holds numerous medals yet remains largely unknown to the public: **the tobacco industry**.

Responsible each year for **8 million deaths worldwide**², the **exploitation of 1.3 million children** in tobacco fields³, the dissemination of **4,500 billion cigarette butts** in nature⁴, a **social cost of 156 billion euros** for France only⁵, etc. **this champion accumulates records each more disgraceful than the next**.

In view of its harmful effects in all areas, the tobacco industry has no place in our world. To protect our children and our planet from this deadly business, **ACT is calling for an end to the sales of tobacco and nicotine products, beginning in 2032, to protect future generations**.



NE LAISSONS PAS L'INDUSTRIE DU TABAC
GAGNER SUR TOUS LES TERRAINS.

¹ Agence Nationale du Tourisme, Paris 2024 in figures: record-breaking games. October 2024. Available at: <https://www.france.fr/fr/article/lo-paris-2024-chiffres-cles/#329-epreuves-1>

² Global Burden of Disease Study, Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), 2019. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.6069/FVQE-GR75>

³ International Labour Organization, "Global estimates of child labour: Findings and trends, 2012-2016." 2017.

⁴ Root T, Cigarette butts are toxic plastic pollution. Should they be banned? Available from: <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/article/cigarettes-story-of-plastic>

⁵ Kopp P. The social cost of drugs: estimates for France in 2019. OFDT; 2023 July (Notes). Available at : Le coût social des drogues : estimation en France en 2019 | OFDT

Health, social, economic and environmental disaster: the sad records of the tobacco industry

While the tobacco industry ranks as the deadliest, it unscrupulously climbs to the top of the podium in many other areas:

- **In terms of public health**, the tobacco industry is the **leading cause of avoidable death** in the world⁶, causing more than **8 million deaths a year**². **Worldwide, 1.3 billion people are addicted to nicotine**⁷.
- **Regarding human rights**, cigarette manufacturers rely on children to sustain their profits. With **half of their consumers dying**⁷ from tobacco-related causes, these companies must continually replenish their customer base, employing marketing tactics to target younger audiences. In France, **200,000 minors take up smoking every year**⁸. Also, cigarette manufacturers exploit young people in the production process, **with 1.3 million children working in tobacco fields**³ worldwide.
- **As far as the environmental impact is concerned**, manufacturers are marketing ecotoxic bombs that are poisoning our planet for the long term. Every year, over **4,500 billion cigarette butts are discarded in nature**⁴, contaminating soil and water with more than 7,000 toxic chemicals⁹. Cigarette manufacturers' carbon footprint extends beyond waste, since with the production of their products is causing deforestation, wasting water resources and requiring the use of pesticides.
- **As far as our economy is concerned** - and contrary to popular belief - **tobacco does not benefit public finances**. In France, while the State receives €16 billion in revenue every year, **the social cost of tobacco amounts to €156 billion a year**⁵. This equates an annual cost of €2,300 per inhabitant¹⁰, including smokers, non-smokers and infants.

Despite the heavy costs borne by society, the tobacco industry is prospering with annual **profits of €51 billion**¹¹, it spends millions on lobbying (**€20 million in Europe**¹²) to hinder public health policies and measures against it.

Ending the sales of tobacco and nicotine products: a vital step towards a smoke-free generation

Given its harmful effects in all areas, the tobacco industry demonstrates that it is unlike any other industry and has no place in our society.

To protect the health of future generations and our planet, **ACT is calling for the gradual banning of tobacco and nicotine products**. This bold measure aligns with the government's measure of a smoke-free generation by 2032, meaning that all people born after 2014 would no longer be able to buy tobacco products.

Far from being utopian, a similar measure is currently being considered in the United Kingdom through a bill that aims to completely ban the sale of cigarettes to people born after 1^{er} January 2009 and who were under 15 years old in 2023.

⁶ WHO global report: mortality attributable to tobacco [Internet]. WHO; 2012. Available at: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241564434>

⁷ WHO global report on trends in prevalence of tobacco use 2000-2025, third edition [Internet]. WHO; 2019. Available from: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/who-global-report-on-trends-in-prevalence-of-tobacco-use-2000-2025-third-edition>

⁸ Quitting smoking and not relapsing: the 2014 HAS recommendation. Haute Autorité de Santé [Internet]. 2014. Available at: https://www.has-sante.fr/jcms/c_1719643/fr/arreter-de-fumer-et-ne-pas-rechuter-la-recommandation-2014-de-la-has

⁹ Government of Canada CC for OH and S. CCOHS: Environmental Tobacco Smoke (ETS): General Information and Health Effects [Internet]. 2024. Available at: https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/psychosocial/ets_ets_health.html

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Branston JR. Industry profits continue to drive the tobacco epidemic: A new endgame for tobacco control? Tob Prev Cessat. 2021 Jun 10;7:45. Available at [Industry profits continue to drive the tobacco epidemic: A new endgame for tobacco control? - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/37111111/)

¹² "Declared presence of the tobacco industry in the European Union's decision-making environment", Smoke Free Partnership, April 2024.

"The records of shame": a public awareness campaign



To illustrate the disastrous consequences of the tobacco industry, **ACT has chosen to personify it under a single persona: Nick O'Tine.**

With more medals than Michel Phelps, Nick O'Tine is a disgraceful champion with a sinister record in health, the economy, social affairs and the environment. Throughout the Olympic and Paralympic Games, this persona will be a focal point in public discussions, media coverage, and social networks.

The campaign was launched during an exclusive live broadcast on journalist **Samuel Etienne's Twitch channel** on July 30th. It will then be expanded and amplified nationwide, running until the start of the 2024 Paralympic Games. The campaign will include a comprehensive 360° communications strategy, featuring **Nick O'Tine's active presence on social media**, a nationwide **poster campaign, press insertions, and an influencer strategy.** A case study compiling all elements of the campaign will also be produced and shared on social networks.

Through this cynical person, ACT aims to deliver a powerful message: **the tobacco industry must not win on all fronts.**

About ACT-Alliance contre le tabac

ACT-Alliance contre le tabac is a public interest counter-lobby that has been advocating for a tobacco- and nicotine-free world for over 30 years. ACT conducts awareness and advocacy campaigns to expose the strategies and manipulations of the world's deadliest industry: the tobacco industry.

In addition to uniting the forces of more than 20 associations, ACT is mobilising decision-makers, civil society, the media and public opinion to achieve the first smoke-free generation in France by 2032.

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