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Papers

Mortality in relation to smoking: 40 years' observations on male British doctors

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Abstract

Objective : To assess the hazards associated with long term use of tobacco.

Design : Prospective study of mortality in relation to smoking habits assessed in 1951 and again from 20 years to time thereafter, with causes sought of deaths over 40 years (to 1991). Continuation of a study that was last reported after 20 years' follow up (1951-71).

Subjects : 34 439 British male doctors who replied to a postal questionnaire in 1951, of whom 10 000 had died during the first 20 years and another 10 000 have died during the second 20 years.

Results - Excess mortality associated with smoking was about twice as extreme during the second half of the study as it had been during the first half. The death rate ratios during 1971-91 (comparing continuing cigarette smokers with lifelong non-smokers) were approximately threefold at ages 45-64 and twofold at ages 65-84. The excess mortality was chiefly from diseases that can be caused by smoking. Positive associations with smoking were confirmed for death from cancers of the mouth, oesophagus, pharynx, larynx, lung, pancreas, and bladder; from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and other respiratory diseases; from vascular diseases; from peptic ulcer; and (perhaps because of confounding by personality and alcohol use) from cirrhosis, suicide, and poisoning. A negative association was confirmed with death from Parkinson's disease. Those who stopped smoking before middle age subsequently avoided almost all of the excess risk that they would otherwise have suffered, but even those who stopped smoking in middle age were subsequently at substantially less risk than those who continued to smoke.

Conclusion : Results from the first 20 years of this study, and of other studies at that time, substantially underestimated the hazards of long term use of tobacco. It now seems that about half of all regular cigarette smokers will eventually be killed by their habit.

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Clinical implications

- Clinical implications
- Observations on the mortality of British doctors with known smoking habits have

been reported over a 20 year period (1951-71); now the study period has been extended to 40 years (1951-91) and covers over 20 000 deaths

- Overall, the excess **mortality** of cigarette smokers was approximately twice as extreme **in** the second half as **in** the first half of this study
- Twenty five causes of death were significantly associated **with** cigarette **smoking** (24 positively and one negatively)
- Even **in** middle age stopping **smoking** substantially **increased** the subsequent expectation of life - and those who stopped before 35 years of age had an expectation of life that was not significantly different from that of non-smokers

Introduction

After the two large case-control studies of 1950 that showed lung cancer to be closely related to **smoking**,^{1,2} prospective studies were needed that could determine which other diseases were also related to the habit. **In** 1951 all the doctors **in** Britain were asked what they smoked. Most of the 40 000 who replied were male, and a prospective study was started of the causes of death that subsequently occurred among them. The early results confirmed the strong **relation** between **smoking** and death from lung cancer,³ and found that **smoking** was also related to **mortality** from many other diseases.*RF 4-6* Deaths have continued to be recorded and, from time to time, further questionnaires have been sent to the survivors. The last report on these men was of the results after 20 years.⁶ We now report the results of following them for 40 years to 1991 and compare the apparent effects of cigarette **smoking** on **mortality** from all causes during the first and during the second halves of the study. We report also the **mortality** during the entire 40 year period from 48 specific causes of death, or groups of causes, **in** men **with** different **smoking** habits, and the effects of stopping **smoking** at different ages, and we discuss the extent to which the effects of **smoking** on certain causes of death are positively or negatively confounded by the effects of alcohol.

The hazards of tobacco have been documented by many other studies, which have been summarised by the Royal College of Physicians,^{7,8} the United States Surgeon General,*RF 9-11* and the **International** Agency for Research on Cancer.^{12,13} Some prospective studies have been far larger than ours; ours, however, has been continued for more than twice as long as any other, which gives it some special **interest**, for long continued cigarette use is particularly hazardous,*RF 14-16* and cigarette use by young men became widespread earlier **in** Britain than **in** most other countries. During the first half (1951-71) of this study, therefore, the lung cancer rates **in** middle aged men were higher **in** Britain than anywhere else **in** the world, and during the second half (1971-91), the lung cancer rates **in** men **in** old age **in** Britain were among the highest. Hence, a study of **smoking** and death among British men during these years may be particularly **informative** about the hazards of long continued cigarette use.

Methods

Questionnaires

At the end of October 1951, questionnaires were sent to all the men and women whose names were on the British medical register and who resided **in** the United **Kingdom**. Simple questions were asked about their **smoking** habits, and replies sufficiently complete to be used were received from

6194 women and 34 439 men. When last reported,⁶ one woman had been mistakenly classified as male, until diagnosed as dying of uterine cancer. The relatively few female smokers had not, in general, smoked as long or as intensively as the male smokers, so that they do not provide direct information about the effects of long term smoking.¹⁴ The present report is therefore restricted to the 40 year follow up of the men. Inquiries about changes in smoking habits and some further details about them were made of the men in 1957, 1966, 1972, 1978, and 1990; on the last two occasions, inquiries were also made about alcohol consumption and some other personal characteristics. Detailed accounts of the questions asked and of the response rates to the earlier questionnaires have been given previously.^{3,5,6,17} Replies to our last questionnaire, which was sent out at the start of the 40th year of the study, were received from 10 807 (94% of those not known to have died), and information was obtained about changes in their smoking and drinking habits, their use of aspirin, and the previous occurrence of any vascular disease.

Follow up

In 1971, information was obtained about the vital status and place of residence of 99.7% of the men who had responded to the 1951 questionnaire; 10 074 were known to have died and 2459 to be living abroad. Those who lived abroad have not been followed since, nor have 218 others (1% of those not known to have died) if they then asked to be excluded from the study (102); if they had been struck off the medical register for unprofessional conduct (15); or if, before November 1971, contact with them had been lost (101). Of the remainder, 10 449 are known to have died before 1 November 1991; 118 have been censored at the date they were last known to be alive (71 known to have emigrated and 47 with whom contact has been lost); 10 615 replied to our questionnaire after 1 November 1990 and are thought to have been alive a year later; and 506 who did not reply to the questionnaire were traced alive after 1 November 1991.

Deaths have been monitored in several overlapping ways. The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys was to notify us automatically when members of the cohort died in Britain. In addition, we monitored the obituary columns of the BMJ and the Medical Directory, and we corresponded directly with the doctors themselves, with people who lived at their last known addresses, or with others who knew them. Our final round of correspondence began in November 1990, so some of the deaths that occurred in the 40th year of the study (November 1990 to October 1991) will have been missed. Judged by the number at risk at the start of this final year (11 652), the crude death rate in that year ($489/11\ 652=4.20/1000$), and the death rates in the previous four years when standardised to the age distribution of the 1990 survivors (4.61, 4.61, 4.65, 4.71; mean= 1.1×4.20), the death rate in the final year should have been about 10% higher than we recorded (yielding about 543 deaths instead of 489). The deficiency has, therefore, been allowed for, when necessary, by multiplying the mortality recorded in the last year by 1.1.

Causes of death

For the vast majority of deaths, including many of those that occurred abroad, information about the underlying cause was obtained from official death certificates. In other instances, when no official information could be obtained, the cause was given in an obituary or described by a relative. In 217 instances (1% of all deaths) the cause remains unknown, commonly because the death occurred in a country in which information about the medical cause of death is not publicly available. Causes were classified according to the seventh revision of the International Classification of Diseases¹⁸ if the death occurred during the first 27 years (1951-1978) and

according to the ninth revision of the international classification¹⁹ if it occurred during the last 13 years (1 November 1978 to 1991). Special inquiry was made about the evidence for any deaths attributed to lung cancer in the first half of the study, but this rarely led to revision of the diagnosis,⁶ and the certified causes are used for the present analysis. Exceptionally, deaths attributed to pleural mesothelioma were always separated from lung cancer and a special category was created for deaths that were thought likely to be due to pulmonary heart disease (see below).

Statistical methods

In calculating death rates for different categories of smokers we have assumed that questionnaires were returned soon after they were sent out (as the great majority were). Deaths that occurred in the year that a repeat questionnaire was sent out were related to the reply to the previous questionnaire. (This helps limit the effects of disease on smoking.) Otherwise non-smokers and continuing smokers were analysed in the category in which they last described themselves. The same is true for former smokers, except that they were classed as having stopped smoking for progressively longer periods as each year passed. The mortality attributed to continuing smokers has therefore been slightly attenuated by including with the deaths and the person years at risk some deaths and some years at risk when the individuals had recently become former smokers. Although in principle the mortality among non-smokers might likewise have been slightly increased by including with the non-smokers a few individuals who had recently become smokers, in practice the distortion will be negligible, as the proportion of non-smokers in 1951 who subsequently started smoking is small (see below), most of those who did start soon stopped, and the life threatening effects of smoking generally take many years to appear.

Mortality has been calculated separately for (i) lifelong non-smokers (that is, men who have never reported having smoked as much as one cigarette or 1 g of tobacco a day for as long as one year) and for men who, to the best of our knowledge, have habitually smoked (ii) only cigarettes, (iii) only pipes or cigars, or (iv) at times both cigarettes and tobacco in other forms. All analyses of non-smokers and of smokers refer to these categories, except where categories (iii) and (iv) have been combined as "other smokers." It is probable, however, that some of the men described as smoking only cigarettes in 1951, particularly those in the older age groups, may have smoked pipes or cigars at an earlier period, as inquiries about the way tobacco was smoked previously were not made until 1957 and were then made only of men smoking pipes or cigars in 1951. Consequently, men classified as smokers only of cigarettes during the second half of the study may have had more prolonged cigarette use (and hence greater hazard) than men of similar age who were similarly classified during the first year.

All mortality rates have been standardised for age and calendar period by calculating the number of deaths that would have been expected in each five year age group and each calendar year in each smoking category if the smoking habit had had no effect on mortality, summing the corresponding observed and expected numbers, and multiplying the ratio of the two numbers by the total death rate for the ages and period covered. Where differences are said to be "non-significant" this implies that the two sided P value is greater than 0.05, without any adjustment for the multiplicity of comparisons.

Results

Changes in smoking habits

The **smoking** habits of those who replied **in** 1951 and survived to the end of 1990 are contrasted, **in** table I, **with** the **smoking** habits of these subjects about 40 years later. Partly because of the disproportionate attrition of the smokers, but chiefly because most doctors who smoked **in** 1951 had ceased to do so, the overall proportion of smokers among these 40 year survivors was reduced from 62% to 18%, the proportion of cigarette smokers was reduced from 53% to 7%, and the proportion of smokers of cigarettes only (that is, who were not also **smoking** cigars or pipes) was reduced from 41% to 6%. These changes were not simply an accompaniment of **aging**, as they were much greater than the differences seen **in** 1951 between one age group and another (as is shown **in** table II), and occurred to much the same extent **in** each age group **in** 1951: for example, the proportion who smoked cigarettes only was reduced from 37% to 5% **in** men **initially** under 25 years of age and from 33% to 2% **in** men **initially** aged 45 years or more. Among the non-smokers **in** 1951 who replied **in** 1990, 11% had started **smoking** at some time **during** the **intervening** 40 years but most (65%) had subsequently stopped, and four fifths of those who had **continued** smoked only pipes or cigars **in** 1990. Similarly, very few of those who were former smokers **in** 1951 had started **again** and **continued** to smoke **in** 1990; **again**, of the 5% who did, almost all smoked only pipes or cigars. It cannot be assumed, however, that these changes are typical of all male doctors of the same ages, as only two thirds of the doctors **in** the United **Kingdom** responded to our 1951 questionnaire, those who did so smoked somewhat less than the non-respondents **in** 1951,⁵ and the knowledge that they were the subjects of a study of the fatal effects of tobacco may itself have **influenced** their habits over the next 40 years. Those who did smoke cigarettes reported **smoking** much the same amount at each age at the **beginning** of both the first and second halves of the study (table II).

- **Smoking** habits of doctors who replied to 1951 and 1990-1 questionnaires. Values are numbers (percentages)

habit	Non-smoker, 1990-1	Former smoker, 1990-1	Current smoker, 1990-1*			
			Cigarette only	Cigarette and other	Pipe or cigar	All habits, 1951
er, 1951	2361	198	17	4	86	2666 (25)
smoker, 1951	0	1374	10	3	66	1453 (13)
smoker, 1951*						
tes only	0	3355	535	47	446	4383 (41)
tes and other	0	897	74	31	308	1310 (12)
r cigar	0	695	16	2	287	1000 (9)
ts	2361 (22)	6519 (60)	652 (6)	87 (1)	1193 (11)	10812(dagger) (100)

defined in response to respective questionnaires; apart from the
tion between non-smokers (who, by **defini**tion, had never smoked
y) and former smokers, these do not take account of past habits.
) **Includ**ing 197 men who replied but died later **in** the 40th year of the

TABLE II - Change **in** amount smoked **with** age (cigarette smokers)

Average No of cigarettes
smoked daily: men who
currently smoked only

cigarettes in 1951 and 1971		
Age (years)	1951	1971
35-44	16.9	
45-54	19.3	18.2
55-64	19.7	19.1
65-74	18.2	18.6
75-84	14.7	16.6
>=85	10.6	14.4

Mortality by **smoking** habit and cause

Pipe and cigar smokers who had never regularly smoked cigarettes have been examined previously.⁶ Their **mortality** from the causes that were classified as closely related to **smoking** (cancers of the lung, other respiratory sites, and oesophagus; chronic obstructive lung disease; pulmonary tuberculosis; pulmonary heart disease; non-syphilitic aortic aneurysm; hernia) was found to be less than **in** cigarette smokers, though greater than **in** non-smokers, while their **mortality** from other causes was similar to that **in** non-smokers. For simplicity, we now present **mortality** rates **in** detail only for cigarette smokers who had not also regularly smoked tobacco **in** other forms and have grouped the remain**ing** smokers together as "other current smokers" or "other former smokers."

Mortality rates have been analysed separately for 54 specific causes of death, or groups of causes, and for a 55th group comprising those deaths for which we were unable to discover a cause. They are shown by **smoking** habit **in** tables III-V for all the 48 causes or groups of causes that were **individually** responsible for more than 50 deaths.

Table III shows the rates for 17 types of cancer. Because of the paucity of numbers for some **individual** types, we have grouped together cancers of the mouth (other than the salivary glands), pharynx (other than the nasopharynx), and larynx, all of which were regarded by the **International** Agency for Research on Cancer¹² as diseases that can be caused by **smoking**, into one group of "upper respiratory cancers." These, together **with** four of the five other types regarded by the agency as able to be caused by **smoking** (cancers of the lung, oesophagus, bladder, and pancreas) were **in** the present study all clearly related to **smoking**. Three types (cancers of the upper respiratory sites, lung, and oesophagus) were particularly closely related, **with** the **mortality in** heavy cigarette smokers at least 15 times that **in** non-smokers; two other types (cancer of the bladder and pancreas) were about three times more common **in** heavy cigarette smokers than **in** non-smokers. Too few deaths (**nine**) were specifically attributed to cancer of the renal pelvis (the remain**ing** type regarded by the agency as able to be caused by **smoking**) for useful analysis. Several studies have suggested that four other types of cancer, which **in** our study each caused more than 50 deaths, might sometimes be caused by **smoking**. One (cancer of the stomach) showed a statistically significant **relation with smoking**, and another (myeloid leukaemia) showed a marginally significant **relation with** the amount smoked. The two others (cancer of the kidney, which **includes** here renal pelvis, and cancer of the liver) showed, **in** this study, a weak positive and non-significant **relation with smoking**. Six of the other seven specified types of cancer that we examined also showed no significant **relation** (cancers of the colon and prostate, lymphomas, multiple myeloma, other leukaemias, and a group of all other specified types of cancer), but the seventh (cancer of the

rectum) did, as it had done **in** our previous report.⁶ A moderate but statistically significant **relation** was observed for cancers of unknown origin, as was to be expected, as a proportion of them is likely to have arisen **in** the lung.

from neoplastic diseases

Annual mortality per 100 000 men								
Non- smokers ever smoked (early)	Cigarette smokers					Other smokers		
	Current No of cigarettes							
	Former	Current	1-14	15-24	>=25	Former	Current	N/X/S
1	3	24	12	18	48	8	15	6.6
4	58	209	105	208	355	59	112	17.4
4	19	30	17	33	45	14	23	5.5
6	23	35	30	29	49	11	24	3.4
3	21	30	29	29	37	13	21	3.0
6	25	43	40	46	44	23	30	2.7
7	9	11	17	3	15	9	6	0.7
9	11	13	13	14	12	11	16	1.8
4	8	7	3	9	10	8	8	1.2
6	50	46	49	39	52	55	47	0.8
0	15	23	13	19	44	17	24	3.5
8	58	67	54	73	84	54	64	-0.3
4	9	12	16	8	13	8	10	-0.3
6	15	16	15	22	7	16	17	0.3
1	8	9	5	12	10	9	5	-1.6
9	39	40	44	33	45	47	31	-0.8
5	15	30	18	42	30	10	21	3.3
5	384	656	482	645	936	369	474	14.2
4)	(885)	(1139)	(317)	(416)	(406)	(565)	(1081)	

from a particular disease the
zero and a standard deviation of
3.29 correspond to P values (two

ers of any type of tobacco, current

smokers, smokers of 1-14, 15-24, and 25

Table IV shows **mortality** similarly divided for 18 diseases (or groups of diseases) of the respiratory and circulatory systems; respiratory tuberculosis is **included** here rather than **with** **infections**. Chronic obstructive lung disease (**with** which are classed all deaths attributed to "chronic bronchitis" or "emphysema") shows a **relation** almost as strong as that for cancer of the lung. Pulmonary tuberculosis continues to show a moderately close **relation with smoking**, but **includes** data for only **nine** more deaths than were recorded **in** the first 20 years of the study. A weak but statistically highly significant **relation with smoking** was observed for pneumonia, which was much the same at all ages, possibly because of an **increased** risk associated **with** the presence of chronic obstructive lung disease. Although this **relation** is weak it is of some importance because of the substantial number of deaths attributed to pneumonia (4% of the total). The lack of a clear **relation** of current tobacco use **with** death from asthma is not **inconsistent with** the belief that

smoking aggravates the disease. Asthma **mortality in** all who had ever been smokers (combining current and former smokers) was more than double that **in** non-smokers (8.3 against 3.7 per 100 000 per year), and the relatively high rate **in** former smokers suggests that the development of potentially life threatening asthma caused many smokers to stop **smoking**, but they still remained at somewhat **increased** risk of death from the disease.

Habitats from respiratory and vascular diseases									
Annual mortality per 100 000 men									Standard deviation
Non-smokers (never smoked regularly)	Cigarette smokers					Other smokers		N/X/S (days)	
	Former	Current	Current No of cigarettes			Former	Current		
			1-14	15-24	>=25				
(542)	4	8	11	7	9	20	8	4	1.1
	10	57	127	86	112	225	40	51	9.9
	71	90	138	113	154	169	94	85	3.3
	4	11	7	6	8	6	9	7	0.4
	19	28	30	26	31	33	24	18	0.1
	107	192	313	237	310	471	176	164	8.2
	(131)	(455)	(490)	(161)	(170)	(159)	(290)	(392)	
	0	7	10	5	10	21	3	10	3.7
	572	678	892	802	892	1025	676	653	7.5
	61	88	125	122	109	173	96	85	3.5
	15	33	62	38	74	81	22	43	6.9
	22	18	40	31	38	72	28	23	1.9
	32	33	44	28	51	60	37	33	1.1
	93	95	122	93	150	143	100	106	2.4
	59	63	81	74	81	92	69	58	1.0
	7	10	15	10	12	24	4	6	1.4
(25)	94	110	164	167	145	188	101	103	3.2
	9	11	14	17	11	14	13	9	0.5
	15	10	15	15	20	8	17	13	-0.1
(5)	58	63	71	60	82	74	62	59	0.7
	1037	1221	1643	1447	1671	1938	1226	1201	10.5
	(1304)	(2761)	(2870)	(1026)	(1045)	(799)	(1878)	(2986)	

mortality from a particular disease the
station zero and a standard deviation of
7, and 3.29 correspond to P values (two
er smokers of any type of tobacco, current
S=non-smokers, smokers of 1-14, 15-24, and 25

Pulmonary heart disease was the circulatory cause of death that was most closely related to **smoking**, which is hardly surprising. (We have **included in** this category deaths attributed to myocardial degeneration and congestive heart failure that were associated **with** chronic obstructive lung disease as well as the few deaths specifically certified as due to pulmonary heart disease.) Next most closely related was aortic aneurysm, **with the mortality in** heavy cigarette smokers more than five times that **in** non-smokers. Peripheral vascular disease is another important vascular condition

that can be caused by **smoking**, but although it causes a great deal of disability, it rarely causes loss of life. **In** this study the number of deaths attributed to it (28) was under 50, and hence did not justify a separate table entry. (But, although based on small numbers, the **mortality** from this disease among **continuing** cigarette smokers was four times that **in** non-smokers and three times that **in** former cigarette smokers.)

The relatively weak proportional **relation** observed for the common vascular diseases, ischaemic heart disease, myocardial degeneration (a condition that is **being** diagnosed much less often now than **in** the first 20 years of the study; the category **includes** all deaths classified as No 422 **in** ICD-7 or 429 **in** ICD-9), and for the various forms of cerebrovascular disease belie their absolute importance, particularly **in** middle age. Although the overall **mortality in** even the heaviest cigarette smokers (25 or more a day) was only about twice that **in** non-smokers, this ratio is more extreme **in** middle than **in** old age and the great number of deaths attributed to vascular causes (more than half of the total) means that the absolute excess **mortality** from vascular diseases **in** cigarette smokers was more than double that attributed to the cancers of the respiratory and upper digestive tracts that are so much more closely related to **smoking**. Of all the categories of vascular disease examined, only two **minor** categories (rheumatic heart disease and venous thrombosis) and the heterogeneous group of "other cardiovascular diseases" bore no significant **relation** to **smoking**.

Table V shows similar data for 13 other causes of death and for unknown causes. Two conditions stand out: cirrhosis of the liver, for which the **mortality** was five times as great **in** **continuing** cigarette smokers as **in** non-smokers, and five times as great **in** heavy as **in** light cigarette smokers, and peptic ulcer, for which the corresponding excesses were each about threefold. Both these conditions were highly significantly related to **smoking** ($P < 0.001$). Seven of the other categories also showed higher **mortality** rates **in** cigarette smokers than **in** non-smokers and **in** heavy cigarette smokers than **in** light, but the **relation with smoking** was clearly significant only for a heterogeneous group of "all other diseases," suicide, and poisoning. Hernia, which we had classed previously as closely related to **smoking**,⁶ is **included in** "other digestive diseases" as only 25 deaths were attributed to it. The **mortality** from hernia was higher **in** current smokers than **in** non-smokers and **in** heavy than **in** light cigarette smokers, but the trends were not statistically significant and the **relation** was less close **in** the second than **in** the first half⁶ of the study. Deaths attributed to "other violence" (but not deaths from traffic accidents or falls) were also related to **smoking**, but less clearly so than deaths from suicide and poisoning.

from causes that are not neoplastic,
causes

Annual mortality per 100 000 men								
Non- smokers (never smoked regularly)	Cigarette smokers					Other smokers		N/X/
	Current No of cigarettes					Former	Current	
	Former	Current	1-14	15-24	>=25			
8	12	24	11	33	34	12	15	3.4
6	15	32	13	22	68	14	16	5.0
25	32	43	38	47	47	28	32	2.2
16	13	24	21	27	25	15	14	1.1
23	19	32	32	31	36	29	17	-0.1

20	22	15	22	6	18	18	8	-3.1
9	10	16	18	21	4	14	7	0.1
64	79	98	89	90	124	81	72	2.0
170	202	286	242	277	382	212	182	3.9
(225)	(458)	(489)	(169)	(171)	(149)	(330)	(429)	
23	29	37	26	33	57	25	34	2.8
7	9	19	15	16	31	10	12	3.4
17	12	16	21	7	22	18	12	-0.7
8	12	13	17	10	11	7	12	1.5
17	22	28	23	23	46	20	18	1.3
72	84	114	103	90	172	79	88	3.8
(114)	(165)	(254)	(81)	(80)	(93)	(95)	(196)	
17	29	34	33	30	41	16	24	2.3
(27)	(78)	(38)	(13)	(13)	(12)	(29)	(45)	
1706	2113	3038	2542	3004	3928	2078	2130	18.9
2215)	(4802)	(5280)	(1767)	(1895)	(1618)	(3187)	(5039)	

from a particular disease the
a zero and a standard deviation of
3.29 correspond to P values (two
sided) of any type of tobacco, current
smokers, smokers of 1-14, 15-24, and 25

One disease showed a statistically significant negative **relation with smoking**: namely, parkinsonism. **Mortality** from this condition was higher **in** former smokers than **in** continuing smokers, presumably because the effects of the disease made **smoking** difficult, but it was almost the same **in** former smokers and non-smokers, so that the annual **mortality in** ever smokers (16 per 100 000) was lower than **in** lifelong non-smokers (20 per 100 000), supporting earlier evidence that **smoking inhibits**, the development (or the progress) of the disease.²⁰ No useful **information** was obtained to test the hypotheses that two other diseases might be negatively related to **smoking** - ulcerative colitis²¹ and, more speculatively, Alzheimer's disease²² - as only eight deaths were attributed to ulcerative colitis and 19 to Alzheimer's disease. It may be noted, however, that the annual **mortality** from dementia (regarded as **including** all deaths classified under ICD 7th revision Nos 304-306 and 9th revision Nos 290 and 331), about half of which is probably attributable to Alzheimer's disease, was similar **in** non-smokers (**nine** per 100 000) and ever smokers (11 per 100 000).

Mortality by smoking habit, by age

No death was observed **in** men under 25 years of age and the total number observed at 25-34 years of age was so small (67) that **mortality** rates **in** different **smoking** categories were subject to large random variation. We can, therefore, usefully compare age specific **mortality in** detailed **smoking** categories only from about 35 years of age upwards, although it may be noted that under 35 years of age the **mortality** was higher **in** current smokers (1.5 per 100 000 per year, based on 35 deaths) than **in** non-smokers (1.1 per 100 000 per year, based on 17 deaths). No new members were recruited to the study after 1951, so the **mortality** at 35-44 years of age was observed almost entirely **in** the first

two decades (November 1951 to October 1971) and **mortality** during the fourth decade of the study (November 1981 to October 1991) will have contributed materially only to ages 55 and over.

The data **in** table VI show that, for the 40 year period of the study as a whole, the overall **mortality** was twice as great **in** continuing cigarette smokers as **in** lifelong non-smokers throughout middle and early old age. The proportional excess **in** cigarette smokers decreased, however, **in** later life, and the ratio was reduced to 1.6:1 at 75-84 years of age and 1.3:1 at ages 85 years and over. Some of the decrease can be attributed to a reduction **with** age **in** the average amounts smoked by continuing smokers (shown **in** table II), some to the reduction **in** the proportion of deaths from cancer (from 24% of all deaths at ages 65-74 years to 11% at ages 85 years and over), and some to the progressive reduction **in** the ratio of the **mortality in** cigarette smokers to that **in** non-smokers that is seen for deaths from cardiovascular disease (from 2.1 at ages under 65 through 1.7 and 1.4, to 1.2 at ages 85 years and over). How the ratios change **with** age for the diseases most closely related to **smoking** is unclear, as the numbers of deaths **in** non-smokers **in** each age group are too small to provide stable estimates.

VI - Total **mortality** by **smoking** habits and age at death

Annual mortality per 1000 men*						
Age at death (years)	Non-smokers (never smoked regularly)	Former	Cigarette smokers only		Other smokers	
			Current		Former	Current
			All	>=25/day		
	(1.6) (dagger)	(2.0)	2.8	(5.1)	(2.8)	(1.6)
	4.0	4.9	8.1	10.8	(4.8)	5.5
	9.5	13.4	20.3	26.0	11.2	12.5
	23.7	31.6	47.0	60.7	30.5	32.4
	67.4	77.3	106.4	117.0	77.6	79.4
	168.6	179.7	218.7	(284.7)	186.1	179.8
ages, including under 35 years	17.1	21.1	30.4	39.3	20.8	21.3
(of deaths)	(2115)	(4802)	(5280)	(1618)	(3187)	(5039)

Standardised for age **in** five year age groups up to age >=95.

(dagger) Parentheses **indicate** rates based on fewer than 100 deaths. The coefficient of variation of each rate is approximately equal to the **inverse** of the square root of the number of deaths on which that rate is based; hence, rates based on fewer than 100 deaths have a coefficient of variation that is 0.1 (10%).

Actuarial survival by **smoking** habit

As the observations have been made over such a long time, it has been possible to follow many men **into** their 10th - and a few even **into** their 11th - decade of life. It has, therefore, been possible to calculate "actuarial" survival curves for different categories of smoker not only throughout middle age but also **into** old age, **with** results that are reasonably reliable up to at least 85 years of age. The results from 35 years of age are shown for non-smokers and continuing cigarette smokers **in** figure 1, and for non-smokers and continuing light, moderate, and heavy cigarette smokers **in** figure 2. The most notable differences are **in** the proportions who die between 35 and 69 years of age, which

vary from 20% **in** non-smokers to 41% **in** cigarette smokers as a whole and to 50% **in** those who smoke 25 or more cigarettes a day. The absolute differences between the survival probabilities of smokers and of non-smokers become less **in** extreme old age, simply because almost nobody survives beyond 100. Even after middle age, however, the differences between smokers and non-smokers **in** their annual **mortality** rates are quite large: of those alive at 70, the probability of surviving to 85 is 41% **in** non-smokers against 21% **in** cigarette smokers. The loss of expectation of life shown by these figures is substantial. For cigarette smokers, the age by which half have died is eight years less than for non-smokers, while for heavy cigarette smokers it is 10 years less than for non-smokers.



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FIG 1 - Overall survival after age 35 among cigarette smokers and non-smokers: life table estimates, based on age specific death rates for the entire 40 year period. (Note that, at 1990 British death rates, 97% of male **infants** would survive from birth to 35 years of age)



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FIG 2 - Overall survival (as fig 1), but **with** cigarette smokers subdivided by amount they were **smoking** at the time their last questionnaire was returned

Assessment of the effects of stopping **smoking** is complicated by the fact that people stop for different reasons, some stopping (particularly **in** old age or late middle age) because they are ill; conversely, some may, because they are ill, specifically choose not to stop, **thinking** that it is too late for any benefit from so doing.⁶ Most of those who stopped **in** the doctors' cohort are likely to have

done so not because of an established illness but to avoid long term effects of **smoking** or to set an example,²³ and their state of health at the time they stopped (particularly if they stopped **in** early middle age or before) should not have distorted materially the pattern of their long term survival. The pattern will, however, be substantially distorted for a few causes of death that are preceded by long term irreversible morbidity, most notably, chronic obstructive lung disease.^{6,24}

The survival of cigarette smokers who stopped at different ages is compared **in** figures 3 and 4 **with** that of non-smokers and **with** that of those who **continued** to smoke. Those who stopped before 35 years of age (at a mean of 29 years) had a pattern of survival that did not differ significantly from that of non-smokers (fig [3](#); two tailed $P > 0.05$). For those who stopped later (fig [4](#)) the survival was **intermediate** between that of non-smokers and that of **continuing** smokers; but even those who stopped at 65-74 years of age (mean 71 years) had age specific **mortality** rates beyond age 75 years appreciably lower than those who **continued**. The benefit of stopping **in** late middle age or old age is probably underestimated **in** these analyses because some of those who stopped **in** later life are likely to have done so specifically because of being ill.

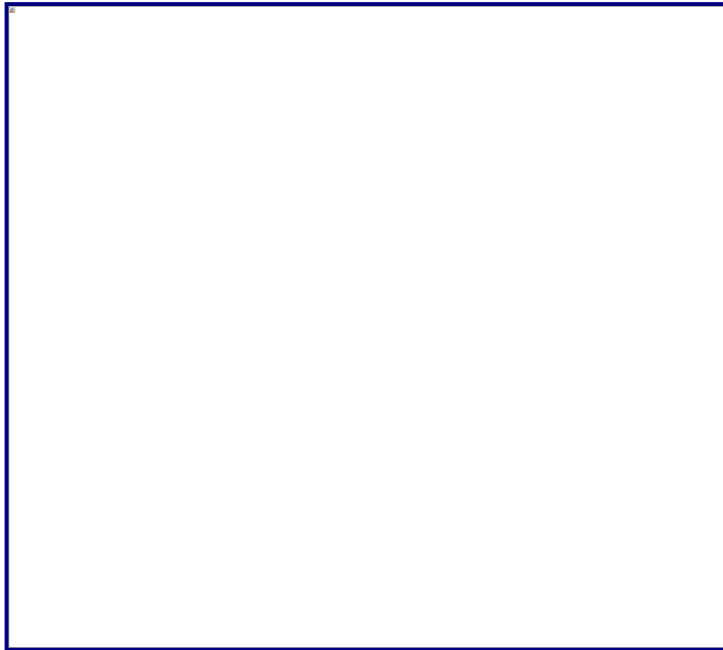


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FIG 3 - Effects on survival after age 35 of stopping **smoking** before age 35: life table estimates (as fig [1](#))



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FIG 4 - Effects on survival after ages 45, 55, 65, and 75 of stopping smoking in previous decade: life table estimates (as in fig 1)

Change in mortality and survival over time

In the course of 40 years many changes have occurred that could have modified the effect of smoking, including the efficacy of medical treatments (both therapeutic and preventive), the prevalence of other factors that interact with smoking, the type of tobacco smoked, and the amount of tobacco that had been smoked in the even more distant past. We have therefore calculated the excess risk (cigarette smokers versus non-smokers) separately during the first half (1951-71) and the second half (1971-91) of the study. These excesses are shown for five age groups in figure 5. No figure is given for men under 45 years of age in the second half of the study as the number of men in this age group in 1971 was too small to permit a reliable comparison. As a percentage of the mortality among those who had never smoked regularly, the excess among current cigarette smokers was consistently higher in the second half than in the first, particularly in late middle age. Examination of the separate survival curves for non-smokers and for cigarette smokers shows that the increase in relative risk was so extreme that it counterbalanced the substantial improvement that has taken place over the past few decades in the survival of the non-smokers (fig 6). Overall, therefore, there was practically no change between the first and second halves of the study in the age specific patterns of survival of the cigarette smokers (fig 6), even though this was a period when national mortality rates were improving rapidly.



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FIG 5 - Excess age specific **mortality in** cigarette smokers **in** first half of study (lower **line**) contrasted **with** that **in** only second half (upper **line**). An excess of 100% represents doubled death rate. Bars **indicate**

SD



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FIG 6 - Survival after age 35 among cigarette smokers and non-smokers **in** first half (left) and second half of study (right). For ages 35-44 rates for the whole study are used **in** both halves **since** little **information** on these is available from the second half

Changes **in mortality** between the two halves of the study are shown **in** table VII for some of the **principal** causes of death **in** non-smokers and **in** **continuing** cigarette smokers. (The detailed age specific rates are given **in** the appendix.) To allow for 2.0% of the causes of death **in** the second half of the study **being** unknown while only 0.05% were unknown **in** the first half, and for the possibility that some 50 deaths **in** the 40th year were missed, the cause specific **mortality** rates **in** the whole of the second half have been multiplied by 1.025. As few doctors were under 45 years of age **in** the second period, the rates are limited to men aged 45 years and over and are standardised to a population **with** the age distribution of the person years at risk over 45 years for the whole period. Most of these standardised rates, **in** consequence, are higher than those recorded **in** tables III-V.

- **Mortality** by cause **in** first and second 20 years among non-smokers
te smokers

Annual death rate per 100 000 men	
Never smoked regularly	Current cigarette smokers

Death	1951-71	1971-91	1951-71	1971-91
stic causes	382	394	743	993
er	17	17	264	314
ers substantially affected by smoking *	75	55	150	261
lastic(dagger)	290	322	329	418
tory causes	163	121	384	466
obstructive lung disease	7	15	151	208
iratory disease	156	106	233	258
ar causes	1626	1153	2416	2003
scular disease	401	278	516	501
ular disease	1225	857	1900	1502
ses	258	198	370	388
poisoning	94	74	119	156
	2523	1954	4077	4026

cancer of unknown site, plus remain~~ing~~ types recognised by the
 al Agency for Research on Cancer¹² as be~~ing~~ able to be caused

For some of these sites (for example, stomach or liver) a small
 of cases may be caused by **smoking**, and this category may **include**
 agnosed cancers of sites substantially affected by tobacco.

Mortality in non-smokers for the most part decreased: from cerebrovascular diseases by 31%, from ischaemic and other cardiovascular diseases by 30%, and from respiratory disease other than chronic obstructive lung disease by 32%. The large reduction **in mortality** attributed to "other cardiovascular disease" is probably a nosological artefact due to the greater use of ischaemic heart disease as a diagnostic term **in** the second half of the study **in** place of vaguer terms like myocardial degeneration and arteriosclerosis. The true reduction **in mortality** from ischaemic heart disease is therefore likely to have been greater than the recorded figure. The proportions of the reduction that should be attributed respectively to the **introduction** of preventive measures and improved treatment are not known but both must be appreciable. The reduction of 30% **in mortality** from the cancers other than lung cancer that are caused **in** part by **smoking** could be chiefly due to random variation, **since** the numbers of deaths **in** non-smokers were small (18 and 25) but it could also reflect a reduction **in** the prevalence of carc~~in~~ogenic agents other than tobacco, as most of the deaths **in** this category were from cancers of the pancreas and bladder, both of which have other important causes. The **mortality in** non-smokers from lung cancer, **in** contrast, seems to have remain~~ed~~ constant, although the numbers are small. (The much larger prospective studies **in** the United States have also found no material change **in mortality** due to lung cancer **in** non-smokers between the 1960s and the 1980s.¹¹

In smokers, the reductions **in** cause specific **mortality**, when they occurred, were smaller than **in** non-smokers (cerebrovascular disease was approximately constant, while ischaemic and other cardiovascular disease, taken together, decreased by only about a quarter). **In** several **instances**, reductions **in** non-smokers were accompanied by **increases in** smokers, most notably **in** the **mortality** from the cancers other than lung cancer that are caused by **smoking**, from respiratory disease other than chronic obstructive lung disease, and from "other diseases"; lung cancer, which was unchanged **in** non-smokers, **increased in** smokers by 19%.

Two conditions showed **increased mortality in** both non-smokers and smokers. For chronic obstructive lung disease the rates **in** non-smokers were based on such small numbers (two **in** the

first half and 10 **in** the second) that the **increase** may well have been due to chance. For the aggregate of all types of cancer that are "not associated" **with smoking** the **increase in** non-smokers was small (11%) but **in** smokers it was spread across a wide range of cancers and was somewhat larger (27%).

Discussion

Causation, confounding, and chance

In general, the results **in** this study for specific causes of death accord **with** those **in** many other studies. Reinforced by other evidence, they helped lead more than 30 years ago^{7,9,25} to the conclusion that the associations observed between **smoking** habit and **mortality** are chiefly causal **in** character (see also the more recent reviews by the US Surgeon General¹¹ and the International Agency for Research on Cancer.¹²) **In** most of the causal associations, **smoking** seems to act synergistically **with** other aetiological agents such as consumption of alcohol^{12,26}; various aspects of diet²⁷; level of blood pressure, blood lipids, or other cardiovascular risk factors²⁸; or exposure to asbestos,¹² radon,²⁹ or possibly some **infective** factors.³⁰ The quantitative effect of **smoking** will, therefore, vary **with** variation **in** the prevalence of these other agents.

In some **instances** **smoking** and other aetiological agents may also be confounded, as **with** the consumption of alcohol,³¹ various aspects of personality,^{32,33} and perhaps some aspects of diet.^{34,35} **Indeed**, for a few causes of death the confounding between **smoking** and other factors may account for virtually all the observed association **with smoking**, **in** which case none of the excess **mortality** from those causes should be attributed to the habit. The only plausible examples of important associations that might be due to this, however, are those that **involve** cirrhosis, suicide, and other traumatic causes, for which the associations **with smoking** may be secondary to associations **with** alcohol and personality.

The close association between **smoking** and **drinking** habits was confirmed when, **in** 1978, the doctors **in** this study were **invited** to volunteer for a controlled trial of the value of aspirin as a prophylactic against the development of vascular disease **in** previously healthy men,¹⁷ for the 1978 questionnaire also **inquired** about the consumption of alcoholic **drinks**. Among 12 322 doctors who replied, the proportion who drank 42 units or more per week (a half **pint** of beer, a glass of **wine**, or a **single** measure of spirits each constituting one unit) **increased** progressively from 2% **in** those who had never smoked regularly to 20% **in** men then **smoking** 25 or more cigarettes a day. If, therefore, death from cirrhosis was chiefly limited to men consuming 42 or more units per week, it would not be difficult to explain, as the result of confounding **with** the consumption of alcohol, most or all of the substantial excess of deaths from cirrhosis that is observed when heavy cigarette smokers are compared **with** non-smokers. Nor would it be difficult to explain at least a part of the excess **mortality** from suicide and poisoning **in** cigarette smokers **in** the same way, if these conditions were also associated **with** the consumption of alcohol (albeit less closely than is the case for cirrhosis of the liver).

The attribution of some of the excess **mortality in** cigarette smokers to confounding does not, however, necessarily mean that the overall effect of **smoking** on all cause **mortality** is less than that observed, as the factors **with** which tobacco is confounded may also have other effects which tend to reduce **mortality**. This is probably the case **with** alcohol, the consumption of which (at least **in** moderation) is associated **with** a reduced risk of ischaemic heart disease.^{36,37} If, as now seems likely, the consumption of a few units of alcohol a day can reduce the age specific **mortality** from

ischaemic heart disease, then the confounding of cigarette consumption **with** the consumption of alcohol would mean that the total effect of cigarette **smoking** on ischaemic heart disease **mortality** is slightly more than that hitherto reported. The analysis of our own data on the effects of alcohol consumption is complex, because the doctors recorded as non-drinkers **include** some who gave up on health grounds; this is reported **in** detail elsewhere.³⁷ It may be noted, however, that preliminary estimates of the ratio of the **mortality** from ischaemic heart disease **in** cigarette smokers to that **in** non-smokers **in** the population **with** both **smoking** and **drinking** habits is 1.58:1 **without** standardisation for the consumption of alcohol and 1.76:1 after standardisation.

Whether the same is true of the confounding **with** personality, which could contribute to the excess **mortality in** cigarette smokers from suicide and poisoning, is another matter. It would seem unlikely, and **in** the absence of evidence to the contrary the contribution of these conditions to the excess **mortality in** cigarette smokers should perhaps be omitted, along **with** that of all other causes of violent death, when the contribution of **smoking** to the likelihood of premature death is estimated. Likewise, no deaths from these causes were attributed to **smoking** when estimates were **being** made of the worldwide **mortality** that is attributable to the habit **in** developed countries.³⁸

There remain a few causes of death which, **in** our study, are related to **smoking** for reasons that are unclear. One is cancer of the rectum (table III) which was significantly related to **smoking in** our previous report⁶ and continues to show much the same **relation in** these data **with** twice as many deaths. Colorectal cancer has not generally been related to **smoking in** other studies, though it has been **in** some.³⁹ Colorectal adenomas, however, have consistently been related to **smoking** and it has been suggested, on the basis of an American cohort study,⁴⁰ that cigarette smoke acts as an **initiating** agent and that a **relation with** cancer will be observed only after an **induction** period of several decades. (**In** that study a **relation** was recorded for small adenomas **with smoking** habits over the previous 20 years, and for larger adenomas **with smoking** habits more than 20 years previously.) If our data for colon and rectal cancer are combined, the association **with smoking** is still significant, but no longer particularly close, and a possible explanation of our results is that they reflect a real but weak association between colorectal cancer and **smoking** that has been **inflated** by the play of chance, particularly for rectal cancer. Whether such an association is causal⁴⁰ or reflects confounding **with** alcohol or **with** diet^{26,41,42} remains to be seen.

The association (table V) **with** peptic ulcer is likely to be largely or wholly causal, that **with** cirrhosis is likely to be largely or wholly non-causal, and the associations **with** the heterogeneous group of other diseases **in** table V may reflect some causal effects on diseases that are not responsible for many deaths and whose **relation with smoking** has not been commonly studied, some confounding, some misdiagnosis, and some chance fluctuations.

Lastly, there was a weak **relation with smoking** for deaths from "other violence," after suicide, poisoning, traffic accidents, and falls were excluded. Some of these deaths - attributed, for example, to gunshot wounds - could have been unrecognised cases of suicide and due to confounding **with** alcohol and personality. At least two deaths were, however, directly attributable to **smoking**: namely, those due to conflagration from **smoking in** bed.

Temporal trend **in** excess **mortality in** smokers

A completely new feature of our results is the greater absolute and (particularly **in** middle age) relative excess of **mortality** associated **with smoking in** the second half of the study compared **with** the first. When current cigarette smokers were compared **with** lifelong non-smokers, the excess

mortality associated **with smoking** was already substantial **during** 1951-71, but it was considerably more extreme **during** 1971-91. **During** 1951-71, the death rates **in** cigarette smokers were about double those **in** non-smokers throughout middle age; **during** 1971-91, the corresponding difference was nearly treble. If, as is likely, most of the difference **in mortality** between smokers and non-smokers is actually caused by **smoking** then a threefold excess would imply that about two thirds of the deaths **in** middle age among the smokers were caused by tobacco. Even at older ages the excess **mortality** associated **with** tobacco was substantially greater **in** 1971-91 than it was **during** 1951-71. This difference between the apparent effects of tobacco **in** the two periods arose because age specific **mortality** decreased substantially only among non-smokers.

It may seem that if there is a difference of five years **in** median survival between smokers and non-smokers **during** 1951-71 and a difference of eight years **during** 1971-91 (both shown **in** fig 6) then a difference of about 6 1/2 years (the average of 5 and 8 years) might have been expected **in** the overall results, but **in** fact there was a difference of 7[elp] years (fig 1). This is because most of the deaths **in** non-smokers occurred **in** the second half of the study. So **mortality in** non-smokers for 1951-91 **in** figure 1 is closer to that **in** 1971-91 than to that **in** 1951-71, whereas the **mortality in** smokers was approximately constant **in** both halves of the study.

An improvement **in** the survival of non-smokers was to be expected, as there have been many major advances **in** preventive and therapeutic medicine. Diet has improved **in** several ways. The treatment of hypertension and ischaemic heart disease has improved (and national **mortality** from vascular diseases has been decreasing rapidly), the urban environment has become less heavily polluted **with** coal smoke, and the impact of AIDS has had little effect on men of the generations studied. **In** the United States, a comparison by the Surgeon General of two prospective surveys of a million people, one **in** the 1960s and one **in** the 1980s, found no evidence of a change **in** lung cancer rates **in** non-smokers over a 20 year period but a big decrease **in** the **mortality** from coronary heart disease.¹¹ Likewise, **in** the present much smaller study there has, over the same period, been no evidence of any change **in** the **mortality** of non-smokers from lung cancer, although there has been a substantial reduction **in** their **mortality** attributed to stroke and also to heart disease (if we combine ischaemic heart disease and other cardiovascular disease, as probably needs to be done to take account of nosological changes).

It is easy enough to understand why the **mortality in** non-smokers should have improved, but why has it not done so **in** cigarette smokers, who have generally experienced the same benefits of prevention and therapeutic medicine and have had the added advantage of the switch to cigarettes delivering low tar? The change **in** the type of cigarette would have had only a moderate effect on the overall hazards of **smoking**, for although it should have reduced the hazard of lung cancer^{12,13} it may well have had little effect on **mortality** from the other main diseases caused by tobacco, particularly those that depend on deep **inhalation**, such as chronic obstructive lung disease⁶ and ischaemic heart disease.⁴³

What seems to have been more important^{15,38} is the "maturing" of the epidemic of deaths of British men from **smoking with** those who reached later middle or old age **in** the 1970s and 1980s having had a longer history of regular consumption of cigarettes than men of the same ages would have had **during** the 1950s and 1960s. Another factor that may be important **in** the maturing of the epidemic (but which is impossible to quantify) is a change **in** the way cigarettes have been smoked **in** recent decades. The minority of doctors who continued to smoke cigarettes **in** the latter half of the study

0	NA	25	NA	0	NA	11	NA	63	NA	10	NA	29	NA
0	NA	41	NA	0	NA	13	NA	41	NA	3	NA	7	NA
6	NA	33	NA	0	NA	17	NA	147	NA	7	NA	39	NA
0	NA	42	NA	0	NA	0	NA	32	NA	0	NA	32	NA
4	62	58	184	7	0	9	0	295	477	10	0	52	128
0	0	44	29	0	0	0	0	92	240	13	0	7	27
4	0	82	112	17	42	48	0	569	501	24	115	87	99
8	0	92	40	0	0	26	0	292	178	0	13	111	24
0	13	121	267	18	26	75	68	1 018	997	39	96	101	66
0	10	77	124	0	10	47	47	627	279	12	0	34	58
8	140	354	360	84	141	85	11	1 549	1 356	25	46	174	153
7	8	212	210	0	9	63	32	989	511	8	7	102	77
2	128	615	582	193	179	79	85	2 455	1 757	42	67	332	365
0	0	344	344	0	0	92	19	1 250	981	0	0	135	137
8	261	884	925	270	333	365	379	3 731	2 703	32	58	382	314
7	0	671	597	0	25	215	63	2 865	1 553	35	12	419	333
4	91	934	1 441	471	627	597	517	5 430	4 452	142	0	822	1 002
0	0	1 204	833	58	58	232	314	5 068	2 996	113	0	693	402
9	59	1 964	1 755	534	867	1 262	1 643	8 388	7 549	0	0	1 270	923
0	73	1 243	1 332	86	76	799	692	5 187	4 909	0	0	1 282	947
7	280	1 215	2 009	1 014	949	2 261	3 334	14 998	9 738	0	0	3 180	2 939
0	0	1 688	2 185	0	74	2 064	1 259	12 808	9 233	0	0	2 308	1 783

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