Smoking statistics

Adults

Fewer than 1 in 5 (17%) of adults in the United Kingdom now smoke: 19% of men and 15% of women. This means there are about 9.1 million adult smokers in the UK and 8.7 million in Great Britain.

Smoking rates have more than halved since 1974 when 51% of men and 41% of women smoked.

Smoking prevalence is highest in the 25-34 age group (24%) and lowest amongst those aged 60 and over (10%).

More than half (59%) of all adults report that they have never smoked.

Smoking rates are much higher among poorer people. In 2015, 12% of adults in managerial and professional occupations smoked compared with 28% in routine and manual occupations.

Quitting smoking

Surveys show that the majority of current smokers would like to stop smoking but only about 30%-40% make a quit attempt in a given year.

Addiction

Two-thirds (66%) of smokers have their first cigarette of the day within one hour of waking.

Deaths from smoking

About half of all regular cigarette smokers will eventually be killed by their addiction.

Every year, around 96,000 people in the UK die from diseases caused by smoking.

Smoking accounts for over one-third of respiratory deaths, over one-quarter of cancer deaths, and about one-seventh of cardiovascular disease deaths.

Young people

Two-thirds of smokers start before age 18.

Of those who try smoking between one-third and one-half will become regular smokers.

It is illegal to sell tobacco or e-cigarettes to any person under the age of 18.

Regional & national smoking rates

There is some variation in smoking rates by region in England and between countries within the UK.

- In 2015, the North East of England had the highest prevalence at 18.7% while the South West had the lowest at 15.5%.

In 2015, adult smoking rates by country were:
- England 17%
- Scotland 19%
- Wales 18%
- N.Ireland 19%

Government revenue and expenditure

In 2015-16 the Government received £9.5 billion in revenue from tobacco tax (excluding VAT).

In 2015-16 the Government spent £5.3 million on mass media campaigns to support people to stop smoking and £33.2m on stop smoking medication.

Tobacco smoke

Contains over 7,000 chemical compounds, present as either gases or as tiny particles. These include carbon monoxide, arsenic, formaldehyde, cyanide, benzene, toluene and acrolein.

For more information on issues raised visit www.ash.org.uk

Planned review date: March 2018