

Smoking statistics who smokes and how much

1 www.ash.org.uk

Number of adult smokers

The highest recorded level of smoking among men in Great Britain was 82% in 1948, of whom 65% smoked manufactured cigarettes. At that time, significant numbers of men smoked pipes or cigars as well as, or instead of, manufactured cigarettes. By contrast, women have tended to smoke only cigarettes. Smoking prevalence among women in 1948 was 41% and remained fairly constant until the early 1970's, peaking at 45% in the mid 1960's.1

Overall the proportion of adults (aged 16 and over) smoking in Great Britian has been declining since 1974 when national surveys on smoking first began. The fastest decline was in the 1970s and 1980s. Since then smoking has continued to decline but at a slower rate.²

Prevalence of cigarette smoking by sex, 1974 to 2014, Great Britain ²³

%	1974	1978	1982	1986	1990	1994	1998	2002	2006	2010	2013	2014
Men	51	45	38	35	31	28	28	27	23	21	22	20
Women	41	37	33	31	29	26	26	25	21	20	17	17
All	45	40	35	33	30	27	27	26	22	20	19	19

NB: Since 2000 data have been weighted. Since 2012 figures are from the Opinions & Lifestyle Survey; previous data are from the General Household/General Lifestyle Surveys.

There are about 9.6 million adult cigarette smokers in Great Britain and the number of exsmokers exceeds that of smokers. The proportion of the population who have never smoked has increased from 37% in 1974 to 59% in 2014. In addition, the proportion of cigarette smokers who have quit doubled between 1974 and 2014 from 27% to 55%.²

Since 1990 there has been a steady increase in the number of smokers using mainly hand-rolled tobacco. In 1990, 18% of male smokers and 2% of female smokers said they smoked mainly hand-rolled cigarettes but by 2011 this had risen to 40% and 26% respectively.³ The 2014 Opinions & Lifestyle survey revealed that 39% of male and 28% of female smokers said they smoked hand-rolled cigarettes.²

Measuring smoking rates

Periodically the Government sets targets to reduce smoking prevalence in the population. In the 1998 White Paper 'Smoking kills' the Government set a target to reduce adult smoking rates to 21% or less by 2010, with a reduction in prevalence among routine and manual groups to 26% or less.⁴ The target for the general population was achieved by 2007 but not for lower socioeconomic groups (28% in 2011).

In its strategy paper launched on 1 February 2010 the Labour Government set new targets to reduce smoking among the general population to 10% of adults and to 1% or less among children by 2020.⁵ In March 2011 the Coalition Government launched its Tobacco Control Plan

ASH Fact Sheet on: Smoking statistics

for England in which it set out ambitions to reduce adult smoking prevalence to 18.5% or less by 2015 and to reduce smoking among 15 year-olds to 12% or less by 2015.6

Cigarette smoking by gender and age

Across all age groups men are more likely to smoke than women. In 2014 20% of men aged 16 and over smoked compared with 17% of women. Smoking prevalence is highest among young adults: 23% of those aged 16-24 and 24% among the 25-34 age group. Smoking continues to be lowest among people aged 60 and over. Although they are more likely than younger people to have ever been smokers, they are more likely to have stopped smoking.

Cigarette	smoking h	v age –	nercentage	of adult	population ²³
Gigarette	SHIUKING L	y aye —	percentage	oi addit	population

	Age								
%	16-19*	20-24*	25-34	35-49	50-59	60+			
1974	40	48	51	52	51	34			
1984	31	38	40	39	39	30			
1994	27	39	32	30	27	17			
2004	24	32	31	29	24	14			
2014	20	26	24	21	19	11			

^{*}Due to small sample sizes, these figures should be treated with caution.

Number of secondary school children in England who smoke

Very few children are smokers when they start secondary school: among 11 year olds fewer than 0.5% are regular smokers. The likelihood of smoking increases with age so that by 15 years of age 8% of pupils are regular smokers. Among children who try smoking cigarettes between one third and one half will go on to become regular smokers within two to three years.8

Overall, the prevalence of regular smoking among children aged 11-15 remained stable at between 9% and 11% from 1998 until 2006. However, in 2007 there was a fall in overall prevalence from 9% to 6%, the lowest rate recorded since surveys of pupils' smoking began in 1982. The downward trend has continued: in 2013 and 2014 overall prevalence was 3% and among 15 year olds it fell to 8%.7 For further information see ASH Fact Sheet on Young People and smoking (pdf)

Percentage of pupils aged 15 who are regular smokers (at least one cigarette per week on average), England ⁷

	1982	1986	1990	1994	1998	2002	2006	2010	2012	2013	2014
Boys	24	18	25	26	19	20	16	10	10	8	6
Girls	25	27	25	30	29	26	24	14	10	8	9
All	25	22	25	28	23	23	20	12	10	8	8

Cigarette smoking and socio-economic group

There is a strong link between cigarette smoking and socio-economic group. In 2014, 30% of adults in routine and manual occupations smoked compared to 13% in managerial and professional occupations.

Prevalence of cigarette smoking by socio-economic classification

Persons aged 16 and over. Great Britain: 2014 (%) ²

	Men	Women	Total
Large employers and higher managerial	9	16	11
Higher professional	11	4	9
Lower managerial and professional	17	12	15
Intermediate	20	18	18
Small employers / own account	22	20	22
Lower supervisory and technical	35	34	35
Semi-routine	31	29	30
Routine	28	29	28

Historically there has been a slower decline in smoking among manual groups, resulting in smoking becoming increasingly concentrated in this population. In recent years, smoking rates have fallen by a similar amount across all social groups, so that the differential between nonmanual and manual has not changed significantly.

Until 2011 the ONS Lifestyle surveys included questions about the age at which people started to smoke. (This information is not collected in the OPN survey.) As in previous surveys, the 2011 data revealed an association between socio-economic group and the age at which people started to smoke. Of those in the managerial and professional households, 31% had started smoking before they were 16, compared with 45% of those in routine and manual households.3

Tobacco consumption

Since the mid 1970s cigarette consumption has fallen among both men and women, particularly among heavy smokers (defined as those smoking more than 20 cigarettes a day). In 1974, 26% of men and 13% of women were heavy smokers compared to 5% of men and 3% of women in 2012. The average number of cigarettes smoked per day by men and women has decreased across all age groups.

Average daily consumption of manufactured cigarettes per smoker, 1949-2014^{1, 2, 3}

Year	1949	1959	1969	1979	1990	2000	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Men	14.1	18.4	18.9	21.6	16.8	15	14	13	12	13	12.2
Women	6.8	11.0	13.7	16.6	13.9	13	12	12	11	11	10.5

There is an association between consumption and socio-economic group. A YouGov survey comissioned by ASH found that 55% of current smokers in higher social groups (AB) smoked 10 or fewer cigarettes per day compared to 34% in the lowest social group (E). People in the lowest social group are more likely to be heavy smokers: 18% reported smoking 21 to 30 cigarettes a day compared to 9% in the highest social group.9 The findings are in line with previous ONS reports.

Dependence on cigarette smoking

Questions designed to determine dependence on smoking are not included in the OPN survey. Therefore the latest survey with this data is the 2011 General Lifestyle Survey. In 2011, 63% of smokers said they would like to stop smoking altogether.3 Other ways of measuring

dependence include how difficult people would find it to go for a whole day without smoking and how soon they smoke after waking.

First cigarette of the day

The ASH/YouGov survey conducted in March 2015 found that 18% of current smokers had their first cigarette within 5 minutes of waking.⁹ The survey also found that 69% of current smokers reported having their first cigarette of the day within 1 hour of waking.

Managing without a cigarette for the whole day

In 2011, 60% of smokers said they would find it hard to go for a whole day without smoking. Eighty-one per cent of heavier smokers (20 or more a day) said they would find it difficult, compared to 32% of those smoking fewer than 10 cigarettes per day.³

Proportion of smokers who would find it difficult to go without smoking for a day by sex and number of cigarettes smoked per day Great Britain 2011 ³

No of cigarettes	Men %	Women %	All smokers %
20 or more	79	84	81
10-19	64	73	69
0-9	32	32	32
All smokers	58	61	60

References

Note: From 2012 the Opinions & Lifestyle Survey (OPN) replaced the General Lifestle Survey (GLF). The OPN and GLF provide comparable results although there are some differences in the two surveys' design and content. Unless otherwise stated, data included in this fact sheet is from the 2014 OPN.

- Wald, N. and Nicolaides-Bouman, A. UK Smoking Statistics. 2nd edition, Oxford University Press, 1991
- 2 2014 Opinions and Lifestyle Survey Office for National Statistics, Feb. 2016
- 3 <u>2011 General Lifestyle Survey.</u> http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/ghs/general-lifestyle-survey/2011/index.html Office for National Statistics, March 2013. <u>PSA Delivery Agreement 18: Promote better health and well-being for all.</u> The Treasury, Oct 2007 (pdf)
- 5 A Smokefree Future. A comprehensive tobacco control strategy for England. Department of Health, 2010.
- 6 <u>Healthy Lives, Healthy People: A Tobacco Control Plan for England</u>. HM Government, March 2011
- 7 Smoking drinking drug use among young people in England in 2014 The Health and Social Care Information Centre, 2015
- 8 <u>Harm reduction in nicotine addiction.</u> Royal College of Physicians. 2007
- 9 YouGov. Total sample size was 12,055. Fieldwork was undertaken between 26th February and 12th March 2015. All surveys were carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB Adults (aged 18+).

