Smoking rates in the East Midlands rose last year: people in the region want Government to do more to limit smoking

In the East Midlands, according to newly published Government figures, adult smoking rates have gone up from 15.7% to 15.8% between 2017 and 2018 [1]. Newly published research for ASH finds growing public support in the region for the Government to do more to limit tobacco and to enforce tighter regulations on tobacco companies.

Although nationally smoking rates fell from 14.9% to 14.4%, the rate of decline has slowed compared to previous years.

Deborah Arnott chief executive of health charity ASH said:

“Smoking rates in the East Midlands rose last year. Cuts in public health funding at national level have bitten hard and it’s not surprising that people in the region want Government to do more to limit smoking.”

“In its forthcoming Prevention Green Paper the Government must respond to public demand and impose a ‘polluter pays’ levy on the tobacco industry, as well as implementing tougher laws on smoking, such as increasing the age of sale for cigarettes to 21.”

A YouGov poll commissioned by Action on Smoking and Health (ASH), found that three quarters of adults in the East Midlands support activities to limit smoking or think government should do more, with the proportion thinking government should do more growing significantly over time. [2]

- Three quarters (76%) of adults in the East Midlands support activities to limit smoking or think Government should do more.
- Support for Government to do more to limit smoking increased from 29% in 2009 to 48% in 2019.
- The proportion of respondents who think that Government is doing too much has fallen from 19% in 2009 [2] to 8% today. [2]

With publication of the Prevention Green Paper due imminently [3] ASH is calling on Matt Hancock MP, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, to include a commitment to ending smoking in all our communities by 2035. This target is supported by ASH and over 100 other national and local organisations including medical royal colleges, health charities, local authorities and NHS organisations. [4]

Ending smoking by 2035 is achievable if the Government introduce tough new tobacco regulations, all of which are supported by the public, including [2]:

- Requiring businesses to have a licence to sell tobacco which they can lose if they sell to underage smokers (81% of adults in the East Midlands support, only 4% oppose).
- Making tobacco manufacturers pay a levy or licence fee to Government to help smokers quit and prevent young people from taking up smoking, (70% of adults in the East Midlands support, only 8% oppose).
- Requiring tobacco manufacturers to include Government mandated information about quitting inside cigarette packs (62% of adults in the East Midlands support, only 8% oppose).
- Prohibiting smoking in all private vehicles, not just those carrying children under 18 (65% of adults in the East Midlands 14% oppose).
- Increasing the age of sale from 18 to 21 (56% of adults in the East Midlands support, only 18% oppose).
A regional breakdown of support for new tobacco regulations is also available on the ASH website. [5]

ENDS

Notes to the editor:

About Action on Smoking and Health (ASH)

Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) is a health charity working to eliminate the harm caused by tobacco use. ASH receives funding for its programme of work from Cancer Research UK and the British Heart Foundation.

Media Contact

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References:


[2] Survey carried out by YouGov. The unweighted sample size for the East Midlands was 955. Fieldwork was undertaken between 12th February 2019 and 10th March 2019. Surveys are carried out online and have been weighted to be representative of all English adults (aged 18+).


[4] Ending smoking is defined in the Smoking Still Kills report endorsed by 129 national and local organisations as achieving prevalence rates of below 5% across all of society, including groups who currently have higher smoking rates e.g. routine and manual workers, and people with mental health conditions. Smoking Still Kills. ASH 2015: http://ash.org.uk/information-and-resources/reports/submissions/reports/smoking-still-kills/