

Tobacco control: Making the case

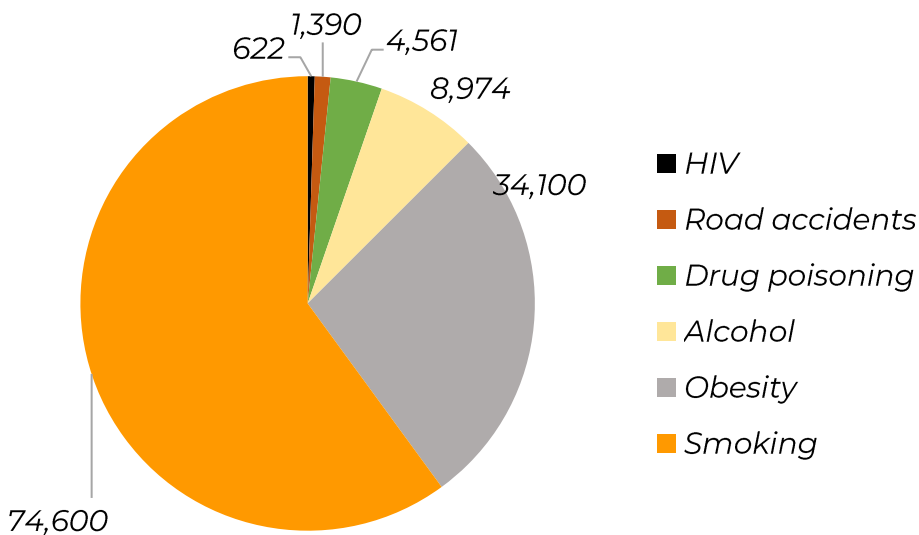
Councillor briefings, July 2022

Key points:

- In the last decade adult smoking prevalence has been reduced by over a quarter to its lowest ever recorded level of 13.9% in England, saving thousands of lives and years lived with disability
- However, smoking remains the leading cause of preventable illness and death, and still kills almost 75,000 people every year in England alone
- Smoking costs billions of pounds every year, with significant costs being borne by local councils and the NHS
- Smoking is the leading cause of health inequalities and is a direct cause of poverty
- The public overwhelmingly support action to address smoking

Smoking is the largest cause of preventable death

Number of annual deaths per year, by preventable cause (latest available data)



Smoking is the leading [cause of preventable illness and death](#) and kills more people each year than [obesity, alcohol, drug poisoning, road accidents](#) and [HIV](#) combined.

Around [half of all regular cigarette smokers will be killed](#) by their addiction and on average they [will lose 10 years](#) of life.

For every person killed by smoking, [at least another 30 people](#) are living with serious smoking-related illness.

Smoking costs the economy billions of pounds every year

The health cost of smoking also comes with enormous economic costs. These include:

£11.7 billion from unemployment and reduced earnings

£1.4 billion as a result of premature death and lost productive life years

£2.4 billion in NHS treatment costs for illness caused by smoking

£1.2 billion in local authority social care costs to meet need caused by smoking

£282 million in Fire and Rescue Service costs to address smoking-related fires

ASH's [Ready Reckoner tool](#) breaks down the cost of smoking in England from national to local authority level.

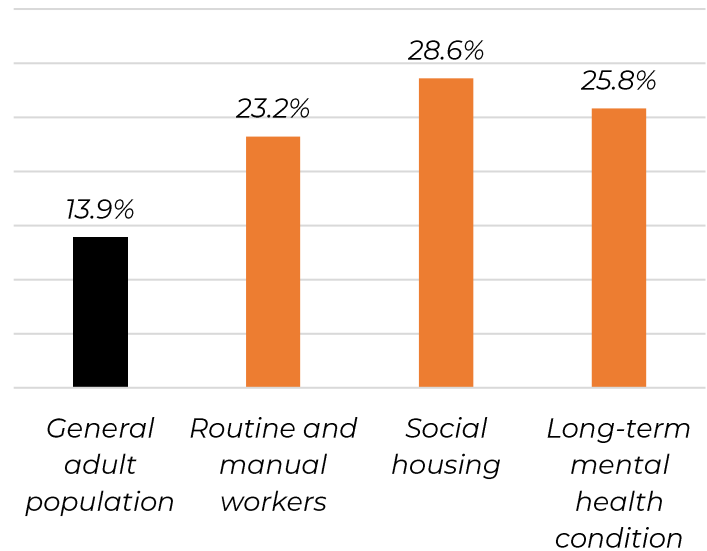
Smoking and inequality

Virtually [every indicator of disadvantage is associated with higher smoking rates](#).

As a result, the health and financial impact of smoking is borne disproportionately by the most disadvantaged and marginalised in society. Smoking therefore drives and exacerbates wider inequalities.

Smoking accounts for [half of the gap in life expectancy](#) between the richest and poorest in society, and is the [single largest cause of the 10-20 year reduced life expectancy](#) for people with longstanding mental health conditions.

Smoking prevalence among selection of priority populations (2019)



Groups with higher smoking rates are [equally motivated to quit](#) as smokers from other groups. However, they face greater barriers to quitting and are less likely to be successful.

Smoking and poverty

On average, people who smoke [lose around £1,875 a year on smoking costs](#). For disadvantaged smokers, this makes all the difference – around 500,000 [households across the UK are in poverty](#) as a result of income lost to tobacco addiction.

This equates to over one million people, including over a quarter of a million children. Supporting smokers to quit empowers them to break away from tobacco addiction and starts providing increased financial security as soon as they start their quit attempt.

The public support further action on tobacco

Public support for activity to limit smoking and for further action is unanimous, including among smokers (the [majority of whom want to quit](#)). For regional opinion data, [click here](#).

'Thinking about Government activities to limit smoking, would you say they are...' (2022)

