

Public support for Government action on tobacco in Great Britain: Results of the 2023 ASH Smokefree survey

Summary

This briefing sets out support for government action on tobacco in Great Britain broken down by voting intention. The results are from a representative survey of over 12,000 adults aged 18+ in Great Britain carried out by YouGov for ASH online in February/March this year.¹ Data is representative of GB adults by key demographics, but party vote is not controlled for and is based on natural fallout.

- Three quarters of adults in England and Scotland (75%) support their government's smokefree ambition, and 69% of adults in Wales, with similar results for those voting in the last general election for all the political parties represented in Westminster.
- More than three quarters (77%) of adults in Great Britain support tobacco manufacturers being required to pay a levy to government for measures to help smokers quit and prevent young people from taking up smoking, with 6% opposed. Three quarters or more of those voting in the last general election for all the political parties represented in Westminster supported the levy.
- There is majority support for all key interventions with low levels of opposition.

For full graphs of national public support for the whole GB population, not broken down by voting intention, [download here](#).

Support for a smokefree ambition by voting intention in England, Wales and Scotland

The Government has set a target for England to be smokefree by 2030. 'Smokefree' is defined as smoking rates of 5% or less. Three quarters (75%) of the public in England support the government's smokefree ambition including 73% of those voting Conservative in the 2019 general election, 79% Labour, 84% Liberal Democrat, and 83% Green. A Smokefree 2030 in England is supported by more smokers (42%) than oppose (27%), with 31% saying they neither support nor oppose or don't know.

The Welsh Government's target is also to be Smokefree by 2030. This ambition is supported by 69% of adults in Wales, including 61% of those voting Conservative in the 2019 general election, 78% Labour, and 81% Liberal Democrat and Plaid Cymru. A Smokefree 2030 in Wales is supported by the same proportion of smokers (38%) as are opposed (38%), with 25% saying they neither support nor oppose or don't know.

The Scottish Government's target is to be smokefree by 2034. This ambition is supported by 75% of adults in Scotland, including 65% of those voting Conservative in the 2019 general election, 75% Labour, 78% Liberal Democrat and 83% Scottish National Party. A Smokefree 2034 in Scotland is supported by more smokers (38%) than oppose (26%), with 36% saying they neither support nor oppose or don't know.

Support for a levy on tobacco manufacturers

More than three quarters (77%) of adults in Great Britain support tobacco manufacturers being required to pay a levy to government for measures to help smokers quit and prevent young people from taking up smoking, with 6% opposed. Three quarters or more of those voting for all the political parties represented in Westminster support a levy, ranging from 75% of those who voted Conservative in 2019 to 87% of those voting Liberal Democrat or for the Green party.

Support for increased government investment in public education campaigns

70% of adults in Great Britain support increasing government investment in public education campaigns on smoking aimed at adults and children, with 7% opposed. The highest levels of support are among those voting Liberal Democrat (78%) Labour (77%), SNP and Green party (76%), but two thirds (67%) of Conservative voters were supportive and one in ten (10%) opposed.

Support for enhanced tobacco regulations

Raising the age of sale from 18 to 21

Just under two thirds (64%) of adults in Great Britain support increasing the age of sale for tobacco from 18 to 21, with 14% opposed. Support by voting at the last general election is highest for those voting Conservative (65%), Labour (66%), Liberal Democrat (67%) and Green (69%). When the US raised the age of sale to 21, smoking rates among 18-20 year olds declined by 30%.²

Raising the age of sale one year every year

An alternative policy which has been passed into law by New Zealand, the first country to do so, is to raise the age of sale by one every year. The New Zealand legislation specifies that tobacco cannot be sold to anyone born after 1 January 2009. Half of adults in Great Britain support such a law, with a quarter opposed and a quarter saying they neither support nor oppose or don't know (26%).

Tobacco retail licensing

In Great Britain 83% support the introduction of a licence to sell tobacco which can be removed if retailers are caught more than once selling to underage smokers, with 4% opposed. Support from voters at the last general election has high support across voters: Conservative (85%) Labour (85%) Liberal Democrat (89%) SNP (86%) and Green Party (88%).

Banning smoking in all cars

Two thirds of adults (66%) support banning smoking in all cars with 16% opposed. Support was similar across those voting at the last general election for all the parties represented in the Westminster parliament at 66% for Conservative voters, 67% Labour, 69% Liberal Democrat, 67% SNP, 76% Plaid Cymru and 69% Green party. Only a third of smokers (32%) support this measure but less than half (43%) oppose, with a quarter (26%) saying they neither support nor oppose or don't know. In 2010 when the campaign for banning smoking in cars carrying children started it was only supported by one in five (20%) of smokers. After the legislation was introduced in 2015, support from smokers rose to 72%, and was 82% in 2017, the last year we asked this question.²

Health warnings on cigarette sticks

Two thirds (66%) of adults in Great Britain support health warnings being printed on cigarette sticks to encourage smokers to quit, with 10% opposed. There are similar levels of support for those voting at the last general election for all the parties represented in Westminster with 65% of those voting Conservative, 68% Labour, 73% Liberal Democrat, 69% SNP, 74% Plaid Cymru and 71% Green Party.

Tobacco pack inserts

Two thirds (67%) of adults in Great Britain support requiring cigarette packs to include inserts with government mandated information about quitting, with 9% opposed. The use of such inserts is supported by smokers diverse in age, gender, and social grade. Support was similar across those voting at the last general election for all the parties represented in the Westminster parliament at 66% for Conservative voters, 70% Labour, 73% Liberal Democrat, 69% SNP, 64% Plaid Cymru and 72% Green party.

Support for enhanced e-cigarette regulation

Banning names of sweets, cartoons and bright colours on e-cigarettes

Three quarters (75%) of adults in Great Britain support banning names of sweets, cartoons and bright colours on e-cigarette packaging, with 6% opposed. Support was high among those voting at the last general election for all the parties represented in the Westminster parliament at 74% for Conservative voters, 80% Labour, 83% Liberal Democrat, 77% SNP, 83% Plaid Cymru and 84% Green party.

Banning promotion of e-cigarettes at point of sale

Three quarters (74%) of adults in Great Britain support banning advertising and promotion of e-cigarettes at point of sale (at the till, in stores and as people enter shops), with 6% opposed. Support was high among those voting at the last general election for all the parties represented in the Westminster parliament at 72% for Conservative voters, 79% Labour, 82% Liberal Democrat, 77% SNP, 78% Plaid Cymru and 82% Green party.

1. All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 12271 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 22/02/2023 - 15/03/2023. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+). Data are weighted by age, gender, region, education status, social grade, and ethnicity. Data are not controlled or weighted by past vote or political affiliation.
2. Anderson W. Fifteen smokefree years: Public support in England for measures to reduce the harm of smoking. London. ASH. 1 July 2022 <https://ash.org.uk/uploads/Fifteen-smokefree-years.pdf>

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