

Saving Babies' Lives: Tracking the progress in reducing maternal smoking in England

July 2025

Background

This briefing has been developed by ASH and the Smoking in Pregnancy Challenge Group to highlight progress in reducing rates of Smoking At the Time Of Delivery (SATOD) in England and identify where further progress is needed. It is based on analysis of [SATOD data published by NHS Digital](#).

Key points

- 6.1% of pregnant women and birthing people were recorded as smoking at the time of delivery in 2024/25, compared to 7.4% in 2023/24.
- The national target of 6% or fewer women smoking at the time of delivery – set in the 2017 Tobacco Control Plan for England – has been achieved, although 3 years later than the 2022 deadline.
- SATOD has fallen in every region in England since 2020/21, with the biggest declines in the Midlands, followed by the North West and the North East & Yorkshire.
- ICBs have seen significant declines in SATOD since they were established, with Lincolnshire ICB experiencing a massive 5.7 percentage point drop between 2022/23 and 2024/25.
- Those regions starting off with the highest SATOD rates have experienced the biggest declines. However, there is still significant variation between regions and Integrated Care Board (ICBs) which needs to be addressed.
- Declines in maternal smoking rates have accelerated rapidly since the introduction of dedicated stop smoking advisers in maternity services in 2020 through the NHS Long Term Plan. However, these services are threatened by recently announced cuts to NHS Integrated Care Board (ICB) budgets and the loss of ringfenced funding for tobacco treatment services.
- Many women who quit during pregnancy will be returning to households and communities where smoking remains common, increasing the likelihood they will relapse to smoking and putting them and their babies at risk of exposure to harmful secondhand smoke.

Note: ICB-level SATOD data is only available from 2022/23.

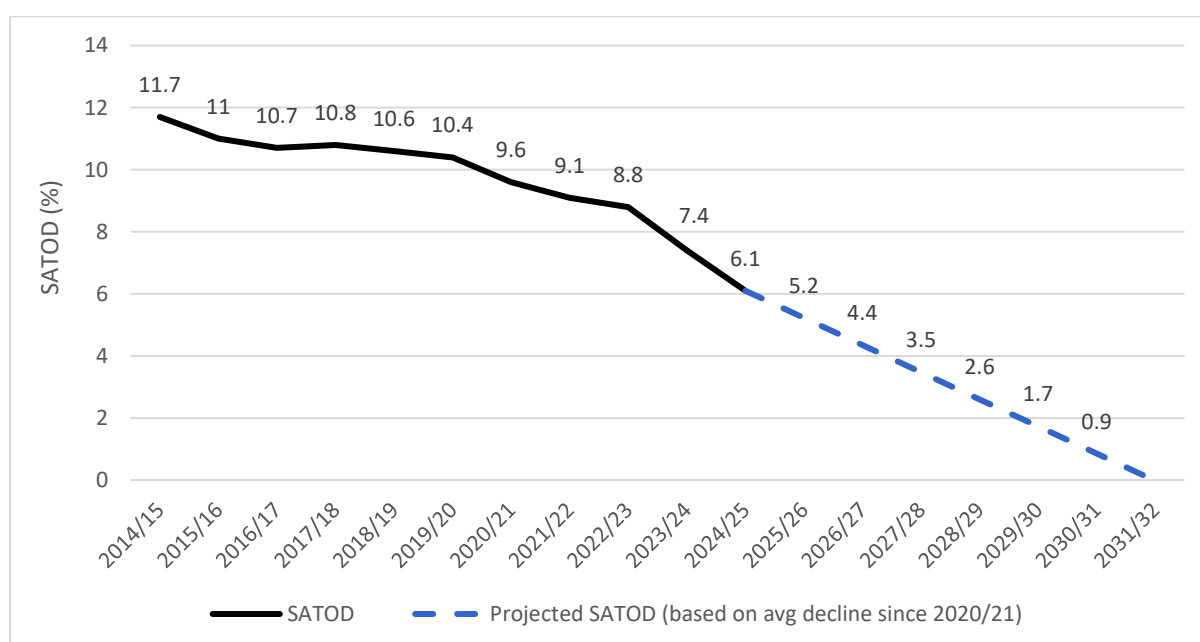
Note: The analysis only looks at v1 SATOD to enable comparison with previous years.

Recommendations

1. Ensure funding for tobacco dependence treatment services in maternity settings is protected and sustained.
2. Maintain the national financial incentive scheme for the duration of this parliament to accelerate declines in smoking among pregnant women and their significant others.
3. Publish a roadmap to a smokefree country with a new target for smoking during pregnancy and a clear strategy to prevent relapse to smoking postnatally.

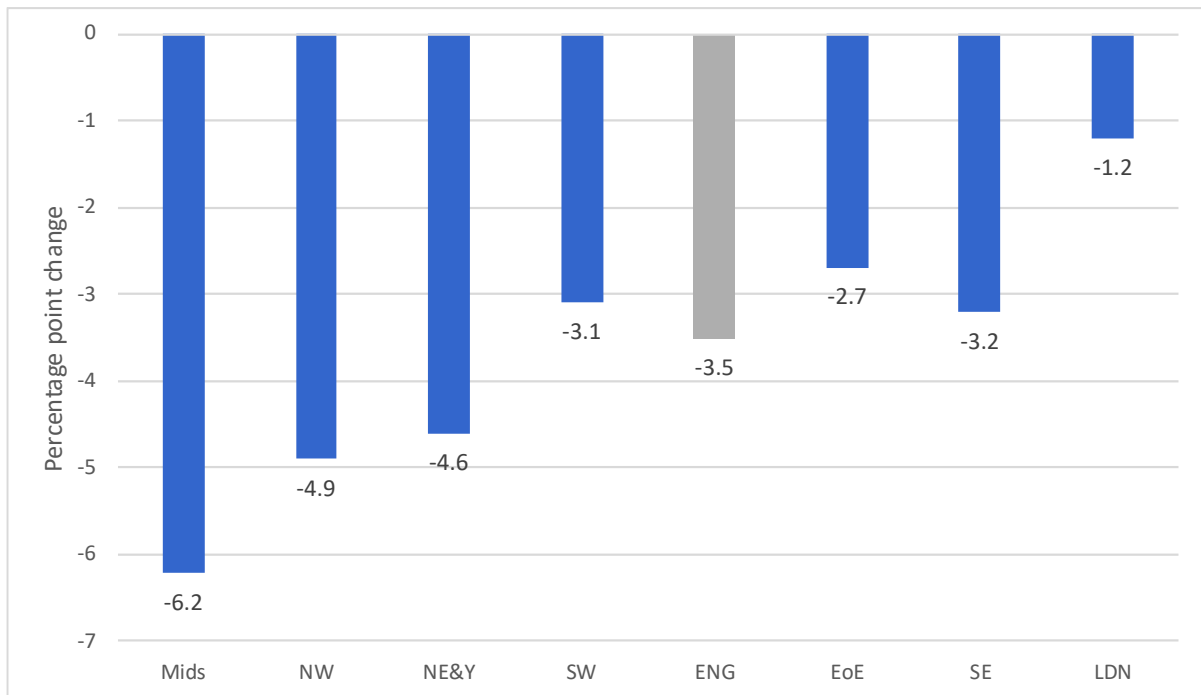
Data

Change in SATOD in England between 2014/15 and 2024/25



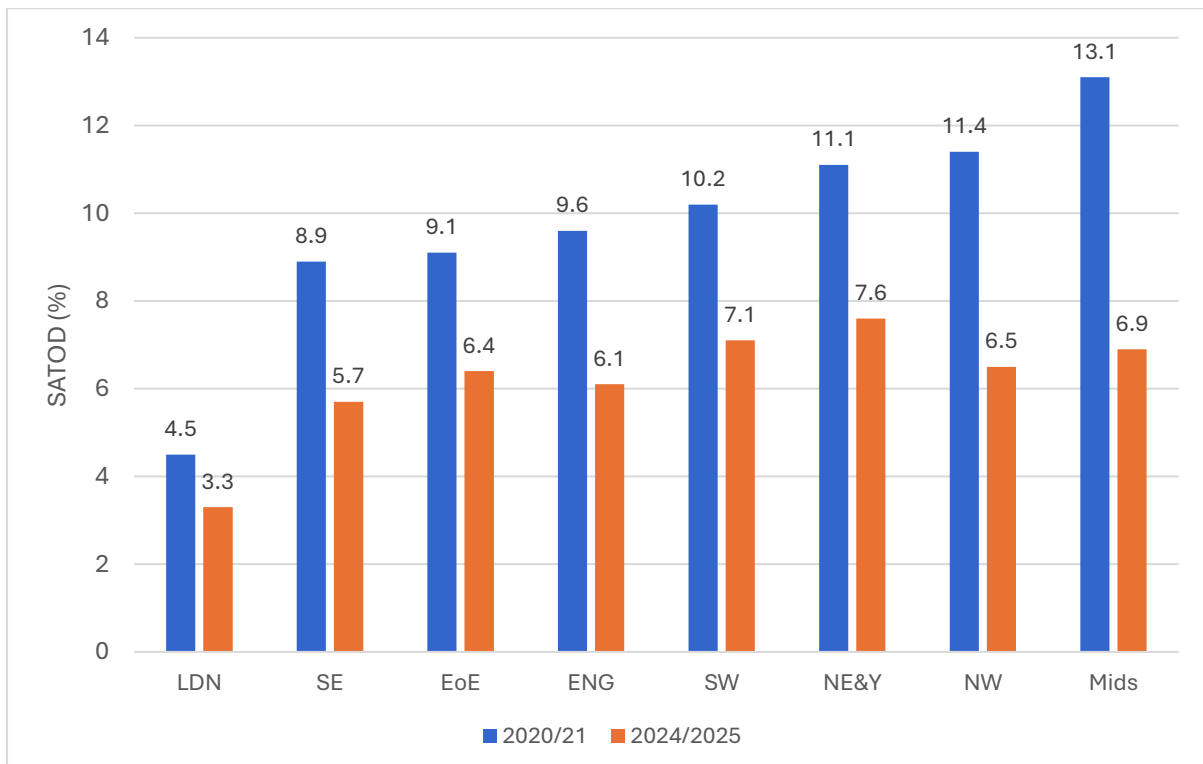
Declines in SATOD have accelerated over the last 5 years, falling by 36% between 2020/21 and 2024/25. This follows a long period of stagnation between 2014/15 and 2019/20. At the current rate of decline, England is on track to achieve near-zero SATOD rates by 2031.

Change in SATOD by NHS region between 2020/21 and 2024/25



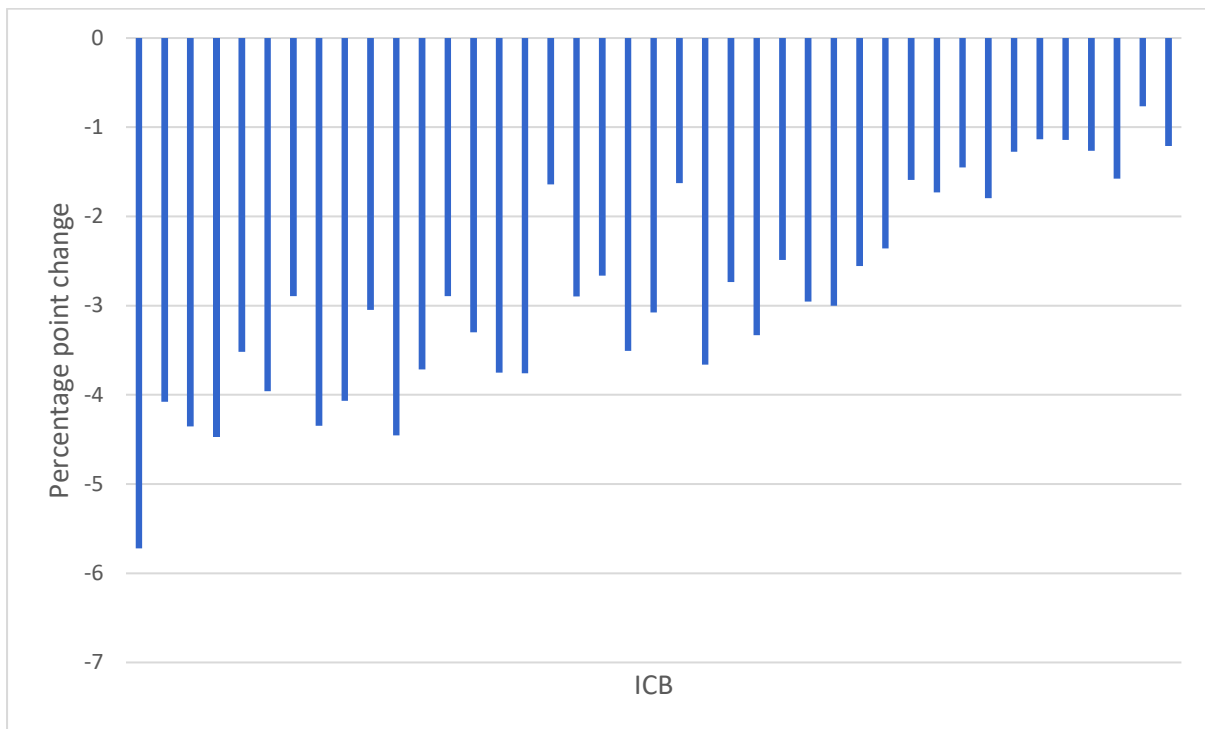
SATOD has declined in every region in England since 2020/21, with the biggest decline in the Midlands, followed by the North West and the North East & Yorkshire.

Comparison of SATOD by NHS region in 2020/21 and 2024/25



Regions starting off with the highest SATOD rates, like the Midlands and the North West, have experienced the biggest declines.

Change in SATOD by ICB between 2022/23 and 2024/25



Between 2022/23 and 2024/25, SATOD declined by more than 1 percentage point in almost every ICB, with Lincolnshire seeing SATOD fall by 5.7 percentage points in 3 years. This is a significant improvement compared to the last time we carried out this analysis in 2021. We previously looked at the change in SATOD across NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) – which have since been replaced by ICBs – between 2015/16 and 2019/20 ([see Appendix 2](#)). We found that SATOD had risen in around a third of CCGs and had only declined by 1 percentage point or more in 44% of CCGs.

Note: Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire ICB has been excluded from the analysis due to an error in their SATOD data for 2024/25.