Smoking statistics

ASH Fact Sheet | October 2026

Summary



Just under one out of every ten people in the UK smokes (9.8%). The chance that a person smokes has been going down ever since 1974, when records began in the UK. The number of cigarettes that people smoke has also gone down.

Here are some patterns in smoking in the UK.

- Smoking is slightly more common in men than women.
- People aged 18 to 24 years, and those aged 65 years and over were least likely to smoke. But older people are more likely to be ex-smokers.
- People in lower-paid jobs are much more likely to smoke than people with higher-paid jobs
- People who rent from a Local Authority or Housing Authority are much more likely to smoke than people who own their house.
- More than half of smokers in GB aim to quit
- One in five smokers in GB aim to quit in the next 3 months

Smoking is the one of biggest causes of death and disease that can be controlled. Up to 2 in 3 life-long smokers will die early, and lifelong smokers lose on average about 10 years of life. Most smoking-related deaths are from one of three types of disease: lung cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and coronary heart disease (CHD).

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Trends in smoking

The highest recorded level of smoking among men in Great Britain was 82% in 1948, with 65% smoking manufactured cigarettes. At that time, it was also more common for men to smoke 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 constant until the early 1970s, peaking at 45% in the mid-1960s, according to tobacco industry surveys.[1]

Overall, the proportion of adults (aged 16 and over) smoking in Great Britain has been declining since 1974 when national government surveys on smoking among adults first began.[2] The fall in smoking rates is due to a combination of people quitting and a growth in the population of people who have never smoked.

In 2025, 9.8% of adults in the UK smoke (Table 1).[2] The proportion of the population who have never smoked has increased from 46.7% in 2011 to 64.1% in 2025.

Table 1. Cigarette Smoking Prevalence, Adults Aged 18 and Over, Countries of the UK (APS), 2025[2]

England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland	UK
9.5%	11.1%	11.4%	9.9%	9.8%

Various methods have been used to measure smoking rates in England, Great Britain and the UK over the years. Smoking prevalence data in this fact sheet is sourced from three Government surveys: The Annual Population Survey (APS).[2], the General Household/General Lifestyle Surveys (GLS)[3] and the Opinion & Lifestyle Survey (OPN).[4]

The demographic data in this report mostly uses the Annual Population Survey, which represents people aged 18+ in the UK. The earliest data available from the APS is from 2011. Government targets are set on the basis of the APS data as this has the largest sample size. This fact sheet covers the 2025 results and trends across years. However, the three-year average is often used in other ASH and external resources as it's more stable between years.

The GLS survey ran from 1974 until 2011. The OPN survey also started asking about smoking in 2011, using the same prevalence question and sampling method as the GLS. Both are representative of people aged 16+ in Great Britain. Unlike the APS, the OPN includes questions about vaping. It also asks smokers a wider range of questions, including number of cigarettes consumed, how soon the first cigarette of the day is smoked after waking and desire to quit.

Due to differences in sample size and methodology, overall prevalence figures differ between surveys, though the trends are consistent. Since 2000 data have been weighted. Table 2 shows a comparison of prevalence in the three surveys. Only four-yearly data is shown before 2022, but results are published yearly (or every other year before 2000).

In 2024, APS data for 2020-2023 were reweighted by ONS. The updated values are used in this fact sheet.

Table 2. Smoking prevalence by survey, 1974-2025[2,3,4]

%	1974	1978	1982	1986	1990	1994	1998	2002	2006	2010	2014	2018	2022	2023	2024	2025
GLS (GB 16+)[3]	45.6	40.2	35.3	32.7	30.0	26.8	27.1	25.9	22.0	20.3						
OPN (GB 16+)[4]											18.8	16.6	11.2	10.5	9.1	8.7
APS (UK 18+)[2]											18.1	14.7	11.7	11.1	10.6	9.8

See also:
ASH Fact Sheet Facts at a glance
ASH Key Topic Smoking: What you need to know

Types of tobacco smoked

Across Great Britain, since 1990, there has been a steady increase in the number of people 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.[4] The 2018 Opinions & Lifestyle survey revealed that 40.8% of male and 29.9% of female smokers said they only smoked hand-rolled cigarettes.[4] This is most likely due to the growing unaffordability of ready-made cigarettes, and that smoking is becoming more concentrated among people on low incomes.

Targets to reduce smoking

Periodically, the Government sets targets to reduce smoking prevalence in the population.

In 2023, the Conservative Government published 'Stopping the Start: our plan to create a smokefree generation.[5]

In July 2019, the Conservative Government announced its ambition for a Smokefree 2030 (where the overall percentage of the population who smoke is 5% or below) through its consultation document 'Advancing our health: prevention in the 2020s'.[6]

In July 2017, the Conservative Government published a Tobacco Control Plan for England, outlining the steps needed to drastically reduce smoking rates by 2022. Its goals included reducing the number of 15 year-olds who smoke regularly from 8% to 3% or below, reducing smoking in adults from 15.5% to 12%, and reducing smoking in pregnancy from 10.7% to 6% or below.[7]

In March 2011 the Coalition Government launched its Tobacco Control Plan 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.[8]

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.[9]

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.[10] The target for the general population was achieved in 2007 but not for lower socio-economic groups (28% in 2011).

See also:

ASH Fact Sheet Key dates in tobacco regulation

Cigarette smoking by sex

Cigarette smoking is more common among men (11.3%) than women (8.2%), and this difference has been fairly consistent over time.

In the 2024 results, APS data for 2020-2023 were reweighted by ONS. The updated values are used in this fact sheet.

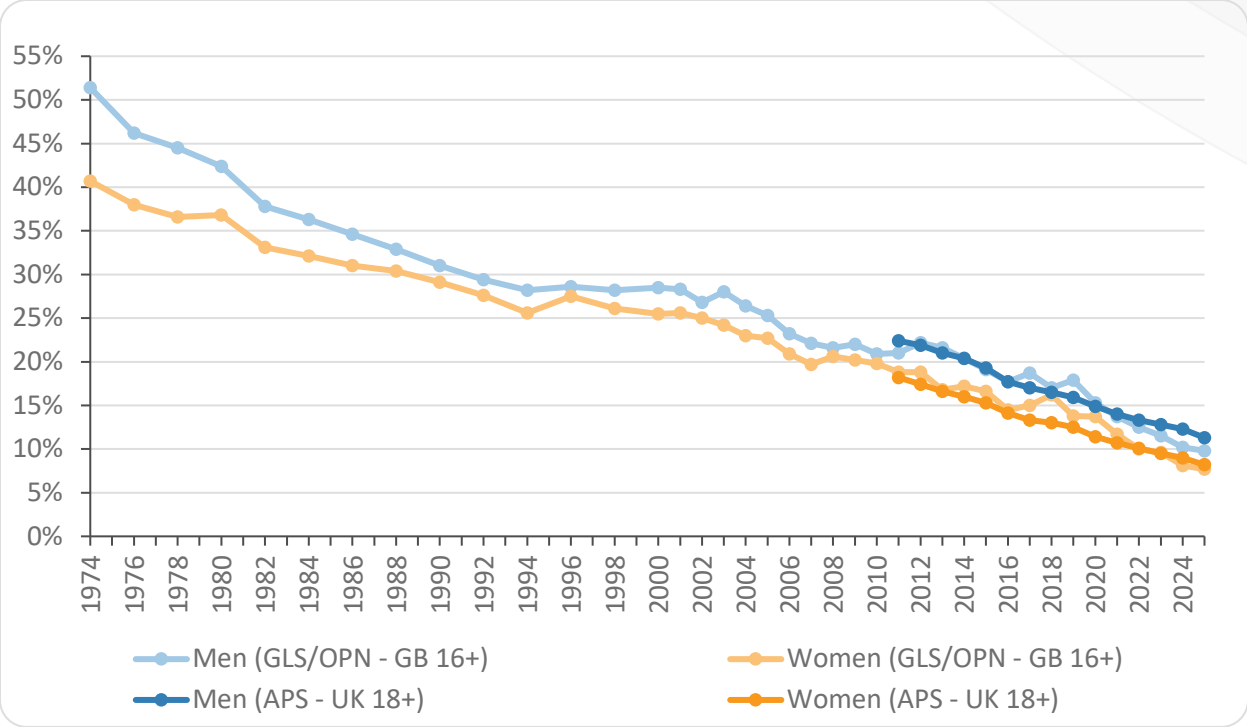
Table 3. Prevalence of cigarette smoking by sex (GLS), 1974-2010, GB age 16+[3]

%	1974	1978	1982	1986	1990	1994	1998	2002	2006	2010
Men	51.4	44.5	37.8	34.6	31.0	28.2	28.2	26.8	23.2	20.9
Women	40.7	36.6	33.1	31.0	29.1	25.6	26.1	25.0	20.9	19.8
All	45.6	40.2	35.3	32.7	30.0	26.8	27.1	25.9	22.0	20.3

Table 4. Prevalence of cigarette smoking by sex (APS), 2011-2025, UK age 18+[2]

%	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Men	22.4	21.9	21.0	20.4	19.3	17.7	17.0	16.5	15.9	14.9	14.0	13.3	12.8	12.3	11.3
Women	18.2	17.4	16.6	16.0	15.3	14.1	13.3	13.0	12.5	11.4	10.7	10.1	9.5	9.0	8.2
All	20.2	19.6	18.8	18.1	17.2	15.8	15.1	14.7	14.1	14.0	13.3	12.9	11.9	10.6	9.8

Figure 1. Prevalence of cigarette smoking by sex and survey 1974-2025, GB aged 16+(GLS and OPN) & UK aged 18+ (APS) [2,3,4]



Cigarette smoking by region

Smoking prevalence varies slightly by region. In 2025, regional smoking rates range from 8.4% in London to 11.3% in Yorkshire and the Humber.

Since 2011, smoking prevalence in England has halved (52% decline), with London seeing the largest percentage point decline (56%).

Table 5. Prevalence of adult cigarette smoking by region (APS), UK age 18+, 2011 and 2025[2]

Region	Prevalence 2011	Prevalence 2025	% decline 2011 to 2025
East Midlands	20.2%	9.9%	51%
East of England	19.3%	8.9%	54%
London	19.2%	8.4%	56%
North East	21.3%	9.7%	54%
North West	21.9%	10.3%	53%
South East	18.2%	8.7%	52%

South West	18.8%	9.2%	51%
West Midlands	19.2%	10.4%	46%
Yorkshire and the Humber	21.9%	11.3%	48%
England	19.8%	9.5%	52%

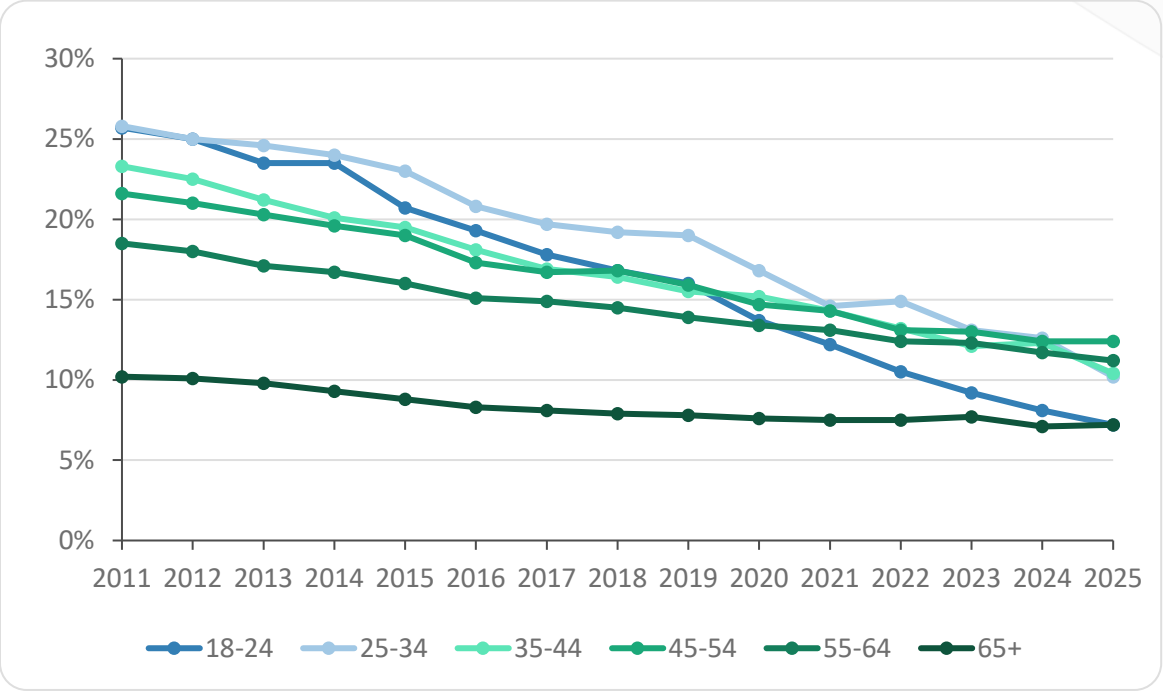
Cigarette smoking by age

Since the start of the APS survey in 2011, smoking has become less common across all age groups.[2] Smoking is lowest among people aged 18-24 and aged 65 and over (both 7.2%). Although people aged 65 and over are more likely than younger people to have ever been smokers, they are also more likely to have stopped smoking. Those aged 45 to 54 years have the highest proportion of current smokers in 2025 (12.4%).

Table 6. Cigarette smoking by age (APS), UK, 2011-2025[2]

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
2011	25.7%	25.8%	23.3%	21.6%	18.5%	10.2%
2012	25.0%	25.0%	22.5%	21.0%	18.0%	10.1%
2013	23.5%	24.6%	21.2%	20.3%	17.1%	9.8%
2014	23.5%	24.0%	20.1%	19.6%	16.7%	9.3%
2015	20.7%	23.0%	19.5%	19.0%	16.0%	8.8%
2016	19.3%	20.8%	18.1%	17.3%	15.1%	8.3%
2017	17.8%	19.7%	16.9%	16.7%	14.9%	8.1%
2018	16.8%	19.2%	16.4%	16.8%	14.5%	7.9%
2019	16.0%	19.0%	15.5%	15.9%	13.9%	7.8%
2020	13.7%	16.8%	15.2%	14.7%	13.4%	7.6%
2021	12.2%	14.6%	14.3%	14.3%	13.1%	7.5%
2022	10.5%	14.9%	13.2%	13.1%	12.4%	7.5%
2023	9.2%	13.1%	12.1%	13.0%	12.3%	7.7%
2024	8.1%	12.6%	12.3%	12.4%	11.7%	7.1%
2025	7.2%	10.2%	10.4%	12.4%	11.2%	7.2%

Figure 2. Cigarette smoking by age (APS), UK 2011-2025[2]



See also
ASH Fact Sheet Young people and smoking
ASH Key Topic Youth Smoking

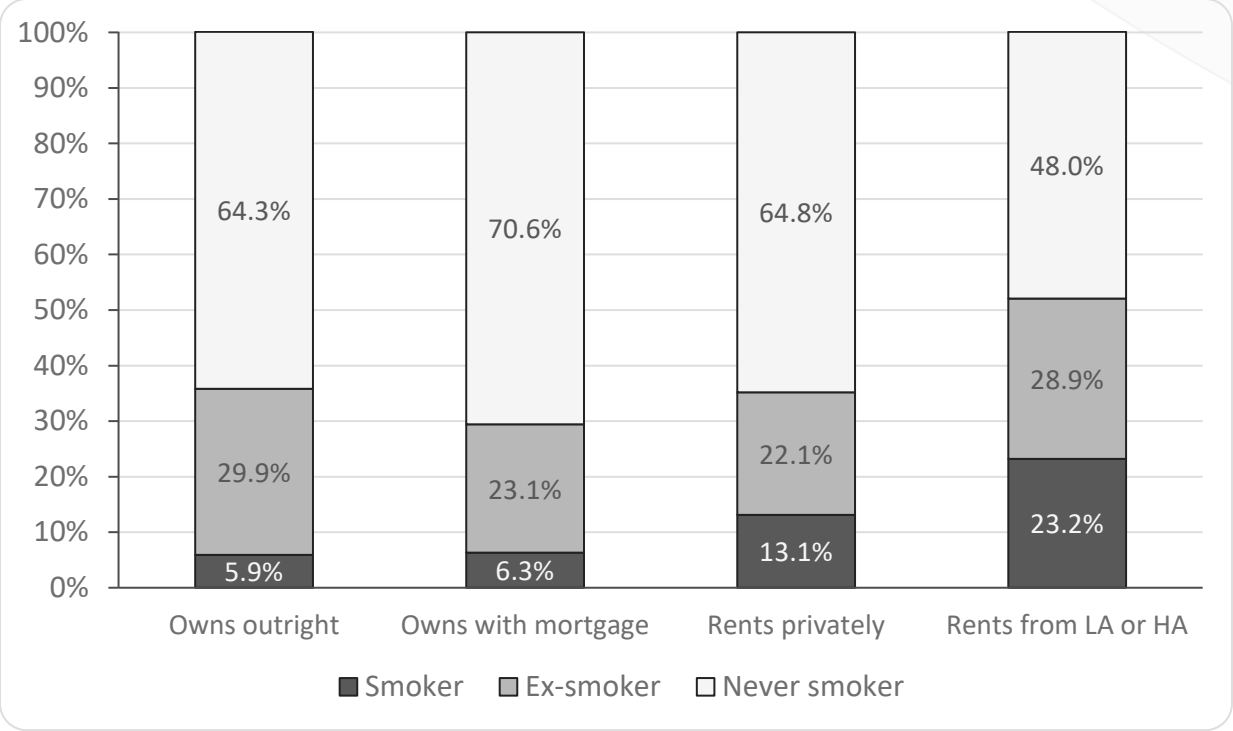
Cigarettes smoking by socio-economic group

There is a strong link between cigarette smoking and socio-economic group. In 2025, 16.9% of adults in the UK in routine and manual occupations smoked compared with 5.9% in managerial and professional occupations.[2]

People in employment are less likely to smoke (10%) than unemployed people (17%), and someone who rents through an LA or HA is four times as likely to smoke (23.2%) as someone who owns their house outright (5.9%).[2]

In England, one in four adults with a long-term mental health condition smoke (24.0%), while four in ten adults with serious mental illness smoke (40.5%).[11]

Figure 3. Prevalence of adult cigarette smoking by housing (APS), UK age 18+, 2025[2]



Amount of 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). The average number of cigarettes smoked per day by men and women has seen a general downward trend. In 1974, male smokers living in Great Britain consumed an average of 18.4 cigarettes per day, and female smokers 13.7. [3] By 2025, the average number of cigarettes consumed per day in GB had decreased to 10.9 for male smokers and 9.0 for female smokers.[4]

Frequency of smoking and socioeconomic group

Smoking every day is associated with lower socio-economic status. A 2026 survey commissioned by ASH found that daily smoking is more common in lower social groups (C2DE, 8.8%) than in the higher (ABC1, 4.7%).[12]

Lower cigarette consumption per day is associated with higher socio-economic status. ASH found that 48% of current smokers in highest social group (AB) smoked 6 or fewer cigarettes per day compared to 28% in the lowest social group (DE).[12]

Dependence on cigarette smoking

There are several ways of measuring dependence on smoking including the desire to quit amongst those who nevertheless continue to smoke. Other ways of measuring dependence include how soon the first cigarette of the day is smoked after waking. In 2025, OPN data shows 40% of current smokers in Great Britain had their first cigarette less than 30 minutes after waking.[4]

Desire to stop smoking is high; in 2025 52% of GB current smokers intended to quit, of which 20% intended to quit in the next three months. Only 16% said that they do not intend to stop.[4]

Disease and deaths related to smoking

Smoking is one of the primary causes of preventable illness and premature death, accounting for approximately 80,000 deaths a year in the UK.[13]

Disease caused by smoking

Smoking harms nearly every organ of the body and dramatically reduces both quality of life and life expectancy. Smoking causes lung cancer, respiratory disease and heart disease as well as numerous cancers in other organs including the lip, mouth, throat, bladder, kidney, stomach, liver and cervix. The 2010 US Surgeon General report, 'How Tobacco Smoke Causes Disease', concludes that "there is no risk-free level of exposure to tobacco smoke, and there is no safe tobacco product."[14]

In England it is estimated that in 2019-20, among adults aged 35 and over, around 500,000 NHS hospital admissions were attributable to smoking, accounting for 4% of all hospital admissions in this age group.[15] The cost of smoking to the National Health Service in England is estimated to be £1.8 billion a year.[16]

Deaths caused by smoking

It is estimated that the global yearly death toll as a result of tobacco use is around 8 million (including exposure to second hand smoke).[13] It is predicted that by the end of the 21st century, tobacco will have killed one billion people within the century.[17]
Up to 2 in 3 life-long smokers will die prematurely, [18] [19] losing on average about 10 years of life.[20]

Data from the Global Burden Study of Disease, 2023 reports the proportion of deaths in the United Kingdom. Tobacco is the cause of 12% of deaths in the UK each year. It is one of the biggest preventable causes of death in the UK.

Most smoking-related deaths arise from one of three types of disease: lung cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD which incorporates emphysema and chronic bronchitis) and coronary heart disease (CHD). In the UK, one in five cancer

deaths (19%) are due to tobacco, amounting to 41 thousand deaths per year. Six in ten (59%) of tracheal, bronchus and lung cancers are due to tobacco.

See also:
ASH Fact Sheet Smoking and cancer
ASH Fact Sheet Smoking and respiratory disease
ASH Fact Sheet Smoking, the heart and circulation

Non-fatal diseases

There are many medical conditions associated with or aggravated by smoking, which may not be fatal but still cause years of debilitating illness. These include:

Heart and circulation	Angina, Buerger's Disease (severe circulatory disease), Peripheral vascular disease
Respiratory	Asthma, Common cold, Chronic rhinitis (inflammation of nose), Influenza, Tuberculosis
Stomach/digestive system	Colon polyps, Crohn's disease (chronic inflamed bowel), Duodenal ulcer, Stomach ulcer
Mouth	Gingivitis & Periodontitis (gum disease), Tooth loss, Tooth discolouration
Ligaments, muscles and bones	Ligament, tendon and muscle injuries, Neck and back pain, Osteoporosis (in both sexes), Rheumatoid arthritis
Eyes	Cataract, Macular degeneration, Nystagmus (abnormal eye movements),Optic neuropathy (loss of vision), Ocular histoplasmosis (fungal eye infection), Tobacco Amblyopia (loss of vision), Diabetic retinopathy, Optic neuritis
Skin	Psoriasis, skin wrinkling
Reproductive functions	Female fertility (30% lower), Menopause (onset 1.74 years earlier on average), Male fertility (Impotence, Reduced sperm count and motility, sperm less able to penetrate the ovum, increased shape abnormalities)
Other	Depression, Hearing loss, Multiple sclerosis, Type 2 Diabetes

Resources

Smoking data	Data Source	Source link
Smoking Prevalence	Annual Population Survey, Office for National Statistics	Smoking habits in the UK and its constituent countries
Cigarette smoking by gender and age	Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN)	Adult smoking habits in Great Britain (Table 4)
Deaths attributable to smoking	Global Burden Study of Disease, United Kingdom	GBD Compare United Kingdom
Smoking-related hospital admissions	NHS Digital's Hospital Episode Statistics (HES) and is based on the primary diagnosis.	Statistics on Smoking Part 1: Smoking-related ill health and mortality
Smoking prevalence in priority populations	A collection of statistics about tobacco use and related harm for England and geographies within it	DHSC Fingertips – Public Health Profiles, 2026

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Please cite as: Action on Smoking and Health (ASH). *Smoking Statistics*. 2026

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