Smoking rates in Yorkshire and Humber are the lowest ever recorded at 16.7% [1]: but people in the region still want Government to do more to limit smoking

In Yorkshire and the Humber smoking prevalence has declined by 0.3 percentage points to 16.7% [1]. This decline – to the lowest level ever recorded – comes with strong support from the public for Government to do more to limit tobacco and to enforce stronger 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 Yorkshire and Humber fell last year, but while this is the lowest ever recorded, the rate of decline is slower than the national average and 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 more than three quarters (77%) of adults in Yorkshire and the Humber support activities to limit smoking or think government should do more, with the proportion thinking government should do more growing significantly over time. [2]

- More than three quarters (77%) of adults in Yorkshire and the Humber support activities to limit smoking or think Government should do more.
- Support for Government to do more to limit smoking increased from 26% in 2009 [2] to 45% in 2019.
- The proportion of respondents who think that Government is doing too much has fallen from 21% in 2009 to 7% 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 introduces 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 Yorkshire and the Humber support, only 3% oppose).
- Making tobacco manufacturers pay a levy or licence fee to Government to help smokers quit and prevent young people from taking up smoking, (72% of adults in Yorkshire and the Humber support, only 6% oppose).
- Requiring tobacco manufacturers to include Government mandated information about quitting inside cigarette packs (64% of adults in Yorkshire and the Humber support, only 8% oppose).
- Prohibiting smoking in all private vehicles, not just those carrying children under 18 (63% support 18% oppose).
Increasing the age of sale from 18 to 21 (56% of adults in Yorkshire and the Humber support, only 16% oppose).

A regional briefing on 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

ASH staff are available for interview and have an ISDN line. For more information contact Deborah Arnott (chief executive, ASH) on email: deborah.arnott@ash.org.uk or telephone: 020 7404 0242.

Out of hours contact Deborah Arnott (Chief Executive, ASH) on 07976 935 987.

References:


[2] Survey carried out by YouGov. The unweighted sample size for Yorkshire and the Humber is 1079. 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/