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A new agenda for tobacco control

The Smokefree Action coalition tackled the injustice of non-smokers' exposure to secondhand smoke. Now the coalition finds a new mission in tackling a burden that falls most heavily on the disadvantaged and the young.



Are voters sick of tobacco control?

In the aftermath of England's smokefree legislation a YouGov survey finds much public support for further tobacco reform.



Stop selling cigarettes to school children

Shop keepers have been getting better at challenging school age smokers. However, test purchases show that children can use vending machines with impunity, undermining the recent rise in the age of sale.



APPG on Smoking & Health:

A New Strategy for Tobacco Control

Tuesday 11th December 5-6pm Committee Room 9

A new agenda for tobacco control

A very great deal has been achieved in the last 10 years. The White Paper *Smoking Kills* was a landmark. It set an agenda for action across government and government followed through. Indeed, this year's increase in the legal age of sale of tobacco products to 18 and legislation to protect people from secondhand smoke were innovations that have put the UK at the forefront of tobacco control worldwide.

This is not just a matter of opinion, Luk Joossens and Martin Raw recently reviewed tobacco control activity in Europe with their Tobacco Control Scale and the UK topped the table. Although smoking rates amongst the most affluent have halved in the last thirty years, smoking rates amongst the most disadvantaged in society have remained above 70%, having changed little. At the publication of *Smoking Kills* 28% of English adults overall smoked, today the figure stands at 24%.

As ministers must surely be considering what to do next to curb the UK's single greatest cause of preventable death and disease and the greatest factor in health inequalities, health campaigners are coming to the view that no single action will be enough to make a real impact on smoking related disease. What is needed is a fresh, cross government strategy embracing Health, Education,

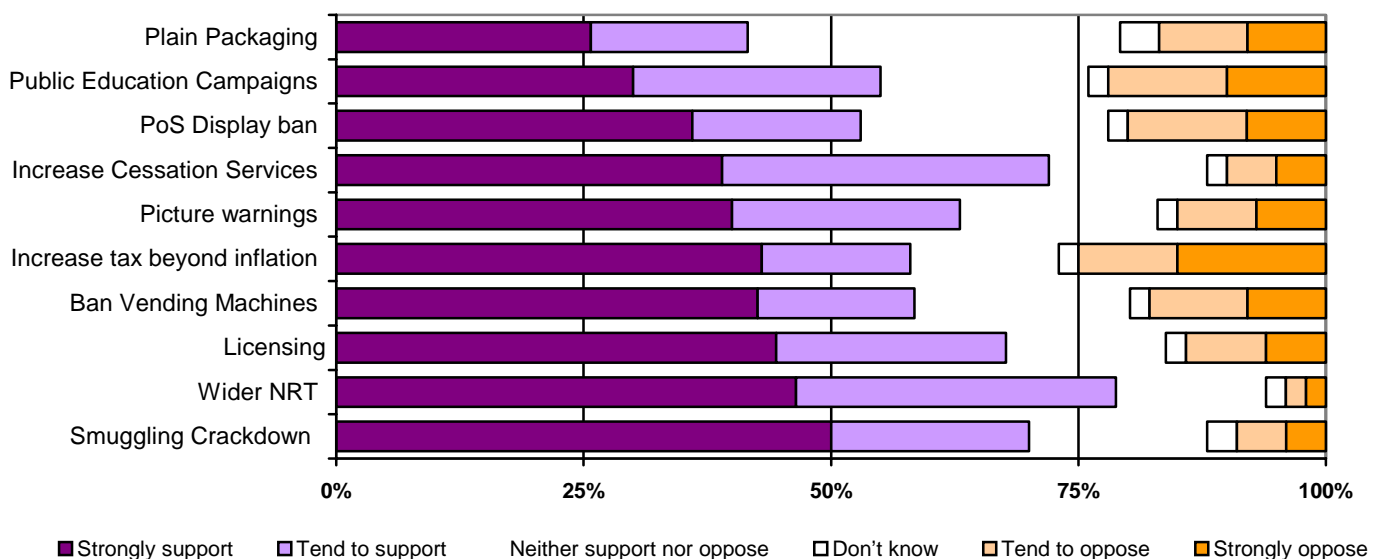


Customs and the Treasury, Westminster, the devolved administrations and local authorities. The object must be to reduce the inequitable burden of tobacco related death and disease born by the most disadvantaged in our society.

Reducing the harm from tobacco by ensuring that an effective, fully funded comprehensive tobacco control strategy remains a central element of government health policy must now be the goal of health campaigners just as it has become the new vision for the Smokefree Action Coalition.

Deborah Arnott, Director of ASH

Support for further tobacco control measures in England



Tobacco policy and opinion after smokefree

How has the public taken to smokefree legislation? Do people believe it is good for health? Has the public appetite for tobacco reform been satisfied or stimulated? ASH, the British Thoracic Society and Asthma UK commissioned a YouGov poll in the wake of Smokefree legislation in England.

Just 6 weeks before the legislation came into force in England the BBC Daily Politics Show published a poll showing support for the legislation at 81% in England. In Scotland, smokefree already, support stood at 85%.

It seemed that the holy grail of liberal tobacco control had been found. Those who chose not to smoke tobacco would be protected from the smoke of others, smokers trying to quit would be less tempted to relapse but those who chose to carry on could do so without harming others.

Has it worked?

There was little change in the number who reported being exposed to secondhand smoke at home and/or at work compared to a similar survey conducted for us in April.

However, 17% of them reported being a little less exposed and 41% reported being a great deal less exposed to secondhand smoke.

We found very little evidence of smokers breaking the law. We asked those who had been to a pub in the previous month if they had seen anybody smoking in a pub since July 1st; only 2% reported that they had seen smoking in pubs “many times” compared to 86% who had seen no smoking. 97% of smokers reported not having smoked in a pub.

An electorate hungry for more?

The BBC Daily Politics poll found that a substantial minority (45%) felt smokefree legislation should go further encompassing public parks for example but the real appetite for further legislation was to be found in banning smoking while driving (62% agree) and on smoking near children (91%).

This showed public opinion overstepping public health groups, few of which are campaigning for these additional legal restrictions. The research team decided to test public support for the kind of measures that health campaigners are calling for and so put our top ten tobacco control measures

to the test. The levels of support were startling. We found majority support for 9 out of 10 of the policies and even the least popular (requiring manufacturers to sell cigarettes in plain packaging) attracted more support than opposition (42% support 17% oppose).

Less secondhand smoke

Of the 24% who report exposure to second-hand smoke at home and/or at work, 58% say they are exposed less than before July 1 while 7% are exposed more than before.

97% of smokers obey the law

97% of smokers who had been to a pub in the previous month had not smoked in a pub since July 1.

People say it is good for health

83% believe it is good for bar workers health, 73% agree that it is good for their health compared to 9% who disagree.

Smokers want more

We also found substantial support among smokers for several measures including “making nicotine replacement therapy (e.g. gum and patches) easier for smokers to get hold of” (70% of smokers support 5% oppose) and “Increasing local ‘stop smoking’ services in the NHS” (63% support 12% oppose). Other measures which tended to be supported by smokers include “requiring businesses selling cigarettes to also sell and display NRT” (47%

support 15% oppose) and requiring a license to sell cigarettes (44% support 28% oppose).

Survey participants were asked how strongly if at all they would support the following measure: Increasing the price of cigarettes faster than the rate of inflation; Requiring businesses to have a license to sell cigarettes; Requiring manufacturers to sell cigarettes in plain packaging (i.e. no distinctive colours or logos); Banning the display of cigarettes in the places where they are sold; Cracking down on tobacco smuggling; Increasing local ‘stop smoking’ services in the NHS; More government spending on mass media ‘stop smoking’ campaigns funded from tobacco taxes; Make nicotine replacement therapy (e.g. gum and patches) easier for smokers to get hold of; Use graphic pictures on the health warning which go on tobacco products; Ban the sale of cigarettes from vending machines; Require businesses selling cigarettes to also sell and display nicotine replacement therapy (e.g. gums and patches)

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov PLC. Total sample size was 1,532 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 22nd - 28th August 2007. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all English adults (aged 18+)

Underage sales: No ID? No problem.

Just over half of school children who tried to buy cigarettes from shops were refused at least once and refusals have been increasing over the past 10 years according to an NHS report 'Smoking, drinking and drug use among young people in England' in 2006. However many young smokers find that the risk of being refused falls to virtually zero when they buy cigarettes from a vending machine.

According to the voluntary code produced by the National Association of Cigarette Machine Operators, machines should be sited in monitored, supervised areas so that staff can be sure of preventing their use by young people. However, test purchases in the East Midlands failed to find a single occasion where children attempting to use cigarette vending machines were challenged. 95% of attempted purchases were successful and the remaining 5% failed only because the machine was empty or out of order. A YouGov poll for ASH (see Page 2) found 59% of adults in England supported a ban on such sales.

Campaigners point out that the unsupervised sales of other age restricted products - such as fireworks, knives, solvents, crossbows and alcohol - would not be countenanced. According to Martin Dockrell of ASH, "Looking at all the age restricted products, only tobacco is sold through vending machines, and this a product that kills 50% of lifelong users who use it as directed by the manufacturer".

David Taylor, chair of the Smoking & Health APPG has pointed out that raising the age of

Cigarette vending machines		
Complete ban		Partial restrictions
China	Poland	Australia
Croatia	Moldova	Belgium
Cyprus	Romania	Finland
France	Russia	Italy
Hungary	Singapore	Netherlands
Iceland	Slovakia	New Zealand
Lithuania	Slovenia	Portugal
Norway		Spain

sale without restricting access to the product could prove counter-productive, "Children who smoke are far more likely to continue smoking as adults and effective youth prevention and cessation campaigns are hard to find. If you tell young people that smoking is for grown-ups and do nothing to reduce the supply you risk sending underage smoking up not down".

The Children and Young Persons Act 1991 had increased penalties and provided for enforcement action by local authorities against retailers selling tobacco products, and in 2000 the government provided supporting guidelines in the Tobacco Enforcement Protocol. The proportion of regular smokers who usually bought cigarettes from vending machines was between 30% and 37% in the 1990s but has fallen since then to 17% in 2006.

The British Heart Foundation is leading a campaign for change and urging MPs to sponsor a Private Members Bill to prohibit the sale of tobacco from vending machines. The campaign is supported by Asthma UK, British Lung Foundation, British Medical Association, Cancer Research UK, Diabetes UK, National Heart Forum, the Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation, The Royal College of Physicians, and the Stroke Association. For further information please contact the BHF on 020 7725 0664 or occonnor@bhf.org.uk

Children refused cigarettes in a shop on the last attempt to buy them: 1990 - 2006

