

Smokefree England factsheet

PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH

The Department of Health undertook a series of surveys looking at public awareness of the smokefree law, levels of public support, its impact on public behaviour and knowledge of what the legislation encompasses.

Prior to July 1st, three waves of research were carried out on ICM's telephone omnibus in February, April and June amongst a representative sample of c.1,700 adults aged 18+ in England. Interviews were conducted across the country and results were weighted to the profile of all English adults.

A small number of relevant questions were also included as part of the Department of Health's advertising tracking on BMRB's face-to-face omnibus in February and April, which was expanded to include questions relating to attitudes and awareness of smokefree legislation in July. In February and April, a representative sample of c.1,500 adults aged 16 to 74 were interviewed. In July, the sample was brought into line with the ICM research, with c.1,700 adults aged 18+ interviewed between 19th and 25th July.

Due to the difference in methodology, the results of the ICM and BMRB research are not directly comparable, so these are presented separately in the summary of key findings below.

98% awareness

- General awareness of the legislation has remained high throughout the research, reaching 98% in July (BMRB, up from 93% in February and 95% in April. Similar trend on ICM: 89% in February, 93% in April and 95% in June).
- Prior to the law being introduced, the ICM research showed unprompted awareness of the date for the introduction of smokefree law rose dramatically from just 33% in February to 55% in April and 83% in June. This followed the launch of public information advertising in mid-May.

75% support

- The latest BMRB results in July show three-quarters (75%) of adults support smokefree law, including 84% of non-smokers and 47% of smokers.
- This is consistent with the levels of support found by the ICM research prior to the legislation: 78% in June, 76% in April and 74% in February.

Positive health impact

- Around three-quarters of the general public have consistently stated throughout all waves of the research that going smokefree will have a positive effect on health. (BMRB: 79% in July, 80% in April and 79% in February. ICM: 78% in June, 76% in April and 75% in February).
- The top reason given for the legislation has consistently been that secondhand smoke is harmful to health (BMRB: 68% in July, up from 64% in April and 60% in Feb. ICM: 69% in June, up from 65% in April and February).
- As numbers have increased acknowledging that this is the main reason for the law, so the numbers have decreased in people thinking it's to encourage people to stop smoking (BMRB: 17% in July, down from 27% in April and 29% in Feb. ICM: 14% in June, down from 17% in April and 18% in February).

Benefits experienced

- According to the BMRB research in July, the most frequently mentioned benefits that respondents had experienced as a result of England becoming smokefree, were:
 - 14% said clothes/hair don't smell of smoke after visit to pub/club
 - 12% said more pleasant/better atmosphere in pubs/clubs/restaurants
 - 9% said cleaner air
 - 6% said better for health.

Business impact

- In June, 73% of regular pub goers expressed their support for the new law (ICM: 71% in April and 70% in February. Question not asked on BMRB).
- In July, 63% of the population said that the legislation would not affect how often they go to the pub and 15% said they will go more often (BMRB. ICM: 66%/18% in June, 68%/15% in April and 65%/15% in February).
- There has been a notable decrease in the number of people saying they'll go to the pub less often, down from 10% in February to 7% in April, 6% in June (ICM) and 6% in July (BMRB).
- In June, 75% of regular pub goers said that the legislation will not affect how often they go to the pub and 14% said they'd go more often, (ICM: 79%/10% in April and 70%/13% in February. Question not asked on BMRB).
- By June, the proportion of smokers who said that the legislation would not affect how often they go to the pub had stabilised at 67%, with 4% saying they expected to go more often and 19% less often (ICM).
- In July, 70% of the population said that the legislation will not affect how often they go to restaurants and cafes and 17% said they will go more often (BMRB). This was consistent with the ICM results: 66%/18% in July, 73%/19% in April and 70%/19% in February.

Enforcement

- In June, 90% of the overall population thought the legislation would be enforced (ICM, up from 86% in April).
- 89% believed business owners/building managers would enforce the legislation (ICM, up from 87% in April).
- 79% believed the council would enforce the legislation (same as April).
- 77% believed workers in the workplace/members of the public would enforce the legislation (ICM, up from 71% in April).
- By July, 49% were aware that the fine for individuals who smoke in a smokefree place is £50 (BMRB. ICM research showed 31% in June and April).
- By July, 95% thought that their employer would enforce the legislation (BMRB. ICM had shown increase from 92% in June, 88% in April and 89% in February omnibus).