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Coverage
Great Britain
Theme
Health and Care

Smoking related behaviour and attitudes

Overall, 38 per cent of smokers had sought some kind of help or advice for stopping smoking according to a survey report published today by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). This was similar to the 2000 figure (37 per cent) but lower than in 1999 when 44 per cent of smokers said they had sought some help or advice.

Three in ten (30 per cent) smokers said they had read leaflets and/or booklets on how to stop smoking, 10 per cent had asked a doctor or other health professional for help and 4 per cent had rung a smokers' telephone helpline. About one in eight (13 per cent) had bought some type of nicotine replacement therapy.

This report presents the results of a survey on smoking behaviour and attitudes carried out in 2001. The survey is the latest in a series of surveys carried out as part of the ONS Omnibus Survey for the Department of Health. The surveys in the series were designed to explore views on passive smoking, smoking restrictions and giving up smoking.

Other key findings from the survey include:

Giving up smoking

- The percentage of current smokers who said they would like to give up smoking was not significantly different to the 2000 figure (72 per cent in 2001, 71 per cent in 2000).

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- Nearly nine out of ten smokers who wanted to give up mentioned at least one health-related reason for wanting to give up smoking. For example, 68 per cent said they wanted to stop smoking because it would be better for their health. A further 31 per cent said they wanted to give up smoking because they could not afford to smoke or considered smoking a waste of money.
- Over three quarters (79 per cent) of current smokers had tried to give up smoking in the past, and a half (51 per cent) of current smokers had made a serious attempt in the past 5 years. The corresponding figures for 2000 were 78 per cent and 50 per cent respectively. A fifth (22 per cent) of ex-smokers had given up within the past 5 years.

Knowledge and views about passive smoking

- People had a high level of knowledge about the effect of passive smoking. Ninety per cent of respondents thought that a child's risk of getting chest infections was increased by passive smoking and over 80 per cent thought that passive smoking would increase a non-smoking adult's risk of lung cancer, bronchitis and asthma. The percentages were similar to those found in 2000.

Non-smokers' attitudes towards people smoking near them

- Over half (55 per cent – 51 per cent of men and 59 per cent of women) who did not smoke said they would mind if other people smoked near them. This was similar to the percentages found in 2000 (55 per cent), 1999 (54 per cent) and 1997 (56 per cent).

Smokers' behaviour in the company of non-smokers

- Sixty-three per cent of smokers said they do not smoke at all when they are in a room with a child (67 per cent in 2000) and 26 per cent said they would smoke fewer cigarettes in the presence of a child (25 per cent in 2000).

Views on smoking restrictions

- Over two fifths of respondents (47 per cent) who were in work said that smoking was not allowed at all on the premises where they worked – this was slightly higher than the 44 per cent reported in 2000, and nearer the 1999 figure of 48 per cent.
- The support for smoking restrictions has been increasing since 1996. The percentage in favour of restrictions at work rose from 81 per cent in 1996 to 86 per cent in 2001, in restaurants, from 85 per cent to 87 per cent, in pubs, from 48 per cent to 50 per cent, and in other public places from 82 per cent to 85 per cent.
- 42 per cent considered whether or not a place has a non-smoking area as an important factor when deciding where to go for a meal. This was a small but significant decrease since 2000 when 45 per cent (41 per cent in 1999) of people considered whether or not a place has a non-smoking area as an important factor when deciding where to go for a meal.
- Nineteen per cent said they would take account of whether a place has a non-smoking area when selecting a place to go for a drink. Again, this was a small but significant decrease since 2000 when 22 per cent (18 per cent in 1999) regarded whether a place has a non-smoking area as an important consideration in their choice of a place to go for a drink.

BACKGROUND NOTES

1. The Omnibus Survey is a multi-purpose survey carried out by the ONS each month on behalf of a range of government departments and other public and non-profit making bodies.
2. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available from the press office.
3. National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference. © Crown copyright 2002.

