

ash wales
cymru
action on smoking and health

YouGov 2016

Attitudes towards tobacco control in Wales



To determine public opinion in Wales relating to tobacco control ASH Wales Cymru conducts an annual opinion poll in conjunction with YouGov. The 2016 survey was undertaken between 2nd March and 23rd March 2016. The survey questions were asked of a representative sample of 1,048 adults (aged 18+) in Wales. 54% of respondents had never smoked, 32% used to smoke but have since given up and 14% currently smoked at the time of the survey. The survey was conducted online.

Smokefree spaces

Support exists for extending the current scope of the smoking ban to include additional places. For instance, 61% of respondents to the survey agree that smoking should be banned in all cars, 62% agree with banning smoking in communal recreational spaces, such as parks and beaches, whilst 82% of respondents agree that smoking should be banned in outdoor children's play areas, including over half (58%) of all the smokers surveyed.



Tobacco control legislation

When asked about the government's activities to limit smoking 40% of respondents felt they were not doing enough, with 13% of the opinion that they were doing too much.

A proposed measure to reduce the prevalence of smoking is to require businesses to have a valid licence to sell tobacco which can be removed if they are caught more than once selling to underage smokers. 84% of respondents to the survey are in support of this measure, including 70% of smokers.

72% of those surveyed (38% of smokers) are in favour of putting tobacco products out of sight in shops.

When asked about their support for raising the age of sale of cigarettes from 18 to 21, 58% of respondents supported this measure (42% of smokers).

The contrast between the views of respondents who smoke and those who don't is most stark when they were asked whether they would support or oppose putting an additional 25 pence on a packet of cigarettes, with the money being used to help smokers quit and discourage young people from taking up smoking. Unsurprisingly, a higher proportion of smokers were against this policy (61%) compared to non-smokers (10%).

Illegal tobacco

92% of current smokers surveyed reported no illicit purchases of cigarettes, a rise from the figure of 79% observed in 2015.

Electronic cigarettes

As many as 95% of respondents had heard of electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes), with 17% having tried them at least once. Interestingly, the proportion of respondents who reported use of e-cigarettes was much higher among smokers (68%) than non-smokers (9%).

Views were sought on whether e-cigarettes were more, less or as harmful as tobacco cigarettes. 50% of respondents believed them to be less/not harmful with just 2% considering them to be more harmful than tobacco cigarettes. Worryingly as many as 23% of respondents think e-cigarettes are just as harmful as tobacco cigarettes.

Of those respondents who have tried e-cigarettes 64% consider them to be either less or a lot less satisfying than ordinary tobacco cigarettes.



52% of respondents to the survey support extending the law banning smoking in enclosed public places and workplaces to cover the use of e-cigarettes. This was the case for 56% of non-smokers and 32% of smokers.

Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT)

Interestingly compared to e-cigarettes fewer respondents had heard of NRT, such as nicotine patches and gum, whilst slightly fewer respondents had tried NRT relative to e-cigarettes (Heard of: NRT = 82%, e-cigarettes = 95%; Tried: NRT = 15%, e-cigarettes = 17%).

In comparison to regular cigarettes, 68% of respondents who were aware of NRT viewed them as less harmful / not harmful at all, with virtually no respondents considering NRT as being more harmful than regular cigarettes and 5% viewing NRT as just as harmful as regular cigarettes.

Attitudes towards smoking

When asked whether they feel more uncomfortable smoking tobacco cigarettes in public these days 39% of smokers agreed this was the case.

67% of respondents to the survey view smoking tobacco cigarettes as common, with 11% viewing this activity as uncommon.

When asked whether in their opinion people in general approve or disapprove of people smoking tobacco cigarettes 74% of respondents answered disapprove, with this being the opinion of 60% of the smokers surveyed. Interestingly e-cigarettes and vaping devices are considered far more acceptable, with just 33% of respondents (21% of smokers) forming the opinion that people in general disapprove of people using e-cigarettes or vaping devices.