



ASH Wales Retailer Survey 2024

Background

The ASH Wales Retailer Survey 2024 includes data from a poll carried out shortly before legislation to raise the age of sale by one year every year for anyone born after 1 January 2009 was laid before UK parliament.

The survey of independent retailers was conducted by NEMS, a market research company, for ASH Wales, using computer-assisted telephone interviews among a random sample of 100 managers or owners of small shops selling tobacco in Wales.

Retailers included newsagents, off-licences, specialist tobacconists, local convenience stores/supermarkets (including symbol groups), and independent fuel stations.

Headline findings for tobacco

The tobacco age of sale policy is backed by the majority of retailers surveyed in Wales:

- **58%** of retailers surveyed in Wales, more than double the proportion opposed (27%)

The new polling also finds overwhelming support for mandatory age verification (proof of age) for all customers who look like they were born on or after 1 January 2009. This measure is supported by:

- **Eight in ten** retailers in Wales (**80%**), five times the proportion who oppose the measures (16%)

The conclusion is clear, that most small retailers support the Welsh and UK Governments' vision of a smokefree future.

Retail environment / point of sale for vapes

Our survey asked retailers about whether they support or oppose additional measures to regulate the sale of vapes and vaping products.

When we asked about the introduction of mandatory age verification laws for anyone who looks under 25 buying vapes or vaping products:

- **Almost 9 in 10** Welsh retailers surveyed supported this (**87%**), with 10% opposed

The majority also supported allowing vapes to be displayed in shops, but prohibiting any advertising and promotion in store as people enter shops:

- **71%** supported these measures, with 20% opposed

In addition to this question on the prohibition of advertising in shops, we also asked about support for a requirement for vapes or vaping products to be put behind the counter in shops:

- **83%** of Welsh retailers supported this (11% opposed)

A smaller majority of Welsh retailers surveyed supported a proposal to prohibit vapes and vaping products from being displayed in shops:

- **64%** supported this, with 28% opposed

Enforcement:

When it comes to dealing with those who breach legislation, an overwhelming majority of responsible retailers in Wales supported Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) for a breach of any new age of sale legislation:

- **86%** of Welsh retailers support FPNs (9% oppose)

The impact of previous regulations on UK small retailers

Retailers in the UK have experienced two major changes in the sale of tobacco products in the last ten years, both of which affected their everyday business. In 2015 point-of-sale displays of cigarettes were prohibited and tobacco products were put out of sight behind closed doors. The following year, in 2016, the attractive packaging of cigarettes and rolling tobacco was stripped away and plain packaging was introduced for all cigarette packs.

ASH UK commissioned NEMS to conduct computer-assisted telephone interviews among random samples of managers or owners of small shops selling tobacco in 2019,ⁱ 2022ⁱⁱ and 2024. In the 2022 survey, small retailers were asked if these changes had had an impact on their business. In response:

- 74% said that the prohibition of point-of-sale tobacco displays had had no impact or a positive impact (13% reported a negative impact)
- 75% said that the introduction of standardised packaging of cigarettes and rolling tobacco had had no impact or a positive impact (13% reported a negative impact)

ⁱ van Deelen et al. [Retailers' support for point-of-sale tobacco control policies in England: Association study of retailers' perceived importance of tobacco sales, contact with the tobacco industry, and the perceived impact of the policy](#). Nicotine and Tobacco Research, 2022

ⁱⁱ [Regulation is not a dirty word: Local retailers' views of proposals for new tobacco laws](#). ASH. November 2022.