



The behavioural, social and cultural impact of Smokefree legislation in England

- Legislation to prohibit smoking in public places is intended to protect adults and children from the health-damaging effects of environmental tobacco smoke and has the potential to reduce socio-economic inequalities in smoking prevalence.
- This report summarises findings from a research project which examined the behavioural, social and cultural impact of Smokefree legislation, implemented on 1st July 2007, in six localities in the north and south of England.
- Some smokers (generally the more affluent) anticipated Smokefree by cutting down or setting a quit date, and more of the affluent locations had no smoking areas or complete bans in public indoor spaces before 1st July 2007.
- There was a high degree of compliance with Smokefree in public places, with only a few minor infringements observed or reported.
- There was a general pattern of reduced consumption among participants in all locations, including cutting down and, to a lesser extent, quitting.
- There were shifts in attitudes from initial resentment to acceptance, and a growing perception of the personal and environmental benefits of Smokefree.
- Within the less advantaged localities in the north of England, a small number of smokers said they now smoked more in their homes post-Smokefree. Nevertheless, overall there was no evidence of a major shift from public to private smoking; most people said that they were not smoking more at home.
- Many respondents reported decreased tobacco consumption while out socialising in public social settings. This was not only because of the inconvenience of going outdoors to smoke, but also because of a perception that their greater visibility as a smoker attracted public disapproval.
- In areas of disadvantage, some older men and women with children curtailed social activities and experienced a sense of loss of the pleasures of socialising in bars and cafés where they could smoke with friends.
- Working with families, couples and social networks should be considered alongside more traditional individual-level approaches to delivering smoking cessation interventions.

Details of the research team

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