Smoking in Scotland

ash scotland
Taking Action on Smoking and Health

Fact sheet

March 2024

Smoking rates

- 685,000 adults (15%) in Scotland are current smokers i.e. 19% of men and 16% of women.[i]
- Smoking rates have dropped significantly from 52% in 1974 to 28% in 2003 and 17% in 2019.[ii]
- 1.6% of 13-year-olds and 4.3% of 15-year-olds in Scotland are regular smokers.[iii]
- 11% of pregnant women in Scotland smoke at the time of their first antenatal appointment, a decline of 14 percentage points in the last 20 years.[iv]
- Year in and year out, two-thirds of Scottish smokers say they would like to stop smoking.[v]
- An estimated 28 young adults (aged 18-25) start smoking every day.[vi]
- People who smoke, use an average of 11.4 cigarettes a day.[vii]

Death and disease

- In 2022, there were 8,942 smoking-attributable deaths, accounting for 20% of all deaths. Smoking is linked to more deaths than suicide, alcohol, homicide, drug, fire and accidental deaths combined.[viii]
- There were 88,779 smoking-related hospital admissions, equating to 243 people every day. Smoking-attributable admissions accounted for around 8% of all hospital admissions in 2022.[ix]
- in Scotland, an average of 22 years of life are lost for every smoking-related death.[x]
- It is estimated that the smoking costs NHS Scotland between £250 and 500 million [xi]

Deprivation and inequalities: 2022 data

- Smoking prevalence is strongly associated with deprivation and inequalities.
- 3.5 times as many people in the poorest communities smoke (25%) compared to the wealthiest communities (7%).[xii]
- One-fifth of people with a long-term mental health disorder smoke compared to 15% without.[xiii]
- In the most deprived areas, of those with a possible psychiatric condition, 34% smoke, whereas this figure is only 11% in the least deprived areas.[xiv]
- With people who have four or more anxiety symptoms in the most deprived areas 45% smoke, whereas this figure is only 4% in the least deprived areas.[xv]
- 8.5 times the number of pregnant women in the most deprived SIMD quintile (20.4%) reported being a smoker at the time of their first antenatal appointment, compared to those in the least deprived (2.4%). 72% of all smokers are from the 40% most deprived communities (SIMD 1+2)[xvi]

Economics, finances and poverty

- An ASH Scotland report from 2023 showed that the average smoking household spends 8% of its income on tobacco. In contrast, households in the most deprived communities (SIMD1) spend 12% and those in the least deprived 4.9%.[xvii]
- The average smoker will spend around £2,450 this year on smoking in 2024. Based on 12 cigarettes per day, at the cost of a cheap brand packet of cigarettes (£11,20). [xviii]
- Around 60,600 households would be lifted out of relative poverty if they quit smoking.[xix]
- An average smoker would save around £2000, if they quit. If the smoking rate in the 20% most deprived areas of Scotland fell just 1% (from 25% to 24%) Scotland's poorest communities would spend around £18 million a year less on tobacco*.

*A 1% reduction is 9136 fewer smokers. 9136 X £2000 (the average spend on tobacco) = £18.27 million

References

[i] Scottish Health Survey 2022.
[ii] General Household Survey (Scottish Sample) and Scottish Health Survey.
[iii] Health and Wellbeing Census 2022.
[iv] Public Health Scotland. Antenatal Booking in Scotland, 2022. Published 2024.
[v] Scottish Health Survey 2022.

[vi] Jackson, S and Tattan-Birch, H. Estimating uptake of smoking among 18-25-year-olds: analysis for ASH [England] March 2024. https://osf.io/nu2rp/
[vii] Scottish Health Survey 2022.
[viii] The Scottish Public Health Observatory. Smoking attributable deaths, 2022. Published 2024.
[ix] The Scottish Public Health Observatory. Smoking attributable admissions, 2022. Published 2024.
[x] Health Scotland, ISD Scotland and ASH Scotland. 2007. An atlas of tobacco smoking in Scotland: A report presenting estimated smoking prevalence and smoking-attributable deaths within Scotland. NHS Scotland/Scottish Public Health Observatory.

[xii] Scottish Health Survey 2022.
[xiii] As above.
[xiv] Scottish Health Survey 2022. Data analysed for ASH Scotland, not published.
[xv] ASH Scotland. 2022. Closing the Inequality Gap: Smoking and Mental Health. (Scottish Health Survey data).
[xvi] Public Health Scotland. Antenatal Booking in Scotland, 2022. Published 2024.
[xvii] ASH Scotland. 2024. Cost of Living, cost of Smoking: The effect of smoking on personal finances and poverty in Scotland.
[xviii] As above.
[xix] As above.