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Coverage  
Great Britain

Theme  
Health



## Smoking habits in Great Britain

As No-Smoking Day approaches (Wednesday 11 March), figures from the Office for National Statistics provide a detailed picture of the nation's smoking habits – and desire to quit.

- In 2007 (the most recent year for which figures are available) smoking fell to its lowest recorded level – 21 per cent of the Great Britain population aged 16 and over.
- 66 per cent of smokers said they wanted to give up.
- 58 per cent of smokers said they would find it difficult to go without cigarettes for a day.
- 17 per cent of smokers said they light up within five minutes of waking. Heavy smokers are more likely to light up immediately; 35 per cent of those smoking 20 or more a day do so, compared with 3 per cent of those smoking fewer than 10 a day.
- These three 'dependence indicators' (desire to give up, ability to forego cigarettes for a day and timing of first cigarette of the day) have changed little since 1992.
- The relationship between cigarettes smoked and desire to give up is not straightforward; heavier smokers are less likely to want to give up. The proportion wanting to give up in 2007 was highest among those smoking, on average, fewer than 20 cigarettes a day.
- Health concerns are the most commonly-cited reason for quitting, with 86 per cent of people who want to give up mentioning at least one health reason.
- After health, the most commonly-mentioned reason for wanting to give up smoking is financial (27 per cent), followed by family pressure (20 per cent) and the effect on children (15 per cent).

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- Cigarette smoking is much lower among people who are married/cohabiting (18 per cent) than among singles (28 per cent).
- Cigarette smoking is lower among households classified as professional and managerial (15 per cent) than among those classified as routine and manual (26 per cent).
- The percentage of people who smoke is highest in the 20-24 age group (31 per cent) and lowest among those aged 60 and over (12 per cent).

ONS publishes two reports on smoking attitudes and behaviour each year. *Smoking and Drinking Among Adults* is drawn from the long-running General Household Survey, and presents trends in cigarette smoking according to personal characteristics such as sex, age, socio-economic classification and economic activity status. It also comments on the prevalence of cigarette smoking in different parts of Great Britain.

A second report, *Smoking Related Behaviour and Attitudes*, forms part of a series of studies carried out by ONS for the Department of Health and NHS Information Centre for health and social care. The study is conducted as part of the National Statistics Opinions (Omnibus) Survey and focuses on people's attitudes to smoking and smoking behaviour. Targets relating to the prevalence of smoking are monitored by other surveys, but the Opinions survey has been used to monitor changes in attitudes towards smoking in general and towards smoking in public places.

#### NOTES TO EDITORS

1. Figures refer to the situation in Great Britain in 2007 and have been published previously. Reports can be downloaded from the ONS website at the following links: [General Household Survey 2007 Smoking and Drinking among adults, 2007](#) (published 22 January 2009); and [Smoking-related Behaviour and Attitudes, 2007](#) (published 18 June 2008).
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