

October 2007

ash. facts at a glance

action on smoking and health

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As the smoke clears: The myths and reality of Smokefree England

In the period leading up to smokefree legislation the hospitality industry and pro smoking organisations claimed the law would spell disaster for their businesses and damage the economy. But what happened in reality? ASH has revisited these claims and assessed the most common scare stories by these organisations, to see what impact the smokefree law has had.

Myth: It will be bad for pubs

Pro smoking groups claimed that the smokefree legislation would be bad for business and we would lead to many pubs closing down. The evidence to date from notable pub groups is that the smoking ban has had 'little impact' upon their sales.

Capital Pubs announced profits and that the 'smoking ban has had no material impact on business'.¹

Greene King said like-for-like sales were up by 2% in managed houses and 1% in tenanted pubs.²

Punch Tavern shares rose by 2.3% and announced the smoking ban as having 'little impact upon sales'.³

Mitchells&Butler announced that the smoking ban has not affected UK sales with like-for-like sales increasing by 2.6 per cent.⁴

Furthermore a recent YouGov survey commissioned by ASH found that 20% of non-smokers reported that they visited pubs more often since the smoking ban.

Source of the claim: Freedom2choose

Weblink: <http://www.freedom2choose.org.uk/>

Myth: It will be bad for bingo

In the lead up to the smoking ban, pro smoking groups argued that the smokefree legislation was going to be particularly detrimental for both the profitability and long term outcomes of Bingo, with smokers more likely to stay home and use online gaming sites.

Reality: Gaming group Rank, which has 86 clubs in England said it was encouraged by performance at its Mecca bingo, with company shares up by 8.75%.⁵

Myth: There will be large scale non-compliance

Critics argued that a total ban on smoking in public places would not be possible to police and there would be large scale non-compliance.

Reality: However two independent surveys tell a different story. The first by the Department of Health, released in August, found that

97% of businesses are complying with the new smoking legislation.⁶ Secondly a YouGov survey recently released by ASH, Asthma UK and the British Thoracic Society found similar results with 97% of pub goers saying they had not smoked in a pub or enclosed space since the ban came into force, while 86% of pub goers said that they had not seen anyone smoking in a pub. The evidence dismisses the arguments by critics surrounding large scale non-compliance.

Source of the claim: The Telegraph

Weblink: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2007/06/03/nsmoke03.xml>

Myth: There will be heavy handed enforcement with undercover officers and covert filming.

Pro smoking organisations and landlords reasoned that the smoking ban would result in heavy handed enforcement, covert filming and armies of undercover enforcement officers. Simon Clarke a FOREST spokesperson argued that it will be like a 'sledgehammer cracking a nut' and the British Beer and Pub Association believed that enforcement would be too heavy handed.

Reality: What has happened in practice is that council officials have approached the situation as they said they would, in a reasonable manner applying a 'softly softly' approach with relatively few fines being issued. Further, Lambeth council have recently reported that they issued their first fine⁷ while Staffordshire have yet to issue a single fine⁸, providing further evidence that these claims were unsubstantiated.

Source of the claim: BBC and Forest

Weblink: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/6346435.stm>

Myth: Working men's clubs and shisha bars will close

Claims and protests that the smoking ban would result in mass closures of shisha bars and working men's clubs, threatening the livelihood of the owners were unfounded. Working men's clubs feared that the smoking ban would see one in five of its clubs closing down following the smoking ban whilst shisha bars argued that they would be unable to operate if smoking was banned in enclosed places.

Reality: There have yet to be any reported closures as a result of the ban.

Source of the claim: Save the Shisha campaign

Weblink: <http://savetheshishacampaign.com/page2.htm>

Myth: People won't really quit

Reality: The survey by ASH, Asthma UK and the British Thoracic Society found that 12% of smokers have attempted to quit since the 1st July. Primary Care Trusts in Lancashire⁹, Brighton and Hove, and Barking and Dagenham have all reported a 100% increase in people using stop smoking services.¹⁰

Source of the claim: Forest

Weblink: <http://society.guardian.co.uk/health/story/0,,2079120,00.html>

Myth: Smoking is a victimless crime/ Claims about the health impact are flawed.

Pro smoking groups continue to dispute credible medical evidence regarding the dangers of secondhand smoke and the health consequences of smoking.

Reality: Numerous international reports from bodies such as the WHO, IARC and the UK's Scientific Committee on Tobacco and Health found that exposure to secondhand smoke was responsible for an increase in heart disease, lung cancer and reduced lung function.¹¹

Recently released research from Scotland shows that admissions to hospital for heart attacks have declined by 17 per cent since the introduction of the smoking ban in public places.¹²

Independent tests and research have also been carried out on bar staff. A BBC investigation tested bar staff prior to the ban and found they had cotinine levels which were the equivalent of smoking 300 cigarettes a year.¹³ A study in Leicestershire of carbon monoxide levels in non-smoking bar staff found that prior to the ban they had readings between 10 -15 molecules per million air particles, the equivalent to 3 to 5 cigarettes a day. After the ban they had between 0-1 molecules per million air particles, which is the equivalent to that of a non smoker.¹⁴ A study by The Tobacco Control Collaborating Centre in Warwick visited 59 pubs, cafes and bingo halls and found staff exposure to harmful secondhand smoke has fallen by 95 per cent since the introduction of smokefree legislation.¹⁵

Source of the claim: FOREST

Weblink: <http://www.foresonline.org/output/page16.asp>

Myth: House fires will increase as people will stay at home to smoke

Preceding the smoking ban, claims were made that the legislation was going to cause people to stay at home and smoke instead of going out to a pub or club and this would result in a greater number of house fires.

Reality: There have not been any reports to suggest that smoking related fires have increased. Further evidence that like-for-like sales in pubs have not been affected suggests that smokers have continued to visit pubs.

Source of the claim: Direct line

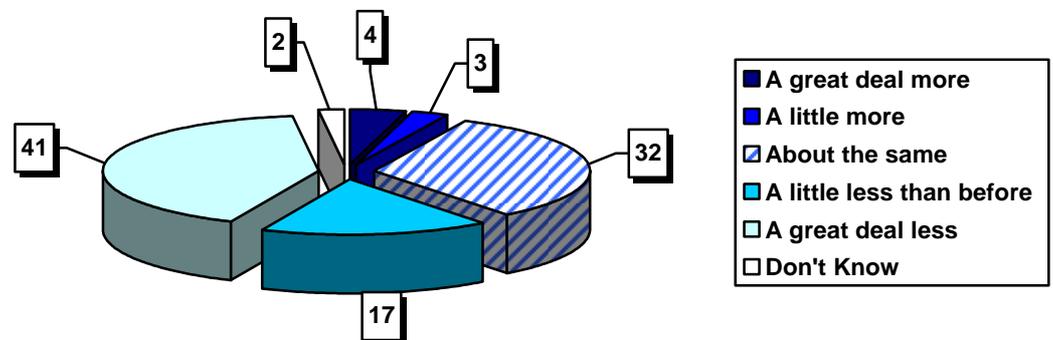
Weblink: http://www.directlineinsurance.com/about_us/news_180407.htm

Myth: There will be an increase in exposure of secondhand smoke in the home, affecting children

Pro smoking groups argued that we would see an increasing number of people buying alcohol from supermarkets and off licences and drinking and smoking at home instead of pubs, which would result in exposing children to greater levels of secondhand smoke.

Reality: The YouGov survey by ASH, Asthma UK and The British Thoracic Society asked those who were exposed to smoke before and after the smoking legislation about their levels of exposure to secondhand smoke at home. The results found that exposure had significantly decreased as the law encouraged people to make homes smokefree. Below is a chart of the results which shows that 41 per cent of respondents said exposure to secondhand smoke was 'a great deal less' than prior to the smoking ban.

Exposed to secondhand smoke at home since the smoking ban



Source of the claim: Freedom2choose

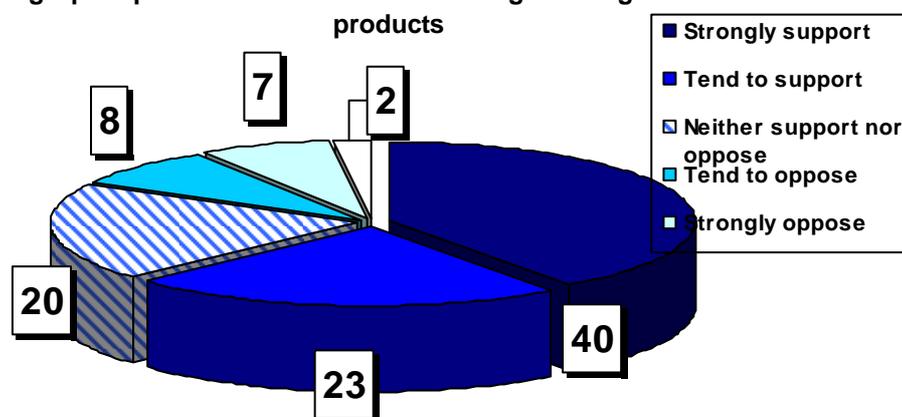
Weblink: www.freedom2choose.org.uk

Myth: The public do not want a smoking ban or any further tobacco control measures

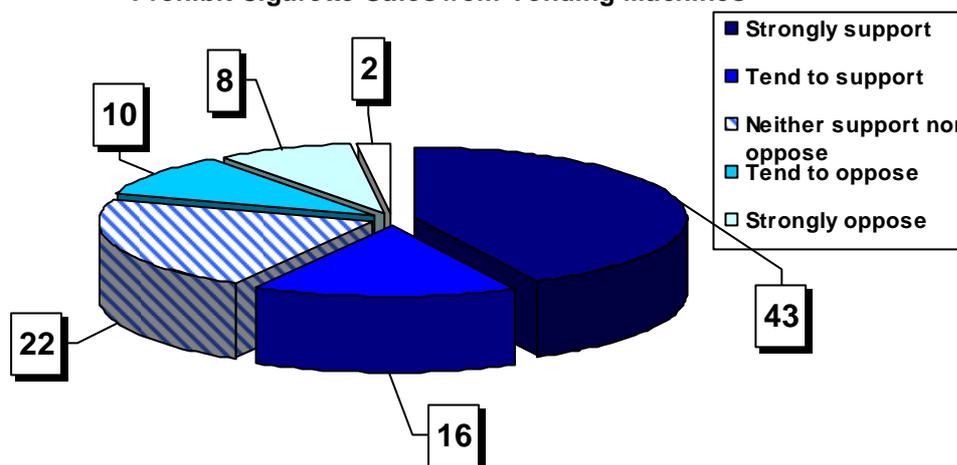
Groups such as freedom2choose argue that the public are not only against the smokefree legislation but they also do not want further tobacco control measures.

Reality: However the survey commissioned by ASH, Asthma UK and the British Thoracic Society found that there was strong support for further tobacco control measures with 72 per cent supporting Reduced Ignition Propensity cigarettes (firesafer cigarettes), 63 per cent of people supporting picture warnings and 59 per cent supporting banning cigarette vending machines.

Use graphic pictures on the health warning which go on tobacco products



Prohibit Cigarette Sales from Vending Machines



Source of the claim: Forest and freedom2choose

Weblink: <http://www.forestonline.org/output/page315.asp>
<http://www.freedom2choose.org.uk>

- ¹ The Caterer, 12 September 2007:
<http://www.caterersearch.com/Articles/2007/09/12/316039/smoking-ban-has-had-no-financial-impact-on-capital-pub-co.html>
- ² The Morning Advertiser, 04 September 2007:
http://www.morningadvertiser.co.uk/news_detail.aspx?articleid=49885
- ³ The Caterer, 06 September 2007
<http://www.caterersearch.com/Articles/2007/09/06/315936/smoking-ban-no-significant-impact-on-punch.html>
- ⁴ Planet Retail, Food Service News, 28 September 2007
<http://www.planetretail.net/FoodServiceNews/NewsFeed.asp#58737>
- ⁵ The Scotsman, 31 August 2007,
<http://thescotsman.scotsman.com/business.cfm?id=1384522007>
- ⁶ The Department of Health, Smokefree England one month on, 06 August 2007:
<http://www.gnn.gov.uk/environment/fullDetail.asp?ReleaseID=305420&NewsArealID=2&NavigatedFromDepartment=False>
- ⁷ 24dash.com – News for the public sector, 24 September 2007,
<http://www.24dash.com/news/2/27877/index.htm>
- ⁸ Medical News Today, 27 September 2007
<http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/83752.php>
- ⁹ The Lancashire Telegraph, 12 September 2007:
http://www.lancashiretelegraph.co.uk/display.var.1684321.0.records_numbers_bid_to_quit_smoking.php
- ¹⁰ The Barking and Dagenham Recorder, 06 September 2007:
<http://www.bdrecorder.co.uk/content/barkinganddagenham/recorder/news/story.aspx?brand=RECOOnline&category=newsBarkDag&tBrand=northlondon24&Category=newsbarkdag&itemid=WeED05%20Sep%202007%2016%3A17%3A42%3A447>
- ¹¹ The Scientific Committee on Tobacco and Health, Secondhand Smoke: Review of evidence since 1998
www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/@dh/@en/documents/digitalasset/dh_4101475.pdf
- ¹² The Scottish Government, News Release: Smoking ban brings positive results.
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2007/09/10081400>
- ¹³ BBC News, 13 July 2007
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/6898124.stm>
- ¹⁴ Leicester Mercury, 21 August 2007
<http://www.thisisleicestershire.co.uk/displayNode.jsp?nodeId=132384&comma>

[nd=displayContent&sourceNode=133130&contentPK=18155666&folderPk=77458&pNodeId=133088](#)

¹⁵ The Telegraph, 01 October 2007

<http://news.independent.co.uk/health/article3015291.ece>