

Cigarettes and Smoking Cessation Aids

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British smokers find ways to beat the ban

One year on since British public places went smoke free, MINTEL finds most British smokers defiant in their commitment to the habit. Although 32% smoke fewer cigarettes as a result of the ban, just 9% have given up altogether. Predictions of the apocalyptic meltdown of the smoking community have simply not materialised.

In Britain today, cigarettes are still big business, estimated to be worth Â£12.7 billion - that's around Â£25,000-a-minute spent on cigarettes. And while the industry did see a fall in volume sales last year this cannot be attributed to the ban alone as cigarette sales have been in long term decline. Indeed, since 2003 the number of cigarettes bought has been falling at around 3% a year (the equivalent of 1.5 billion fewer cigarettes annually) and the same was true between 2007 and 2008.

"Those who have given up since the ban are most likely to be the social and lighter smokers," comments Richard Caines, senior market analyst at MINTEL. "And it would seem that despite this new legislation, the cigarette market is here to stay, albeit a slightly smaller one."

MINTEL's exclusive consumer findings also show that many smokers have simply adapted to the ban by changing their habits, with one in four (21%) now saying they smoke more at home. Meanwhile, the same proportion of smokers (20%) enjoy cigarettes too much to have any interest in giving up.

Power to the people

As part of the government's Cancer Reform Strategy, further legislation affecting the tobacco industry is on its way. In October this year, pictorial health warnings on all tobacco products will be introduced. Other areas being discussed are restrictions on vending machines and moving tobacco displays under the counter. But the effect that these measures will have remain to be seen, as MINTEL's research shows that one in three (33%) smokers said on-pack health warnings make no difference to them giving up and 29% said that hard-hitting anti-smoking advertising has no effect.

"The message from the anti-smoking lobby is indeed a powerful one and has helped to achieve many changes. But those who still choose to smoke in the face of the growing pressure to give up, are simply claiming what they see as their right to smoke. Far from being just unable to, many are simply unwilling to quit the habit of a lifetime," says Richard.

Do you have any gum?

Since 2003 the market for smoking cessation aids such as nicotine patches and chewing gum has increased on average by 5% year on year, to reach Â£101 million in 2007. To encourage more smokers to try nicotine replacement therapy, the government reduced VAT on these products from 17.5% to just 5%. The cheaper price has undoubtedly encouraged some potential quitters to give them a go, but market value has suffered as a result.