

Widespread support for smoking ban in Scotland

Contributed by BMRB
Thursday, 16 March 2006

BMRB's TGI survey shows that three-fifths of all adults in Scotland agree that "smoking should be banned in public places". This is an increase from 56 per cent 3 years ago.

Widespread support for smoking ban in Scotland

BMRB's TGI survey shows that three-fifths of all adults in Scotland agree that "smoking should be banned in public places". This is an increase from 56 per cent 3 years ago.

Despite an apparent improvement in health awareness amongst smokers in Scotland (26 per cent are either currently trying to give up or have tried to do so in the last year) the reality is that 1.3 million adults still smoke. This is around a third of all adults in Scotland. In December 2004 the Scottish Executive took decisive action and announced a Bill to ban smoking in enclosed public places, including pubs, bars and offices. The ban comes into place on the 26th March and follows similar bans in New York and Ireland.

In England, 63 per cent of adults think that smoking should be banned in public places. A fifth of adults aged 16+ smoke, equivalent to 11.8 million people.

The experience in Ireland suggests fewer smokers will visit pubs, but more people will eat out in pubs. The public smoking ban in the Republic of Ireland has now been in force for almost two years. Data from BMRB's TGI survey in 2005 showed a year-on-year drop of eight per cent in the number of adults going to the pub for a drink once a week or more (from 1.39 million in 2004 down to 1.28 million in 2005). This trend was particularly apparent for smokers. Between 2004 and 2005, the number of smokers in Ireland who went to a pub for a drink once a week or more declined by 18 per cent, a drop of over 100,000. The same percentage decline in Scotland would result in almost 75,000 fewer smokers visiting the pub once a week or more. (In England this would translate to over 750,000 fewer smokers visiting pubs once a week or more).

However since the introduction of the ban in Ireland there has been a noticeable increase in the numbers of adults who have been to a pub for a meal. In 2002, 1.9 million adults had a meal in a pub "in the last 12 months". This remained fairly static until 2005, when it increased to 2.1 million adults. In percentage terms that represents an increase from 62 per cent of adults in 2002 to 66 per cent in 2005. In Scotland the proportion of adults who have eaten in a pub or bar "in the last 12 months" has also risen in recent years (68 per cent of all adults in 2003, compared to 73 per cent of all adults in 2005). This trend may well accelerate after the smoking ban in Scotland.

Anti-smokers are older and wealthier

In Scotland people who support the ban are 23 per cent more likely than adults as a whole to be aged over 65. They are also 23 per cent more likely to earn a family income of over £50,000.

In terms of the attitudes of these anti-smoking people, they are more likely than the average adult to be health conscious (45 per cent agree with the statement, "I consider my diet to be very healthy" compared to 37 per cent of all adults).

They are also more environmentally friendly (77 per cent believe that "People have a duty to recycle" compared to 70 per cent all adults). So being against smoking in public places is bound up with the more general trend towards healthier lifestyle and environmental awareness.