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# Smoking costs society £17bn – £5bn more than previously estimated

14 Jan 2022

## Regional and local breakdown available

New economic analysis of national data for ASH finds the cost of smoking to society is significantly higher than previous estimates have shown. Commissioned by charity Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) the new figures [1] published today [Thursday 13th January] show the cost of smoking to society totals £17.04bn for England each year. This compares to £12.5bn under the previous estimate [2].

The higher estimate is a result of a new assessment of the impact of smoking on productivity [3]. Smokers are more likely than non-smokers to become ill while of working age increasing the likelihood of being out of work and reducing the average wages of smokers. Smokers are also more likely to die while they are still of working age creating a further loss to the economy. Together this adds up to £13.2bn.

Smokers' need for health and social care at a younger age than non-smokers also creates costs, with smoking costing the NHS an additional £2.4bn and a further £1.2bn in social care costs. This includes the cost of care provided in the home and, for the first time, residential care costs. However, many of smokers' care needs are met informally by friends and family. It's estimated that to provide paid-for care to meet needs would cost society a further £14bn [4], this is not included in the overall £17bn figure but illustrates the wider burden of smoking beyond pounds and pence.

Smoking-related fires are the leading cause of fire-related deaths, and the costs of property damage, injuries and deaths amount to another £280m.

These figures represent profound losses to individuals and their families with smokers paying the price of addictions established in childhood throughout their lives.

Smokers also lose a large part of their income to tobacco an estimated £12bn in England each year, or approximately £2,000 per smoker. While the tobacco industry argue that what smokers pay in tax compensates for the cost to society, the excise tax paid for 2020/21 totalled just under £10bn [5] in England, higher than in previous years but still nowhere near the £17.04bn it cost society in 2019.

Other economic analysis commissioned by ASH last year found that if the country could stub out smoking for good the economic benefits would go even wider as smokers switch their spending from tobacco to other goods and services which benefit the economy more. In total this would generate around half a million jobs, with a net benefit to public finances of £600m [6].

## Deborah Arnott, Chief Executive of Action on Smoking and Health says:

*"Smoking is a drain on society. It's a cost to individuals in terms of their health and wealth and a cost to us all because it undermines the productivity of our economy and places additional burdens on our NHS and care services."*

*"The Government have delayed the tobacco control plan it promised last year which is now urgently needed with only 8 years left to achieve the goal of England being smokefree by 2030."*

## Ted Aldridge, 39 from Cheshire, quit smoking last year and wants to encourage others to follow his lead:

*"I had to have my ulcerated large bowel removed in 2018 as a result of colitis brought on by years of smoking and it meant that for three years I had a bag attached. I only quit smoking a year ago after I was told I could have reattachment surgery because I wanted to have clean insides in preparation for the operation. In a year staying quit I saved £2,000 in a sealed jar, enough to pay for a holiday, a widescreen TV and a new video game console. I'm passionate about persuading others to quit too – what I say is, if you hate your lungs lads, at least love your wallet?!"*

[Picture available on request]

The costs have been broken down so local authorities and regions can see the impact of smoking in their area. Regional versions of PR available at the bottom of this press release – key statistics/summary data below.

## ENDS

## Notes to the Editor

Action on Smoking and Health is a health charity working to eliminate the harm caused by tobacco use. For more information see: [www.ash.org.uk/about-ash](http://www.ash.org.uk/about-ash). ASH receives funding for its programme of work from Cancer Research UK and the British Heart Foundation.

For interviews and more information contact [press@ash.org.uk](mailto:press@ash.org.uk)

## References

[1] Ready Reckoner tool

Summary data below:

Area name	Number of smokers	Overall cost	Healthcare costs	Productivity costs	Social care costs	Fire costs
England	6,144,703	17.04Bn	2.40Bn	13.17Bn	1.19Bn	282.78M
East Midlands	568,751	1.55Bn	217.29M	1.19Bn	118.04M	26.56M
East of England	670,686	1.84Bn	283.67M	1.40Bn	128.38M	26.74M

London	897,243	2.98Bn	308.12M	2.48Bn	150.40M	40.98M
North East	326,257	887.62M	124.98M	684.51M	66.98M	11.14M
North West	838,793	2.15Bn	322.63M	1.60Bn	176.83M	44.38M
South East	877,585	2.59Bn	411.44M	1.97Bn	170.24M	36.47M
South West	633,500	1.66Bn	277.01M	1.23Bn	123.97M	30.72M
West Midlands	651,289	1.68Bn	242.16M	1.27Bn	130.30M	38.46M
Yorkshire and the Humber	680,118	1.74Bn	243.24M	1.34Bn	125.01M	28.03M

[2] ASH Ready Reckoner 2019 edition

[3] Reed H. The impact of smoking history on employment prospects, earnings and productivity: an analysis using UK panel data. September 2020

[4] ASH. The cost of smoking to the social care system, 2021. March 2021.

[5] HMRC. [National statistics: Tobacco Bulletin](#). November 2021

[6] ASH Press Release. Ending smoking in the UK would increase the number of UK jobs by nearly half a million. October 2021

#### Regional Releases:

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Find out how much smoking costs your area.

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May 2023

### [Data and Cost Calculators](#)

Statistics on the impact and cost of smoking available on local authority, regional, Integrated Care System (ICS) and national footprints.

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Nov 2021

### [A third of smoking households in England are living in poverty with rates highest in the North](#)

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Feb 2022

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