

WHAT PEOPLE REALLY THINK ABOUT PUBLIC SMOKING

A photograph of a man and a woman in a social setting. The man, on the left, is wearing a red button-down shirt and light-colored pants. He is smiling and looking towards the woman. He holds a clear plastic cup with beer in his right hand and a lit cigarette in his left. The woman, on the right, is wearing a purple top and is looking down at a wine glass she is holding. The background is dark and out of focus, suggesting an indoor setting like a bar or club.

“Less than a fifth of adults agree that smoking should be banned in clubs, pubs and bars.”

What people really think

Introduction

Should smoking in clubs, pubs, bars and restaurants be banned? Some say yes and they have been most forceful in promoting their views. So what does the public and those who use these venues really think.

There have been conflicting claims about what people really want. Some of these claims seem to be based on "research" that is, frankly, poorly conducted and unreliable.

So the Tobacco Manufacturers' Association (TMA) decided to find out how the general public really do feel about the current situation. This leaflet outlines the results of recent quantitative research which shows where public smoking stands on most people's list of priorities, and what they would like to see happen next.

What do the public really think?

The British public shows few signs of wanting to follow the New York model of banishing smokers from restaurants and bars. We have carried out independent research revealing an altogether more moderate and pragmatic attitude. The majority favour practical measures to reduce exposure to other people's smoke rather than an outright ban on smoking.



RESEARCH RESULTS

Smoking in pubs, clubs and bars

- Three out of ten non-smokers (30 per cent) and over half of adult smokers (55 per cent) have **no real concern** about smoking in pubs, clubs and bars.
- **Less than a fifth** (17 per cent) of all adults agree that smoking should be banned in pubs, clubs and bars.
- The great majority (86 per cent) feel that the **smoking situation in pubs, clubs and bars has improved in recent years**, with almost three quarters (73 per cent) noting that the number of non-smoking areas has increased.
- Most people (75 per cent) feel more improvements are still needed but requiring **good ventilation** is a more popular option (24 per cent) than banning smoking (17 per cent), **increasing the number of non-smoking areas** (16 per cent) or banning smoking at the bar (4 per cent).

Smoking in restaurants

- There is stronger support for **smoking restrictions in restaurants** than in pubs.
- But still only a third feel it should be banned altogether (32 per cent) or in other places where food is served (14 per cent).
- Many prefer a more flexible approach, the most popular options being **more non-smoking areas** (19 per cent), offering **a real choice** of smoking policies (10 per cent) or **leaving it up to the management** (8 per cent).

Other priorities

- Top of the public's list of quality of life issues on which they think local authorities should concentrate resources was **'controlling yobbish behaviour'** (37 per cent), followed by **'increasing security camera surveillance'** (19 per cent). Even **'maintaining parks and open spaces'** (18 per cent) and **'prohibiting litter and graffiti'** (12 per cent) were of greater concern than banning smoking (9%), with only 'banning cars from city centres' ranking lower (3 per cent).

Smoking in pubs, clubs and bars...



86% feel the situation has improved in recent years.



73% note that the number of non-smoking areas has increased.

Smoking in restaurants...



67% want more restrictions but not a complete ban.

Other priorities for local authorities...



37% want to ban yobbish behaviour.



9% want to ban smoking.

The government's view

Responding to calls for a ban, Public Health Minister Melanie Johnson MP said that a ban would be 'premature' and that more still needs to be done by way of 'public persuasion'. In January 2004, Culture Secretary Tessa Jowell MP said she wanted the hospitality industry to improve conditions voluntarily rather than have a smoking ban imposed.

The hospitality industry

The Charter Group (consisting of 15 trade associations which represent over 100,000 pubs, clubs, hotels and restaurants) supports a Public Places Charter on smoking.

The Public Places Charter is a voluntary code, agreed with the Government, to improve choice. It allows customers to know whether they can smoke in a venue, and whether it has non-smoking and ventilated areas. It was included in outline in the 'Smoking Kills' White Paper in December 1998 and formally launched in September 1999 by Tessa Jowell, then Minister for Public Health.

According to a 2003 independent validation report commissioned in partnership with the Department of Health, 63% of pubs now carry external policy signage and over half of these have smoking bans, non-smoking areas and/or high quality ventilation.

What do we think?

The Tobacco Manufacturers' Association believes that the available evidence on the possible health effects of environmental tobacco smoke does not justify calls for a total ban on smoking in public. This would be an unnecessary limitation of choice and personal freedom.

The TMA supports voluntary health and safety measures in work and public places to ensure employees work in well-ventilated, non-smoky air. Clear smoking policies should be established and there should be provision of effective ventilation and facilities for both smokers and non-smokers. There is no need for a legislative ban on smoking in the workplace because voluntary self-regulation is working.

The TMA's chief executive, Tim Lord, commented that the survey shows "the British public has a very practical, common sense attitude to smoking in hospitality outlets, preferring to accommodate smokers and non-smokers where possible. Most people have noticed the improvements in pubs and bars and believe more of the same is the most sensible course. The majority do not support a ban, and most seem to feel that further improvements can be achieved on a voluntary basis rather than through regulation."

How was the research carried out?

The survey was commissioned by the Tobacco Manufacturers' Association and carried out by BMRB International, using its weekend telephone omnibus survey ACCESS. 1929 adults aged over 18 were interviewed in September 2003. BMRB used a nationally representative survey and standard sampling techniques rather than some web-based polling which may be open to manipulation and cannot guarantee representative samples.

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